

Unmasking Online Behavior: investigating Narcissism, Impulsivity, and Ghosting Trends

Anna Maria Austin & Marina Lepenioti | PS4935, Final Year Project II
Supervisor: Dr Petropoulos Petalas

Previous literature

- **Dark triad** individuals prefer **reward – seeking behaviors**. People with high dark triad traits report **lower levels of satisfaction** and commitment and are **more willing to terminate** a personal **romantic relationship** (Jonason and Jackson, 2016).
- **Narcissist** have been known to **maladaptively** use their **extraversion** and **assertiveness** to generate a more **concrete self-image** (Miller et al., 2021, Maltby et al. 2016), as they too are also insecure individuals (Grapsas et al., 2019) resulting in a greater need for recognition and grandiosity ego (Miller et al., 2021).
- **Trolls** are notorious for **carefully curating their online personas** depending on the cyber spaces they occupy with the goal of annoying other users and causing harm (Jones & Brice 2019).
- **Trolling** can be regarded as a **risky behavior** since the consequences of being uncovered as a troll (bans and reports) can be detrimental to the **self-esteem** of the instigators, as they may also face social sanctions in real life. This is also an important factor behind the **preference** for operating under an **anonymous account**(Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2021).
- Trolling is **more frequent in men** than women (Navarro-Carrillo 2021, Hong & Cheng 2018, Tang & Fox 2016).
- Literature is **inconclusive** for ghosting and gender (Hampton et al., 2011).

The current studies aimed to bridge the gaps in literature concerning the behavior of individuals in the Dark Tetrad on the internet.

Study A

H1: Ghosting will be highly appealing to individuals that scored high on dark Triad traits.

RQ: Is there a difference between men and women in ghosting ?

Study B

H1: High levels of narcissism will result in higher levels frequency of trolling.

H2: Higher impulsivity will result in higher rates of trolling.

H3: Men will be more likely to engage in trolling.

DISCUSSION

The way in which individuals behave online depends on multiple factors, most importantly however, personality. **Both studies** highlighted how people in the **Dark Triad** choose to **boost their egos**, and cause **discomfort** to others online, through malicious interactions (trolling and ghosting). **Gender** as well as anonymity were also shown to be **great predictors of trolling**, as for **ghosting, no difference** was found between genders, however motives behind ghosting could be different.

This combined research poses a **great question** about how **personality and behavior is examined in social studies**. Through the implementation of behavioral measurements, we are able to investigate behavior beyond self-reported activity.

Additionally, it can be argued that **what matters most**, is the **control** a person has over their **online image**, since dating app profiles are also carefully curated by the users and cannot be second guessed by their circle.

Further research is needed in this domain to unmask the motives and expressions of dark online behavior across the internet.

RESULTS

Study A

H1: A positive overall regression was found between dark triad traits (M=74.87, SD=5.11) and likelihood to ghosting (M=14.34, SD=1.74) and analysis revealed $F(1,69) = 5.61, p = 0.021$

RQ: T-Test results revealed non – significant difference between females (M=5.27, SD=1.56) and males (M=5.00, SD=1.92), $t(67) = -0.626, p = 0.525$.

Study B

Independent samples T Test for Gender and self-reported Trolling

	Male		Female		t(106)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Trolling							
Participation in trolling (self-report)	11.7	3.99	9.06	3.67	3.69	<.001	3.84
Anonymous Trolling	68.4	27.2	54.7	30.0	2.47	.015	28.6
Public Trolling	38.4	28.3	34.8	28.5	.652	.258	28.4

METHODS

Self report measures

Short dark triad questionnaire

Narcissism induction Task

Narcissistic Administration and Rivalry Questionnaire

Behavioral measures

Study A: Ghosting task

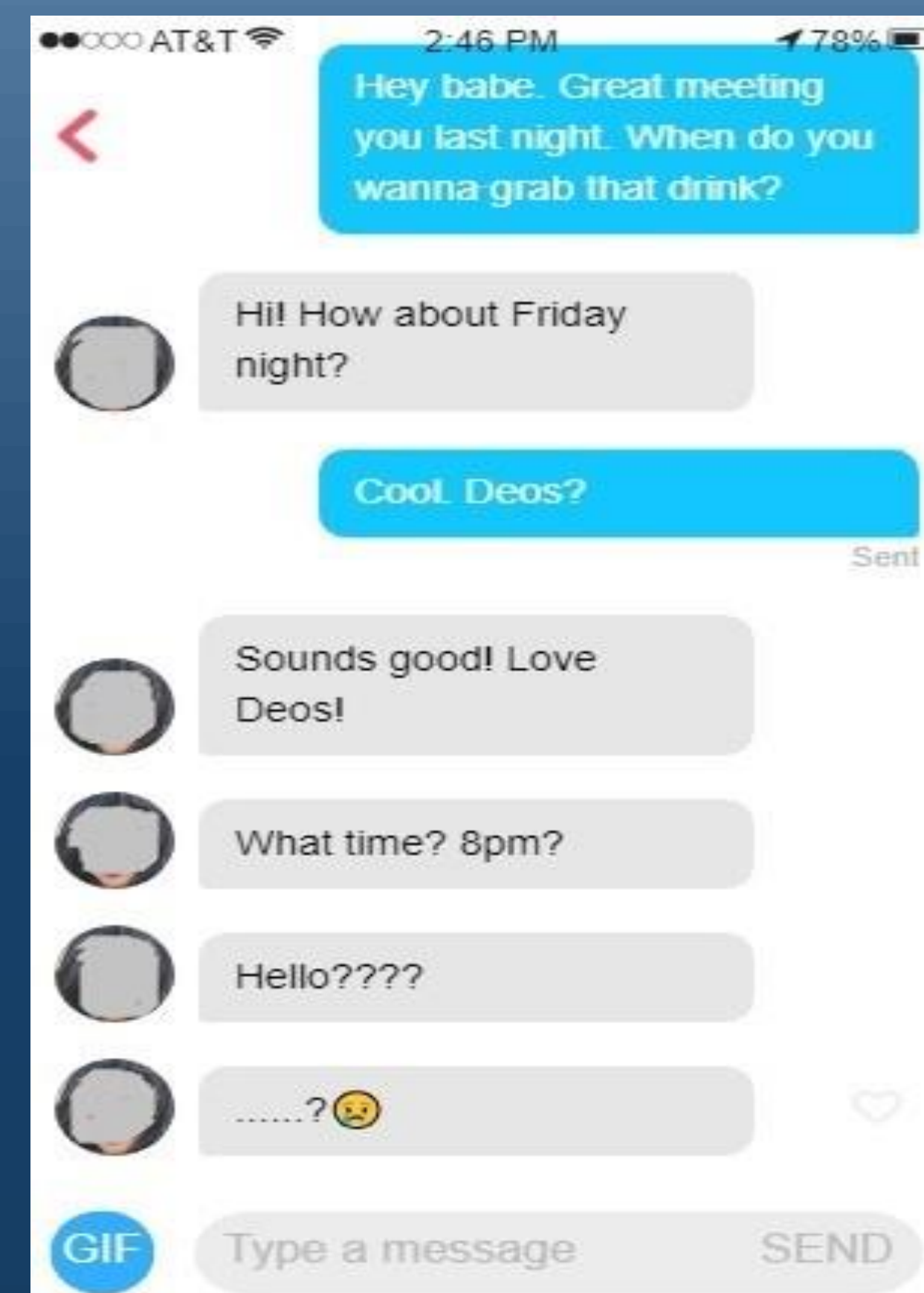
In study A, we developed a behavioral task to examine how participants would behave in a scenario of a conversation with a potentially romantic interest, in terms of the likelihood to ghost their counterparts.

Regardless of the condition they were placed under (narcissism induction vs control group), participants were shown a series of long saturated and short texts. They were then asked to indicate the likelihood to ghost their counterparts using a slider.

Study B: Online Trolling Impulsivity task

In study B, we developed a behavioral task to investigate how participants would behave in the comment section of a simulated social media feed, and specifically if they would engage in trolling or not.

Participants were shown fake twitter posts and had the ability to “like, dislike, ignore” and comment. They were also given instructions to comment as they would in real life if their identity was hidden. After each stimulus was presented, participants were asked to rate the likelihood they would comment something similar in real life, using two sliders, if their identity was hidden or public.



Study B

Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Anonymous Trolling from Narcissism

	β	F	df	p	R ²
Overall Model					
Narcissism	.44	.962	110	<.001	.193
			1		

Note. ** results significant at the <.001 level

References

- Jonason, P. K., Kaźmierczak, I., Campos, A. C., & Davis, M. D. (2021). Leaving without a word: Ghosting and the Dark Triad traits. *Acta Psychologica*, 220, 103425. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2021.103425>
- Miller, J. D., Back, M. D., Lynam, D. R., & Wright, A. C. (2021). Narcissism today: What we know and what we need to learn. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 30(6), 519-525. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214211044109>
- Maltby, J., Day, L., Hatcher, R. M., Tazzyman, S., Flowe, H. D., Palmer, E. J., ... & Cutts, K. (2016). Implicit theories of online trolling: Evidence that attention-seeking conceptions are associated with increased psychological resilience. *British Journal of Psychology*, 107(3), 448-466. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjop.12154>
- Jones, A. B. (2019). *Personality and Dark Gaming: The relationships between Perfectionism, the Dark Triad, and Anti-Social Online Gaming Behaviour* (Doctoral dissertation, York St John University). <https://rav.yorksj.ac.uk/id/eprint/4371>
- Navarro-Carrillo, G., Torres-Marin, J., & Carretero-Dios, H. (2021). Do trolls just want to have fun? Assessing the role of humor-related traits in online trolling behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 114, 106551. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106551>
- Hong, F. Y., & Cheng, K. T. (2018). Correlation between university students' online trolling behavior and online trolling victimization forms, current conditions, and personality traits. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(2), 397-405. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.12.016>
- Tang WY, Fox J. Men's harassment behavior in online video games: Personality traits and game factors. *Aggress. Behav.* 2016; 42: 513–521. pmid:26880037 <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21646>
- Hampton K.N., & Sessions L.F. Core networks, social isolation, and new media: How Internet and mobile phone use is related to network size and diversity. *Inf. Commun. Soc.* 2011;14:130–155. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2010.513417