The Usage of Linguistic Cues Among Online Groomers in Grooming Their Victims

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Abstract

      The study of online grooming is still in its infancy in Malaysia, despite the increase in the number of reported cases in the country. Online grooming typically involves an older person attempting to get closer to a child online with an intention to abuse them sexually. Most previous research related to online grooming has predominantly emphasized the Western culture, particularly in the field of psychology and criminology. Very few studies looked at it from a linguistic perspective and none in Malaysia. Thus, this study is keen to gain insights into this phenomenon from a linguistics perspective, in particular, on the strategies that groomers employ to lure their victims in the different stages of their communication. In other words, this study aims to explore the choice of words or phrases that the groomers use to hold their conversations with the victims. This study employs a qualitative method approach, predominantly focusing on 50 text messages from PervertedJustice.com. The study does not take into consideration of convicts who participate in offline sexual activities and victims of online child grooming. The text messages data are analyzed using Thompson approach thematic analysis. By knowing the linguistic form of the online groomers, this study will be able to raise some awareness of the seriousness of online child grooming as well as assist law enforcement officers by assisting them with the knowledge in understanding the process of online grooming.

Keywords: *Online grooming, Thematic analysis*