Using corpus analysis to investigate "extreme" Incel misogyny online

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This paper focuses on the language used by the Incel community on Reddit. Incels are a group of men known for often blaming society and/or genetics for their lack of success in relationships with women.

This study starts with a comparison between a corpus of comments posted by Incels on Reddit and a general Reddit corpus. The keywords extracted from this comparison are analysed using the WordSketch, Concordance, and Thesaurus tools available on SketchEngine (Kilgarrif, 2009). The corpus analysis reveals that Incels' discussions tend to revolve around two connected themes: society's rejection of Incels, and men's (particularly Incels') entitlement to women's bodies.

We argue that the language of Incels does not reveal the ideology of a restricted community of "deviant" men. On the contrary, it shows that what drives them seems to be a belief system situated on a continuum of societal misogyny that pre-dates the Internet but that, on the Internet, has found fertile ground to flourish, strengthen and reinvent itself by circulating rapidly and vastly.

Thus, using language as an entry point into the ideology of Incels, this study argues that, the Internet gave Incels a platform to express their hatred and perpetrate violence against women using language (Powell et al, 2017) as a weapon. While linguistic violence can be seen as a "mitigated" form of abuse (Smart, 1989), it can lead to extreme consequences, despite it wider level of societal acceptance.

References

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