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Cyberbullying Judgements Among Mainland Chinese University Students Aged 18–25: A Factorial Vignette Study

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01 Research Questions

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My research asks:

1. What makes students see an online incident as cyberbullying?

2. What influences how harmful they think it is?

Why a factorial vignette experiment?

1. Tests how different scenario features influence judgements of cyberbullying and harm.

2. Allows participants to make judgements without sharing personal experiences.

02 PhD Research Overview

The project has three stages: two preliminary studies followed by the main factorial vignette study.

01

Focus Group Study (completed)

Explored how Chinese university students understand cyberbullying and used the findings to adapt Palladino et al.'s (2017) vignette framework.

02

Pilot Study (completed)

Tested the vignette materials and compared three response formats.

03

Main Study (next)

Will examine how different vignette features influence judgements of cyberbullying and perceived harm.

The focus group findings shaped the vignette design, which was then tested in the pilot.

03 Factorial Vignette Design

Five factors are combined to create each scenario:

Factor	Levels
Online behaviour (4)	Humiliating text post; edited image; impersonation account; group removal
Intentionality (2)	Intended to hurt or upset; viewed as harmless fun
Amplification (2)	Little further attention; substantial further attention
Perpetrator anonymity and online influence (3)	Unknown source; known with few followers; known with many followers
Target identifiability and offline spillover (3)	Online identity only; some real-life connections; real name

4 × 2 × 2 × 3 × 3 = 144 possible vignettes

04 Pilot Study Design

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Vignette selection and allocation

144	72	9	8
possible scenarios	selected scenarios	decks	per participant

Three randomly assigned response formats

A	**Classification only**	115 participants
B	**Harmfulness only**	115 participants
C	**Both questions**	113 participants

Ratings used a 1–7 scale. The pilot tested whether asking both questions together changes judgements.

05 Pilot: Descriptive Results

343	84.5%	20.06
analysed participants	female	mean age (years)

91.8% were undergraduates. Survey completion was 92.2% among those with recorded allocation.

Ratings were generally high

Outcome	Single question	Both questions
Classification	A: 5.95	C: 5.85
Perceived harmfulness	B: 5.68	C: 5.73

Median rating: 6 out of 7 in all four groups. Differences between formats were small in the descriptive data.

Table 3. Descriptive summaries and seven-category distributions

Statistic or category	Classification A	Classification C	Harmfulness B	Harmfulness C
Participants, n	115	113	115	113
Ratings, n	920	904	920	904
Mean (SD)	5.95 (1.20)	5.85 (1.20)	5.68 (1.21)	5.73 (1.25)
Median [Q1, Q3]	6 [5, 7]	6 [5, 7]	6 [5, 7]	6 [5, 7]
Rating 1, n (%)	10 (1.1)	3 (0.3)	5 (0.5)	3 (0.3)
Rating 2, n (%)	5 (0.5)	13 (1.4)	8 (0.9)	15 (1.7)
Rating 3, n (%)	22 (2.4)	25 (2.8)	34 (3.7)	40 (4.4)
Rating 4, n (%)	63 (6.8)	70 (7.7)	95 (10.3)	69 (7.6)
Rating 5, n (%)	168 (18.3)	191 (21.1)	224 (24.3)	214 (23.7)
Rating 6, n (%)	266 (28.9)	265 (29.3)	276 (30.0)	261 (28.9)
Rating 7, n (%)	386 (42.0)	337 (37.3)	278 (30.2)	302 (33.4)

06 Pilot: Exploratory Findings

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Adjusted differences in ratings (points)

Vignette factor	Classification	Harmfulness
Group removal vs text post	−0.745	−0.644
High vs low amplification	+0.378	+0.697
Intent to hurt vs harmless fun	+0.165	+0.142
High offline linkage vs online-only	+0.220	+0.299

Group removal received lower ratings than text posts.

Amplification was especially strongly associated with perceived harmfulness.

Exploratory mixed-effects models accounting for participants and vignettes.

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THANK YOU

Questions or comments?

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