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Usage guidelines

"I knew the stranger that I've never spoken to was paying attention to me." A Content Analysis of the Variation in Surveillant Behaviours on Social Media.

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Background

- **PhD Title:** *The Development and Validation of an Online Surveillant Behaviours Scale*

- **Overall Aim:**
  - Develop a measure to differentiate between online surveillant behaviours (creeping, cyberstalking etc) along a continuum, so that variations and behavioural patterns can subsequently be investigated.

Item Development

- Domain Identification
- Item Generation

Scale Evaluation
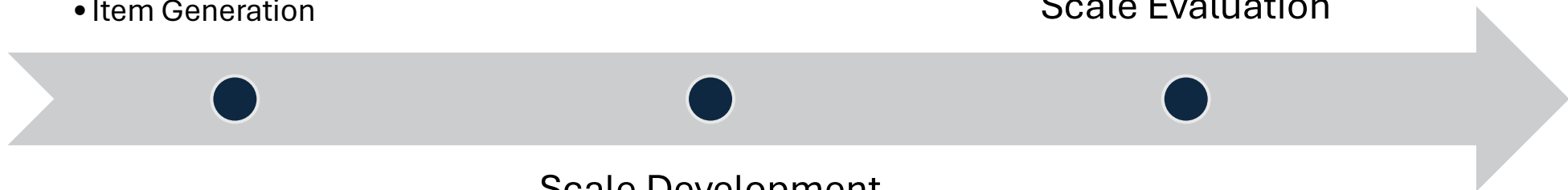
Scale Development

Background & Research Aims
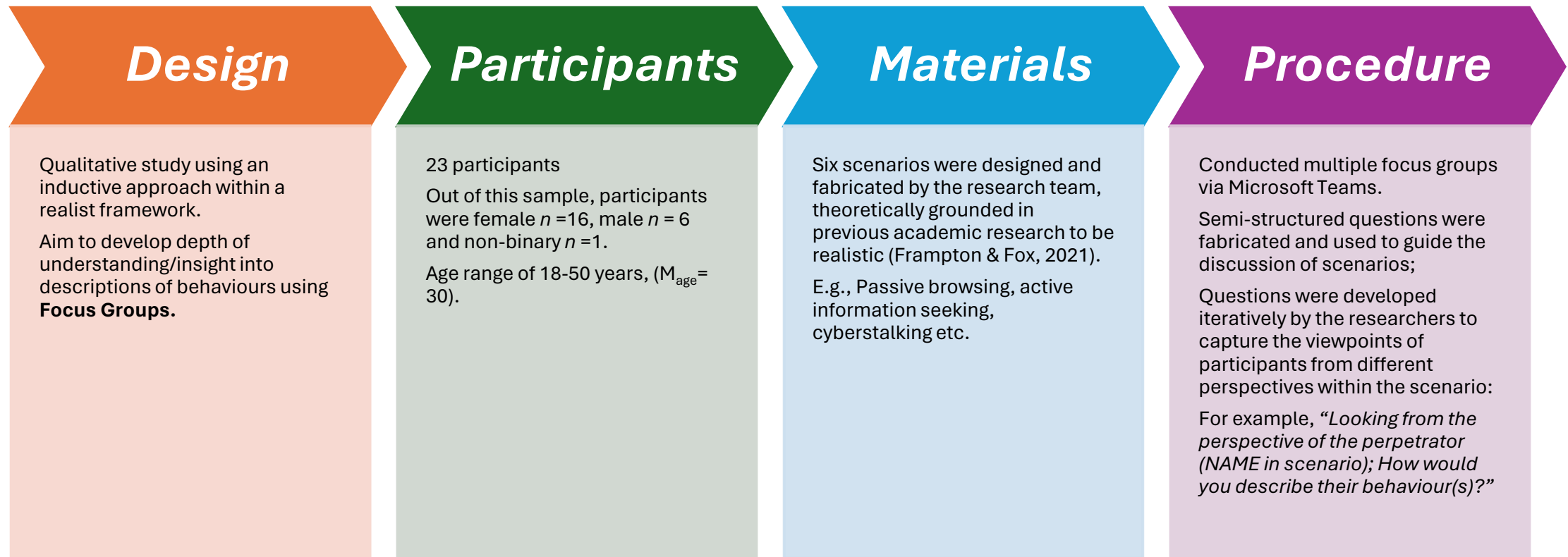
Domain Identification Study

- What is Online Surveillance?
    - Observant actions paired with stalking mentalities (Lyon, 2017).
    - Evident on Social Media platforms – "surveillant culture"
- "Creeping, Lurking, Online Monitoring, Electronic Surveillance, Information Seeking, Cyberstalking" (Kaur et al., 2021; March et al., 2022; Marcum & Higgins, 2019)
- Literature is currently full of inconsistent and overlapping conceptualizations of surveillant type behaviours (Frampton & Fox, 2021).
- Need to explore and differentiate between the types of online surveillant behaviours.

Current Study Aims:

- Explore variations and differentiate between online surveillant behaviours on social media platforms.
- Plus, consider the motivations and intentions that will help to define each behaviour.

Methodology

Design

Qualitative study using an inductive approach within a realist framework.

Aim to develop depth of understanding/insight into descriptions of behaviours using **Focus Groups.**

Participants

23 participants

Out of this sample, participants were female n =16, male n = 6 and non-binary n =1.

Age range of 18-50 years, (M_{age}= 30).

Materials

Six scenarios were designed and fabricated by the research team, theoretically grounded in previous academic research to be realistic (Frampton & Fox, 2021).

E.g., Passive browsing, active information seeking, cyberstalking etc.

Procedure

Conducted multiple focus groups via Microsoft Teams.

Semi-structured questions were fabricated and used to guide the discussion of scenarios;

Questions were developed iteratively by the researchers to capture the viewpoints of participants from different perspectives within the scenario:

For example, *"Looking from the perspective of the perpetrator (NAME in scenario); How would you describe their behaviour(s)?"*

Results: *Content Analysis*

- Data was analysed holistically using **inductive content analysis**;
- Three main categories emerged from the analysis and each category had further sub-categories.
- Generated categories which accurately describe the behaviours (e.g., User Actions) and associated sub-categories which provided a more focused description (e.g., Passive Observations).

Categories	Sub-Categories
User Actions	Passive Observations
	Active Information Seeking
	Obsessive Interaction
Intentions and Motivations	Emotional State
	Relational Connection
Perceptual Understanding	Concept of Online Privacy
	Affordances of Social Media Platforms
	Demographic Biases

Results & Discussion: *User Actions*

Passive Observations

- Socially browse, follow but don't post anything = Normalised!
- Significant overlap of actions between creeping and lurking concepts = passive typology.

"Going across different platforms to find out information. So, it's not just like on that like Facebook page or Instagram or anything but it's like it's like actively searching like on the wider web for that person."

"Like low level, like trying to find out information about people's lives and like trying to be part of their lives, like trying the following like that narrative."

Active Information Seeking

- Distinction between passive and active is based on frequency; how often increases intensity.

Obsessive Interaction

- As the intensity increases, the development of obsession and obsessive behaviours increase.
- Intrusive behaviours to accelerate their obsession with a target.

"Liking, noticing and commenting on every single post... that person is always the first person to like it, the first person to comment, and so it's almost like they're taking possession of your posts."

Results: *Intentions & Motivations*

Emotional State

Relational Connection

Participants suggested a variety of **emotional drivers** for explaining user actions.

E.g., Passive user actions were driven by curiosity or boredom (Jonison, 2008).

"Sounds like she uses it to like to connect with the people that she knows, then also I don't know boredom. Because she's you know scrolling as a stress relief, so she's just kind of browsing to chill out." Line 43 FG6.

When curiosity develops further, individuals develop further emotional ties and strive for connection with a specific target…

Connection tended to be associated with individuals motive for some form of **relationship,** whether that be maintain, form or an actual illusion of being in a relationship.

This drive for connection influences the intensity of user actions and the degree to which the obsession with a target develops further.

"He's also under the belief that he has a relationship with that person, and he basically invests a lot of time into just being aware of every single step that this person is doing." Line 231 FG1.
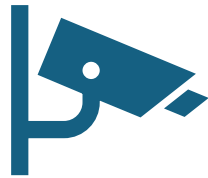
Results & Discussion: *Perceptual Understanding*

Online Privacy

Privacy online is **fluid**

Exposure of private information is normalised on social media.

"People's private life is no longer private anymore, as it's sort of like it's all untrue. You can almost get used to being able to see right into the depths of people's private, kind of, life." Line 631, FG2.

Affordances of Social Media Platforms

Accessibility of information on SM provides a means of surveillance.

Metrics of social media (like, comment, share) all contribute to the construction of each user actions, allowing obsessions to develop without any consequences (Chui, 2014).

"With social media... we have access to each other nearly 24 hours a day at the drop of a hat and can easily just look at their pictures and socials." Line 550 FG1.

Demographic Biases

Different **genders** exhibit different user actions.

Certain behaviours are acceptable based on **age**

The role of the target's **status** and reputation; Those with large social following should expect certain actions.

"Because of the world we live in, we are owed a view into famous people's lives." Line 205 FG6.

Concluding Comments

What:

- Types of user actions on Social Media along a continuum

- Distinction between what is normalized and potentially problematic online surveillant behaviours.

How:

- Social Media platforms facilitate these user actions; digital barrier impacts individuals' awareness of respectable boundaries online.

Why:

- The distinction along the continuum is based on both the intensity, such as how often someone displays the behaviour.

- Understanding of what is driving individuals to conduct such behaviours (degree of motives)

Concluding Comments:

- Behavioural variations develop along a trajectory of obsession.

- The concept of obsession is both an action, in terms of repetitiveness, and a motive behind the actions, e.g., individuals being obsessed with a target.

Contribution to PhD:

- Conceptualised user actions to generate items as part of behaviour-based subscale.

- Generation of motivations subscale to strengthen the validity of the constructs being measured.

Thank you for listening ☺
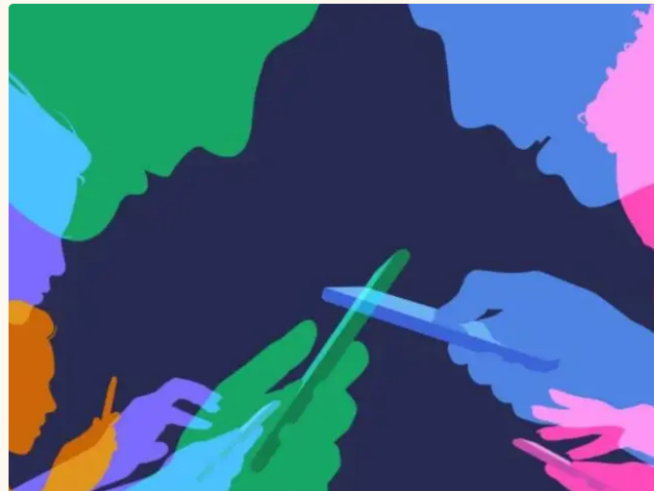
- Any questions?

- Feel free to read about this study in the BPS Cyberpsychology Bulletin.

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