

New research shows female selfie posting can be driven by aggression

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New research from Swansea University shows that female selfie posting is associated with intimidatory self-presentation strategies, linked to higher levels of aggression.

The study, conducted by Professor Phil Reed from the University's Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Science and academics from the University of Strathclyde, has been published in the *Journal of Social Media in Society*.

The team examined the posting of selfies and non-selfies on [social media](#) by 150 individuals, separately assessing the degree to which they adopted different types of self-presentation strategies; how people act with others to make an impression.

On average, females posted five selfies and ten non-selfies a month, compared to two selfies and six non-selfies by males. However, there was a large range of selfie posts, with some people posting more than 40 selfies a month.

For females, the strongest predictor of selfie posting was the degree to which they adopted intimidatory self-presentational strategies. The more they tended to emit actions in the [real world](#) with an intent to project a powerful and dangerous personality to induce fear in others, the more they posted selfies. These selfies were not directed specifically at either males or females, but at the online community in general.

Males did not show any relationship between real-world intimidatory self-presentation and selfie posting, but their desire to avoid punishment, that is, to fit in and be accepted, predicted the sharing of selfies.

This finding contrasts with previous studies conducted in real-world situations, where females do not display associations between this aggressive characteristic and their behaviors as strongly as males.

Professor Phil Reed from Swansea University's School of Psychology said, "When the usual social constraints that operate in the 'real world' are removed, it could facilitate the expression of this aggressive facet of

female personality."

Professor Reed added, "These results suggest that traditional androcentric views of aggression need to be altered.

"Thinking of aggression by females as a result of some slightly male-like physiology in those females or as a mating strategy directed against other females will not do.

"Rather, digital behavior suggests women are not programmed to be passive but are just as actively aggressive as men, and, in some circumstances, more so—and not just when getting a mate."

This research follows earlier work by the team published in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences* which also found that intimidatory self-presentation was most strongly associated with [selfie](#) posting by females.

The data further revealed that, while males were generally more assertive than females in the real world, there was no difference in the use of real-world aggressive self-presentation strategies between genders; in fact, males tended to show higher levels of ingratiation strategies than females.

Professor Reed said, "While males reported being more assertive in the real world, these behaviors were not always associated with their online behavior, where females tended to let their aggressive traits guide their behavior more than males. This may reflect the operation of a different set of social-role norms or their absence in online settings."

More information: Study:
thejsms.org/index.php/JSMS/article/view/1135

Phil Reed et al, Sex differences in online assertive self-presentation strategies, *Personality and Individual Differences* (2020). DOI: [10.1016/j.paid.2020.110214](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110214)

Provided by Swansea University

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