Safe Space
Examining Contextual Influences on Self-disclosure in a Security Vetting Scenario

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Background

Sensitive Self-disclosure and Security Vetting

- Security vetting requires full and accurate disclosure to personal questions about one's history, lifestyle, and behaviours.
- There is minimal published research on self-disclosure in security vetting scenarios.
- Previous research on self-disclosure has focused on stranger dyads, and examined how factors such as gender, personality, and reciprocity affect self-disclosure.

Communication in Context

- Context may play an important role in sensitive self-disclosure.
- Studies have examined how perceptions of physical spaces (e.g., lighting, temperature, room size) affect disclosure; and how perception of spaciousness may encourage disclosure.
- Self-disclosure behaviour may also be affected by:
  - **Computer Mediated Communication.** May produce increased sensitive self-disclosure due to increased perception of anonymity.
  - **Place Attachment.** Using the connection individuals have to the important places in their lives may also increase sensitive self-disclosure.

Current Study

- Little is understood about the determinants of sensitive self-disclosure in a security vetting scenario. We address this gap in knowledge using a vetting paradigm.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Those interviewed online will endorse the most questions (that is, respond affirmatively to questions such that further information is required), followed by those interviewed in their home, the office, and then public.

- **H2:** Those interviewed online will disclose the most details, followed by those interviewed in their home, the office, and then public.

Method

Sample

- 124 Lancaster University students (68% women; M_{age} = 21.75 years)
- Primarily UK, EU, Chinese, and Nigerian nationals
- Assigned randomly to one of four interview contexts:

Interview

**Sensitive Topics Questionnaire (STQ)**; 37 questions about:

- Affiliations (suspicious connections; questionable loyalties)
  - *Have any of your family members spent time in prison?*
- Character (calculated deceit; cynical orientation)
  - *Have you ever said something racist?*
- Criminal transgressions (criminality, disrespect of the law or rules)
  - *Have you ever shoplifted?*
- Ego (protection of feelings of self-worth or self-definition)
  - *Have you ever had a mental health evaluation?*
- Irresponsible behaviour (disregard of obligations or wellbeing; impulsivity)
  - *Have you ever been fired from a job?*
- Substance use (sensation seeking)
  - *Have you used marijuana in the last three years?*

Measures

1. **Item Endorsement:** Number of affirmative responses per interview
2. **Information Yield:** Number of unique details were coded using a modified adaptation of the Assessment Criteria Indicative of Deception (ACID)
3. Demographic form
4. Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI)

Results

Item Endorsement and Information Yield Across Contexts
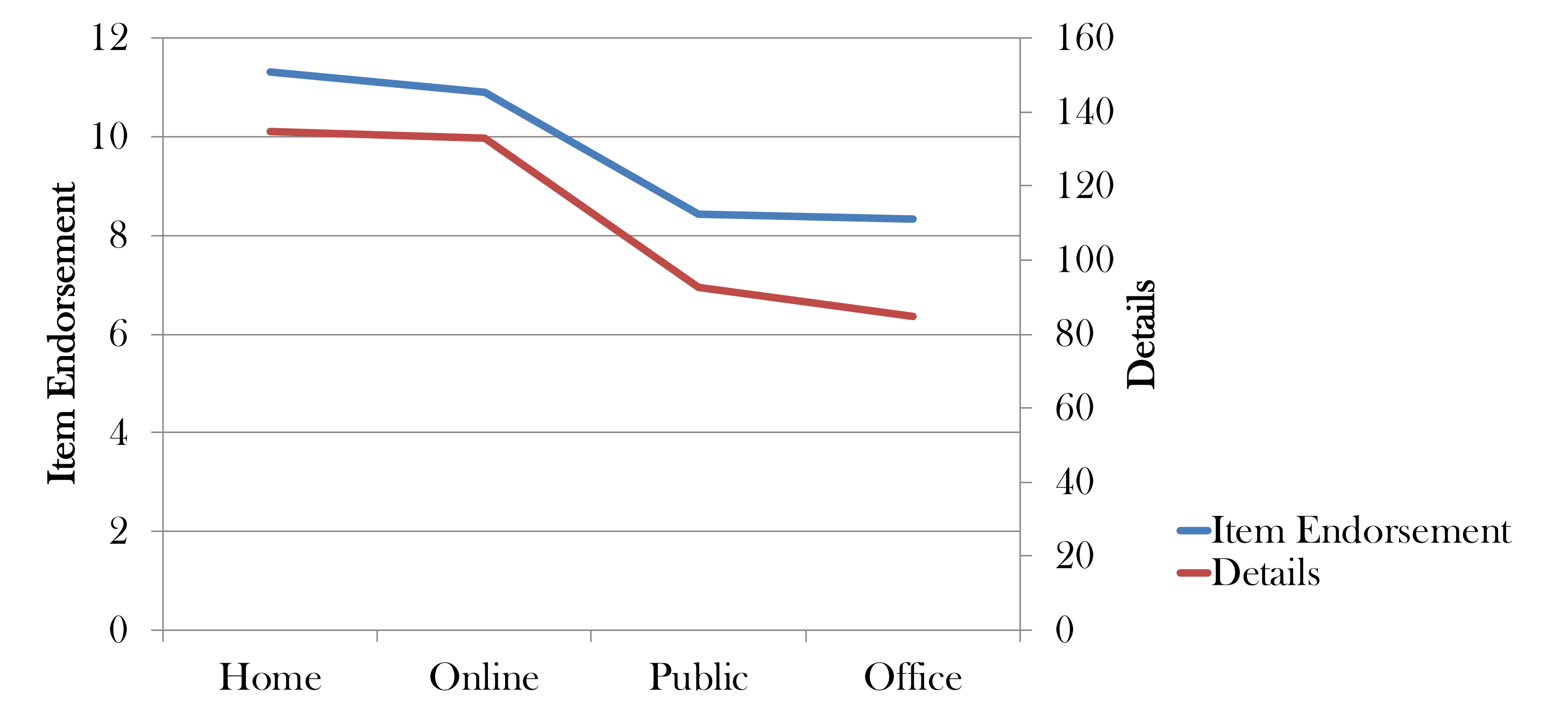
Partial support was found for the hypotheses.

- **Item Endorsement**
  - Home interviewees were significantly more likely to endorse questions than Office interviewees (d = 0.65), and Public interviewees (d = 0.69).
  - Online interviewees were significantly more likely to endorse questions than Office interviewees (d = 0.55) and Public interviewees (d = 0.57).
- **Information Yield**
  - Home interviewees provided significantly more details than Public interviewees (d = 0.70) and Office interviewees (d = 0.55).
  - Online interviewees provided significantly more details than Public interviewees (d = 0.63).
- Personality differences did not influence group-level outcomes.
- 90% of Online interviewees chose to interview from their Home.

Discussion

- Home-based interviews yielded greatest self-disclosure.
- Findings echo a recent study which found no differences in item endorsement or details disclosed when the interview occurs in the same location.
- This suggests that location may have a greater effect on self-disclosure than interview medium.
- Our sample was composed of Generation Z individuals, who primarily interact socially online. Further investigation is necessary to examine the effects of interview location and interview medium with older individuals.