

## **Abstract**

Dehumanization, that is perceiving others as lacking humanness, has been recently brought to public attention. The perpetrators of dehumanization may be less prosocial, more antisocial, and negatively shape public policies, while the victims of dehumanization may suffer from mental and functional issues. It is unarguably a common phenomenon with profoundly harmful consequences. Research in dehumanization has begun to highlight its existence across cultures, affecting targets like ethnic minorities, gender groups, and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. However, little attention has been paid to students with special education needs (SEN) in inclusive settings.

Built upon the Dual Model of Dehumanization, which differentiates between human uniqueness (i.e., differences between humans and animals) and human nature (i.e., differences between humans and objects), the research, with mixed methods design, aims at examining the dehumanizing perceptions of SEN students through various lenses (SEN students, parents, peers, teachers and the public), investigating its role in mental health and well-being, and exploring effective intervention strategies to reduce dehumanization.

In Phase 1, it examines self-dehumanization (whether and how SEN students dehumanize themselves), and its relationship with psychological well-being and school functioning, as well as dyadic relations with peers, parents, and teachers. Subjects (N over 1015 in total) are invited to complete measures of humanness, well-being, school functioning, and prejudice, followed by a survey among the non-SEN majority group members in society to examine how they dehumanize SEN students (other-dehumanization) and how it is related to prejudice and public policy support. In Phase 2, drawing on the quantitative findings of Phase 1, experiments are conducted to directly manipulate the perception of humanness of SEN students and measure its effects on dehumanization, prejudice, subjective well-being, and public policy support (N over 540 in total). Findings from Phase 2 not only substantiate the previous studies in this field, but also provide practical implications to reduce dehumanization and its negative consequences for SEN students.

In summary, the identified prevalence and key features of the dehumanization of SEN students and their associations with psychological consequences will contribute to the limited literature on this important topic in SEN students. The outcome is also significant as it further explores its underlying mechanisms through experimental studies to offer more solid empirical data as compared to previous cross-sectional designs, as well as sheds valuable insights for future practical endeavours on providing solutions to both self- and other-dehumanization of this vulnerable group in Chinese context.