

Tweeting about sexism may improve a woman's wellbeing

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This is one of the findings of a study by Dr Mindi Foster, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada that is published today, Friday 30 January 2015, in the *British Journal of Social Psychology*. The study was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Dr Foster explained: "We know women can be badly affected by experiences of sexism and that responding publically can be stressful and risky. This study examined whether using Twitter to respond to sexism could be done in a public way without any [negative effects](#) to their wellbeing."

A total of 93 female undergraduate students were randomly assigned to one of three conditions regarding tweeting over a three day period. All participants received information over the three days regarding topical issues around sexism in politics, the media and in universities for them to tweet about. One group was required to tweet publically, another privately and the third group did not tweet at all. They received no instructions regarding the number or the content of tweets they should undertake.

All participants completed mood questionnaires and wellbeing measures after they tweeted. Tweets were also analysed for linguistic and emotional content. Emotions identified were: anger, discontent, sarcastic, shocked, surprise and sadness. The most common combination was surprise and discontent.

"Never knew there was this much [sexism](#) in politics! It's so disturbing! Shocked disgusted".

Analysis showed that the group of women who tweeted publically displayed feelings of increased wellbeing by the third day. Neither of the other two groups showed any changes in wellbeing.

Dr Foster said: "We know that popular online campaigns such as EverydaySexism have empowered women to speak out and share their experiences. However, this study demonstrates how tweeting publically has the potential to improve women's wellbeing.

"More research is required to understand whether this form of collective action has any further health benefits."

More information: Full paper title is 'Tweeting about sexism: The well-being benefits of a social media collective action.'

Provided by British Psychological Society

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