Journal homepage: https://jll.uoch.edu.pk/index.php/jll

**The Myth of Free Speech in the Realm of Online Trolling: Exploring Cyber Shadows Through Psychological Lens**

1Aqsa Farooq, 2Rahat Bashir, 3Sadia Asif

1BS, Student of English, Department of English, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

2Lecturer, Department of English. University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

3Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics and Communications, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

**Article Info**  **Abstract**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Article History:Received 30 March 2024Revised 07 April 2024Accepted 08 April 2024\*Corresponding author: (R. Bashir) rahat.bashir@ucp.edu.pk **Keywords:** Instagram post comments,hate speech,free speech,deindividuation,dark triad, psychological | The emerging time of the internet has made people across the globe collide at the same point with very different yet inquisitive mindsets. Meanwhile, it is observed that most social media posts are bombarded with online trolling. The purpose of this study is to untie the complex knots of the free speech notion that people on social media use as their right to share opinions, but they inject hate speech through their contributions, which can be examined by the support of Instagram's comment section which has the focal significance in my data collection. Data is collected by purposive sampling, by taking the comments from the recent viral posts mainly of two categories, one of political figures and the second of celebrities. The data is then analyzed through a psychological lens, examining the psychological factors behind such destructive involvements with the assistance of dark triad theory, which was coined by researchers Delroy L. Paulhus and Kevin M. Williams in 2002, and deindividuation theory by social psychologist Leon Festinger in the 1950s. The qualitative data shows how people on social platforms have become cyber shadows to engage in such anti-normative and disruptive behaviours. The results show that social media post comments portray the personalities of online trolls as having a shield of anonymity and factors of dark personality traits of Narcissism, where they give excessive importance to themselves only, Machiavellianism, because of their manipulative behaviour they can mould their grudges into honest opinions, and Psychopathy because of their apathetic view towards one's self-destruction and depression, tempt them to involve in such situations. Researchers should also reflect upon how people in our surroundings are misleading the very essence of free speech by using its negative connotations. In conclusion, the analysis shows that this is not what they call free speech; rather, it is utter hate speech with the intent to disturb and disrupt human living and social peace. |

**Introduction**

Have you ever witnessed a social media post without it being influenced by the antisocial or disturbing trolls? As Kemp (2022) states, this is a world where the number of users is increasing at an unstoppable pace since the invention of this wide web in 1989, reaching 5 billion in 2022 all over the world, as almost 63% of the total population. When a person posts a comment online as a conscious attempt to "bait" people, to create an argument that provokes a reaction or emotional tension on the other end is what they call trolling. The most convenient way to see that is by opening the comment section of any post that clearly creates a visualization of how negativity, hate, and trolling are also coming with the interactions, and that has made the online world a hostile kind of place for living. People trap users in trolling either by posting comments on controversial social issues to create chaos and to get reactions where their such activities are referred to as "hot spots" (Papapicco & Quatera,2019).

Hardaker (2010) defined trolling as people who are users of online communications, firstly pretending to be a part of a group or community but then coming with the intention of disrupting the flow of society and the essence of human discussions by creating a cause on which people get irritated. And they do all this just for the sake of entertainment or amusement. Hate speech is an offensive discourse that people use with a motive to threaten social peace by targeting people on the basis of several factors that could include their race, ethnicity, and other traits. Furthermore, hate speech can be defined as communications which forcefully deny the very standing of people living in society as free humans and have equal rights as citizens ( Lepoutre, 2017).

A recent study of "Personality and Internet Trolling" by March, McDonald, & Forsyth, (2023) shows that men and women are both involved in such behaviors, but men are more likely to be involved in trolling and have a higher level of psychopathy and sadism. It also includes other factors, which are narcissism, Machiavellianism, and anonymity, and this is what functions like a weapon for those who want to troll and associate themselves with character assassination, as stated by Reynard (2020).

Matsuda et al. (1993) and Lederer and Delgado (1995) state that those who favour restrictions on hate speech are the ones who are considerable about the amount of harm and hate it brings with it for people. The approach presented here would call the myth of free speech that people use to throw their inner apathetic behaviours to threaten or disturb others as their right of having freedom of speech, but the marketplace of ideas or context of free speech does not follow the use of hate speech. It rather talks about the right to show and express one's honest opinions and ideas so that we can reach the truth, which is not possible for one individual alone to find. Based upon the findings, not a single research has been done which could support this stance because hate speech is marked as discriminatory beliefs, attitudes, or ideas having ugly, violent history because of the depth of offensiveness it can leave on victims (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

**Research Objectives**

* This research would investigate how people use free speech to troll in the online realm of social media.
* This paper will explore the hidden behaviors of people involved in online trolling, which propel them to use hate speech in the name of free speech.

**Literature Review**

Many recent researches, i.e. "Personality and Internet Trolling" by March, McDonald, & Forsyth, (2023)), "Freedom of Expression and Hate Speech", by March, McDonald, & Forsyth (2023), etc. have been done on the recently emerged phenomenon of "online trolling" when people try to bait others by using disturbing, and insincere word choice in the comments to either to disturb or bully them both mentally and emotionally. The word cyberbullying could be used there because the intention or motive of such people is to harm or distress others. Such people involved in online trolling target people whom they don't know most of the time, unlike the ones involved in cyberbullying (Caplan ,2018; Nichol ,2012).

Howard et al. (2019) talk about the participants involved in such norm-violating, antisocial behavior; both men and women are involved. However, through the examination of demographic and psychological factors, men are most likely to be involved in such behavior, and the craving for social media participation tempts them into such activities.

A recent study by March, McDonald & Forsyth (2023) on "Personality and Online Trolling" showed that men are involved in trolling more than women because they have higher sadism, as they troll for the sake of enjoyment, psychopathy, and they possess less agreeableness which prompts them for such actions. Online trolling has a great association with sadism because both try to harm others for enjoyment or to consummate pleasure out of the suffering of victims. (Buckels et al. ,2018).

Lopes & Yu (2017) talked about the great influence of dark triad personality traits on humans involved in such malicious behaviour, and their response towards high Facebook profiles and low Facebook profiles. The result of the study is solid proof that people with higher scores of psychopathy and narcissism involve or appreciate trolling towards the high profile, which shows how directly linked the personality traits are with the trolling behavior.

Moor & Anderson (2019) explored the already existing evidence relating the relationship between dark personality traits and trolling and found that these traits "Psychopathy" (the apathetic behavior of a person who is antisocial and has zero remorse for whatever he does and lacks empathy for others), "Machiavellianism" (the cunning, dishonest, and manipulative nature of a person who seeks his benefits by manipulating others) , and "Narcissism" (superiority of oneself over others) are closely related with trolling. But the most strongly related trait is "psychopathy." Narcissism is the least common in online trolls, but sadism and Machiavellianism were consistently noticed in online trolling.

Mentioning the study of Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus (2013) would create coherence in comprehending how the actions follow the footsteps of your personality. They did an interesting yet thoughtful experiment where participants were given four behaviors, killing bugs in a coffee grinder, assist the experimenter in killing bugs, clean a dirty toilet, or taking an ice bath. Those having sadism chose the first option that portrays their pleasure out of one's pain and suffering. Psychopathy and sadism are also strongly attached to online trolling (March et al. ,2017).

The study of Molenda et al. (2022), "What makes an Internet Troll?" provide the empirical evidence that online trolling is characterized by disinhibition because people involved in such activities are least conscious or concerned with their actions and respective consequences in future.

According to Nitschinsk, Tobin & Vanman (2022), the most significant factor behind the online trolling is of anonymity (where users' identifying information is not provided), which is one of the integral factors behind online trolling that is not being mentioned enough. The situational factor of anonymity stems from the cues of no eye contact or any visual appearance that can constrain a human from showing their negative behavior online. Rather, the more unidentifiable a person is, the more freely they can troll others by creating malicious comments for them. And anonymity is a step towards disinhibition, which is basically the reduced concern of a person for social norms, and in result, they get involved in such negatively inspired and occupied surroundings by Evans et al. (2019). The anonymity works as a weapon because the identity is not revealed, and you have the tool to use it your way or for your benefit (Reynard ,2022).

Papapicco & Quatera (2019) in "Do not Make to eat to Troll!" analyzed and examined the fake profiles and their interactions online noting how they change their identity from real to virtual by anonymity and satisfy their provoking goals of trolling. The gap that this research would fill is the exploration of how the notion of free speech is being used by people who are involved in utter hate speech by using words that denote nothing but disturbing and disrupting motive of ruining peace in society, and how free speech does not mean to disrespectfully assassinate or target someone by threatening them online. And the ones who do not support this are the ones who know very well that how hate speech brings harm, disgracefulness, and distress with itself. (Matsuda et al. ,1993; Lederer & Delgado ,1995).

**Research Methodology**

Keeping in mind the nature of the research, a psychological lens was used to analyze the data, while a purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. Two psychology-related theories are considered most appropriate for analyzing the research through a psychological lens. The main idea of the deindividuation theory by social psychologist Leon Festinger in the 1950s is that how people who have less self-evaluation and self-awareness use anonymity to get involved in such destructive and anti-normative behaviours in comments where they believe that they cannot be personally identified, i.e. by using anonymous usernames. This is the most integral factor behind online trolling because when there are cues of no eye contact or any visual appearance, people get involved in such situations easily (Nitschinsk, Tobin & Vanman, 2022). Moreover, the idea of dark triad theory, which was coined by researchers Delroy L. Paulhus and Kevin M. Williams in 2002, lies upon the three personality traits, which are narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. These traits work as weapons to assassinate and troll people (Reynard,2020). Purposive sampling was considered an appropriate tool for analyzing such comments. For instance, recent viral comments on Instagram posts are taken and the findings would be generalizing the results with whole realm of social media trolling. Moreover, the data collection is taken from two categories specifically, one is of political figures related post comments in which Nawaz and Maryam Nawaz post is taken, and second is of celebrities related post comments on Instagram in which post of Dananeer Mobeen also known as "Pawri Girl" is taken, and Saba Faisal son's grand wedding post specifically because these two categories comparatively face more trolling on social media. Before selecting the Instagram posts, few questions were considered and tried to select posts which can answer them carefully. For instance, (1) Who is in the post? (2) How much information is present related to the research objectives relating online trolling? (3) Do the post comments portray the desired themes of Anonymity, Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy? (4) Do these comments give a unique perspective related free speech and hate speech and add value to the existing literature? A digital publication and media company *WOW360* are chosen, for data related celebrities and a *HideSide Magazine* for political data, and two official accounts of celebrities, one of Dananeer Mobeen and one of Saba Faisal to collect the data. The reason of choosing these accounts on social media is that they got larger audience in recent times, as *HideSide Magazine* has 669K followers, and *WOW360* has 89.1K. So is the case with the other two accounts, Dananeer has 3.7M, and Saba Faisal has 2.3M followers. There were 10 to 14 posts which were initially considered related to the research objectives, but the posts which were more seen and trolled by people on Instagram specifically were considered, through purposive sampling, and data was clipped into 4 posts, and these shortlisted posts effectively matched with the desired theme which will be discussed in analysis section.

 Selected Instagram posts from which findings would examine the trolling factors through the content of their comments to reinforce the given stance, and their links are in the following:

* <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CyrId32rei7/?igsh=MTJqaHY2eDJnb2xhYw==>
* <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1l_pdMo1tz/?igsh=MWNkNnhta2Q4MDU5MQ==>
* <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyQzlZYNHc9/?igsh=MXVhOXVvaWhyejlkag==>
* <https://www.instagram.com/p/C11paNPIQFs/?igsh=MTdhdjU0aHNic3M4cA==>

As stated earlier, comments on social media posts is the medium to troll people. People post incendiary comments on social media with the intention to provoke others to participate into the conflicts by Hardaker (2010). Four major themes are developed in analysis, and under each theme,, the comments are purposively attached to fit the analysis in the best way possible.

**Data Analysis**

Different themes emerged through the data collection depicting that how people on social media take advantage of some factors and troll others online. And how such factors tempt them and attract them to involve in such destructive situations. The themes also discuss how the ideologies and psychological factors of human beings help them to use hate speech in the name of free speech and it's drastic effects on others. Some of the comments are comprises of more than one theme, and it shows how strongly powerful a comment can be to influence someone's life.

1. **Anonymity**

In social media, people get to choose their usernames as per their interest, and the one's with the intention to troll others by using hate speech are more likely to choose the usernames which can portray them as anonymous people, with no real identity or personal information. And these are the cues which support people to indulge in hate speech because their identities cannot be seen by anyone.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyQzlZYNHc9/?igsh=MXVhOXVvaWhyejlkag==>

The background of the picture is that, Dananeer Mobeen was Pakistani girl who is known on internet as "famous for doing nothing" was not very famous at earlier time, but after randomly making a video saying "pawry ho ri hai" she got a massive fame as her video and burger accent both reached higher audience across the world, and right after this video, she got a good deal of drama projects and got a Lux Style Award 2023 for her acting. But, most of the audience took her fame and award as not deserving and trolled her on social media a lot.

|  |
| --- |
| @accountdelete33221188 |
| Itni over acting kyun krti? |
| @s.m\_sharukh\_vlogs |
| Is over acting ki dukan ko bh mila ha |

For instance, if we analyze above comments, it is shown how anonymous people ridiculed Dananeer's post of holding Lux Style Award for her acting achievements. And how the comments portray herself as not deserving for this award, trying to put her in self doubts. They have used words and phrases with intention to hurt her feelings by using words "overacting ki dukan" and the repetition of "overacting" in comments emphasizes on this idea of hate speech used by anonymous usernames, i.e. "accountdelete" etc.

* <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CyrId32rei7/?igsh=MTJqaHY2eDJnb2xhYw==>

If we talk about the background of this video, this is about PMLN political party jalsa that held in Minar-e-Pakistan Lahore, on October, 22, 2023. Where there were so many moments that were captured by the media, these two moments were in highlight. One where Maryam Nawaz, daughter of PMLN leader Nawaz Sharif embraced her father, and second is when Nawaz Sharif was holding a pigeon on his hand. People trolled both of them as fake, overly-exaggerated moments of Nawaz family to impress the nation.

|  |
| --- |
| @basitaholic\_69 |
| I'm unfollowing, if this ghatia content continues |
| @tiamo\_1412  |
| Makes us puke. The sharif family |
| @baddy.loves.baddy  |
| kabootar gunja jungle soar  |
| @aunms\_  |
| Publicity stunt ❌ kabutar ✅ |

For example, in the above comments, anonymous users troll Nawaz Sharif family as unworthy to be seen at the social media and how much hate people have for them. The use of words as "puke,” "ghatiya," and "publicity stunt" shows how badly people react to such videos and posts, and troll political parties with anonymous personalities i.e. "basitaholics,” "baddylovesbaddy" etc.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/C11paNPIQFs/?igsh=MTdhdjU0aHNic3M4cA==>

The background story of this post which was shared by media page *WOW360* on January, 08, 2024 is that it became the media headlines saying "Hania Amir recent cozy photos with Haider Mustehsan spark fans' reaction: I'm jealous." Basically, Hania Amir is a Pakistani renowned actress who got trolled and involved in controversial situations in her life, about having relationships with singers i.e. Asim Azhar, a famous Pakistani singer was his ex-boyfriend but their clashes got the media limelight, and still she is facing the trolling for having multiple relationships, for being a greedy for fame, etc. This post raised eyebrows of the media as another affair from her side with another Pakistani singer Haider Mustehsan, and used hateful words for her.

|  |
| --- |
| @bint\_e\_hawa2022 |
| Tobaah hai hania amir na hogi mano koi lady diana hogai.. hr jaga usi k charchay |
| @shykhh\_03 |
| Zehrili |
| @awae.\_.mayhem |
| Attention Mang rhi  |

If we talk about above mentioned comments, they depict how Hania Amir is being trolled as an attention seeker who has to do nothing with relationships but take them as publicity stunts, who is being the center of the social media for no reason. For instance, her comparison with Lady Diana, hateful words as "zehrili" and "attention" reinforce the very idea of hate speech. The anonymous usernames i.e. "bint-e-hawa,” "shykh" etc shows the big role of anonymity that people play to troll others.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1l_pdMo1tz/?igsh=MWNkNnhta2Q4MDU5MQ==>

The background of this post is, Saba Faisal, a senior Pakistani actress's son got married recently, on December, 27, 2023. His wedding was there in the eyes of people who use social media for its grandeur and huge nature, as much-anticipated event. There, people got an eye on the daughter-in-law and trolled her for not being a suitable girl for the rich family, and how awfully she was dressed by her in-laws.

|  |
| --- |
| @syeda\_bukhari\_syeda  |
| Kisi Kaam ki larki nahi.. pata nahi kya sabit krna chah rhy hain.. |
| @syeda\_bukhari\_syeda |
| Itn makeup bandri ko bhi karain to pyari lagti hai |

For instance, above comments have shown how anonymity played its part to troll the Saba Faisal's daughter-in-law as someone who is not even pretty to be a bride as the phrase suggests "kisi kaam ki larki nahi" and compared her makeup with animals as the word shows "bandr." If we see, the comments are written by people having no real identity i.e. "syeda\_bukhari\_syeda."

1. **Narcissism**

Narcissism is one of the three traits of a dark-triad personality, which depicts how some people take excessive pride on themselves, and take themselves as the only important person in the world, who is always right and who can cross boundaries whenever or wherever they want. This trait can be found very easily in social media comments where people having such personality traits involve in uttering hateful views about others. And this psychological factor plays a crucial role in online trolling.

* <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CyrId32rei7/?igsh=MTJqaHY2eDJnb2xhYw==>

|  |
| --- |
| @sairakha.10 |
| Crying as if zulm in k sath huwa |

The post comments under Nawaz Sharif post showed how people are so narcissistic in this world who troll political members as people who shed crocodile tears in front of public. This comment shows how negatively we separate others from "us" to "them" and take them as the ones who can be anything but cannot be victim at any point of their lives. This also describes the human nature that dark-triad personality shows where people take themselves as significant and others as fake and bad in every such situation.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1l_pdMo1tz/?igsh=MWNkNnhta2Q4MDU5MQ==>

|  |
| --- |
| @neelam\_shabir |
| Yeah, she don't look like member of such a to rich family. |

The comment shows how people take their opinion of others as utter and final, as if they are the only significant characters in others lives. They take it as a responsibility to share "their views" no matter how sensitively they affect someone. This person "Neelam\_shabir" said what she wanted to without thinking about the drastic consequences of such hateful and disturbing comment on bride's mental peace and inner-satisfaction, nourishing the very idea of narcissism.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyQzlZYNHc9/?igsh=MXVhOXVvaWhyejlkag==>

|  |
| --- |
| @basirirfan |
| Jab baap army general ho toh aise awards mil hi jaate hain |
| @dress\_collection786 |
| Esa lag raha he waleema he apka dressing krna nai ai or star ban gai |
| @khantooba322 |
| Itna munh kholne ki zrurt ni thi |

The above comments again support the destructive nature of online trolling where people impose their ideologies as utter realities on others. In the first comment, anonymous user clipped the entire hard work of Dananeer as nepotism as daughter of army person gets unjustified favors and it can be assured by the confidence of the comment as "toh aise awards mil hi jate hain." Moreover, the comment by the person "dress\_collection" shows how people impose their dress-code ideas on others, and take other's ideas as unskillful and terrible i.e. as the phrase suggests "dressing krna nai ai or star ban gai". These types of comments show how people having a colonial mindset try to bombard people with their choices and words as real and superior and other's choices as inferior and unworthy.

1. **Machiavellianism**

This is the second trait of dark-triad personality which portrays the behavior of people who possess a manipulative nature to reach their goals. Such people try to take hold on others to get high status. People on social media are more likely to have such trait when they engage in unethical comments about others. They mold their words as free speech, as if they are sharing their honest opinions for social benefit, but in actuality, they use elements of hate speech either to get attention, or to show that they are more powerful than the famous people because they have the right to comment as bad as one could do to disrupt normal living of a person. People indulging in such behaviors take this opportunity as a medium to speak the personal grudges- out but in more sophisticated and fabricated way.

* <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CyrId32rei7/?igsh=MTJqaHY2eDJnb2xhYw==>

|  |
| --- |
| @\_\_42hoorulain  |
| Behan hamdardiyan jornay acha treeqa hai |

The above comment for instance, shows how aware people are of political dramas and how much pathetic political people look while crying or sharing any emotional moment with their loved ones. But in reality, such comments show the person commenting that intends to basically upset someone to show how their words can change someone's course of life. For example, as the commenter wrote the word "hamdardiyan" to show politics and people associated with politics want sympathies all the time.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1l_pdMo1tz/?igsh=MWNkNnhta2Q4MDU5MQ==>

|  |
| --- |
| @mushkhaq |
| Looks like you did all the efforts for ur dresses an Yr daughters dresses….bahu ka makeup sy ly k dress everything is below average |

This commenter intends to create a clash between the associated family members either by rooting doubts and complaints among each other on a so-called dress thing, but the language and sentence literal meaning shows that the person commenting is more concerned for the bride and her right to get best of everything at her wedding.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyQzlZYNHc9/?igsh=MXVhOXVvaWhyejlkag==>

|  |
| --- |
| @adeel.khan123 |
| Her father is Brigadier in Army... Award to dena hi tha. Hum walon sy ISPR se projects bhi tu leny Otherwise over acting award he milna tha |

The above comment shows how the person commented "adeel.khan" is defending people in the industry who do not get the opportunities as Dananeer got because their fathers are not "Brigadier in Army" trolling the success and achievements of people to satisfy their jealous and envious personas.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/C11paNPIQFs/?igsh=MTdhdjU0aHNic3M4cA==>

|  |
| --- |
| @muneebakber324 |
| Jo BHI comment read kr rae kindly in loguin KO unfollow kren inhn like post share mt kren inhn PTA chle k ye SB ghlat hai |

The above comment by Muneeb Akber shows her negative intent to make everybody unfollow Hania Amir and Haider Mustehsan because according to Muneeb, they share a relationship that is not appropriate in the eyes of society and only unfollowing them can stop them from such relationships. But the main agenda of the commenter is to spread hate against these two figures, and to see their following dropping to satisfy his words and intentions. This is one of main root of engagement in hate speech and online trolling.

1. **Psychopathy**

This is the third and final trait of dark triad personality to denotes the importance of such psychological factors in hate speech and online trolling involvements. This behavior basically describes the nature of people who are not sympathetic or empathetic towards other's suffering and they do not pay any little attention to their crisis. People of such nature are cold, and the most negative and alarming point of such behavior is the element of remorselessness, where people do not regret their hateful actions and show the extinction of humanity in the world. People engaging in antisocial and hate spreading behaviors show this trait to a large extent because they do not care about the devastating consequences that their words can have on others.

* <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CyrId32rei7/?igsh=MTJqaHY2eDJnb2xhYw==>

|  |
| --- |
| @zamra.khan89 |
| Attention, seeker page everyone please unfollow this page |
| @waqar.khan\_87 |
| Unfollow this corrupt supporting page and also report him |

The above anonymous comments show how apathetically people involve other people into the category of bad ones. The magazine page *HideSide* which shared this video of PMLN leaders, got a huge amount of hate from people calling this page as "corrupt supporting page" and "attention seeker page" without even thinking the role of a media person is to show a thing first, then we can analyze their ideologies, but in comments people showed their psychopathy for everyone associated with the page or with the PMLN party. Some user used the phrase "sharif family make us puke" without considering their lexical choices to be hateful or negative by any means.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/C1l_pdMo1tz/?igsh=MWNkNnhta2Q4MDU5MQ==>

|  |
| --- |
| @neelam\_shabir |
| Yeah she don't look like member of such a to rich family.  |
| @mushkhaq |
| Looks like you did all the efforts for ur dresses an Yr daughters dresses....bahu ka makeup sy ly k dress everything is below average |

For instance, in above comments, people remorselessly comment just for the sake of trolling others. The theme of "appearance vs. reality" suits people here, where they judge others on the basis of their social status and physical appearances, neglecting all other significant characteristics of any person. The use of phrases i.e. "not able to be a member of a rich family" and ranking makeup and dressing of the bride as "below average" show how apathetic people can be in online sphere. They comment without even thinking for once the ever-lasting effects of those harsh words on people.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyQzlZYNHc9/?igsh=MXVhOXVvaWhyejlkag==>

|  |
| --- |
| @basirirfan |
| Jab baap army general ho toh aise awards mil hi jaate hain |
| @dress\_collection786 |
| Esa lag raha he waleema he apka dressing krna nai ai or star ban gai |
| @khantooba322 |
| Itna munh kholne ki zrurt ni thi |
| @shumaila3926 |
| Isyy kiss ny kisss cheez ka awaard de diya yrrr |

People in the comment section are pointing again and again at the nepotism as "Brigadier ki beti" over everything. These comments can put a person in envy or hate with their parents or in conflict with the nature of being born in brigadier's house. This can disrupt someone's happy life into a tragically ruined ending. The use of words as "isko kisny kis cheez ka award diya" showing how funny it is for you to see others getting awards who did nothing but made a video, sidelining all the other good things a person did to deserve that award. This is utter psychopathy that people show through their words in comments which waters the trolling environment in online realm.

* <https://www.instagram.com/p/C11paNPIQFs/?igsh=MTdhdjU0aHNic3M4cA==>

|  |
| --- |
| @sania\_ch\_134 |
| This is a culture of Pakistan vulgarity promoter showbiz actors & actressess who make haram relations then he do breakup and such a dramatic shitless activities are continue by them… |

Labelling someone's actions with "vulgarity" or "a reason for vulgarity in Pakistan" is not a simple thing to say. This is simply what we call character assassination and how people in social media take their anonymous identities to destruct someone's reputation. The use of strong words as "haram relations" and "shitless activities" show how people do not look or even consider what they say on social media. This is what people do who get involved in online trolling.

**Discussion**

Hardaker (2010) states that online trolling is basically a trap that people use to involve others in conflicts. At first, people involved in online trolling pretend to be a part of the community, but in actuality, they come with the intention to disrupt the smooth flow of society. While using hateful speech, a communication that forcefully denies the right of humans to be free in a society as well as having equality in rights as citizens reinforces online trolling (Lepoutre's,2017).

People involved in online trolling are prompted by many psychological reasons, which, according to Reynard (2020) are narcissism, where people behave as if they are the centre of the universe and superior to all, trolling people as the duty of the civilized, Machiavellianism, by trolling others with their manipulative behavior to satisfy their personas, and psychopathy by being careless and remorseless for one's hate coated actions and these factors work as a weapon for people engaged in such destructive situations to troll and character assassinate others.

As Buckels et al. (2018) state, most of the times, thre is great extent of association between sadism, that is, when you get amusement from one's suffering and online trolling one tries to involve others in controversial topics to create conflicts because the motive of both activities is same to harm others by taking pleasure out of one's sufferings. There psychological traits play a great role in involving humans to involve in such malicious behaviors by (Lopes & Yu ,2017).

This study analyses how there is a correlation among the dark-triad personality traits, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, and how all of them depend on each other. Psychopathy is more likely to be noticed in the comments than the other two; as we see in the comments, people troll others by using words that can have a more negative and hurtful impact on people, either by talking about their sensitivities or their past, either by comparing them or by ridiculing them, people show hate speech which takes victims at the verge of not believing in humanity (Moor & Anderson,2019).

Nitschinsk, Tobin & Vanman (2022) talked about the significance of anonymity, which is an integral cause behind online trolling, and the data analysis shows how anonymous people get a license to troll others with the shield to protect their real or personal information. Trolling through anonymity basically happens when there are no cues that can represent the visual or real information of people indulged in online trolling. The more unidentifiable you are, the more freely you can use hate comments or hateful expressions, either explicitly or symbolically. The anonymous usernames on post comments show how deviant people are from social norms and ethical considerations to drag someone's reputation and personality negatively through online trolling ( Evans et al.,2019).

This study reveals how people avail themselves of the opportunity to spread hate in someone's life through online trolling on social media and how political and public figures are more likely to encounter such trolling. The findings reveal that people with a choice of usernames get involved in such anti-normative circumstances where they use hateful speech not just to upset themselves but to satisfy their deprivations, either by using the words as a narcissist to impose their opinions on others, segregating the others from the position to be free. And how, on social media, manipulative behaviours are initially taken as free speech, but on the analysis, we find the benefits and personal grudges behind such negative personas attached to political figures and celebrities to show they have more hold on them even if they are not famous or known to the world. Also, psychopathy and sadism play their parts in online trolling to make people uncomfortable and unheard in communities (March et al. ,2017). The latter study has portrayed online trolling as threatening to social peace, which is affected by several factors instilling the idea of hate towards people on social media. The current study echoes the outcomes of previous studies. It also talks about online trolling and how people are manipulatively using their speech to make it hateful and destructive as it should come under the criteria of online trolling, showing how the people against online trolling are very well aware of the storm of hate and disgrace it takes with itself (Matsuda et al. ,1993; Lederer and Delgado ,1995).

**Conclusion**

This research article sought to analyze how people in the online sphere use the notion of free speech manipulatively, just like they do in online trolling with words coated with self-made realities originating from personal ideologies we construct for others. The other objective of this research was to find what hidden behaviors propel people to get involved in online trolling, like destructive situations, and after the data analysis, it was clearly observed that personal grudges, jealousy, selfish behavior, and psychopaths and Machiavellians are more likely to indulge in such situations where they satisfy their deprivations by trolling others online. Online posts are bombarded with online trolling, mostly in the political and celebrity spheres, so my research was basically analyzed by getting data from categories of political and celebrity figures. To generalize my research on trolling behavior all over the realm of social media, I chose the social media platform Instagram on purposive sampling because this app is more common, and most of the public views updates related to politics and media related to it. Initially, the intention exhibited in front of all by people involved in trolling is to give honest opinions to make our society the best place for living, but in actuality, the main agenda of people is to create a negative and irritating surrounding people where they suffocate either because of their assassination by online trolling, or by fake perceptions created online without any clarity or truthfulness. When we talk about free speech, we ask people to share their opinions for the betterment of our surroundings, but people pick one word which is "right" and start bluffing people to act according to what they say by imposing their harsh ideologies on them to water their grudges, hold over others, and entertainment instead of persuading them positively to change their attitudes as famous figures influencing others, and this is how I looked at this whole scenario. It is suggested that future researchers continue working on the sensitive yet most influential parts of free speech and other human rights that people use in negative connotations to save the online world from becoming a hostile place because, with time, people are more relying on social media, and if we are not educated enough for negative use of platforms which can be beneficial for national or international purposes, how can we add positive shade to thing?

**References**

Brink, D. O. (2001). MILLIAN PRINCIPLES, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND HATE SPEECH. *Legal Theory*, *7*(2), 119–157. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1352325201072019

Buckels, E. E., Jones, D. N., & Paulhus, D. L. (2013). Behavioral confirmation of everyday sadism. *Psychological Science*, *24*(11), 2201–2209. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613490749

Buckels, E. E., Trapnell, P. D., Andjelovic, T., & Paulhus, D. L. (2018). Internet trolling and everyday sadism: Parallel effects on pain perception and moral judgment. *Journal of Personality*, *87*(2), 328–340. https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12393

Castaño-Pulgarín, S. A., Suárez-Betancur, N., Vega, L. M. T., & López, H. M. H. (2021). Internet, social media and online hate speech. Systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *58*, 101608. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2021.101608

Golf-Papez, M., & Veer, E. (2017). Don't feed the trolling: rethinking how online trolling is being defined and combated. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *33*(15–16), 1336–1354. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2017.1383298

Gylfason, H. F., Sveinsdóttir, A. H., Vésteinsdóttir, V., & Sigurvinsdóttir, R. (2021). Haters gonna hate, trolls gonna troll: The personality profile of a Facebook troll. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(11), 5722. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18115722

Hopkinson, C. (2013). Trolling in online discussions: From provocation to community-building. *Brno Studies in English*, *39*(1), 5–25. https://doi.org/10.5817/bse2013-1-1

Howard, K., Zolnierek, K. H., Critz, K. L., Dailey, S. L., & Ceballos, N. A. (2019). An examination of psychosocial factors associated with malicious online trolling behaviors. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *149*, 309–314. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.06.020

John Stuart Mill and the "Marketplace of Ideas" on JSTOR. (n.d.). *www.jstor.org*. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23559183

Lepoutre, M. (2019). HATE SPEECH LAWS: EXPRESSIVE POWER IS NOT THE ANSWER. *Legal Theory*, *25*(4), 272–296. https://doi.org/10.1017/s135232522000004x

Lopes, B., & Yu, H. (2017). Who do you troll and Why: An investigation into the relationship between the Dark Triad Personalities and online trolling behaviours towards popular and less popular Facebook profiles. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *77*, 69–76. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.08.036

Manuoğlu, E., & Öner-özkan, B. (2022). Sarcastic and Deviant Trolling in Turkey: Associations With Dark Triad and Aggression. *Social Media + Society*, *8*(3), 205630512211260. https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221126053

March, E., McDonald, L., & Forsyth, L. (2023). Personality and internet trolling: a validation study of a Representative Sample. *Current Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04586-1

Molenda, Z., Marchlewska, M., Rogoza, M., Michalski, P., Górska, P., Szczepańska, D., & Cislak, A. (2022). What makes an Internet troll? On the relationships between temperament (BIS/BAS), Dark Triad, and Internet trolling. *What Makes an Internet Troll?*, *16*(5). https://doi.org/10.5817/cp2022-5-11

Nitschinsk, L., Tobin, S. J., & Vanman, E. J. (2022). The disinhibiting effects of anonymity increase online trolling. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *25*(6), 377–383. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2022.0005

Nitschinsk, L., Tobin, S. J., & Vanman, E. J. (2023). A functionalist approach to online trolling. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1211023

Papapicco, C., & Quatera, I. (2019a). "Do not Make to eat to Troll!": The Dark Side of Web. *Communication and Media Technologies*, *9*(2). https://doi.org/10.29333/ojcmt/5764

Papapicco, C., & Quatera, I. (2019b). 2019.1 - The Lab’s Quarterly, 4. Concetta Papapicco, Isabella Quatera, La fabbrica dei Troll[5694]. *ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333995393\_20191\_-\_The\_Lab's\_Quarterly\_4\_Concetta\_Papapicco\_Isabella\_Quatera\_La\_fabbrica\_dei\_Troll5694

Paulhus, D. L., Curtis, S. R., & Jones, D. N. (2018). Aggression as a trait: the Dark Tetrad alternative. *Curr Opin Psychol*, *19*, 88–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.04.007

Reynard, L. (2020). Troll farm. In *IGI Global eBooks* (pp. 230–265). https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1684-3.ch010

Volkmer, S. A., Gaube, S., Raue, M., & Lermer, E. (2023). Troll story: The dark tetrad and online trolling revisited with a glance at humor. *PLOS ONE*, *18*(3), e0280271. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0280271

Yong, C. (2011). Does freedom of speech include hate speech? *Res Publica*, *17*(4), 385–403. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-011-9158-y

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   | @ 2024 by the author. Licensee University of Chitral, Journal of Linguistics & Literature, Pakistan. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).  |