

Achieved- 1st

In my essay I will be exploring and evaluating the similarities and differences of research and methodology across 'Trolling here, there, and everywhere: Perceptions of trolling behaviours in context' and 'The dark side of Facebook®: The Dark Tetrad, negative social potency, and trolling behaviours'. Both of these articles share the theme of online trolling however one employs qualitative methods in their research whereas the other one uses quantitative data.

For the purpose of this essay I will be referring to the articles as A and B.

Since the advancement of technology within the digital age, online trolling has become a significant issue for those in online communities. Article A (Trolling here, there, and everywhere: Perceptions of trolling behaviors in context') defines online trolling as "harmless, but irritating behaviors online (Phillips, [2015](#)), whether provocative (Hardaker, [2010](#)), humorous (Phillips, [2015](#)), or socially harmful and deviant" (Herring et al., [2002](#), as cited in, Sanfilippo, Yang and Fichman, 2017). Although both articles share the same theme they have different aims that they are achieving. Both articles included a detailed abstract and introduction where they explicitly stated their aims. However, in article B(The dark side of Facebook®: The Dark Tetrad, negative social potency, and trolling behaviours') the research question and was unclear so I had to interpret and formulate my own. Article A was focused on perception of trolling across various contexts and they intended to answer three questions related to this, "how do trolling behaviours differ across contexts; how do perceptions of trolling differ from case to case; and what aspects of context of trolling are perceived to be important by the public?" (Sanfilippo, Yang and Fichman, 2017). A strength of this study is that their research questions are easy to understand and they have a clear focus, also by having multiple they are not limiting their research. Article B was structured effectively as they presented their aims/hypothesis in a separate section, they explicitly stated that 'the aim of this research project is to investigate the relationship between the Dark Tetrad (i.e., sadism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism) personality traits, social reward (specifically negative social potency) and Facebook® trolling behaviours' and that 'it is hypothesised that high levels of negative social potency will also predict Facebook® trolling behaviours'(Craker and March, 2016). Arguably, social media is an important topic to cover as it is relevant in contemporary society, so both articles are researching something that could be valuable to people's lives. Furthermore, it is likely that it will help social media users be more aware of peoples online presence and from social media sites could potentially eradicate online trolls. Furthermore, both articles have conducted extensive research into their topic, their introductions are rich with detailed information regarding trolling. This is effective as it provides the reader with significant background information.

Although both articles have researched into trolling online, their biggest difference is the methods they have employed to achieve their results. Article A used qualitative data to discover whether context affected trolling or if perceptions changed in each case. Many

scholars have expressed how difficult it is to define qualitative data as there is so many aspects of it, Aspers and Corte (2019) defined it as “the outcome of an iterative process in which both deduction and induction were involved”. The specific methods used were focus groups and follow up interviews. During the focus group, ‘scenarios were presented to participants for discussions... Cases were selected to include a variety of trolling behaviours, communities, and platforms, including: Wikipedia, CNN forums, Facebook, Twitter, and chatrooms’(Sanfilippo, Yang and Fichman, 2017). This diverse set allows for analysis of all their research questions. Focus groups involve multiple people coming together to discuss a certain topic. Research conducted by Ritchie (2014) explores the importance of focus groups and explains that the group context is very beneficial, ‘participants present their own views and experience, but they also hear from other people... they listen, reflect on what is said, and in the light of this consider their own standpoint further’, from this more material can be collected as the conversation naturally flows as more people become inspired. In addition to this, focus groups can be described as ‘synergistic’ ; meaning ‘ the group works together’ (Stewart and Shamdasi,1990, as cited in Ritchie, 2014). Focus groups are an effective technique as the researchers main goal is to collect lots of useful data , however they can also ‘result in mountains of data’ which is time consuming to analyse (Breen, 2006). After the scenarios were presented in the focus group, follow up interviews were carried out, “Semi-structured interviews ,with open ended questions and a series of case studies, lasted 30–90 minutes. Digital audio recordings were later transcribed and coded using Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis software” (Sanfilippo, Yang and Fichman, 2017). The term ‘interview’ is deemed a recent term and it can defined as ‘an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of common interest’(Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018). Interviews are therefore more personal so can offer lots of interesting data that may not have been uncovered in the focus group.

Article B collected their data using quantitative research methods, quantitative data is regarded as more scientific in comparison to qualitative data as it is more concerned with numbers and scales, Choy(2014) states that ‘ Quantitative data can help establish correlations between given variables and outcomes’. The participants in article B carried out multiple assessments and questionnaires, the first being ‘A modified and extended version of Global Assessment of Internet Trolling (GAIT; Buckels et al., 2014, as cited in Craker and March, 2016), they were asked questions and ‘responded by indicating how much they agreed or disagreed on a five-point scale’ (Craker and March, 2016). The participants then responded to a further ten statements using ‘a dichotomous scale’, from this ‘The Short Sadistic Impulse Scale was used to measure participant's level of trait sadism’(Craker and March, 2016). Finally, the participants answered two questionnaires, one was related to the dark triad personality traits (The Dirty Dozen) and the other was implemented to ‘assess participants value of negative social potency type of social reward’ (Craker and March, 2016). All material used was proven to be useful, for example the ‘SSIS’ has been established to have ‘good concurrent validity’ and The Dirty Dozen questionnaire ‘has established construct validity and test-retest reliability’(Craker and March, 2016). It is important to note that other researchers found quantitative data to be a difficult process in regards to questionnaires and scales, ‘Developing questionnaire items or scales that are

both valid and reliable is a difficult and costly scientific endeavour' (Steckler et al., 1992, p.3).

When conducting a study it is vital that ethical issues are considered and addressed beforehand, this is to avoid distress for the participant and to ensure nothing goes wrong. Furthermore, it benefits the researcher as it prevents issues from arising in their study. Ethics is defined as 'a set of moral principles' (Merriam-Webster, 2019). In Article B they explain that participants were recruited through 'a snowball sampling technique via Facebook®, email distribution and printed flyers' which indicates that nobody was forced or scouted to do this study. Furthermore, it is stated under the 'procedure' section that 'Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, that they were free to withdraw at any stage, and about the details regarding the use, storage and confidentiality of any data collected. Participants were asked for their consent to participate... Upon completion of the questionnaire, students were thanked for their involvement' (Craker and March, 2016) so the researcher has clearly addressed the ethical issues in their study. However, there is no mention of ethics in article A however they do explain how participants were recruited, 'Undergraduate and graduate students at a large public university were recruited through listservs and social media' (Sanfilippo, Yang and Fichman, 2017), from this I can gather that participants would have been made aware of what they were signing up for when they were approached online.

The final point of comparison is on the results and findings of the research. In order for the reader to fully understand and interpret the research that is provided, it is imperative that the researcher presents their findings in a clear and concise way, they must also be persuasive in their tone so the findings are deemed reliable. I found that both articles fit this criteria as throughout the findings, their research questions and aims were answered and limitations were also addressed. In article B, they immediately addressed how they looked for missing aspects of the data 'Data was first analysed for missing values and statistical assumptions' (Craker and March, 2016), this makes their data appear reliable. Furthermore, they also addressed how there were validity concerns regarding 'responses on the trolling scale' however these were also tested and there was 'no cause for concern' (Craker and March, 2016). A similarity between article A and B is that they covered issues with sampling and included ways they could fix this issue. As Article A only involved 10 participants, they explained how this "raises concerns about representativeness and generalizability", however they then supported this with research from Crouch and McKenzie "a qualitative design with few participants supports "fine-grained, in-depth inquiry" exploratory analysis of explanatory interviews" (Sanfilippo, Yang and Fichman, 2017). Article B addresses their concerns in their 'limitations and further research' section, 'The sampling procedure, specifically participation being voluntary and anonymous, may have had an influence on the results ...' as it could potentially lead to 'misleading answers'. To ensure this did not happen "the term 'trolling' was not present in participant recruitment advertisements and in the questionnaire itself" (Craker and March, 2016). Furthermore, there were significantly more women than men in this study so they highlighted how next time they could explore this gender sample in regards to their differences, "future research should seek to address this gender sample disparity when assessing trolling behaviours" (Craker and March, 2016).

Overall, article B is arguably more persuasive throughout as their language and structure is concise and understandable whereas towards the end of article A, a lot of text is presented in regards to their research findings which is a lot to process.

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