

Online Trolling: Cyber Victimization in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

Online trolling is a pervasive issue that poses significant challenges to individuals, communities, and online platforms. This paper examines the nature of online trolling, its impact on victims, and strategies for prevention and intervention. Drawing from research, the paper explores the gender dynamics of online trolling, highlighting the role of gender stereotypes, multiple forms of discrimination, and gender-based violence. It also discusses strategies for preventing and mitigating online trolling, such as promoting digital literacy, implementing stronger moderation policies, and encouraging positive online behavior. The paper concludes by outlining future directions for research, including the evaluation of prevention strategies and the communion of online trolling. Overall, addressing online trolling requires a comprehensive approach that involves collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and online platforms to create a safer and more respectful online environment.

Keywords: Online trolling, Gender dynamics, Prevention, Intervention, Digital literacy, Trolling tactics

INTRODUCTION

With the rise of digital technology in the recent years, people's lifestyles have begun to blur between the online and physical worlds. Individuals, groups, and larger organizations have benefited greatly from the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The digital environment, on the other hand, might lead to online hazards and vulnerabilities such as trolling, cyber-harassment, cyberbullying, cyber sexual solicitation and many more. All these hazards and vulnerabilities faced by an individual or a group or a community can come under the ambit of cyber victimization. Cyber victimization refers to be the actions intended to harm individuals and/or groups through the use of electronic information and communication technologies. Patchin and Hinduja (2014) defines cyber victimization as an intentional harm carried out repeatedly through electronic means like text message, blogs, email etc. against which a person is unable to defend himself/ herself.

Over the past few years, there has been a noticeable increase in media coverage surrounding Online trolling. The term 'troll' is thought to have originated from a fishing technique involving trailing a baited line behind a boat. However, contemporary internet users often liken being a 'troll' to the mythological creature that hides under bridges, waiting to ambush (Herring et al., 2002). This analogy suggests a similarity between the online world and the act of hiding under bridges, both waiting for the opportune moment to take action. The first definition portrays trolling as a method of provocation, akin to casting a baited line to elicit an emotional response (Donath,1999). Trolling is a game about identity deception, suggesting that a troll's true opinion is often concealed during the act (Herring et al., 2002). Trolling involves a person intentionally making false or incorrect statements with the aim of provoking a specific response from the recipient, usually one that is negative or aggressive (Morrissey, 2010). Online trolling, often referred to simply as "trolling," is an online behavior characterized by the posting of inflammatory or provocative comments with the intent of upsetting others (Buckels et al., 2014). Thus, Trolling is a complex term that covers a range of hostile, antisocial, or deviant behaviors and motivations online. It involves deceiving others about one's identity and is often done without their consent. Trolls typically pretend to be genuine users, disrupt conversations, and erode confidence in online interactions (Jussinoja, 2018). In a study on trolling conducted through a content analysis of Usenet posts, Hardaker (2010) identified four key characteristics of trolling: aggression, deception, disruption, and success. These features, particularly the deceptive and "pointless" disruptive aspects, may differentiate trolling from other forms of online antisocial behavior, such as cyberbullying, where the identities of the perpetrators are typically clear, and their intentions are more straightforward.

Men are more likely to engage in trolling, and when women do, their intentions are perceived as more ideological than spiteful (Fichman and Sanfilippo, 2015).The frequency of activity is a significant factor associated with antisocial uses

of technology. For example, trolling tends to be more prevalent among heavy internet users (Juvonen & Gross, 2008), and individuals with disagreeable personalities tend to use mobile technologies more for personal entertainment rather than socializing (Phillips & Butt, 2006). Additionally, gamers who are motivated by non-social factors in online gaming, such as competition or personal achievement, often exhibit lower levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness (Graham & Gosling, 2013). Research has also linked low levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness, as well as high levels of extroversion, to increased internet use (Andreassen, Griffiths, & Gjertsen, 2013). These patterns are consistent with gender differences in online behavior, as men tend to engage in more overall internet use and exhibit higher levels of antisocial behavior online (Joiner, Gavin, & Duffield, 2005; Zweig, Dank, Yahner, & Lachman, 2013). These findings suggest that examining the associations of trolling with personality traits, gender differences, and overall internet habits could be beneficial.

Females are also more likely than males to be the subject of online trolling and cyber-harassment (Backe, et al., 2018). Akhtar and Morrison (2019) reported that female representatives of the UK Parliament were more prone to receive gender and ethnic abuse, as well as sexist comments, whereas male leaders of the UK Parliament received more abuse as a result of their professional responsibilities and activities. Gender, like it is in traditional victimisation, is a key risk factor in cybercrime. (Douglass et al., 2018) Beckman et al. 2013. Some researchers found that trolls target feminists (Hardaker and McGlashan, 2016 ; Herring, et al., 2002), while others discovered that the troll's gender influences the perception of and reaction to trolling, with male and female trolls having distinct goals and actions (Fichman and Sanfilippo, 2015 ; Todd and Melancon, 2019). In traditional victimisation, women have been reported to be victimised more than men which is often replicated in cyber space (Citron, 2009).

Gender-based cyber victimization, particularly in the context of trolling, is a concerning issue in the digital age. Trolling, which involves posting offensive or provocative messages online to provoke emotional responses, often targets individuals based on their gender. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by this form of cyber victimization, facing harassment, threats, and bullying that can have serious psychological and emotional consequences. The anonymity afforded by the internet can embolden trolls to engage in behavior they might not indulge into in face-to-face interactions, leading to a culture of online misogyny and gender-based violence. Understanding and addressing gender-based cyber victimization is crucial for creating a safer and more inclusive online environment for everyone.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

O1: To critically analyze the evolving nature of online trolling as a form of gender-based cyber victimization, focusing on its nature, characteristics, and impact on Women and LGBTQ+ groups.

This article examines the phenomenon of gender-based cyber victimization, with a specific focus on trolling. By exploring the nature of trolling and its impact on women and girls, the article aims to raise awareness about this form of online abuse and its implications for gender equality and digital safety. Additionally, the article seeks to highlight the need for effective strategies and interventions to address gender-based cyber victimization and create a safer online environment for all individuals. This article provides an overview of gender-based cyber victimization, including the definition and prevalence of trolling. It examines the different forms of trolling targeting women and girls, such as online harassment, cyberbullying, and revenge porn. The article also explores the impact of trolling on victims, including its psychological, emotional, and social consequences as well as the role of education and awareness-raising in preventing trolling and supporting victims.

This study employs a exploratory research design, focusing on secondary data sources and a systematic literature review to explore the evolving nature of online trolling as a form of gender-based cyber victimization. For this research, various academic journals, books, reports, and online databases were examined using keywords related to online trolling and gender-based cyber victimization. Inclusion criteria included studies published in English that specifically addressed online trolling in the context of gender-based victimization. Data analysis was thematic, identifying common themes related to the nature of online trolling, its impact on victims, gender dynamics. The articles and research reports for the present study were extracted electronically using keyword search technique through Google Scholar, Science Direct, PubMed, Web of Science and various international publication houses. In all 40 papers and studies were identified that fitted the inclusion/exclusion criteria.

Table 1: Keywords used for database search

<i>Troll</i>	<i>Trolling</i>	<i>Internet trolling</i>	<i>Cyber-trolls</i>
<i>Online Trolling</i>	<i>Online abuse</i>	<i>Online Gender based violence</i>	<i>Cyber Bullying</i>
<i>Cyber victimization</i>	<i>Computer assisted communication</i>	<i>Computer mediated violence</i>	<i>Internet Violence</i>

The aforementioned terms were employed in conjunction with phrases aimed at eliciting evidence, such as 'evidence,' 'research,' 'systematic review,' and 'effectiveness,' including 'evaluation,' 'assessment,' 'impact,' 'intervention,' 'motivation,' as well as 'prevalence' and 'impact.'

Limitations of the study include reliance on existing literature and the potential impact of publication bias. This methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of online trolling's impact on women and girls and inform future research and policy interventions.

EVOLUTION OF TROLLING: AN ANALYSIS

The evolution of online trolling can be traced through various stages, reflecting changes in technology, internet culture, and societal norms. Initially, trolling was primarily seen as a form of mischief or playful antagonism, often involving harmless pranks or jokes (Phillips, 2015). However, as the internet became more pervasive and interactive, trolling took on a darker tone, with individuals using anonymity to engage in more aggressive and harmful behavior. As the internet became more mainstream, trolling evolved into a more aggressive and harmful behavior. Herring et al. (2002) described trolling as luring others into pointless and time-consuming discussions, suggesting a shift towards more deliberate and malicious intent. This shift was further emphasized by Morrissey (2010), who defined trolling as the intentional dissemination of false or incorrect information to elicit a negative or violent response from others.

One key evolution in trolling has been the shift towards targeting specific groups or individuals based on their characteristics, such as gender, race, or sexual orientation. This form of targeted trolling, often taking forms of "cyberbullying," can have serious consequences for victims, leading to emotional distress, social isolation, and even suicide in extreme cases (Patchin & Hinduja, 2014). Another significant development in trolling has been the emergence of organized trolling campaigns, where groups of individuals coordinate attacks against a target for political, ideological, or personal reasons (Phillips, 2015; Vitak et al., 2017). These campaigns can involve coordinated harassment, doxxing (revealing personal information), and other forms of online abuse, highlighting the potential for trolling to be used as a tool for malicious intent. Overall, the evolution of online trolling reflects broader changes in internet culture and behavior, highlighting the need for continued research and intervention to address this form of online abuse (Buckels, et al., 2014; Shachaf, et al., 2010).

Recent research has highlighted the role of anonymity in facilitating trolling behavior. Trolls often hide behind anonymous online personas to avoid accountability for their actions (Buckels, et al., 2014; Buckels, et al., 2015). This anonymity, coupled with the ease of access to online platforms, has contributed to the proliferation of trolling behavior on the internet.

The evolution of online trolling from its early days as a form of identity deception to its current state as a malicious and harmful behavior reflects broader changes in internet culture and behavior. Understanding this evolution is crucial for addressing the challenges posed by trolling and creating a safer online environment for all users.

NATURE OF ONLINE TROLLING: A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLORATION

Online trolling, a pervasive phenomenon in digital communication, encompasses a wide range of behaviors characterized by deception, disruption, and hostility. Early studies, such as Hardaker (2010) content analysis of Usenet posts, identified four primary characteristics of trolling: aggression, deception, disruption, and success. Trolls often use these tactics to provoke emotional responses and disrupt online discussions (Herring et al., 2002). This disruptive nature distinguishes trolling from other forms of online antisocial behavior, such as cyberbullying, which tends to be more straightforward and identity-revealing (Lenhardt, 2013).

Trolling behavior is often motivated by a desire for attention and power. Buckels et al, (2014) found that trolls exhibit traits associated with the Dark Tetrad, including narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism. These traits suggest a complex interplay of personality factors driving trolling behavior, with trolls seeking to assert dominance and control over others (Kim et al., 2011). One of the key challenges in understanding trolling is its varied and multifaceted nature. Trolling can take on different forms, ranging from harmless pranks to malicious attacks. Phillips (2015) suggests that trolling behavior may be influenced by cultural factors and societal norms, with trolls often exploiting stereotypes and taboos to provoke reactions from others. This adaptive nature of trolling makes it difficult to define and predict, as trolls may change their tactics based on the context and audience.

Another important aspect of trolling is its impact on victims. Patchin and Hinduja (2014) highlight the detrimental effects of cyberbullying, a form of trolling, on victims' mental health and well-being. Victims of trolling often experience feelings of shame, anxiety, and isolation, highlighting the need for effective interventions to address this issue (Andreassen, Griffiths, & Gjertsen, 2013). Online trolls exhibit a range of characteristics that distinguish them from other internet users.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TROLLS: AN ANALYSIS

One of the defining characteristics of trolls is their propensity for deception. Trolls often create fake identities or personas to deceive others and provoke emotional responses. This deceptive behavior is often accompanied by a sense of amusement or satisfaction at having successfully manipulated others (Donath, 1999). This deceptive behavior can also manifest in the form of spreading false information or engaging in dishonest tactics to disrupt online discussions (Herring et al., 2002). Trolls are also characterized by their disruptive behavior. They often seek to disrupt online communities and provoke conflict among members. This disruptive behavior can take many forms, including posting inflammatory or provocative comments, engaging in personal attacks, and deliberately derailing conversations (Hardaker, 2010). This disruptive behavior is often intended to sow discord and create chaos within online communities (Phillips, 2015).

Another key characteristic of trolls is their enjoyment of causing harm or distress to others. Trolls derive pleasure from eliciting negative emotional responses from their victims, such as anger, frustration, or sadness. This sadistic enjoyment sets trolls apart from other internet users and underscores their malicious intent (Kim et al., 2011). In addition to these traits, trolls often exhibit a lack of remorse or empathy for their actions. They may dismiss the harm they cause to others or justify their behavior as harmless fun. This lack of empathy allows trolls to engage in harmful behavior without considering the consequences for their victims (Craker & March, 2016). Understanding these characteristics is crucial for identifying and addressing trolling behavior in online communities.

Tactics Used in Online Trolling: A Detailed Examination

Online trolling is characterized by a variety of tactics that trolls use to provoke and disrupt online discussions. One of the most common tactics used by trolls is the use of inflammatory or provocative language. Trolls often use offensive or controversial language to provoke emotional responses from others and derail conversations (Herring et al., 2002). This tactic is intended to create conflict and discord within online communities. Another tactic used by trolls is the spread of false information. Trolls may deliberately spread misinformation or hoaxes to confuse or deceive others. This tactic is often used to undermine trust and credibility within online communities (Hardaker, 2010). By spreading false information, trolls can create confusion and sow discord among community members. Trolls also use personal attacks as a tactic to provoke and intimidate others. Trolls may target individuals with insults, threats, or harassment in an attempt to silence or discredit them (Phillips, 2015). This tactic is intended to create fear and undermine the confidence of the victim.

In addition to personal attacks, trolls may engage in gaslighting, a form of psychological manipulation in which the troll tries to make the victim doubt their own sanity or perception of reality. Gaslighting can be a powerful tactic used by trolls to confuse and disorient their victims, making them more susceptible to manipulation (Fielitz, & Marcks 2019). Trolls also use the tactic of doxxing, which involves the release of private or sensitive information about an individual online. Doxxing is used as a form of intimidation or harassment, with trolls seeking to publicly shame or embarrass their victims (Kim et al., 2011). This tactic can have serious consequences for the victim, including loss of privacy and security.

In addition to the aforementioned tactics, trolls often use the tactic of "sealioning," a form of persistent questioning or harassment disguised as a sincere request for information. Sealioning is used to wear down opponents and disrupt discussions by creating a seemingly endless loop of questioning (Zannettou et al., 2019). This tactic is particularly effective in online forums where moderators may struggle to differentiate between genuine inquiries and sealioning behavior. Furthermore, trolls may engage in "brigading," a coordinated effort to flood online platforms with inflammatory or disruptive content. Brigading involves rallying a group of individuals to target a specific individual or community with the goal of overwhelming them and stifling their voices (Chen et al., 2015). This tactic can have serious consequences for targeted individuals, including harassment, doxxing, and threats of violence.

Moreover, trolls may utilize the tactic of "concern trolling," where they feign concern for a particular issue or individual while actually seeking to undermine or discredit them. Concern trolling is often used to manipulate public opinion and create division within online communities (Kim et al., 2011). This tactic can be particularly insidious, as it can be difficult to distinguish genuine concern from malicious intent. Overall, trolls employ a variety of tactics to disrupt, harass, and intimidate others in online spaces. These tactics are often used strategically to achieve specific goals, such as provoking emotional responses, spreading misinformation, or silencing dissenting voices. Understanding these tactics is crucial for identifying and combating trolling behavior in online communities.

Online trolls use a variety of tactics to provoke, disrupt, and intimidate others in online communities. These tactics are often used to create conflict, confusion, and fear among community members. Understanding these tactics is crucial for identifying and addressing trolling behavior in online spaces.

Targets of Online Trolling: Impact on Women, LGBTQ+ Individuals, and Minorities

Online trolling often targets marginalized groups, including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and minorities, with the goal of intimidating, harassing, or silencing them. Research has shown that these groups are disproportionately affected by online trolling, highlighting the need for greater awareness and intervention to address this issue.

Women are frequent targets of online trolling, with research indicating that they experience higher levels of harassment and abuse compared to men (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012). Trolling behavior towards women often takes the form of misogynistic attacks, sexual harassment, and threats of violence (Phillips, 2015). This targeting of women can have serious consequences, including psychological distress, social isolation, and a chilling effect on their participation in online spaces (Ging & Siapera 2018). LGBTQ+ individuals are also frequent targets of online trolling, facing harassment and discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity (Norton & Herek, 2013). Trolls often use derogatory language, stereotypes, and threats to attack LGBTQ+ individuals, contributing to feelings of fear, anxiety, and insecurity (Kim et al., 2011). This targeting of LGBTQ+ individuals not only harms the individuals themselves but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes and prejudices within online communities.

Minorities, including racial and ethnic minorities, are also vulnerable to online trolling, facing harassment and discrimination based on their identity (Tynes et al., 2016). Trolls may use racist language, stereotypes, and threats to target minorities, creating a hostile online environment that can impact their mental health and well-being (Chen et al., 2015). This targeting of minorities reflects broader societal issues of racism and discrimination, highlighting the need for inclusive and respectful online spaces. Online trolling disproportionately targets women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and minorities, with serious consequences for their mental health and well-being. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, awareness-raising, and effective policies and interventions to protect marginalized groups from online harassment and abuse.

Online trolling can have profound and lasting impacts on its victims, affecting their mental health, well-being, and sense of safety. Research has shown that victims of online trolling experience a range of negative outcomes, including psychological distress, social isolation, and a reluctance to engage in online discourse (Henry, 2016). Understanding these impacts is crucial for developing effective strategies to support victims and prevent future instances of trolling. One of the primary impacts of online trolling is psychological distress. Victims often experience feelings of fear, anxiety, and depression as a result of being targeted by trolls (Kim et al., 2011). This distress can manifest in various ways, including sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, and difficulty concentrating (Phillips, 2015). The constant threat of harassment and abuse can create a sense of helplessness and vulnerability in victims, leading to long-term mental health issues.

Social isolation is another common impact of online trolling. Victims may withdraw from online communities or limit their online interactions out of fear of further harassment (Hardaker, 2010). This isolation can have negative effects on victims' social relationships and sense of belonging, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and alienation (Herring et al., 2002). Additionally, social isolation can make it difficult for victims to seek support and assistance from others, further exacerbating their distress. Furthermore, online trolling can have a chilling effect on victims' willingness to engage in online discourse. Victims may self-censor their opinions or refrain from participating in online discussions to avoid further harassment (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012). This self-censorship can have a detrimental effect on freedom of expression and the exchange of ideas in online spaces, limiting the diversity of voices and perspectives represented.

In addition to these impacts, online trolling can also have physical consequences for victims. Research has shown that victims of online harassment may experience stress-related health issues, such as headaches, stomach problems, and hypertension (Chen et al., 2015). These physical symptoms can further contribute to the overall negative impact of trolling on victims' well-being.

Online trolling can have significant and wide-ranging impacts on its victims, affecting their mental health, social relationships, and willingness to engage in online discourse. Addressing these impacts requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, awareness-raising, and effective policies and interventions to support victims and prevent future instances of trolling.

GENDER SPECIFIC TROLLING: UNDERSTANDING A GROWING PHENOMENON

Gender-specific trolling, a form of online harassment targeted at individuals based on their gender, has emerged as a concerning and pervasive issue in the digital age. This phenomenon has its roots in the broader evolution of trolling, which initially focused on deceptive and disruptive behavior in online interactions (Donath, 1999). However, as the internet became more mainstream, trolling evolved into a more targeted and malicious form, with individuals using anonymity to engage in gender-based harassment and abuse (Herring et al., 2002).

One of the key characteristics of gender-specific trolling is its focus on exploiting gender stereotypes and societal norms. Trolls often use derogatory language, threats, and other forms of harassment to intimidate and silence

individuals based on their gender identity (Patchin & Hinduja, 2014). Various studies highlight the detrimental impact of cyberbullying as a form of gender-specific trolling which impacts victims' self-esteem and mental health, emphasizing the need for effective interventions to address this issue. This behavior is not limited to binary gender identities but also extends to non-binary gender identities, which are often targeted with additional forms of discrimination and marginalization (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012). Research has shown that gender-specific trolling is often perpetrated by individuals with misogynistic beliefs and attitudes towards women and non-binary individuals (Buckels et al., 2014). These trolls may view their behavior as a form of entertainment or a way to assert their dominance and control over others (Buckels et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2011). However, the impact of gender-specific trolling can be profound, leading to psychological distress, social isolation, and even physical harm for victims. Phillips (2015) explores the relationship between online trolling and mainstream culture, suggesting that trolling behavior may be influenced by societal norms and perceptions of gender roles.

Research by Shachaf and Hara (2010) discuss the phenomenon of trolling on Wikipedia, highlighting the challenges of managing trolling behavior in online communities and the impact it can have on the quality of information available on the platform. The texting and sexting behavior in romantic relationships is also examined in studies, shedding light on how gender-specific trolling can manifest in intimate settings and impact individuals' perceptions of trust and intimacy (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012). The trolls often exhibit traits associated with the Dark Tetrad, including narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism, which may contribute to their propensity for engaging in gender-specific trolling (Buckels et al., 2015). The emergence of gender-specific trolling reflects broader societal issues related to gender inequality and discrimination.

Gender Dynamics in Online Trolling

Online trolling often intersects with gender dynamics, reflecting and reinforcing societal gender stereotypes and norms. This phenomenon manifests in various forms, including the use of gender-based abuse, multiple forms of discrimination, and the perpetuation of gender-based violence. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing the root causes of online trolling and mitigating its impact on individuals, particularly women and gender minorities.

Gender Stereotypes and Online Abuse: Online trolling frequently targets individuals based on their gender, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing gender-based discrimination. Women, in particular, are often subjected to misogynistic abuse, including threats of sexual violence and derogatory comments about their gender (Duggan, 2014). This form of abuse not only harms individual victims but also contributes to a culture of gender-based violence and discrimination.

Multiple Forms of Discrimination: Online trolling can also intersect with other forms of discrimination, such as racism, homophobia, and trans phobia, amplifying the impact on victims who belong to multiple marginalized groups (Citron, 2014). For example, women of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and gender non-conforming individuals may face intersecting forms of abuse that target both their gender and other aspects of their identity (Noble, 2018). This convergence of various categories highlights the complex nature of online trolling and the need for a nuanced understanding of its impact on different groups.

Online Trolling as a Tool for Gender-Based Violence: In extreme cases, online trolling can escalate to gender-based violence, with trolls using online platforms to perpetrate acts of harassment, stalking, and intimidation against their victims (Henry, 2016). This form of violence can have devastating consequences for victims, leading to psychological trauma, social isolation, and fear for their safety (Akhtar, 2019). The anonymity provided by online platforms can embolden trolls to engage in such behavior, knowing that they are less likely to be held accountable for their actions.

Normalization of Gender-Based Abuse: Online trolling contributes to the normalization of gender-based abuse, creating a culture where such behavior is seen as acceptable or even humorous. Research has shown that misogynistic attitudes and behaviors are prevalent in online spaces, with women being disproportionately targeted for abuse (Duggan, 2014). This normalization can have far-reaching effects, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and attitudes towards women and gender minorities.

Impact on Mental Health: The gendered nature of online trolling can have significant impacts on victims' mental health. Women and gender minorities who experience online abuse are more likely to report symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Henry, 2016). This impact is compounded by the often pervasive and relentless nature of online harassment, which can create a constant state of fear and anxiety for victims.

Silencing of Marginalized Voices: Online trolling can also contribute to the silencing of marginalized voices, particularly those of women and gender minorities. Research has shown that individuals who experience online abuse are more likely to self-censor their opinions and withdraw from online discourse (Patchin & Hinduja, 2014). This silencing effect can have negative consequences for diversity of opinion and democratic discourse in online spaces.

Role of Social Media Platforms: Social media platforms play a significant role in shaping the gender dynamics of online trolling. Research has shown that these platforms often fail to adequately address online abuse, leading to a culture of impunity for trolls (Citron, 2014). Additionally, the algorithms used by these platforms can inadvertently amplify harmful content, further perpetuating gender-based abuse.

Gender dynamics play a significant role in online trolling, shaping the nature of abuse and discrimination that individuals experience. Addressing these dynamics requires a comprehensive approach that includes challenging gender stereotypes, promoting respectful online behavior, and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. By understanding and addressing the root causes of online trolling, we can create a safer and more inclusive online environment for all individuals. Online trolling is a complex phenomenon that converges with gender dynamics in significant ways. Addressing the gendered nature of online trolling requires a multifaceted approach that includes challenging harmful stereotypes, promoting respectful online behavior, and holding platforms accountable for addressing online abuse.

STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION OF ONLINE TROLLING

Online trolling poses significant challenges to individuals, communities, and online platforms. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that includes prevention strategies, intervention measures, and the promotion of a more respectful online culture. Drawing from the most cited research, the following strategies can be effective in preventing and mitigating the impact of online trolling:

1. Promoting Digital Literacy: Educating individuals about online etiquette, privacy settings, and the impact of their online behavior can help prevent trolling. Research has shown that digital literacy programs can empower individuals to navigate online spaces safely and responsibly (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

2. Implementing Stronger Moderation Policies: Online platforms should implement stronger moderation policies to deter trolling behavior. Research has shown that platforms with clear guidelines and proactive moderation are more successful in reducing trolling incidents (Cheng et al., 2017).

3. Encouraging Positive Online Behavior: Promoting positive online behavior, such as empathy, respect, and constructive communication, can help create a more inclusive and respectful online environment. Research has shown that positive online norms can reduce the prevalence of trolling behavior (Dooley & Cross, 2017).

4. Providing Support for Victims: Victims of online trolling should be provided with support and resources to cope with the impact of trolling. Research has shown that support from friends, family, and mental health professionals can help mitigate the negative effects of trolling (Patchin & Hinduja, 2014).

5. Holding Perpetrators Accountable: Platforms should take steps to hold perpetrators of online trolling accountable for their actions. Research has shown that the fear of being identified and punished can deter individuals from engaging in trolling behavior (Kim et al., 2011).

6. Collaborating with Law Enforcement: Law enforcement agencies should work closely with online platforms to investigate and prosecute cases of online trolling that constitute criminal behavior. Research has shown that collaboration between law enforcement and online platforms can lead to successful prosecution of trolling cases (Citron, 2014).

7. Empowering Bystanders: Research has shown that empowering bystanders to intervene can be an effective strategy for reducing online trolling. Platforms can encourage users to report abusive behavior and provide tools for bystanders to support victims and challenge trolls (Barlett & Coyne, 2014).

8. Engaging with Communities: Engaging with online communities can help promote positive norms and reduce the prevalence of trolling behavior. Research has shown that community-led initiatives, such as online forums and support groups, can create a sense of belonging and discourage trolling (Kowalski et al., 2014).

9. Addressing Root Causes: Addressing the root causes of trolling, such as social inequality and discrimination, can help prevent trolling behavior. Research has shown that interventions that address underlying social issues can reduce the prevalence of online trolling (Perry et al., 2018).

10. Supporting Research and Education: Supporting research and education on online trolling can help improve understanding of the phenomenon and inform effective prevention and intervention strategies. Research has shown that education programs for students and professionals can increase awareness of trolling and its impacts (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008).

11. Enhancing Legal Protections: Enhancing legal protections for victims of online trolling can help deter perpetrators and provide recourse for victims. Research has shown that legal measures, such as anti-cyberbullying laws, can be effective in reducing online trolling (Kowalski et al., 2014).

12. Promoting Responsible Media Reporting: Responsible media reporting on online trolling can help reduce its prevalence and impact. Research has shown that sensationalized media coverage can fuel trolling behavior, while balanced and informed reporting can help mitigate it (Citron & Franks, 2014).

Addressing online trolling requires a comprehensive approach that includes empowering bystanders, engaging with communities, addressing root causes, supporting research and education, enhancing legal protections, and promoting responsible media reporting. By implementing these strategies, we can work towards creating a safer and more respectful online environment for everyone.

CONCLUSION

In sum, addressing online trolling requires a multifaceted approach that includes promoting digital literacy, implementing stronger moderation policies, encouraging positive online behavior, providing support for victims, holding perpetrators accountable, and collaborating with law enforcement. These strategies, supported by research, can help create a safer and more respectful online environment for all users.

Moving forward, future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies in preventing and mitigating online trolling. Longitudinal studies can help track changes in trolling behavior over time and identify factors that contribute to its persistence. Additionally, research should explore the interdisciplinary nature of online trolling, considering how factors such as gender, race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status influence individuals' experiences of trolling and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies.

Furthermore, there is a need for greater collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and online platforms to develop and implement evidence-based solutions to address online trolling. By working together, we can develop a more comprehensive understanding of trolling behavior and develop more effective strategies to combat it, ultimately creating a more inclusive and respectful online environment for everyone.

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