CrimRxiv •

Review 2 of "'Goodbye, My Friendcels': An Analysis of Incel Suicide Posts"

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Vote: Publish pending minor changes

[For votes to count, referees must reasonably explain why they voted as they did. Thus, please explain your vote. If you voted to publish pending minor changes, specify each change, why it is needed, and, possibly, how it should/could be done.]

Thank you for the opportunity to review this work. This is an important contribution to the current scholarly literature on those who identify as incels and participate in the online incel community. I have several suggestions which will strengthen the manuscript.

I appreciate the comprehensive introduction and review of the literature. That said, the literature review could be reorganized and restructured to better frame the study. For example, the sections on suicide generally and mental health strategies provide a lot of information, but I am not sure that they are necessary, or at least that they need to be covered in such depth.

Most of my suggestions are centered around the method. I appreciate the detail regarding some of the aspects of the coding, and the acknowledgement of the critique surrounding the "emergence" of themes. In terms of the coding process, I would like to know more about how the authors developed the themes. They state that the themes were identified in the first stage of data analysis: "In stage one, we immersed ourselves independently in the data, reading through several times and familiarizing ourselves with the content. Upon initially assessing the data for broad themes, we met to discuss and decided upon the six major themes and conceptualized them." Typically, multiple levels of coding are performed to develop categories which are then organized into themes. For example, Braun & Clarke, 2006 discuss the three phases of coding where developing the themes is the final stage. Some clarification on the process of coding would be helpful in understanding the process. Additionally, an explanation of why frequencies were included (for example, Braun & Clarke, 2006) argue that the keyness of a theme does not necessarily mean it is more relevant or important.)

In the statement regarding positionality, the authors state: "incels must be humanized and understood to effectively prevent and address the likelihood of violence or, in a seemingly more likely outcome, suicide and self-harm." While I agree with this statement, I would add some justification as to WHY they should be humanized,

particularly tying it to prevention. I would also add some language as to how the authors dealt with the issues they raise here regarding being women studying these topics – e.g. debriefing, self-care, etc.?

The results are interesting, and I appreciate the organization, but there are many subheadings, and these could possibly be collapsed into just general text underneath the headings of the theme. (I think that the authors could actually have several papers in here with the results, but that is a personal choice.) There is a lot of descriptive information being presented, which I appreciate, but I wonder if it could be synthesized and organized to improve the flow for the reader.

The discussion section restates the findings while situating them within the broader literature. The authors end with: "By studying these critical aspects of experiences, we have the opportunity to expand upon existing incel research to better understand the complexity and the nuances of incel issues and, in time, prevent and address self-harm and suicide among people who share this identity." Again, I would suggest that the authors make a compelling argument as to why this understanding of the incel suicide/self-harm is important, drawing from violence prevention or extremist literature on prevention.

[Please put additional info below, as/if you see fit.]

General comments:

From a stylistic perspective, I would urge the authors to reread the manuscript for repetitive words and redundant language. For example, in the first two paragraphs of the lit review, the word "concept" occurs frequently, throughout the manuscript, "However," appears often.

In the last paragraph before the literature review, the authors state: "However, none to date have examined how the incel identity and the subsequent experiences can lead to self-harm and suicide." I would change this language to sound less like a causal argument.