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Attitudes to Social Interaction in The Internet Environment Among Men and Women With Different Gender Types

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Abstract

Introduction. The Internet is an important sphere of communication for a large number of men and women of different ages, but the microlevel of interaction on it has been little studied. The paper is the first to study the attitude of men and women to social interaction which the Internet and social networks is the main sphere of, taking into account their gender type as determined by the author's typology (patriarchal-polarized, patriarchal-similaritive, egalitarian-polarized and egalitarian-similaritive). **Methods**. Participants: 182 respondents (18 to 70 years old, 75.8% of whom were 21 to 40 years old; 33% men, 67% women) whose main sphere of interaction is the Internet and social networks. Methods: author's gender personality type questionnaire; author's social interaction attitudes questionnaire. Methods of mathematical statistics: stepwise discriminant analysis (IBM SPSS v. 27.0), Cohen's d, descriptive statistics. **Results**. For representatives of each gender personality type, combinations of parameters that differentiate the attitude to social interaction in men and women on the Internet and social networks were identified. Women of the patriarchal-polarized type perceive the participants of the interaction as focused on their own interests, and place a higher value on restraint. Men of the patriarchal-similaritive type compete more often, and their interaction strongly depends on their attitude to the subject. Men of the egalitarian-polarized type perceive the participants of the interaction as focused on their own interests, while women perceive them as focused on others. Men of the egalitarian-similaritive type perceive work, family, friends as closely interconnected

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spheres of life, tend to react to the actions of others, without taking initiative; women are guided by generally accepted norms. **Discussion**. Differences in the content of attitudes to social interaction in men and women with different gender types whose interaction is concentrated on the Internet and social networks were established. With regard to the Internet, beliefs about the polarization of psychological characteristics of men and women have a nonlinear relationship with the magnitude of differences in the content of attitudes to social interaction in men and women with different gender personality types.

Keywords

For citation

Introduction

In modern society, it is important to take into account the changing dynamics of social interaction. The development of the Internet has allowed people to participate in various forms of social interaction; the Internet has become an independent sphere of communication for a huge number of users of different sexes and ages. At the same time, the microlevel of interaction on the Internet, which reveals how it is carried out by people with different personal characteristics, has not been sufficiently studied, which does not allow us to take into account its peculiarities when optimizing interaction in remote work organization, in distance learning and other situations of Internet communication.

An analysis of publications devoted to interaction in the Internet space made it possible to identify three areas of research. The first is devoted to the socialization of various age groups in the era of the digital world, which is radically different from the previous stages of the formation of society. The issues of competence of social interaction in the context of digitalization of education (Pak, 2020), personal relationships (Andreeva, Volodina & Shurakova, 2020), the risks of conflicts in digital interaction of participants in the educational process (Weindorf-Sysoeva & Pankina, 2020), including in relation to representatives of Generation Z (Pletnev, 2020) are discussed. Neurobiological studies by Eslinger et al. (2021) show that social media communication has effects on physical and mental health similar to loneliness and trauma. Brain responses vary in relation to social media status, which affects social information processing similarly to social status in real-life interactions (Farwaha & Obhi, 2019). Evidence is provided linking social media use to self-comparison, body image, and eating disorders (Faelens et al., 2021). The personal

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boundaries in virtual communication (Yegorov, 2020), the possibilities of enhancing the impression of the interlocutor with the help of content processing programs (Viktorova, 2020), and manipulation of behavior in Internet communication (Vilovatykh, 2020) are studied. The role of the virtual image of the Self in developing a coping strategy for an Internet user (Rasina, 2022), cognitive means of processing social information from the Internet in adolescents (Molchanov, Almazova & Poskrebysheva, 2018), and the role of self-esteem in preventing the negative impact of "likes" perceived on the Internet as social approval (Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilán, 2019) are analyzed.

The second direction is devoted to the unfavorable aspects of interaction on the Internet – cyberbullying, flaming and other forms of cyberaggression. The frequency and forms of cyberbullying among Russian adolescents (Khlomov, Davydov & Bochaver, 2019), its psychological characteristics as a form of Internet crime (Makarova, Makarova & Makhrina, 2016), the relationship between the characteristics of the emotional sphere of the individual and the tendency to cyberbullying (Zekeryaev, 2023; Marín-López et al., 2020) are studied. The positive role of social and emotional competence in preventing negative forms of online interaction, the special role of young people in the study of cyberbullying (Dennehy et al., 2020) are noted. New forms of interaction in the digital environment are highlighted, including flaming (Soldatova, Rasskazova & Chigarkova, 2021) and phubbing (Dushkin, Barinova, 2023), which is an example of the interpenetration of real and virtual communication processes.

The third direction is more closely related to the subject of our study and is aimed at studying the gender characteristics of interaction, including on the Internet and social networks. It has been established that women and young people communicate more on the Internet and social networks, the goals of communication for women are more specific than for men and are related to current everyday issues (Gambo & Özad, 2020). The greater involvement of women in online communication is also confirmed in the Russian sample, and gender differences in the meaning-of-life orientations of men and women are described in connection with their satisfaction with online communication (Maslodudova, Titova, 2023). Gender differences in extroversion and agreeableness are more pronounced in social networks compared to offline interaction, and gender differences in neuroticism are less pronounced in social networks compared to offline interaction (Bunker, Saysavanh & Kwan, 2021). Gender differences in recognizing the emotional states of other participants in the interaction (Barabanshchikov, Suvorova, 2021) and reactions have been established: men react more emotionally to threats of non-confirmation of masculinity by other participants in the interaction (Vescio, Schermerhorn, Gallegos & Laubach, 2021; Grieve, March & Doorn, 2019). The virtual image of student users of the VKontakte network is more consistent with traditional gender ideas than egalitarian ones (Erofeeva, 2018). The personal qualities and motivations of women who are members of anti-feminist online communities are described (Chiker, Svirikhina, 2019). Using the example of the social media activities of the #MeToo movement, the role of a person's orientation towards social dominance in changing their attitudes to sexual violence is studied (Szekeres, Shuman & Saguy, 2020).

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Digital technologies are changing gender differences in different contexts of interaction, but despite the significantly increased interest in the issues of online communication, there remains a shortage of research into the psychological aspects of interaction in the Internet environment, including taking into account the gender and gender characteristics of the subjects of interaction.

At the same time, the Internet represents a more impersonal version of human interaction compared to face-to-face communication, the easily accessible technical capabilities of which and the anonymity of the participants in online communication allow experimenting with different gender images and styles, up to their radical change to those inherent to the opposite sex. And how gender-specific the interaction of Internet communication participants will be depends, among other things, on their beliefs about the similarities or differences in the psychological characteristics of men and women.

This article continues the presentation of the results of the study of the role of gender personality type in the attitude to social interaction in different spheres of life (work, family, friends, etc.) (Titova, 2024b, etc.). Social interaction of men and women in the Internet space is studied taking into account the gender personality type, which is based on beliefs about the extent of gender polarization of the psychological characteristics of men and women and the hierarchy in the interaction between them.

Research hypothesis: attitudes to social interaction on the Internet differ depending on the gender type and sex of the person.

Additional hypothesis: attitudes to social interaction differ more between men and women whose basis of gender types are beliefs about the polarization of psychological characteristics of men and women.

Purpose of the research: to study the characteristics of the attitude of men and women to social interaction in the Internet, taking into account the gender type of personality.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the research

The theoretical and methodological foundation is based on the concepts of personality in the works of V.N. Myasishchev (1995), the concept of psychological relations by V.P. Poznyakov (2017), concepts of gender in the works of D.V. Vorontsov (2008), and the author's concept of gender personality type (Titova, 2023).

According to V.N. Myasishchev (1995, p. 48), personality is characterized as a system of relationships to the surrounding reality, which "represent a conscious, selective, experience-based, psychological connection of a person with various aspects of objective reality, expressed in his actions, reactions and experiences." Beliefs are an independent type of personality relationships, in which a system of requirements is combined with knowledge of reality – these are ideas about both the existing reality and what it should be (ibid., pp. 20–23).

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Attitude to social interaction is a set of relatively stable, to varying degrees consciously perceived by the individual, features of perception, experience, understanding and organization of social interaction (Poznyakov, 2017). In forming his attitude to social interaction, the subject selectively relies on specific parameters that have different significance and relevance for him. In the study of attitude to social interaction on the Internet, we took into account: parameters of interaction analysis (Parsons & Shils, 1951), derivative characteristics of relationships (Lomov, 1984), principles of interaction identified in the resource-value approach (Poznyakov, Vavakina, 2016) and vectors of analysis of gender relations (Kletsina, Ioffe, 2018).

Based on the definition of D.V. Vorontsov (2008, p. 63), we define gender as a set of personal qualities and methods of social interaction fixed in culture, with which an individual of a certain sex correlates himself, organizes and typifies his individual experience and behavior as a man or a woman, and also organizes and typifies the behavior of other people as men or women.

Gender personality type is an integrative characteristic that determines differences between people associated with socio-psychological attitudes to men and women, manifested in subjective assessments of similarities or differences between men and women in their psychological characteristics (including emotional states and behavioral patterns), and in subjective assessments of hierarchy in the interaction of men and women in different spheres of life (politics, family, professional activity, intimate personal relationships, etc.) (Titova, 2023; Titova, Poznyakov, 2023).

The basis for identifying 4 gender types is: (1) the individual's attitude to gender polarization, their beliefs about how different or similar men and women are in their psychological characteristics; (2) the individual's attitude to the hierarchy in the interaction of men and women, whether their beliefs are characterized by the dominance of men in case of lower social status of women, or whether men and women are perceived as equal in status and influence in social interaction.

"High" and "low" values according to the specified criteria allowed us to describe and empirically verify 4 gender personality types (Titova, Poznyakov, 2023). At the subsequent stage of the study, their names were clarified as:

- patriarchal-polarized (characterized by beliefs about the pronounced differences in the psychological characteristics of men and women and about the dominance of men in interactions with women);
- patriarchal-similaritive (there are beliefs about the similarity of psychological characteristics of men and women and about the dominance of men in interactions with women);
- egalitarian-polarized (characterized by beliefs about the pronounced differences in the psychological characteristics of men and women and about the equality of men and women in social interaction);

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- egalitarian-similaritive (characterized by beliefs about the similarity of psychological characteristics of men and women and the equality of men and women in social interaction).

We follow this terminology further in presenting the results of the study.We follow this terminology further in presenting the results of the study.

Methods

Participants

The study sample consisted of 182 people (33% men and 67% women) aged 18 to 70 years, including 75.8% of respondents aged 21 to 40 years, who indicated the Internet and social networks as their main sphere of interaction, indicating that it is in online communication that they mainly build relationships with people around them, make contacts and form social connections. The sample was random, formed on the basis of a voluntary desire to take part in the study.

Research methods

A questionnaire of gender personality type (the results of its validation are presented in the article by O.I. Titova (2024)), on the basis of which respondents were divided into 4 subgroups with different gender personality types.

Author's questionnaire for studying attitudes toward social interaction (Titova, 2024b). Attitudes to social interaction were studied based on the following parameters: emotionality – rationality, focus on one's own goals – focus on other people, awareness – spontaneity, dominance – submission, principles of interaction, frequency of competition and partnership, initiative – reactivity, restraint – directness, adherence to principles – situativeness, assessment by status – assessment by actions, etc. Respondents were offered 38 statements characterizing various aspects of interaction, the degree of agreement / disagreement with which was assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

Methods of mathematical statistics: descriptive statistics, stepwise discriminant analysis (using the software IBM SPSS v. 27.0), Cohen's coefficient (d).

Results

The analysis of the data, according to the results of which 4 subgroups were identified, shows (Fig. 1) that among the respondents whose main sphere of interaction is the Internet and social networks, 28.6% have a patriarchal-polarized gender type, 26.9% have an egalitarian-similaritive type, 23.6% have an egalitarian-polarized type, and 20.9% have a patriarchal-similaritive type.

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Figure 1

The share of representatives of gender types among respondents whose main sphere of interaction is the Internet and social networks
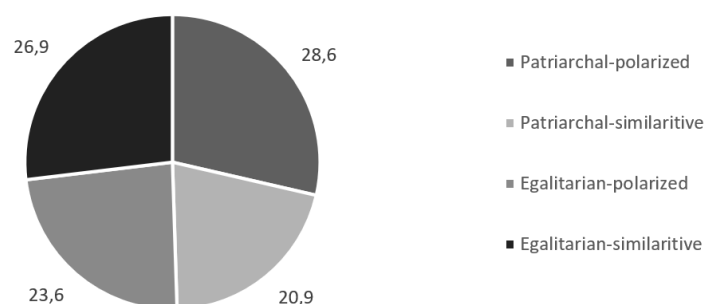
Men and women are unevenly distributed among the representatives of the studied gender types. As can be seen in Figure 2, men more often have a patriarchal-polarized and patriarchal-similaritive gender type, and women have an egalitarian-polarized and egalitarian-similaritive gender type.

Figure 2

The proportion of men and women among respondents with different gender types-whose main sphere of interaction is the Internet and social networks
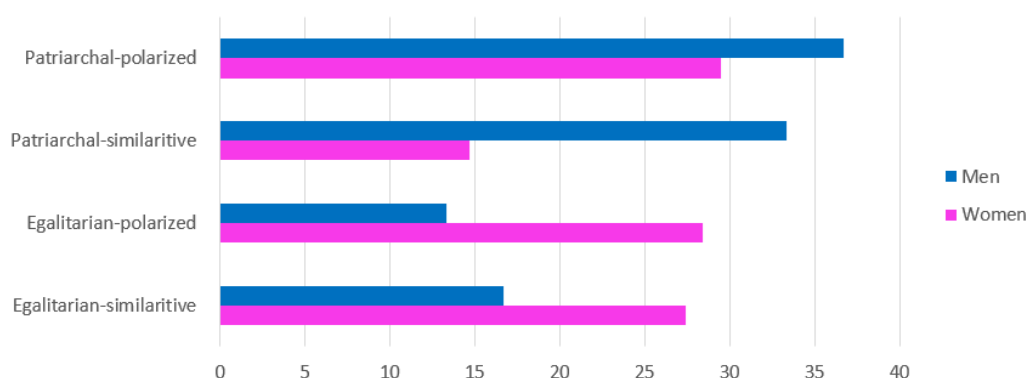
Next, in each subgroup of respondents, a discriminant analysis was conducted using the stepwise method in order to identify for each gender type a set of parameters that significantly differentiate the attitude to social interaction in men and women.

Analysis of data from respondents of patriarchal-polarized type whose main sphere of interaction is the Internet and social networks revealed a set of 6 parameters (Table 1) that distinguish the attitude to social interaction of men and women with this gender type.

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Table 1

Parameters of differences in attitudes to social interaction in men and women of the patriarchal-polarized type

	Discriminant function coefficients
Focus on one's own goals	0,681
Dissimilarity of interactions in different spheres	-0,815
Displaying restraint in emotions and instincts	1,259
Focus on other people	-0,649
Clearness of emotional assessment of interaction	1,296
Respect for other people's adherence to principles	0,811

As follows from Table 1, the attitude to social interaction among men and women of the patriarchal-polarized type differs in how much they are focused on their own goals, as well as on society and other people, how they evaluate the norms and rules in building relationships, the role of specific circumstances and the influence of the situation, to what extent they respect the principles of other people and adherence to them. Most significantly, it differs in the understanding of one's own emotional attitude to the content of interaction and its results and the degree of emotional restraint.

Analysis of data from respondents of the patriarchal-similaritive type whose main sphere of interaction is the Internet and social networks showed 3 parameters that distinguish the attitude of men and women to social interaction (Table 2).

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Table 2
Parameters of differences in attitudes to social interaction among men and women of the patriarchal-similaritive type

	Discriminant function coefficients
Frequency of competition in interaction	1,168
The nature of interaction depends on the attitude towards the subject	0,926
Respect for other people's adherence to principles	0,777

As follows from Table 2, the attitude to social interaction among men and women of the patriarchal-similative type differs in assessments of how often interaction is perceived as competitive, to what extent interaction depends on the attitude to the subject on the part of other participants, and also in the degree of respect for the adherence to principles by other participants in the interaction.

Analysis of data from respondents of the egalitarian-polarized type whose main sphere of interaction is the Internet and social networks showed 3 parameters that distinguish the attitude of men and women to social interaction (Table 3).

Table 3
Parameters of differences in attitudes to social interaction among men and women of the egalitarian-polarized type

	Discriminant function coefficients
Focus on one's own goals	-0,591

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	Discriminant function coefficients
Focus on other people	0,615
Adherence to one's own principles	0,715

As follows from Table 3, the attitude to social interaction among men and women of the egalitarian-polarized type differs in assessments of the extent to which people focus primarily on their own interests and goals in interaction, or whether they also take into account the interests of other people and society when constructing interactions, and the extent to which they strive to follow their own principles.

Analysis of data from respondents of the egalitarian-similaritive type the main sphere of interaction of which is the Internet and social networks discovered 4 parameters that distinguish the attitude of men and women to social interaction (Table 4).

Table 4
Parameters of differences in attitudes to social interaction among men and women of the egalitarian-similaritive type

	Discriminant function coefficients
Patterns of behavior and relationships in different spheres of a subject's life are interconnected	0,729
Respect for other people's adherence to principles	0,637
Interaction is based on generally accepted norms	-0,842
Passivity, lack of initiative of the subject in interaction	0,966

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As follows from Table 4, the attitude to social interaction among men and women of the egalitarian-similaritive type differs in their assessments of the subject's passivity and lack of initiative in interaction, the perception of models of behavior and relationships in different spheres of life as closely interconnected with each other, and the extent to which interaction is based on generally accepted norms and is accompanied by respect for the adherence to principles by other participants.

In conclusion, we will evaluate the obtained results using Cohen's coefficient (d), which, together with descriptive statistics, will allow us to determine which characteristics most clearly distinguish the attitude to social interaction among men and women with different gender personality types whose interaction is concentrated on the Internet and social networks.

The attitude to social interaction of men and women with different gender types has the following most striking features (descriptive statistics data (M and SD), Cohen's coefficient (d) are provided):

Respondents of the patriarchal-polarized type: (1) women are more likely to perceive other participants in the interaction as focused on their own interests and goals (M_{male} = 3.36, SD_{male} = 0.67; M_{female} = 3.86, SD_{female} = 0.8; d = 0.67); (2) women rate the role of restraint in interaction higher (M_{male} = 2.91, SD_{male} = 0.83; M_{female} = 3.54, SD_{female} = 0.74; d = 0.79); (3) women are more inclined to believe that in interaction they can always understand whether they like it or not (M_{male} = 3.64, SD_{male} = 0.8; M_{female} = 4.25, SD_{female} = 0.65; d = 0.84).

Respondents of the patriarchal-similaritive type: (1) men significantly more often participate in competition, rivalry with other people (M_{male} = 3.9, SD_{male} = 0.99; M_{female} = 1.79, SD_{female} = 0.8; d = 2.34); (2) men are more likely to believe that the construction of interaction with other people largely depends on their attitude to the subject (M_{male} = 3.7, SD_{male} = 0.82; M_{female} = 2.86, SD_{female} = 0.86; d = 0.99).

Respondents of the egalitarian-polarized type: (1) men are more likely to perceive other participants in the interaction as focused on their own interests and goals (M_{male} = 4.75, SD_{male} = 0.5; M_{female} = 3.7, SD_{female} = 0.87; d = 1.48); (2) women are more likely to believe that the basis of interaction is focus on the other people (M_{male} = 2.5, SD_{male} = 1.0; M_{female} = 3.44, SD_{female} = 0.64; d = 1.12).

Respondents of the egalitarian-similaritive type: (1) men are more likely to perceive different spheres of life (work, family, friends, etc.) as interconnected and strongly influencing each other (M_{male} = 3.9, SD_{male} = 0.9; M_{female} = 3.23, SD_{female} = 0.86; d = 0.73); (2) women are more likely to be guided by generally accepted norms and standards of behavior and not deviate from them (M_{male} = 2.6, SD_{male} = 0.9; M_{female} = 3.54, SD_{female} = 0.58; d = 0.82); (3) men are more likely to react to the actions of other people than to take the initiative (M_{male} = 4.4, SD_{male} = 0.5; M_{female} = 3.38, SD_{female} = 0.75; d = 1.54).

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Discussion

The conducted research allowed us to prove the main hypothesis – the attitude to social interaction of people whose main sphere of communication is the Internet really differs depending on their sex and gender personality type. Firstly, the parameters were established by which the attitude to social interaction among men and women with the same gender type differs. Secondly, the content of the attitude to social interaction among men and women is characterized by different sets of interaction parameters, which vary depending on the gender personality type of a particular man or woman.

The additional hypothesis was partially confirmed. On the one hand, the total number of parameters that distinguish the attitude of men and women to social interaction is higher among representatives of the two "polarized" types – patriarchal-polarized and egalitarian-polarized – than among the two "similaritive" types (9 versus 7). On the other hand, the number of parameters of differences in attitude to social interaction that are not only statistically significant, but also the magnitude of their difference between men and women is such that it will noticeably manifest itself in interaction, among representatives of the types who have beliefs about the high polarization of the psychological characteristics of men and women, coincides with their number among representatives of the types who are convinced of the similarity of the psychological characteristics of men and women (5 versus 5).

In other words, there are differences in attitudes toward social interaction between men and women whose interaction is concentrated on the Internet and social networks, but their beliefs about the polarization of psychological characteristics of men and women, according to our data, did not entail a significant increase in these differences. Perhaps this is due to the specifics of interaction on the Internet: virtual communication is often more impersonal, less personalized, unlike real communication. It is possible for an individual to position themself in different ways and experiment with gender images (Erofeeva, 2018), but it is more difficult to form a holistic image of a partner and build effective interaction in the virtual space than in face-to-face communication, since this will require the subject to have more developed psychological competence (Weindorf-Sysoeva & Pankina, 2020; Viktorova, 2020; Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilán, 2019), imagination, analytical skills (Molchanov, Almazova & Poskrebysheva, 2018), communication skills (Vilovatykh, 2020), because the socio-psychological conditions of interaction on the Internet and in real relationships are different (Andreeva, Volodina & Shurakova, 2020; Pak, 2020; Bunker, Saysavanh & Kwan, 2021; etc.). A significant portion of people prefer the Internet as a space for communication and interaction due to difficulties in communication and introverted character traits, rightly believing that this will make their personality traits less noticeable to the interlocutor, and the communication conditions will be more comfortable (Bunker, Saysavanh & Kwan, 2021). The accumulating experience of Internet communication averages out the differences in the communication and interaction patterns of men and women, and deeper ones remain, due, for example, to neurophysiological characteristics

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(Barabanshchikov, Suvorova, 2021; Eslinger et al., 2021; Farwaha & Obhi, 2019). Among the results obtained, these include, at a minimum, the level of emotionality and expression, the desire for predictability of interaction through the development of its principles and rules (Titova, 2024b).

The above is indirectly supported by the data we obtained in our dissertation research in relation to other spheres. Men and women, representatives of the same gender type, who indicate work, family or friends as the main sphere of interaction, differ in their attitude to social interaction based on completely different combinations of parameters.

Conclusion

Sets of parameters that significantly differ in the attitude to social interaction among men and women with different gender personality types whose main sphere of interaction is the Internet and social networks have been identified.

The most significant differences in attitudes to social interaction in the Internet environment among men and women with different gender personality types are associated with subjective assessments of the following parameters: focus on one's own goals; focus on other people; manifestation of restraint in emotions; clearness of emotional assessment; frequency of competition; dependence of the nature of interaction on the attitude to the subject; interconnectedness of behavior patterns and relationships in different spheres of life; reliance on generally accepted norms; passivity, lack of initiative of the subject.

Women of the patriarchal-polarized type are more likely than men to perceive other participants in the interaction as focused on their own interests, to believe that in an interaction they can always understand whether they like it, and to rate the role of restraint in the interaction higher.

Men of the patriarchal-similaritive type participate in competition with other people significantly more often than women, and they tend to believe that the nature of the interaction strongly depends on their attitude to the subject.

Men of the egalitarian-polarized type perceive other participants in the interaction as focused on their own interests, while women of this type, on the contrary, believe that the basis of interaction is focus on the other people.

Men of the egalitarian-similaritive type perceive different spheres of life (work, family, friends, etc.) as interconnected and strongly influencing each other, they are more inclined to respond to the actions of other people than to take the initiative; women of this type tend to be guided by generally accepted norms of behavior and not deviate from them.

The prospects for studying gender differences in social interaction on the Internet are associated with a comparative analysis of the attitude to social interaction among men and women with different gender personality types in the Internet and offline spheres

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(e.g., work, family, friends), which will allow us to understand to what extent common psychological patterns regulate interaction in the online and offline spheres. In addition, in our study, we did not specifically specify what exactly respondents do on the Internet – communicate in chats and on forums with other people or search for information on a particular topic regardless of other people. Clarification of the nature of activity on the Internet and social networks will allow us to deepen our understanding of the reasons for the peculiarities of the attitude of men and women with different gender personality types to social interaction that we discovered. It is necessary to continue studying the principles and adherence to them in Internet interaction, according to which the opinions of men and women with different gender personality types turned out to be different. It seems interesting to continue studying the fact that some people perceive interaction as independent of the attitude of other participants, which will also allow us to understand the mechanisms of the transition of interaction from an online to an offline format (flash mobs, rallies, etc., by participants of online communities, continuation of online dating in the format of real marital or friendly relationships, etc.).

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Conflict of Interest Information

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.