



UNIVERSITEIT
VAN AMSTERDAM

Internship Research

Introduction

Social media is the most popular form of entertainment among young people (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Since the corona pandemic, the use of platforms such as Instagram and TikTok has only increased (Pennington, 2021). Although many young people enjoy these platforms, social media also has a dark side. Since the corona pandemic, the number of victims of cyberbullying has increased sharply. In 2021, more than 40% of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 reported that they had been bullied exclusively online (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The research also shows that cyberbullying has a major impact on the victims. More than half of the young people surveyed indicated that the bullying led to emotional and psychological complaints.

The fact that cyberbullying is a growing problem and that it causes a lot of damage to the victims is beyond view. There are many parties that are committed to stimulating online social behavior. One of these organizations is Netwerk Mediawijsheid. They are committed to stimulating pro-social behavior online among all ages with national campaigns. The Week of Media Literacy, with the theme 'Like & Cancel' is a good example of this. During the campaign, Netwerk Mediawijsheid provides interesting insights and good examples and offers tools to keep it social online together (Netwerk Mediawijsheid, 2022). Although Netwerk Mediawijsheid often collaborates with partners to motivate young people to behave socially online, they wonder how they themselves can play a more direct role in this issue. They notice that the events that they organize in collaboration with partners, such as workshops and performances, attract few young people. Netwerk Mediawijsheid believes that by using a social media campaign they can reach young people better and thus influence their attitude towards online bullying more strongly. Although campaigns are seen by many companies as a means to generate attention for their product, they are also increasingly used to draw attention to social problems (Bughin et al., 2010; Campbell & Brauer, 2022). Only a small number of researchers have conducted research into the effects of framing and which methods of campaigning are most effective in solving social problems, such as cyberbullying (Milosevic, 2015; Savage et al., 2017; Amarah et al., 2020). This research can therefore be very useful, in addition to for Netwerk Mediawijsheid, to add theoretical knowledge to science. Based on this, the following research question was chosen:

To what extent does an episodically framed campaign by Netwerk Mediawijsheid lead to a more negative attitude among young people between the ages of 18 and 24 towards online bullying than a thematically framed campaign?

It is relevant for Netwerk Mediawijsheid to get an answer to this research question, so that they know what kind of campaign they need to develop to make young people aware of the seriousness of cyberbullying. In addition, it is very useful for Netwerk Mediawijsheid to find out on

which social media platforms cyberbullying occurs the most, so that they know on which platforms they need to launch these campaigns.

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Definition of Cyberbullying

Nowadays, it appears to be very difficult to define the concept of cyberbullying (Langos, 2012). The main reason for this is that cyberbullying develops along with the development of technology, which means that it can take on different forms (Farley et al., 2021). Some researchers define cyberbullying as a form of general bullying. An example of this is the definition of Olweus (1994), who was one of the first to define this concept. He stated that cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place in a digital environment, caused by the use of computers and other electronic devices. A good definition, in addition to the fact that cyberbullying takes place in the digital world, also mentions what forms bullying can take and for what purposes it is done. A definition that does this very well, and can therefore be considered complete, is the definition by Tokunaga (2010) and reads as follows: ‘Cyberbullying is any behavior carried out through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups who repeatedly send hostile or aggressive messages intended to harm or inconvenience others’ (Tokunaga, 2010, p.278).

2.2 Definition Thematic and Episodic frame

Framing is defined as “*selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the described item*” (Entman, 1993, p.52). Two subframes that are often applied in social campaigns are episodic and thematic frames (Nitz & West, 2013). Episodic framed campaigns focus on specific examples from someone’s life, such as a personal story, with the aim of illustrating broader issues (Peter & Zerback, 2020). Thematic frames are defined as stories that place public issues in a more general or abstract context, often supported by facts and statistics (Iyengar, 1996). Which of these two frames is most successful in achieving attitude change will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Relationship Campaigns and Attitude Change

Over the past decade, many organizations have campaigned to draw attention to cyberbullying. Stichting Ideële Reclame was one of the first parties to draw national attention to this problem with its campaign in 2006 (Steffgen et al., 2010). Since then, researchers have conducted extensive research into which campaign methods are most effective in changing public attitudes. A clear conclusion seems to be drawn from previous research comparing episodically and thematically

framed campaigns. Research into the effectiveness of these two approaches shows that emotional, personal stories have a greater impact on attitude formation than statistically based approaches (Milosevic, 2015; Savage et al., 2017; Amarah et al., 2020).

There are several reasons why thematic frames are less effective in the context of an anti-cyberbullying campaign. First, thematic frames are most effective when either no or a weak emotional response is elicited as a result of the campaign (Aarøe, 2011). In the case of a campaign about cyberbullying, in which the number of people who committed suicide after being bullied online is mentioned, an emotional response will almost always be elicited, whether this is stated using a thematic or episodic frame. A second reason is that people experience thematically framed stories as less interesting and relevant than episodically framed stories (Coleman et al., 2011). Because people find a campaign in which statistics about cyberbullying cases are less interesting and relevant, it will attract less attention from people and therefore have little effect on their attitudes towards cyberbullying. Finally, previous research shows that by using thematic frames, people attribute responsibility for a problem to factors such as failed government programs, the political climate, or economic conditions (Iyengar, 1991). In the case of cyberbullying, this leads people to develop more negative attitudes toward political bodies rather than toward the cyberbullying itself (Milosevic, 2015).

How is it then that researchers claim that episodic frames will lead to more attitude change? This can be explained by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Jacobs et al., 2014). This theory states that persuasion can work via a central or peripheral route and that personal characteristics determine the relative effectiveness of these processes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The route chosen depends on the extent to which someone is able to process the information. In the case of social media campaigns, people do not watch the campaign for more than 10 seconds on average (Klein et al., 2020). As a result, people do not have the time to form their attitude based on arguments, as happens via the central route. If this time were available, a thematically framed campaign would be very effective. However, this time is not available, which means that people will process the information from the campaign via the peripheral route. Factors such as colours, shapes, but also emotions such as fear play an important role in this. These emotions are most strongly aroused in episodically framed campaigns, through storytelling (Aarøe, 2011). As a result, an episodically framed campaign seems to be more successful in influencing young people's attitudes towards cyberbullying. Based on the above information, the following hypothesis was chosen, which can be found in Figure 1:

H1: An episodically-framed social media campaign is more positively related to attitude change toward cyberbullying than a thematically-framed social media campaign, such that youth who see an episodically-framed campaign will have a more negative attitude toward cyberbullying than youth who see a thematically-framed one.

2.4 Social Media Platforms

Previous research into cyberbullying on social media clearly identifies three platforms as places where cyberbullying most often occurs: Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (Abaido, 2019; Mkhize & Gopal, 2021). It should be noted that new popular platforms, such as TikTok, have not yet been researched much. The main reason that cyberbullying often occurs on these platforms is the ease with which someone can share a bullying-related photo of someone else with followers, post nasty comments under someone else's post, and act anonymously (Mahlangu et al., 2018). Based on the above information, the following hypothesis was chosen:

H2: The attitude towards cyberbullying is most positive among young people who use the social media platforms Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Figure 1

Conceptual model Exposure to social media campaign and attitude towards cyberbullying.



Method

3.1 Demographic data

In order to determine which campaign approach is most effective in influencing young people's attitudes towards cyberbullying, an experiment was developed to collect the necessary data. An experiment is used to investigate the causal relationship between different variables (Gravetter & Forzano, 2021). In the case of this study, this measurement method was chosen because the aim of the study is to investigate the causal relationship between campaigns and attitudes towards cyberbullying. Several choices were made for the study. Firstly, it was decided to only look at young people in the 18-24 age category. This was chosen because social media is most popular within this age category (Gruzd et al., 2018). In addition, it was decided to only carry out a post-measurement, because the time interval between a pre- and post-measurement would be too short for practical reasons for this study. The consequences of this for the internal validity will be discussed in the discussion.

Om deel te kunnen nemen aan het experiment was er één vereiste. Participanten moesten tussen de 18 en 24 jaar oud zijn. De respondenten zijn geworven door middel van een gemakssteekproef. Door het experiment online te in verschillende facebook-groepen is er een totaal aan 96 participanten geworven.

Because boys can complete the experiment online in as natural a situation as possible, external validity is guaranteed. Afterwards, 16 participants' data turned out to be unusable, which is why they were removed. This ultimately left 80 participants. The average age of the participants turned out to be well distributed, namely around 22 years ($M = 21.90$, $SD = 2.13$). This was different for gender. 65.0% of the participants turned out to be female and only 35.0% were male. With regard to education level, HBO was most often mentioned as the highest level of education achieved (40.0%). Looking at the social media use of the participants, three platforms turned out to be used by far the most: WhatsApp (95.0%), Instagram (91.3%) and YouTube (91.3%).

3.2 Procedure

The recruitment text contained a link, after which participants were forwarded to the experiment. When they had read the informed consent and agreed to participate, the study began. First, the participant was asked some demographic characteristics. More specifically, the participant had to fill in age, gender and education level. In addition, the participant had to indicate on which social media platforms he or she was active. After this, the participant was exposed to the stimulus material. The participant was randomly assigned to either the thematically framed or the episodically framed campaign. After being exposed to the campaign, the dependent variable, attitude towards cyberbullying, was measured. Finally, a manipulation check was performed by asking whether the participant found the campaign factual or emotionally charged. The study concluded with the debriefing, in which the aim of the study was made clear to the participant.

3.3. Operationalization

3.3.1. Social Media Campaign

As previously described, a distinction was made between thematically framed and episodically framed campaigns. Both fictional campaigns were developed specifically for this research and therefore never presented publicly. In order to make the campaigns look as realistic as possible, the style guide of Netwerk Mediawijsheid was used and the logo of the organization can also be seen on the campaign post. Both campaigns are identical, except for the text. The thematically framed campaign includes three texts that emphasize facts proven by research, such as the number of Dutch people who experience online bullying and what the most common consequences of cyberbullying are. These texts are based on practical research. (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022; Netwerk Mediawijsheid, 2022). For the episodically framed campaign, the factual texts were replaced by personal stories of victims of cyberbullying. In contrast to the thematically framed campaign, these texts describe how victims feel and quotes statements from victims. These quotes come from various

news articles, but have been modified to the extent that they cannot be traced back to the articles in question. In addition, the names of the victims have been modified or made anonymous. The two campaigns can be found in Appendix 2. In addition, a third group was included in the experiment, namely a control group. This group was not shown either of the two campaigns, but was forwarded directly to the questions measuring attitudes towards cyberbullying after filling in the demographic data.

In order to check whether the two campaigns were experienced by the participants as either thematically or episodically framed, a manipulation check was added at the end of the experiment. Because it was assumed that many participants do not know what thematic and episodic frames are, the participant was asked whether he or she found the campaign factually or emotionally charged. A chi-square test on a cross-tabulation showed that this manipulation test was significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 90) = 38.05, p < .001$. For the episodically framed campaign, 82.8% of the people who saw this campaign described it as emotionally charged. This figure was slightly lower for the thematically framed campaign, namely 75.8%.

3.3.2. Attitude towards cyberbullying

Attitude towards cyberbullying was measured using 9 items from the study by Barlett et al. (2016). The items could be answered using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An example of the statements presented is as follows: 'Attacking others online can be justified.' All 9 items in this scale can be found in Appendix 1. The Factor Analysis with Principal Axis Factoring and Oblimin rotation showed that 1 factor was formed with an eigenvalue higher than 1, $EW = 3.64$, $EV = 45.48\%$. However, the analysis also showed that one item had a very low communality. It was therefore decided not to include this item in further analyses. In order to check whether this scale is reliable, a reliability analysis was performed with the remaining 8 items. This analysis shows that the scale, formed with the 8 items, is reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.80. The scale could not be improved by removing an item, which resulted in the scale for attitude towards cyberbullying with 8 items. Participants scored relatively negatively on the scale on average ($M = 1.68$, $SD = 0.58$).

3.4. Analysis plan

Before the hypotheses can be tested, independent t-tests, ANOVA tests or correlation tests were first performed for the control variables. The test performed depends on the measurement level of the different control variables. Then, an ANCOVA test was performed for the significant control variables to check for the correlations of the remaining control variables. After this, a one-way ANOVA test was performed to test H1. Finally, a one-way ANOVA test was performed again to test H2.

Results

4.1 Covariates

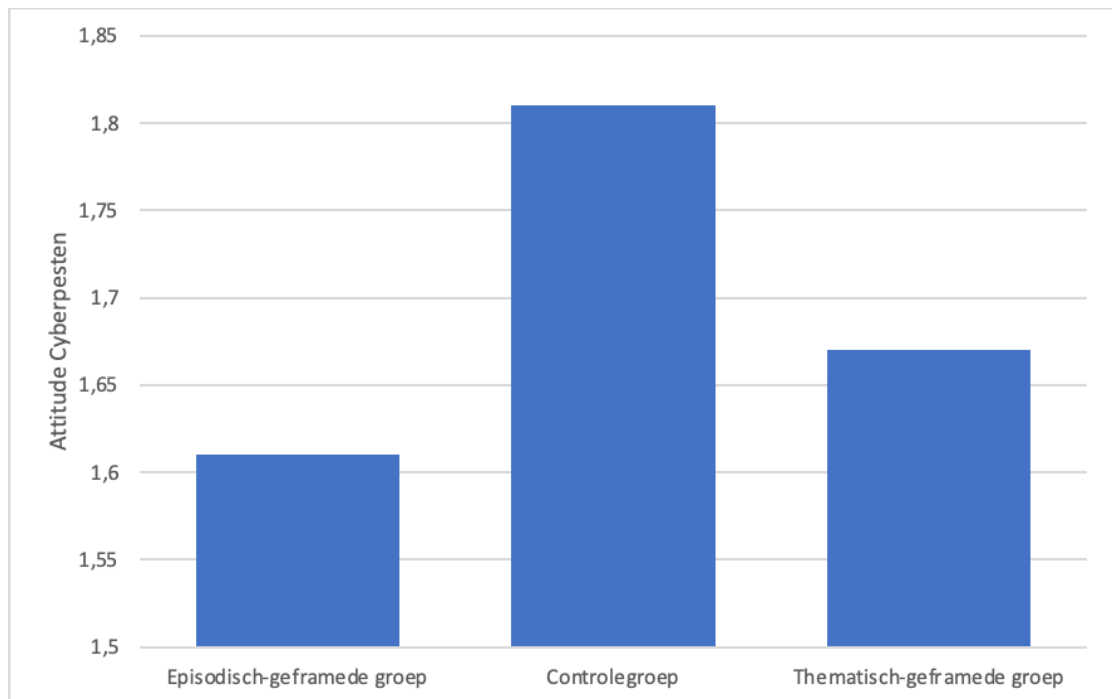
Before an independent t-test could be performed to test H1, a covariate check was performed for the variables age, gender and education level. For this, either an independent t-test, ANOVA test or correlation test were performed, depending on the measurement level of the control variable. These tests showed that the average attitude towards cyberbullying was significantly more positive for men ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.62$) than for women ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.48$), $t(78) = 4.00$, $p < .001$. No significant effect was found for the other two covariates. However, a subsequent ANCOVA test showed no significant effect, which is why gender is not included as a control variable in further analyses.

4.2 Framing Effectiveness

Subsequently, a one-way ANOVA test was performed to test H1. The one-way ANOVA showed that the control group had on average a more positive attitude towards cyberbullying ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 0.64$) than youth who saw an episodic- ($M = 1.61$, $SD = 0.55$) or thematically-framed ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 0.58$) campaign. This finding can be seen in Figure 2. However, no significant evidence was found that episodically-framed campaigns resulted in a more negative attitude than thematically-framed campaigns, $F(2, 77) = 0.67$, $p = .515$. Based on this, H1 can be rejected.

Figure 2

Average score groups on attitude towards cyberbullying



4.3 Social Media Platform

Finally, an independent t-test was performed for each social media platform to test H2. Because SPSS does not allow multiple answer options within a variable, a separate test must be performed for each social media platform, in this case an independent t-test. What is immediately noticeable is that no significant relationship is found between each social media platform and attitude towards cyberbullying. Despite this, Twitter users appear to be the most positive towards cyberbullying ($M = 1.80$, $SD = 0.60$), $t(78) = -0.80$, $p = .306$, 95%CI [-0.14, 0.18]. In second place, as expected, is Facebook ($M = 1.69$, $SD = 0.57$), $t(78) = -0.21$, $p = .836$, 95%CI [-0.33, 0.27]. The top 3 is unexpectedly completed by YouTube ($M = 1.66$, $SD = 0.56$), $t(78) = 0.67$, $p = .503$, 95%CI [-0.30, 0.61]. The average attitude of all platforms can be found in Figure 3. The findings can also be found in graph form in Figure 4. Despite the fact that users of two of the three predicted platforms are the most positive towards cyberbullying, H2 must also be rejected.

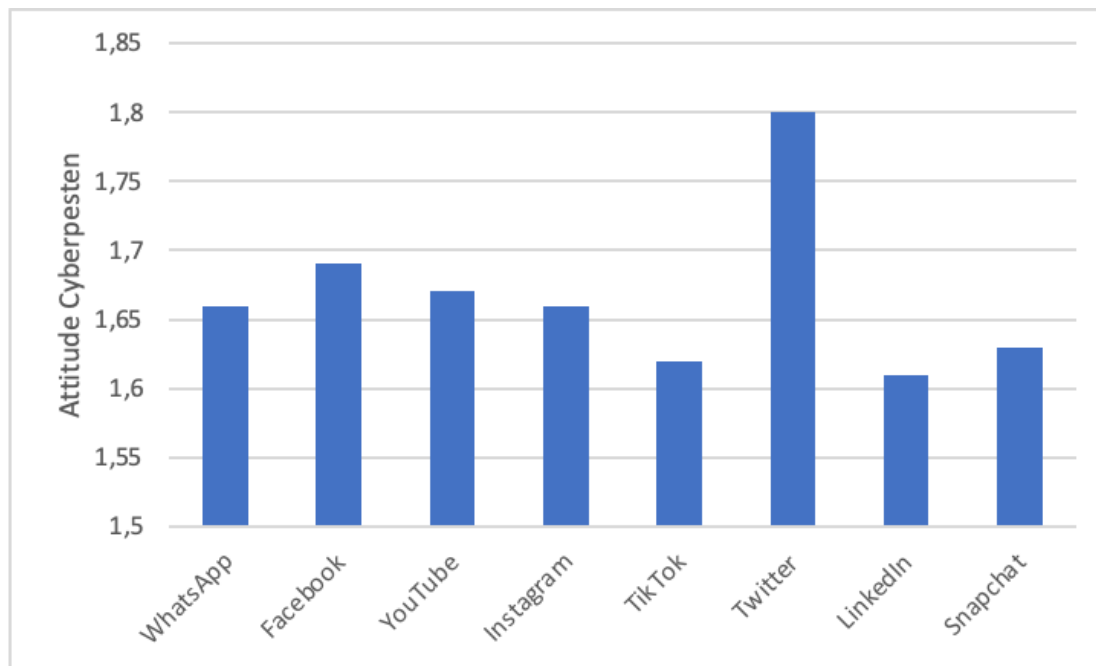
Figure 3

Average score of social media platforms on attitude towards cyberbullying

Social Media Channel	Average Attitude
WhatsApp	1,66
Facebook	1,69
YouTube	1,67
Instagram	1,66
TikTok	1,62
Twitter	1,80
LinkedIn	1,61
Snapchat	1,63

Figure 4

Graph of the average score of social media platforms on attitude towards cyberbullying



Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

The following research question was central to this study: To what extent does an episodically framed campaign by Netwerk Mediawijsheid lead to a more negative attitude of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 towards online bullying than a thematically framed campaign? The first hypothesis states that episodically framed campaigns lead to a more negative attitude than thematically framed campaigns. However, based on the tests performed, no significant evidence for H1 is found, but the results do suggest that episodically framed campaigns lead to a more negative attitude towards cyberbullying. The non-significant result is contradictory to previous studies (Milosevic, 2015; Savage et al., 2017; Amarah et al., 2020). The most obvious argument why the results deviate from previous studies is that most studies use longer personal stories instead of quotes as manipulation material. The problem here is that quotes can contain too little text and information, which does not evoke an emotional response and therefore makes the campaign less effective (Burgess & Martín-Martín, 2020). Longer stories contain more information, which allows the reader to better empathize with the victim's story. A second reason that previous studies show a different picture may be hidden in the fact that these studies were conducted among American youth instead of Dutch youth. Whether episodic framed anti-cyberbullying campaigns are actually more effective among American youth than among Dutch youth will have to be determined by future research. Based on the average attitudes from this

study and previous studies, it seems more effective for Netwerk Mediawijsheid to use episodic-framed campaigns.

In order to find out on which platforms Netwerk Mediawijsheid can focus and launch their campaigns, H2 was tested. This hypothesis stated that the attitude towards cyberbullying is most positive among young people who use Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Although no significant evidence was found for this either, it seems that users of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have the least negative attitude. These results are partly in line with previous studies (Abaido, 2019; Mkhize & Gopal, 2021). The main reason that these three platforms seem to be the most sensitive to cyberbullying lies in the fact that everyone can move completely anonymously on the platforms (Matamoros-Fernández, 2017). This is in contrast to platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat, where photos of the person behind the account can often be seen. The fact that Twitter scores the highest can be explained by the fact that the platform is seen as the place where people can share and specify their opinion with the world (Shakeel & Dwivedi, 2022). Despite the non-significant results of this study, Facebook and Twitter seem to emerge in all studies as the platforms where users have the least negative attitude towards cyberbullying. The Media Literacy Network could focus on the platforms in the future with a campaign.

5.2 Discussion

Although this study helps Netwerk Mediawijsheid to provide insight into which type of social media campaigns are most effective in influencing the attitude towards cyberbullying of young people, it was subject to important limitations. First, the number of respondents is relatively low. Based on a g-power test, the ideal number of respondents for this study is around 250. This number was not achieved in this study, which means that it is important to recruit a larger number of respondents in the future. The relatively low number of respondents also has a negative impact on the external validity of the study. A larger number of respondents makes the findings more generalizable to the entire population. A second shortcoming concerns the operationalization. For this study, it was decided to only apply a post-measurement of attitude towards cyberbullying. As a result, it is not known what the attitude of the respondents was before seeing the campaign and to what extent the campaign causes a change in attitude. As a result, the effect of the campaign cannot be ruled out. This has a negative impact on the internal validity of the study. On the other hand, participants are not influenced by a pre-measurement, whereby they may remember the answers they gave in this pre-measurement. Because a pre-measurement cannot influence the results, external validity is better guaranteed. In the future, more time can be spent on the research, which means that a pre- and post-measurement can be used. Finally, the manipulation check shows that approximately 80% of the respondents understood what kind of campaign they had watched. As a result, internal validity is not fully guaranteed. For participants who did not experience the campaign shown in the way intended, there is a good chance that their attitude

formation can be explained by other factors. To solve this problem, a pilot study can now be carried out in advance to check whether the manipulation material has the desired effect.

In addition to the above recommendations, there are a few recommendations for further research that are worth mentioning. Children are getting access to social media at an increasingly younger age, which makes it important to make them aware of the seriousness of cyberbullying from an early age. Future research could show what role campaigns can play in this. In addition, it could be investigated in the future whether campaigns with longer, personal stories lead to more attitude change than campaigns with quotes, which was examined in this study. Finally, it is important that a lot of research is done on new social media platforms, such as TikTok. New platforms often use new technologies, which are accompanied by new forms of cyberbullying that need to be mapped out.

The aim of this study was to provide Netwerk Mediawijsheid with insight into the issue of how they can use campaigns to combat online bullying on social media. Netwerk Mediawijsheid can use the knowledge about which platforms are the most bullied by launching campaigns on these platforms. Although the results are not significant, it seems based on previous research and the averages from this study that episodic-framed campaigns are the most effective in realising attitude change in the target group. Netwerk Mediawijsheid can apply this knowledge in practice by engaging with victims of online bullying and incorporating these personal stories into a campaign.

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Appendix 1: Quistionnaire

{Information 1}

You will first be asked a number of questions regarding your demographics.

Q1_1

What is your age in years?

- _____

Q1_2

What is your gender

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q1_3

What is the highest level of education you are currently pursuing?

- High school diploma
- MBO
- HBO
- Bachelor degree
- Master degree
- PHD

Q1_4

What different social media platforms do you use? (Multiple answers possible)WhatsApp

- Facebook
- YouTube
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Snapchat
- Other, namely ____

{Intro Campaign}

You will now see a fictional social media campaign post about online bullying from Netwerk Mediawijsheid. You have 20 seconds to view the fictional campaign post. You will then be redirected to the next question.

{Campagne 1}



{Campagne 2}



{Information 2}

Please read each statement about your own attitude towards online bullying carefully and indicate to what extent the statement applies to you on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Q2

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy teasing or ridiculing others online with harmful comments.	0	0	0	0	0
You may send harmful online messages/posts to another person.	0	0	0	0	0

It makes me feel good to attack others online when they deserve it.	0	0	0	0	0
I have no hesitation in using technology to hurt others when they deserve it.	0	0	0	0	0
Harming others through social media is acceptable.	0	0	0	0	0
School/university rules will not be effective in stopping cyberbullying.	0	0	0	0	0
Sending mean messages to others online is less harmful than face-to-face communication.	0	0	0	0	0
Attacking others online can be justified.	0	0	0	0	0
When I'm not talking to another person face to face, but online, I feel like I can say whatever I want, even if it's mean or hurtful.	0	0	0	0	0