

Language of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Victims of Cyber Bullying: A Forensic Psycholinguistic View

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ABSTRACT

Forensic Psycholinguistics can predict human behaviour through their language. This paper tries to identify the suicidal ideation of cyberbullying victims through their language. Further, to verify and see whether it is reflected in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the suicide notes of the victims from their language use. The researchers use qualitative analysis such as trauma narrative and pragmatic analysis to identify the language marker of the victims, viz., determiners, functional words, cognitive processing words, death-related words, distinct emotional types, etc. Additionally, it focuses on which lexical items used by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) victims used often. This study uses the purposive sampling method to collect data from the web. The findings of this study will provide social awareness regarding the traumatic behaviour of cyber-bullying victims. The outcome obtained through Linguistic analysis can help in the detection and prevention of suicides by people living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at an early stage.

Keywords: Forensic Psycholinguistics, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Trauma Narrative, Cyber Bullying, Suicidal Ideation

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INTRODUCTION

Forensic Psycholinguistics can predict human behaviour through their language. Further, it examines verbal and nonverbal clues of the offenders' or victims' language. It is a sub-branch of Forensic Linguistics that studies language and law. It tries to contribute to the field of criminal investigation, an emerging field of research. It is helpful for the society, investigating agencies, judicial departments to resolve crimes by identifying threats, Authorship Identification, False Allegations, Workplace Violence and Statement Analysis, Detection of Deception, Criminal and Corporate Psychopathy, Crime Scene Assessment, Interviewing techniques for Criminal and Violent offenders and Homicides disguised as Suicides etc. There are currently few theoretical studies, tools, or analyses in India or even in the rest of the world about clear-cut academic explanations in the subfield of Forensic Psycholinguistics. This is an attempt to combine the principles and theories of psycholinguistics for the purpose of forensics, which can help the judiciary to assess the psycholinguistic aspect of the accused, victim, witness and provide it as evidence in the court of law. Here, the researchers made an attempt to make it a systematic and proper construction for Forensic Psycholinguistics with the help of linguistic analysis and combined with theories developed in psychology and principles to get a clear picture of how language is used, interpreted, and manipulated in a legal context. The present study explores cyberbullying cases.

Bullying over digital devices such as cell phones, laptops, and tablets is known as cyberbullying. It can occur in social media, forums, or gaming, where people can watch, participate in, or share content. It can involve embarrassment or humiliation caused by sharing intimate or private information about another individual. This happens anytime and anywhere, and it is difficult to escape for the victims. Cyberbullying is sometimes also called cyber harassment, mainly because this research article affects adults. There are some common examples of cyberbullying they are harassment, spreading rumors, impersonation, public shaming, and exclusion. First harassment involves threatening messages and hurtful. Next is about spreading rumors they may post false or harmful information about someone. Impersonation is about damaging their reputation. To know about public shaming it about sharing private photos, videos etc. Finally, exclusion is about intentionally

leaving someone out of online groups or chats. This study focuses on spreading rumors and public shaming.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) occurs when a person has faced a traumatic event in their life; it may be through experience or witness. It also further connects with war, accident or abuse; if it is prolonged, cyberbullying may lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A new study shows that cyberbullying can amplify symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in teenagers. The researchers said those who had been bullied had significantly higher severity of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anger, and fantasy dissociation than those who had not been bullied (Harvey, 2020).

According to the American Psychiatric Association, people who have encountered or witnessed a traumatic incident such as a natural disaster, a catastrophic accident, a terrorist attack, war/combat, or rape, or who have been threatened with death, sexual violence, or severe injury, may develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). If it is not identified in early stage, it leads to suicide.

Suicide happens when one intentionally takes one's own life. It occurs because they wound themselves to end their life. Suicides in India rose 10 per cent from 2019 to an all-time high of 1,53,052 in the pandemic year of 2020, with student suicides seeing the highest percentage increase at 21.20 per cent, according to the latest data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB, 2020).

Forensic Semantic plays a vital role in this research article because it focuses on words, phrases, clauses etc. It will be able to interpret the suicide notes, will and online message clearly. In this case the first part of the analysis is about before committing suicide i.e suicidal ideation how their mind set (emotions, thoughts and behaviors) data was collected from the social website. Next part is focuses on their suicide notes, analysis these victims are suffered from (PTSD) and linguistic expressions.

This research focuses on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affected by cyber bullying and also their suicide notes. The purpose of this study is to fulfill the needs of the society who are affected by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and to identify it earlier through the language.

Aim of the paper

This paper attempts to identify suicidal ideation in cyberbullying victims through their language. It further verifies whether post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is reflected in the suicide notes of the victims by their use of language.

Objective of the study

- To find out the presence of suicidal ideation in victims through their use of language.
- To examine the specific suicidal patterns that are represented in the victims' language.

Research Gap

There are few studies in Forensic Linguistics had focused on suicidal ideation. But this research article exploration on to identify PTSD related language in cybercrime cases, Suicidal ideation in earlier stage has not examined that much and linguistic categories in suicide notes.

Background

In the article, 'Early Linguistic Markers of Trauma-Specific Processing Predict Post-trauma Adjustment' by Kleim et al. (2018), the research data is in the form of psychological and grammatical levels of analysis. Linear regression analysis and SPSS 20.0 software are used. The Key findings are cognitive processing words, death related words and first person singular pronouns. It concluded that it would be helpful for early post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Also helps in understanding trauma processing and intervention strategies.

The paper entitled 'The truth behind six disturbing cyberbullying cases that turned into suicide stories' focuses on the cases which are related to cyberbullying cases later it explained how it had turned into suicide stories. Additionally, it describes the victims and their aftermath. Our focuses is on Amanda Todd (2012, Canada) was subjected to online harassment and posed a video on YouTube.

Another research paper regarding the linguistic properties of trauma narratives of survivors of a Motor Vehicle Accident (MVA) result says that there is an emotional foundation in texts written about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and recall of the traumatic event. Furthermore, the researchers used LIWC software in the article 'Tell Us Your Story:

Investigating the Linguistic Features of Trauma Narrative' by Jeremy A. Luno et al. (2013).

Finally this research paper focuses on cyberbullying and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms in UK adolescents. The difference is between cyber and traditional bullying in the United Kingdom. The key findings are severity of symptoms and overlap with traditional bullying. It also further highlights the need for increased awareness and intervention strategies. (Mateu et al. 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The researchers use qualitative analysis to identify the suicidal ideation of the victims with the help of trauma narrative, and from the suicide notes, language markers have been analyzed. A purposive sampling method is used in this study to collect data from the web. Two suicide notes were taken for the study, one in Tamil (transliteration) and another in English. Both of them are female.

Approach

A trauma narrative is a psychological intervention designed to assist survivors of traumatic experiences in processing and making sense of the events they have endured. It serves as both a therapeutic tool and a form of controlled exposure to distressing or painful memories, helping individuals confront and integrate these experiences in a safe and structured manner. During the process of creating a trauma narrative, survivors recount the story of their traumatic experience multiple times, which can be done through various modalities, including verbal recounting, written narratives, or even artistic expression. This repeated engagement with the traumatic memory allows individuals to gradually reduce the intensity of negative emotions associated with the event and to develop a clearer understanding of their own thoughts, feelings, and reactions. In the case of suicide victims, the researchers analyse the data which was collected from the web to know the suicidality of that victim. The research paper focuses on the victims' language of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours of the victims.

DATA

A. To know whether a victim has suicidal ideation with the help of the trauma narrative approach. Suicidal ideation will start from a person who has faced trauma-related thoughts. Here, it looks upon the victims who underwent painful incidents like morphed images of the victim being used to blackmail and bully. The below flow chart shows the factors of thoughts, emotions and behaviour of the victims of suicidal ideation.

The table illustrates the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in contributing to suicidal ideation. It is structured to show how different psychological and behavioral factors interact to influence a person's risk of considering suicide. The central concept is suicidal ideation it has three surrounding categories they are thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Thoughts has been classified into seven types they are hopelessness, isolation, worthlessness, self-hate, purposelessness, racing thoughts and perceived burdensomeness. Next these are the emotional experiences that reinforce or trigger suicidal ideation. They are shame or guilt, anger, anxiety and depression. Finally behaviours that may indicate suicidal risk they are classified into poor expression of emotion, social withdrawn, substance abuse, self-harm, preparing for death. Each category contributes to the development and reinforcement of suicidal thoughts.

The researchers have chosen females for the study who had undergone many painful incidents

due to cyberbullying. The victim got addicted to an online chatting website with an unknown person and was flashed once. The victim started to get too many messages, and the stranger took the chance to blackmail the victim. The victim had no other option rather than suicide because she was affected from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). One more bullying incident occurred when a stranger uploaded the morphed images of the victim on Facebook. In this case, no one trusted the victim, who lost all the hope and support from their family and friends.

Examples:

1. *ennala etuvum panna mutiyala*
I anything do couldn't

'I couldn't do anything'.

(Hopelessness, Social withdrawn, Guilt)

2. *ennala valiyai tanka mutiyala*
I pain bear couldn't

'I couldn't bear the pain'.

(Isolation, Preparing for death, Depression)

In this instance, no one trusted the victim, which made them get isolated from everyone, which made the victim get into depression. That made the victim thinks again and again and thought of committing suicide.

3. *enakku yarume utavi pannala*
to me no one help didn't

'No one helped me'.

(Isolation, Social withdrawn, Depression)

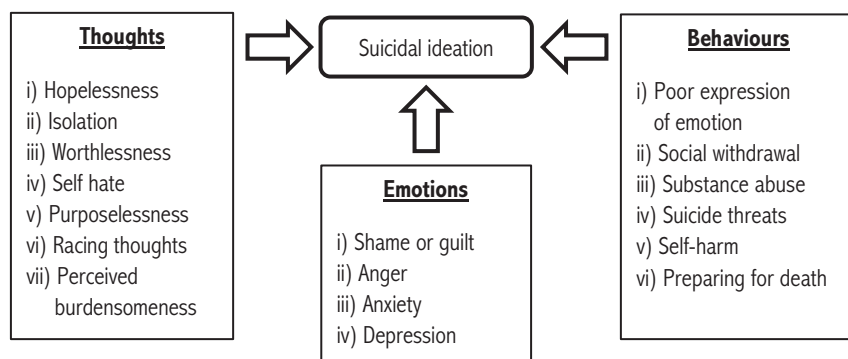


Figure 1 Shows the pattern of suicidal ideation

In this situation, the victim tries to approach the parents to explain the situation and their friends. But no one gave the small hope or trusted the victim, which made the victim isolate from others and socially withdrawn because no one was there to help the victim.

4. *ennala itukku mela tarccar anupavikka mutiyatu*
I hereafter torture tolerate anymore
'I cannot bear this torture anymore'.
(Purposelessness, Preparing for death, Depression)

5. *itukku mela ennala ettukka mutiyatu*
hereafter I cannot accept anymore
'I cannot take it anymore'.
(Purposelessness, Preparing for death, Anger)

From the data analyzed examples (1-5), it is found that this victim has suicidal ideation. The situation of the victim was made worse because the stranger who morphed the image of the victim had posted it on Facebook. So, the victim tried to get help from her parents and the police. The victim felt helpless, had lost hope in everyone, felt isolated from society, felt terrible about facing society and depressed.

6. **I cannot leave normal life.**
(Isolation, Social withdrawn, Depression)
7. **They can't talk to me or they will be hated.**
(Self-hate, Social withdrawn, Shame)
8. **Can't be a real normal person.**
(Racing thoughts, Preparing for death, Anxiety)
9. **I am always scared of what's going to happen.**
(Hopelessness, Poor expression of emotion, Shame)
10. **I hated being alone with my computer.**
(Self-hate, Social withdrawn, Anxiety)
11. **It hurts no matter what. Please, please just help me.**
(Isolation, Social withdrawn, Depression)
12. **I am afraid to go out of home.**
(Hopelessness, Self-harm, Depression)

Examples (6-12) show that the victim has suicidal ideation. Here, the stranger started to bully the victim by blackmailing. Initially, the victim tries to overcome the depression, but days later. The people around them also began to bully her constantly. These made the victim to fall into depression, felt lonely, helpless, lost hope in people and tried to isolate from everyone.

The usage of words and phrases used by victims shows their behaviour, thoughts and emotions are related to suicide ideations. The terms and phrases are "*enakku yarume utavi pannala, cannot leave normal life, always scared of what's going to happen, afraid to go out of home, ennala itukku mela tarccar anupavikka mutiyatu*". Here, both victims emphasise that they lost hope in others and they felt they were not normal anymore. It's shows that these victims have an extremely high level of risk factors for suicidal ideation due to factors such as depression, isolation, hopelessness, social withdrawn, self-hate, etc.

- B. To analyse cyberbullying victims who had committed suicide and to identify post-traumatic stress disorder in the suicide notes. The analysis given below is about four linguistic features and the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms found in their language.

PTSD symptoms

People who are abused when they were a child or who have been repeatedly exposed to life-threatening situations are at risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Victims of trauma related to physical and sexual assault face the most significant risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). There are mainly four symptoms they are reliving, avoiding, increased arousal, negative cognition and mood.

Reliving

People with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) relive the event repetitively through their thoughts and recollections of it. Having memories, hallucinations, and nightmares are examples of these. They may also be distressed when specific objects, such as events like birthday or anniversary date, remind them of the trauma.

Examples:

13. *mudhala neenga allaurm enna manichiruga*
first everyone me forgive
 'Everyone forgive me'.

14. *sathiyama solran naa ean photo's ah*
yarkum anupala
Promise tell I my photos
anyone send
 'I promise that I didn't send my photos to anyone'.

15. *It killed me inside and I thought I was gonna actually die*

16. *Every day I think why am I still here?*

17. *All from my past.... life's never getting better...*

This statement shows that due to blackmailing, being bullied and morphed images of the victim, they face so many traumas and thoughts inside the victim's mind like "I die, why I am alive, never getting better", etc. It seems like the victim has nightmares; the victim feels stressed about certain things again and again. They couldn't overcome the problem that let them to commit suicide.

Avoiding

People, places, thoughts, or events that remind the person of the trauma may be avoided. This can lead to feelings of separation and isolation from family members and friends, a loss of interest in previously liked activities.

Examples:

18. *naa eandha thappum panala*
I anything wrong didn't
 'I didn't do anything wrong'.

19. *I then moved and got into drugs and alcohol.*

20. *My anxiety got worse.... couldn't go out.*

21. *Cried every night, lost all my friends and respect.*

The statements mentioned above show that they are isolated from people, thoughts, etc. around them. Finally, they try to overcome and heal themselves by taking alcohol and drugs they expressing their pain by crying. Nothing worked out for the victims;

they detached themselves from society at the end of their final days. The usages of words are *thappum panala, got into drugs and alcohol, got worse, Cried*. This shows that victims try to escape from the situation by doing something, but they fail because no one is there to support them.

Increased arousal

Excessive emotions; difficulties relating to people, such as feeling or exhibiting affection; difficulty sleeping or staying asleep; irritability; outbursts of rage; difficulty concentrating; and being "jumpy" or easily startled are some symptoms. Physical symptoms such as raised blood pressure and heart rate, fast breathing, muscle tension, nausea, and diarrhoea may also occur.

Examples:

22. *eanoda life ponadhukuapram naa valndhu*
eanapanaporan
My life over I live
no use

'When my life is over what's the purpose of being alive.'

The potential PTSD marker *naa valndhu eanapanaporan* shows the negative beliefs about the future. The victim feels detachment from life. Additionally, the victim has a preoccupation with death.

23. *I'm stuck... what's left of me now...nothing stops*

The statement tries to express that the victim feels trapped and unending cycle of pain. The victim loss of self-worth and had no relief from their suffering.

24. *I wanted to die so bad.... When he brought me home*
I drank bleach....

This shows the strong explicit wish to die and no escape other than death.

25. *Constantly cutting. I'm really depressed.*

Constantly cutting represents deliberate self-injury and the victim feels an ongoing cycle of pain and maladaptive coping.

26. *I'm constantly crying now.*

The words used by the victims are *naa valndhu eanapanaporan, stuck, wanted to die, depressed and crying*. The victims could not handle their situation alone, and no one was there to help them out of it. None of them trusted them; they got stuck in their lives and depressed. As they did not have any solution, they committed suicide.

Negative cognitions and mood

This relates to thoughts and feelings of blame, estrangement, and traumatic event recollections. Toilet training, motor skills, and language development may be impaired in young children with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Examples:

27. *eanaku vala pudikala*
I to live hate
 'I hate to live'.

It is a direct expression of deep emotional pain, despair and rejection.

28. *eanoda amma, appa vea eana namadhapoo*
My mother father me not trust
naa uyiroda erundhu eana priyoojanam
I alive staying what use

'When my parents themselves are not ready to believe me, what is the purpose of me staying alive?'

It reveals hopelessness and deep betrayal. The victim primary support system (parents) has failed to accept the situation of the victim.

29. *avangalea eana pathi kevalama pesuranga*
They I about bad talking
 'They are talking bad about me'.

Due to constantly judged or attacked by others leads to lost hope.

30. *Then nobody liked me.*

This demonstrates that victims attempt to take action to escape the circumstance, but they are unsuccessful since no one is there to help them.

31. *I have nobody..... I need someone... I sat still alone.*

This expression tries to sense of isolation and feels disconnected from friends, family and society.

32. *The girl and 2 others just said look around nobody likes you.*

In the negative cognitions and mood the victims use words such as *kevalama pesuranga, nobody liked me, and have nobody*. The victims blame others and feel estranged, so they feel like they are right. Every statement shows how much they are accusing others. They think again and again but it's difficult for them to come out of the situation.

Table 1 Shows four featured linguistic categories

S. No.	Category	Examples
1.	Functional word - Determiners - Possessives: - Pronouns - First person: - Third person: - Conjunction	<i>me, my, enna</i> <i>I</i> <i>it, he, neenga</i> <i>and, on</i>
2.	Cognitive processing words (insightful and causal words)	<i>inside, thought, actually, every, think, still, never, stuck, left, nothing, stops, all, over, moved, bad, out, sathiyama</i>
3.	Death related words - die dead	<i>killed, die, life ponadhukuapram uyiroda, valndhu, eanapanaporan</i>
4.	Distinct emotional types	<i>worse, cried, depressed, crying, cutting, hate, anxiety, nobody, alone, lost, drug, alcohol, namadhapoo kevalama, manichiruga, thappum, kevalama, pudikala</i>

The analysis of the table shows that the victims' usage of words has been divided into four types they are functional words, cognitive processing words, death related words and distinct emotional types. It is visible that first person and possessives were used more frequently in the suicide notes. The cognitive processing words, otherwise known as causal words, describe the mental processes of perception or thinking etc. Most of the words seem to be negative words like nothing, over, bad etc. Death related words are common in suicide notes and in case we come to know the person is affected by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or suicidal ideation we can be able to judge them. Distinct emotional types are basically classified into any kind of emotion like happiness or sorrow etc.

RESULTS

Here is the victims' language, which has been analyzed in the suicide notes based on four linguistic features.

They are: (i) 'I' first person singular (ii) determiners 'me' everything is related to the self in the victim's suicide notes. It shows that everything is related to self and mental depression to victims. (iii) A cognitive processing word comes under insightful and casual words. A few examples are 'over, bad, stuck' etc. These words can show how others thought-provoking them to commit suicide and say a final goodbye. (iv) It's about distinct emotional types like sadness, fear, and anger. Every individual feels for things that make them upset, sad, worried, etc., but on a suicide note, they mention the specific event that made them lonely, doubtful, unhappy, frustrated, and so on. It is clear from this that most word usage shows that their mind is towards negative emotional state or thoughts running in their victims' minds.

According to Karisma et al. (2021), suicide is committed mainly by unmarried. To show their emotions, negative words are used by suicidals in suicide notes. Though the use of positive emotional words was higher in the notes, the negative words were used to express the emotion which connotes a negative meaning. All the notes had a narration of past story which made them happy or sad and most of them narrated the past stories mentioning how they were harassed at the mental and emotional level which were also the reason for their suicide.

CONCLUSION

The trauma narrative approach and pragmatic analysis were used to analyze the data to identify that the victims had suicidal ideation with the help of their language patterns in thoughts, emotions and behaviour. This research paper focuses on the victims who struggled with being blackmailed, having morphed images made public and being bullied by strangers, which made them have negative thoughts and suicidal ideation. Further, it examines the language patterns of victims who are affected by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) through their suicide notes.

In this research paper, it is observed that they have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) through their language, and symptoms were found. Additionally, researchers noted the usage of words that are related to negative words, cognitive processing words, and death-related words in suicide notes. These are words used in the suicide notes death-related words are *killed, die, life ponadhukuapram uyiroda, valhdhu, eanapanaporan*. Next is about distinct emotional words they are *worse, cried, depressed, crying, cutting, hate, anxiety, nobody, alone, lost, drug, alcohol, namadhapoo kevalama, manichiruga, thappum, kevalama, pudikala*. These are the cognitive related words *inside, thought, actually, every, think, still, never, stuck, left, nothing, stops, all, over, moved, bad, out, sathiyama*.

There is insufficient data and corpus in this research (e.g., India). Considering this research can create a huge impact. Through this research it will be helpful for the teenage and can able to judge whether the person is affected from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Teenage suicide is a complicated and urgent problem that often rises with age during the adolescent years. It stems from various risk factors, such as psychological issues, environmental conditions, and socio-cultural influences, resulting in a complex problem that requires thoughtful consideration. Recognizing this issue is vital not just for governments and policymakers, but also for the general public, educators, parents, and teenagers, as grasping the warning signs and root causes can be key to prevention. Successful suicide prevention necessitates a thorough and unified strategy, preferably engaging various stakeholders including government agencies, schools, the media, friends, and families. Through collaboration, these

organizations can employ strategies that tackle the issue from various perspectives, fostering a more supportive atmosphere for teenagers. At the individual level, each person should learn practical methods for engaging with at-risk teenagers, providing empathy, direction, and assistance as necessary. Additionally, local efforts focused on offering care and creating safe environments for teens can be especially effective, as community involvement can enhance larger policy and institutional actions. In the end, a mix of societal, institutional, and individual actions is crucial to effectively lower the rate of adolescent suicide, especially in areas like Asia where cultural and social influences may distinctly influence the challenges and solutions.

IMPACT OF THE STUDY

It can help people who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or persons who have suicidal thoughts can be helpful for detection and prevention of suicides. It makes them understand which lexical terms are used repeatedly by the victims and identify the factors such as behaviour, thoughts and emotions. Forensic psycholinguist can try to examine the language of the suicide notes, the victims' language, the victims of the surrounding people through a trauma narrative approach and whether the victim committed suicide or not.

FURTHER STUDY

- Linguistic Profiling of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Therapeutic and Preventive approaches in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

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Conflict of Interest

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

The data that support this study were collected from an online forum and are openly available to everyone at:

- <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/morphed-images-on-facebook-drive-salem-woman-to-suicide-16741-2016-06-28>
- <https://www.wtps.org>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQRnSla-qQM&rco=1>

Ethical Responsibilities of Authors

"The research paper is original, and I have submitted it exclusively to the *FoMR* journal. The data was extracted from an online forum, which is publicly available and accessible to all. I accept whatever process the journal follows, including the use of plagiarism checks."

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