

# Celebrities are more protected from cyberabuse than ordinary people due to their attractiveness: study

January 7 2022

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Celebrities and famous people are seen as more "attractive" which helps to protect them much more than ordinary people when they are

cyberabused, new research has revealed.

While being a [celebrity](#) doesn't make them immune from the cyberbullies, when they do become targets of the trolls these incidents were seen as much more severe than those involving other people.

The new research, published in the *Computers in Human Behaviour* journal, also shows that at the root of this is the [public perception](#) that celebrities are more "attractive," rendering any [abuse](#) they receive as being much more socially unacceptable.

The report suggests that celebrity gives [famous people](#) when they are online "a protective 'halo' related to the 'what is beautiful is good' phenomenon."

The only exception to this was when celebrity social [media](#) user initially tweeted negative content, in which case, they received more blame.

The research looked mainly at interactions and incidents of trolling and cyberabuse on the social media platform Twitter.

Dr. Christopher Hand, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, at the University of Glasgow, the report's co-author, said: "Our research found that celebrities appear to be held in higher regard and considered more attractive than other social media users, affording them protection when abused online.

"Our studies were very carefully controlled. The only things that varied were the names and profile pictures of the victims. This 'celebrity' status was enough to dramatically shift viewer perceptions of blame and severity.

"Interestingly, 'who' was viewing the abuse was very important

too—participants who scored higher in psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism were less likely to have sympathy for victims, and did not see abuse as severe."

Dr. Graham Scott, a Lecturer at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), the report's co-author, said: "Although celebrities are viewed as attractive, the public recognize that their motivations for using social media are more self-serving than the average user, so if they post negative or insulting content and receive abuse as a result of this they are seen as 'fair game.'"

As online communication, including using social media, has been increasing in society for the past two decades, a consequence of this has been an increase in online abuse.

Previous studies have established that both the volume of online abuse, and potentially provocative content posted by the victim themselves, impacts observers' perceptions of both victim blame and perceived severity of the incident.

This new research compared victim blame and perceived severity scores, as well as perceived victim attractiveness, from studies in which the volume of abuse and the nature of the 'provoking' content posted by the victim were manipulated, and in which victims were either celebrities or lay-users of social media.

The paper says: "By better understanding how victims of online abuse are viewed, and often blamed, by observers we will be better-placed to minimize the blame attributed to victims for such incidents and mitigate against potential negative fallout."

**More information:** Christopher J. Hand et al, Beautiful victims: How the halo of attractiveness impacts judgments of celebrity and lay victims

of online abuse, *Computers in Human Behavior* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2021.107157](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.107157)

Provided by University of Glasgow

Citation: Celebrities are more protected from cyberabuse than ordinary people due to their attractiveness: study (2022, January 7) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-01-celebrities-cyberabuse-ordinary-people-due.html>

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