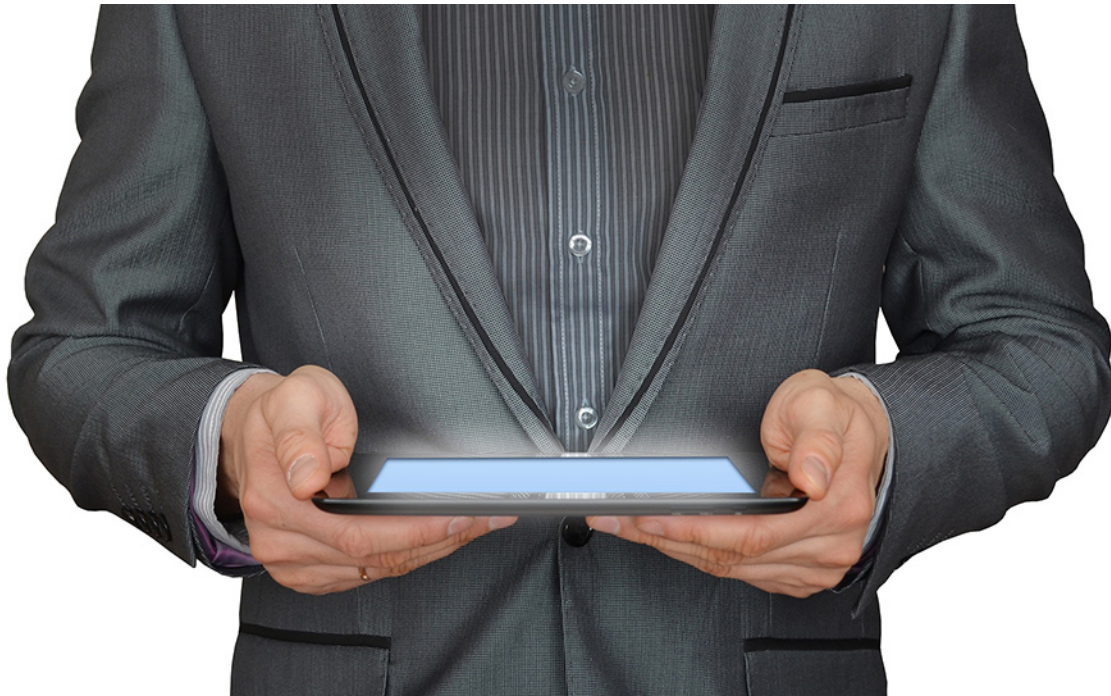


Men troll on Facebook more than women because of narcissism, study suggests

September 13 2017, by Sarah Cox, Brunel University London



Credit: Brunel University

Men are more likely than women to have antisocial motives for using Facebook, which can be explained by their greater levels of narcissism, new research from Brunel University London and Goldsmiths, University of London, suggests.

Prior research has found that men are more likely to engage in bullying

on Facebook, and online trolling in general. Studies have also found higher levels of narcissism in men.

This new research is believed to be the first to confirm a link between that behaviour and trait.

Writing in the journal *Computers in Human Behaviour*, lead-author Dr Nelli Ferenczi (Goldsmiths, Department of Psychology) with Dr Tara Marshall and Dr Kathrine Bejanyan (Brunel, Department of Psychology) conclude that, overall, men are more motivated to use Facebook antisocially, and this can be explained in part by greater narcissism.

They also found that women were more likely to use it prosocially, for a sense of connectedness and belonging, which can be partly explained by higher levels of relational self-construal (the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of close relationships).

"The link between narcissism and stronger antisocial Facebook use might be connected with the general tendency of narcissists to hold extremely positive opinions of themselves which may alienate others," the research team explain.

"By posting self-promoting content on Facebook, narcissists may seek to cultivate an online profile which attracts admiration and views but ultimately isn't really concerned with pro-social outcomes.

"Moreover, narcissists tend to be antagonistic towards people who don't share their inflated views of themselves. Such antagonism may express itself in hostility or anger towards Facebook friends who challenge them or don't give them the attention they crave."

Cyberbullying is a strategy for gaining attention, the researchers say, and an exertion of negative social power and influence for narcissists. Their

findings support the association of narcissism with self-promotion and cyberbullying.

The psychologists analysed the online survey results of more than 570 US participants. 77% were white and 85% were in full or part-time work or study.

Participants tended to be daily users of Facebook and have an average of 304 Facebook friends.

They rated themselves on a 13-point narcissistic personality scale, then rated themselves on a relational self-construal scale (eg. 'my close relationships are an important reflection of who I am') and on a uses-of-Facebook scale (eg. how far they would agree that they use the platform antisocially, to 'show off', 'be mean', or 'to badmouth people' for example, or prosocially – 'to keep in touch with people,' or 'to show support for others').

The researchers say: "Sex differences in Facebook use may be a further reflection of the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes in the behaviours of men and women. In terms of greater narcissism, one explanation may be that as a result of stereotypes, characteristics such as competitiveness, assertiveness, need for achievement and dominance, tend to be encouraged in the socialisation of men and punished in women. The reverse holds true for communal characteristics, such as relational self-construal.

"Encouraging self-definition interdependently with others could help decrease trolling behaviour and encourage people to use Facebook in a more socially constructive and harmonious way. This will help meet the fundamental need for belonging and the maintenance of relationships while making Facebook a safer place for all its users."

The researchers conclude that their participants' responses could be prone to bias because they were self-reported, and that future research should involve the independent coding of Facebook profiles. They also recommend the involvement of a more internationally diverse sample size, given the higher levels of narcissism found in individualistic societies which place higher value on the development of a distinct and unique self.

Previous research by Dr Marshall and Dr Ferenczi has found that people who post Facebook status updates about their romantic partner are more likely to have low self-esteem, while those who brag about diets, exercise, and accomplishments are typically narcissists.

The psychologists' guide to spotting a Facebook narcissist

- More likely to post self-promoting content
- More likely to post frequent status updates and brag about their achievements
- The more they post, the less likely they are to receive validation in the form of likes and comments
- They tend to seek more social support than they're willing to give back
- They get angry when social contacts do not comment on content
- They retaliate against negative comments
- They're more likely to engage in Facebook bullying

More information: Are sex differences in antisocial and prosocial Facebook use explained by narcissism and relational self-construal? By Nelli Ferenczi, Tara Marshall and Kathrine Bejanyan is published in *Computers in Human Behaviour*:

authors.elsevier.com/c/1VfYw2f~UW0xso

Provided by Brunel University

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