

1 **The formation processes and development characteristics of boulder**
2 **bars due to outburst flood triggered by the overtopped landslide dam**
3 **failure**

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12 **Abstract**

13 Boulder bars are a common form of riverbed morphology that could be affected
14 by landslide dams. However, few studies have focused on the formation processes and
15 development characteristics of boulder bars triggered by outburst floods. In such way,
16 eight group landslide dam failure experiments with movable bed length for 4 to 7 times
17 of dam length are carried out to study the temporal and spatial distributions of
18 boulder bars along the riverbeds, the boulder bar geometric characteristics, and the
19 influence of dam volume and the released flood volume on the total volume of boulder
20 bars. The results show that boulder bars are formed after peak discharge of outburst
21 flow. The number of boulder bars is 0.4 to 1.0 times the ratio of river bed length to dam
22 length. Besides, boulder bars have the characteristic of lengthening towards upstream

23 during the failure process. Boulder bar's upstream edge has a more extensive
24 development than boulder bar downstream edge. The length of a boulder bar along the
25 channel changes faster than the boulder bar's width and height. The boulder bar's length
26 is about 7 to 16 times of width. The landslide dam can provide materials for the
27 formation and development of the boulder bar. When landslide dam volume is larger,
28 the boulder bars' total volume on the river bed is larger. Specifically, when the released
29 flood volume is larger, the boulder bars' total volume will be larger. Comparing the
30 experimental results in this paper with the Yigong field data, many characteristics of
31 the experiments and the field are consistent. Therefore, results in this paper can be
32 applied to the river channel's geomorphological characteristics analysis triggered by
33 overtopped landslide dam failure.

34 **Keywords**

35 Landslide dam · Overtopping failure · Dam volume and released flood volume · boulder
36 bar formation and development

37 **1. Introduction**

38 Activities such as rainfalls and earthquakes often cause landslides, which block the
39 river to form a water-retaining body similar to a reservoir dam, called a landslide dam
40 (Takahashi, 2007; Costa and Schuster, 1988; Casagli, 2003). According to statistics,
41 85 % of the dams failed within one year after formations, and more than 50 % of the
42 dams breach with overtopping mode (Costa and Schuster, 1988). When the dam breach,
43 the storage water erupt and flow to the downstream riverbed.

44 Many studies on the influence of flood geomorphology and sedimentary
45 characteristics have proved that the outburst flood energy is huge, and it can entrain and
46 transport materials of various sizes, from clay to boulders. A large number of boulders
47 gather in the river to form bars, namely boulder bars. The downstream riverbed's
48 geomorphology will be significantly affected and undergo significant changes (Lamb
49 and Fonstad, 2010; Maizels, 1997; Russell and Knudsen, 1999; Marren and Schuh,
50 2009; Benito and O'Connor, 2003; Carling, 2013; Wu et al., 2020). Boulder bars are
51 one common landform formed during the outburst flood evolution (Turzewski et al.,
52 2019; Jiang and Wei, 2020; Wu et al., 2020). For example, in the 2000 year, Yigong
53 outburst flood, due to its huge lake storage, formed many huge boulder bars on the river
54 bed. The boulder bars had a significant impact on the development of the river. And Wu
55 et al. (2020) investigated the impact of this event on river morphology and analyzed the
56 shapes and geometric characteristics of the boulder bars caused by the overtopping
57 flood. And they found that the boulder bar components are poorly sorted. Turzewski et
58 al. (2019) studied the particle gradation of the boulder bars during the Yigong River
59 landslide dam failure process. They found that the boulder bars' particle sizes decrease
60 along the lower reaches of the river bed. But they did not analyze the evolution
61 characteristics of boulder bar's size in detail. Lamb and Fonstad (2010) suggested that
62 the rising and falling stages of the outburst flood had a greater impact on riverbed
63 geomorphology and analyzed the characteristics of the median diameter of material in
64 boulder bar.

65 Because lack of field investigations about the growth characteristics of boulder

66 bars during the landslide dam failure process in the field, some researchers had
67 conducted landslide dam failure experiments in the lab (Jiang and Wei, 2020; Ashworth,
68 1996). Ashworth (1996) used flume experiments to study the boulder bar's growth.
69 However, in their experiment, the inflow conditions are quite different from the outburst
70 flood. Therefore, the research results' applicability to the boulder bar formed by the
71 outburst flood remains uncertain. Jiang and Wei (2020) qualitatively analyzed the
72 formation process of boulder bar in the evolution of overtopping outburst floods using
73 dam failure experiments and initially discussed the characteristics of geometric
74 dimensions of boulder bars after dam failure. However, the characteristics of the
75 boulder bar's positions and geometric sizes during the dam failure process have not
76 been analyzed.

77 Above all, no matter whether it is field observations or indoor experiments, the
78 boulder bar's development characteristic during the landslide dam overtopping failure
79 process has not been proved. This paper focuses on the formation processes, the
80 geometrical size characteristics of boulder bars in the downstream channel during the
81 overtopping failure process, and how the dam volume and the released flood volume
82 affect boulder bars' total volume. Firstly, through flume experiments, boulder bars'
83 formation processes on the downstream channel under the dammed lake failure
84 condition were reproduced. Then, based on the experimental data, the development
85 characteristics of boulder bars' upstream and downstream edges were analyzed.
86 Furthermore, statistical analysis of boulder bars geometrical dimensions at each
87 moment during the failure process, such as length, width, height, and volume, had been

88 carried out to obtain boulder bars' size characteristics. And then, by analyzing the total
 89 volume of the boulder bar under different dam volumes and the released flood volumes,
 90 the influences of the released flood volume and dam volume on the boulder bar total
 91 volume were obtained. Finally, compare the boulder bar formed by the Yigong outburst
 92 flood and the boulder bar formed by the experiment to verify this experiment's
 93 reliability.

94 **2. Experimental design**

95 **2.1 Model design and experimental materials**

96 The longitudinal profiles of experimental landslide dams were trapezoidal and
 97 triangular. The trapezoidal dam height and crest width were both 0.3 m, and the
 98 triangular dam height was also 0.3 m. In the experiment, river bed slope angle θ was
 99 fixed at 10° , and the landslide dam upstream slope angle α was set to 40° , and the
 100 landslide dam downstream slope angles β were set to five different values. The
 101 moveable bed was set downstream of the model dam, which had a length of 8 m. The
 102 downstream channel bed's length was about 4 to 7 times of dam length along the
 103 channel. The test parameters are shown in Table 1.

104 **Table 1** test parameters

No.	Dam shape	β ($^\circ$)
T1	Trapezoid	10
T2	Trapezoid	15
T3	Trapezoid	20
T4	Trapezoid	25
T5	Trapezoid	30
T6	Tringle	10
T7	Tringle	15
T8	Tringle	20

105 Peng and Zhang (2012) proposed that landslide dam height (H_d), dam bottom
 106 width parallel to the channel (W_d), dam volume (V_d), and reservoir volume (V_l) are the
 107 key geometric parameters of landslide dam, and proposed a set of dimensionless
 108 numbers, $\frac{H_d}{W_d}$, $\frac{V_d^{1/3}}{H_d}$ and $\frac{V_l^{1/3}}{H_d}$, to verify whether the established dam model is
 109 consistent with the landslide dam in the field (Zhou et al., 2019). As the field data show
 110 that the $\frac{H_d}{W_d}$, $\frac{V_d^{1/3}}{H_d}$ and $\frac{V_l^{1/3}}{H_d}$ are ranged about 0.001 to 2, 0 to 40, and 0 to 20 for filed
 111 landslide dam (Zhou et al., 2019). Table 2 shows the dimensionless numbers of the
 112 experimental dams, which are all within the acceptable range of the field landslide dams,
 113 indicating that the dams in the experiments are relatively close to field landslide dams.
 114 **Table 2** landslide dam parameters. The value of $\frac{H_d}{W_d}$ ranges from 0.1 to 0.3, and $\frac{V_d^{1/3}}{H_d}$ and $\frac{V_l^{1/3}}{H_d}$
 115 both range from 1 to 2, which all fall within the acceptable range of values of the field landslide
 116 dams (Zhou et al., 2019).

No.	H_d (m)	W_d (m)	$\frac{H_d}{W_d}$	$\frac{V_d^{1/3}}{H_d}$	$\frac{V_l^{1/3}}{H_d}$
T1	0.3	2.359	0.127	1.643	1.477
T2	0.3	1.777	0.169	1.513	1.477
T3	0.3	1.482	0.202	1.437	1.477
T4	0.3	1.301	0.231	1.387	1.477
T5	0.3	1.177	0.255	1.350	1.477
T6	0.3	2.059	0.146	1.508	1.477
T7	0.3	1.477	0.203	1.350	1.477
T8	0.3	1.182	0.254	1.254	1.477

117 The dam materials used in this study were mixtures of sand and gravels, with a
 118 median particle size D_{50} of 3.8 mm. Due to the flume space limitation, the maximum
 119 sediment particle size was set to 20 mm. The riverbed was movable, which consisted
 120 of the same material as the dam model. The thickness of the riverbed was set to 0.06 m.
 121 The gradation curve of material particles' sizes is shown in Fig. 1.

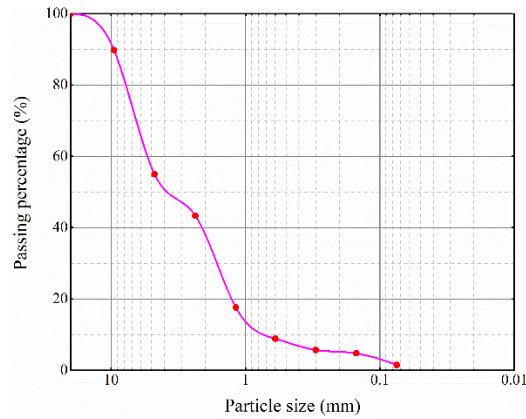
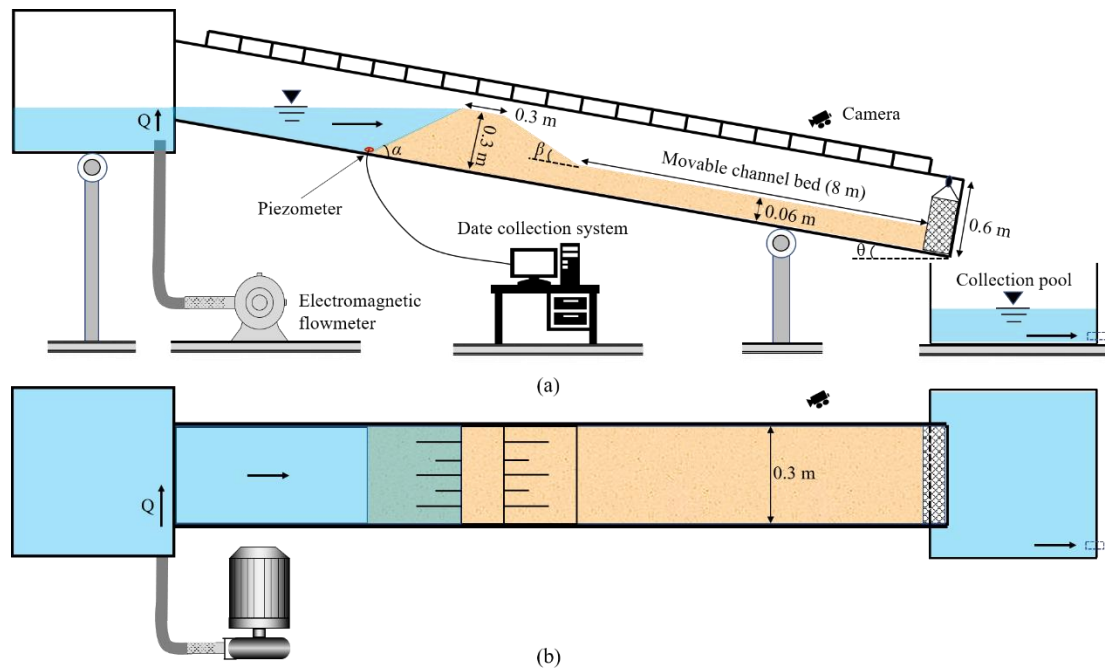


Figure. 1 Gradation curve of the dam materials

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124 2.2 Experimental apparatus

125 The experimental setups are shown in Fig. 2. The flume was 15 m long, 0.3 m
 126 wide, and 0.6 m high. The flume slope was adjustable from 10 to 30°. One side of the
 127 flume was transparent glass, and scale lines were drawn on the glass to facilitate
 128 observation and recording of experimental phenomena. The inflow discharge was set
 129 as 1.0 L s⁻¹. Under the control of the electromagnetic flowmeter, the error range could
 130 be controlled within ±0.01 L s⁻¹. In addition, piezometers were embedded at the toe of
 131 the dam upstream slope, which can help calculate the failure discharge. During the tests,
 132 the toe of the dam upstream slope was set at 4.5 m away from the water supply tank. A
 133 baffle with a height of 6 cm was set at the flume end as a boundary condition. Seven
 134 cameras were placed on the transparent glass side of the flume, one camera was placed
 135 on the top of the dam, and one camera was placed directly behind the flume. A total of
 136 nine cameras recorded the whole experimental phenomena.



137
138 **Figure. 2** Experimental setups. (a) Front view of the flume. (b) Top view of the flume.

139 **2.3 Measurements**

140 In the experiment, using the scale lines on the transparent glass on the side of the
 141 flume, we can accurately read the boulder bars' positions at each moment. Boulder bars'
 142 lengths, widths, and heights could be obtained from the screen. The boulder bars formed
 143 in their experiment were irregular, and the boulder bars' height close to the flume wall
 144 were slightly different from the height at other positions (Chen et al., 2015; Jiang and
 145 Wei, 2020). Therefore, in this experiment, we selected the boulder bars' section along
 146 the flume wall as concerned positions. And we took the average height or width along
 147 the wall of the flume as the representative height or width values of the boulder bars.
 148 According to the actual boulder bars' geometric characteristics, the boulder bars were
 149 divided into several parts, and then the volume calculation formula of the similar
 150 geometric body was used to calculate the volume of each part respectively, and finally,
 151 the boulder bars' volumes were obtained by summing.

152 According to the principle of hydrostatic pressure, the piezometers in front of the
153 dam can record the real-time changes of the water level. The water volume in front of
154 the dam can be obtained through the water level in front of the dam and the geometric
155 dimensions of the dam model:

$$V_{(t)} = \frac{1}{2} h_{(t)}^2 [\cot \theta + \cot(\alpha - \theta)] d * 1000 \quad (1)$$

156 where t is the time, s; $V_{(t)}$ is the water volume in front of the dam at time t , L; $h_{(t)}$ is
157 the height of the water surface in front of the dam at time t , m; α is landslide dam
158 upstream slope angle, °; θ is river bed slope angle, °; d is the width of the flume, m.

159 According to the water balance equation, the overtopping discharge can be
160 obtained as:

$$Q_{out} = Q_{in} - \frac{dV}{dt} \quad (2)$$

161 in which Q_{out} is the breaching discharge at the breach, L s⁻¹; Q_{in} is the inflow rate
162 L s⁻¹. Equation (2) can be used to obtain the breaching discharge at each moment, and
163 then the volume of released flood in the dam failure process can be obtained.

164 **3. Experimental results**

165 **3.1 Formation processes of boulder bars**

166 The formation processes of boulder bars are almost similar for all the tests.
167 Therefore, it takes the T7 test as an example to analyze below in this section, as shown
168 in Fig. 3. When the flow overtopped the dam crest, the outburst flood carried the dam
169 materials to the dam downstream slope (T=5 s) and then to the channel bed (T=19 s)
170 with outburst flow discharge increasing. It should be noted that although a large number

171 of sediments were transported on the channel bed before the peak discharge, no boulder
172 bar formed on the downstream channel bed. After the moment of peak discharge, the
173 flow discharge gradually weakened, and dam materials were transported to the position
174 near the dam toe. The flow could not transport all the sediments away, and some
175 sediments gradually silted down, then the first boulder bar occurred near the dam toe
176 (T=30 s, the boulder bar in the figure is marked with a blue dotted line). After the first
177 boulder bar was formed, the flow direction was changed when water flow bypassed the
178 boulder bar. And the moving sediments still moved along the original direction due to
179 inertia, which causes sediments piled up to form the second boulder bar on the opposite
180 side of the first boulder bar (T=33s).

181 Similarly, the first and second boulder bars affected the formation of the boulder
182 bar downstream. Eventually, boulder bars were scattered on both sides of the channel,
183 forming a meandering channel downstream (T=40 and 47 s). This phenomenon is in
184 good agreement with the field boulder bars along the Yigong river (Wu et al., 2020).



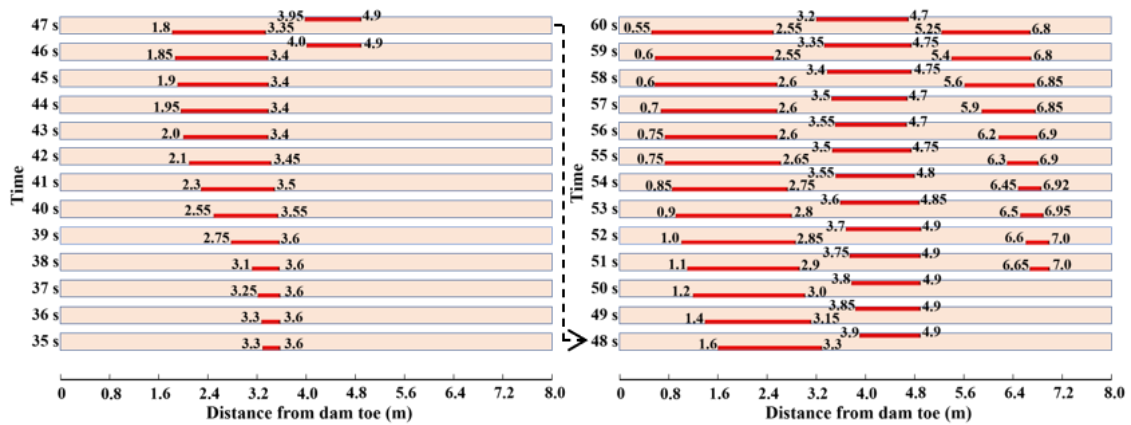
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186 **Figure. 3** The riverbed morphology at six different moments during the boulder bars' formations
187 and growths process for the T7 experiment. The boulder bars in the figure are marked with blue
188 dotted lines.

189 3.2 Characteristics of the boulder bars' positions

190 Figure. 4 shows boulder bars' locations on the channel bed during the dam failure
191 process. The red lines in the figure represent the boulder bars' outlines, and the orange
192 rectangles represent the channels. It clearly shows the formation sequences of boulder
193 bars at different locations. That is, boulder bars were formed first near the dams
194 (upstream reaches of riverbed), and the farther from the dam toe, the later the boulder
195 bar was formed, which is consistent with the content of Sect. 3.1. Boulder bars near the
196 downstream dam toes are all located on the dam breach side across the river. This
197 characteristic has also been found in Chen et al. (2015).

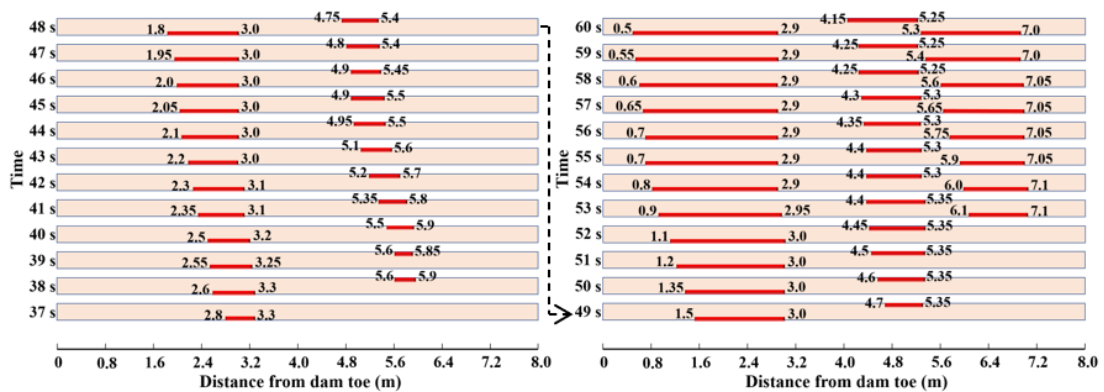
198 According to the boulder bars' formation sequences, the channel bed's boulder bars
199 were divided into three types: I. the boulder bar near the upstream reaches, that is, the
200 boulder bar near the dam toe; II. the boulder bar at the middle reaches; and III. the
201 boulder bar near the downstream reaches. Figure 4 shows that the upstream edges of
202 the boulder bars of type I for all the tests basically moved toward the dams with time
203 development. The movement directions of the downstream edges of boulder bars of
204 type I showed a little different: for T1, T2 and T5, the boulder bars' downstream edges
205 moved toward the dam toes, from a distance from the downstream toe of 3.6 to 2.55 m,
206 3.3 to 2.9 m and 3.7 to 3.4 m, respectively, as shown in Fig.4 (a), (b) and (e); for T6,
207 T7, and T8, the boulder bars' downstream edges first moved away from the dam toes
208 and then moved toward the dam toes, and the downstream edges move forward
209 compared to the original location. However, the distance they moved is 0.1 to 0.2 m, as
210 shown in Fig.4 (f), (g), and (h); for T3 and T4, the boulder bars' downstream edges

211 positions remained almost unchanged, see Fig. 4(c) and (d). No matter how the
 212 downstream edge positions of the boulder bars type I changed, there is a common
 213 feature: compared with the initial positions of the boulder bars, the downstream edges
 214 almost remained original locations, and the movement distances were much smaller
 215 than those of boulder bars' upstream edges. The lengths of the boulder bars of type I
 216 increased with the failure time. It can be seen that the sediments on the boulder bars'
 217 upstream edges played a great role in the length developments of type I boulder bars.



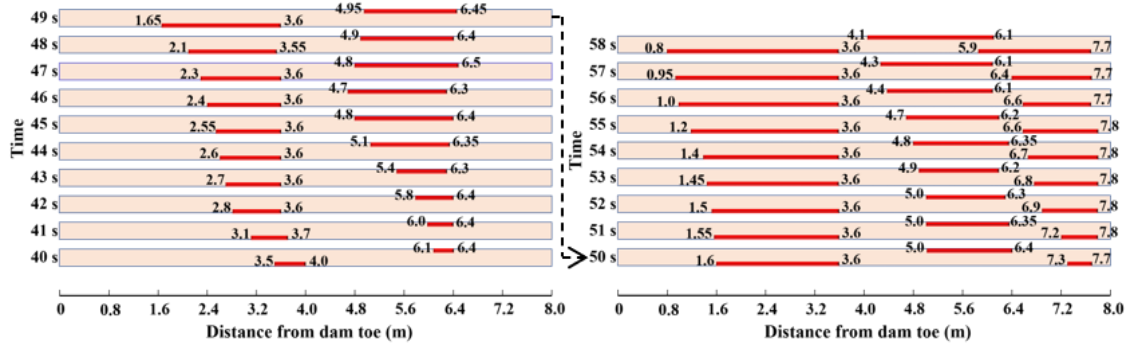
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(a)



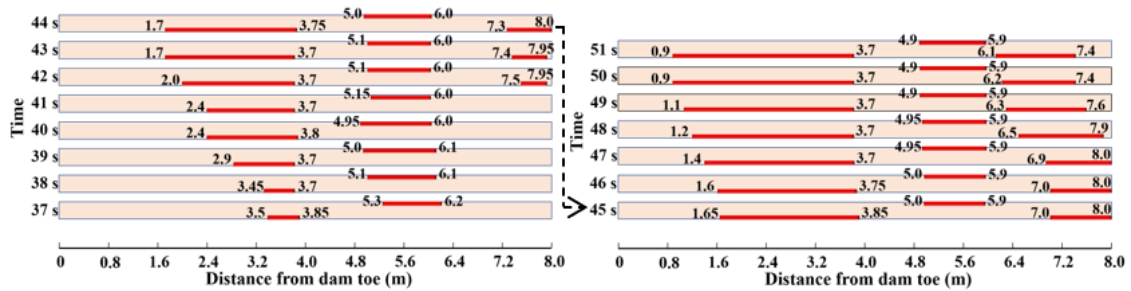
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(b)



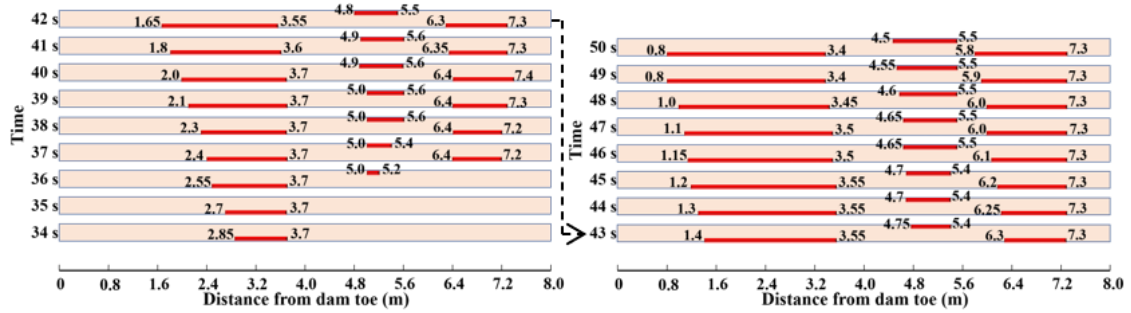
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(c)



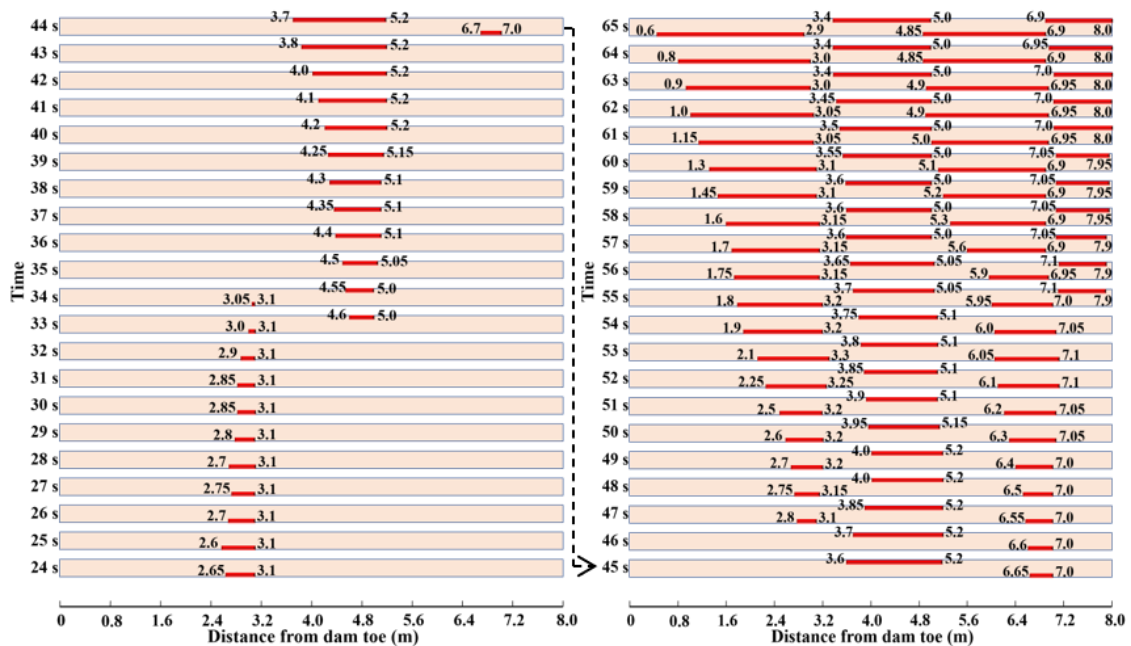
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(d)



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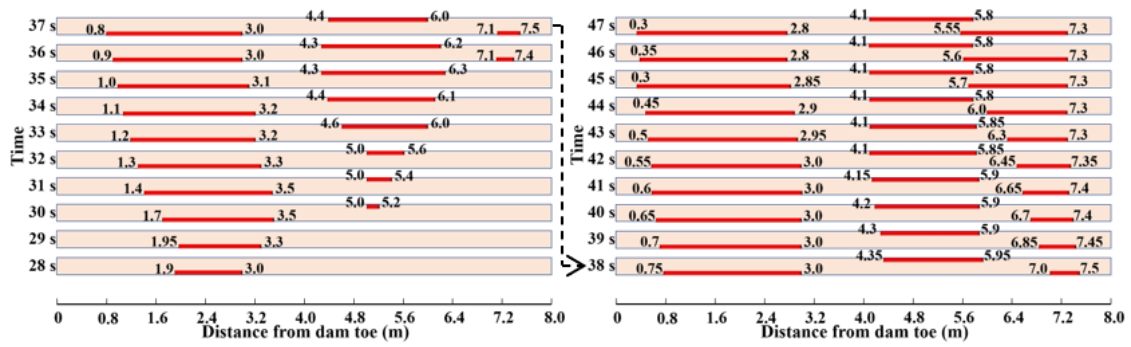
(e)



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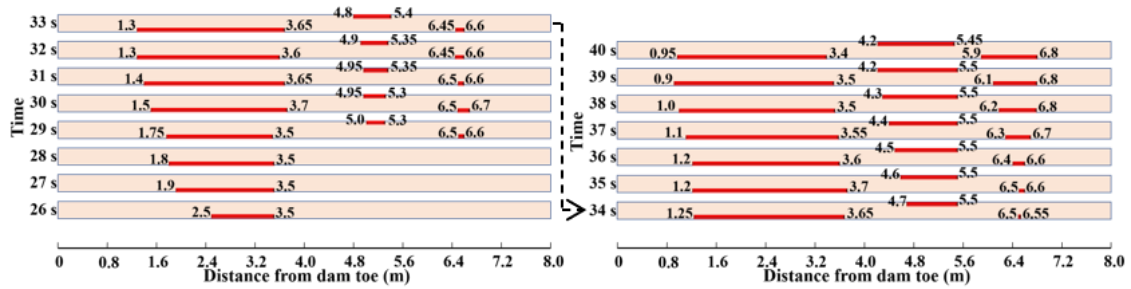
(f)



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(g)



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(h)

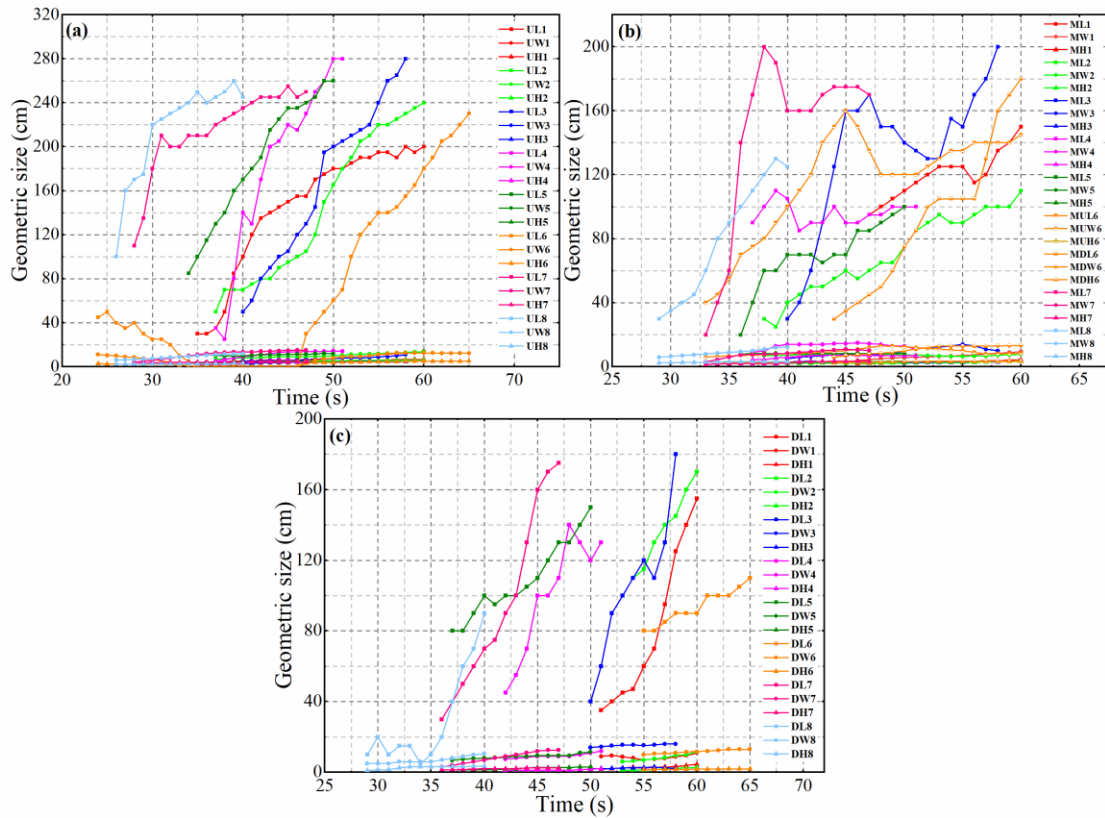
234 **Figure. 4** The boulder bars' locations during the dam failure process. Notation: (a) to (h) represent
 235 the boulder bars' locations for T1-T8 tests, respectively. The red lines in the figure represent the
 236 boulder bars, and the orange rectangles represent the channels. The numbers at both ends of the red
 237 lines represent the distances between the upstream and downstream edges of boulder bars and the
 238 dam toe.

239 The positions of the upstream edges of type II and III boulder bar moved toward
 240 the dam toe during dam failure, but the downstream edges' positions could move toward
 241 or away from the dam. The distances of movement of the downstream edge positions
 242 were smaller than that of upstream edge positions. Compared with the boulder bars of
 243 type I, the movements of type II and III boulder bars were smaller. The distance between
 244 the boulder bars in the middle and downstream reaches is smaller than the distance
 245 between boulder bars near the upstream reaches and adjacent boulder bars.

246 **3.3 Characteristics of the boulder bars' geometric sizes**

247 It is corresponding to Sect. 3.2, Fig. 5 shows that the lengths of the boulder bars
248 of type I were longer than other types of boulder bars' lengths due to the sufficient
249 incoming materials from the upstream dam. For all the boulder bars, their lengths along
250 the channel were largest, followed by widths, and lastly the heights. Boulder bars'
251 lengths had a growing trend, and their growth rates were larger than widths and heights.

252 The boulder bars' shapes were irregular during the entire dam failure process,
253 similar to the field boulder bars (Wu et al., 2020). The average values of the widths and
254 heights of the boulder bars along the channel were selected as the parameters reflecting
255 the characteristics of boulder bars' widths and heights (Fig. 5). The figure shows that
256 boulder bars' heights changed less drastically than widths, which because boulder bars'
257 heights were significantly affected by outburst flow depth. In most cases, flow depth
258 was less than the heights of boulder bars. The sediments mainly accumulated at the
259 boulder bars' edges and waists and could not "climb up" boulder bars' tops. Besides, the
260 reduction of flow depth was not large enough, so the boulder bars' heights did not
261 change seriously. The boulder bars' widths were significantly affected by the discharge
262 of the outburst flow. When the discharge was enough, the sediments around the boulder
263 bars were taken away by the flow, and the widths decreased. The variations of widths
264 and heights both increase slowly with time and then tended to be stable values.

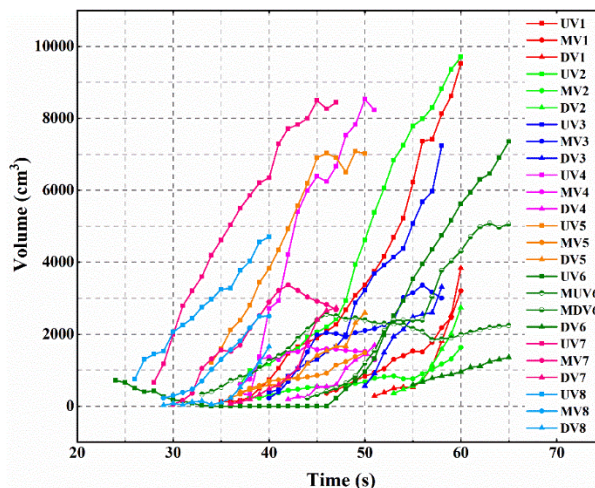


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266 **Figure. 5** The lengths, widths, and heights of the boulder bars: (a) sizes of the boulder bars near the
 267 upstream reaches; (b) sizes of the boulder bars near the middle reaches; (c) sizes of the boulder bars
 268 near the downstream reaches. Notation: L, W, and H represent the length, width, and height of the
 269 boulder bar, respectively. i represents the T_i experiment. For example, MUL6 indicates the length
 270 of the boulder bar near the middle-upstream reaches for the T1 test.

271 When the amounts of sediments deposited on boulder bars were larger than the
 272 quantities of eroded sediments, boulder bars' volumes became larger. Otherwise,
 273 boulder bars' volumes would decrease or remain at a stable level. Figure. 6 reveals
 274 boulder bars' volume characteristic during the dam failure. Most of the 25 boulder bars
 275 gradually increased in volume, indicating that the amounts of outburst flow erosions in
 276 the boulder bars' vicinities were less than the amounts of siltation during the entire
 277 outburst process. Referred to Figs. 5 and 6, the boulder bars' volume characteristics

278 were consistent with the boulder bars' length characteristics. And because the widths
 279 and heights developed slightly, boulder bars' volumes were mainly controlled by
 280 boulder bars' lengths.



281
 282 **Figure. 6** Volumes of boulder bars. Notation: UV_i, MV_i, DV_i, MUV_i, MDV_i represent the volume
 283 of the boulder bar near the upstream reaches, the boulder bar near the middle reaches, the boulder
 284 bar near the downstream reaches, the boulder bar near the middle-upstream reaches, and the boulder
 285 bar near the middle-downstream reaches, respectively. For example, UV1 means the volume of the
 286 boulder bar near the upstream reaches of the T1 test.

287 **4. Influences of the dam volume and the released flood volume on total**
 288 **boulder bar volume**

289 The boulder bar's formation and development are inseparable from the combined
 290 action of outburst flow and sediment. The landslide dam can provide materials for the
 291 development of the boulder bar, while the outburst flow provides hydraulic conditions.

292 Figure. 7 shows the boulder bars' total volume on the river bed when the dam fully
 293 failed. It can be seen that the total volume of the boulder bars is much lower than the

294 dam volume. The volumes were about 0.079 to 0.127, 0.017 to 0.078, and 0.015 to
295 0.041 times of the initial dam volumes for the boulder bars near the upstream reaches,
296 the boulder bars near the middle reaches, and the boulder bars near the downstream
297 reaches, respectively. The ratio of the total volume of the boulder bars to the dam
298 volume is 0.138 to 0.208. It shows that only a small part of the dam material participates
299 in the boulder bar's formation and development. During the process, most of the dam
300 material was taken away by the outburst flow. Moreover, when the dam volume
301 decreases, the amount of sediment involved in the development of the boulder bar
302 decreases. The total volume of the boulder bars on the river bed also shows a decreasing
303 trend.

304 This experiment counted the released flood volume during the dam failure process,
305 as shown in Fig. 8. It could be seen that the released flood volume in the dam failure
306 process of the T1 to T8 experiments decreased. According to Figs. 7 and 8, it could be
307 found that with the decrease of the released flood volume, the total volume of boulder
308 bars on the river bed shows a decreasing trend. When the released flood volume is small
309 in the dam failure process, a small amount of flood is not enough to transport many
310 dam materials to the downstream riverbed. There is less sediment on the riverbed, and
311 the deposit that can participate in the boulder bar's growth is less. Therefore, the total
312 volume of the boulder bars on the river bed at the moment of complete dam failure
313 decreased with the decrease of the released flood volume.

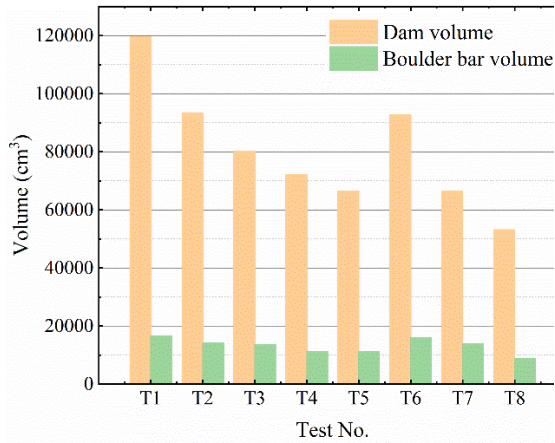


Figure. 7 The boulder bar's total volume and dam volume

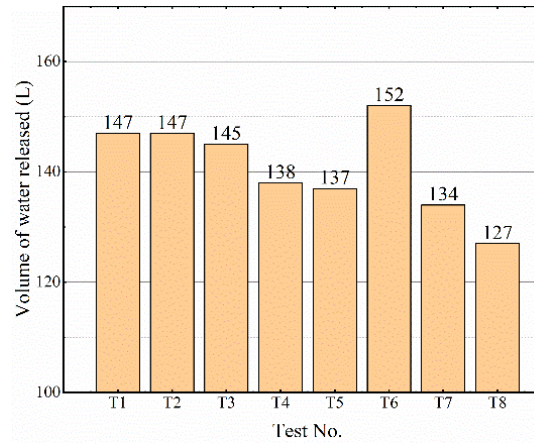


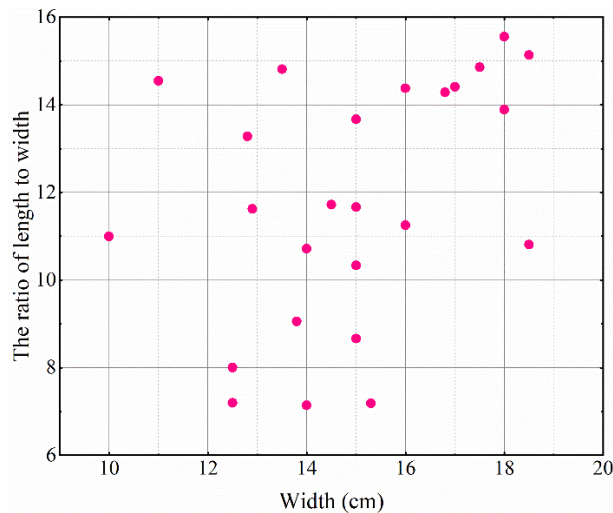
Figure. 8 The volume of water released during the dam failure.

314 5. Discussion

315 The field data of the Yigong landslide dam are used to verify the reliability of the
 316 results in this paper. Turzewski et al. (2019) investigated the boulder bars in the Yigong
 317 River triggered by the Yigong landslide dam outburst flood in 2000. They found that
 318 the number of boulder bars is about 0.69 to 0.77 times the ratio of river bed length to
 319 dam length for the boulder bar frequent region. In this study, boulder bars were
 320 distributed in the 8 m length of the channel, which is 4 to 7 times of dam length. It
 321 reflected the number of boulder bars was 0.4 to 1.0 times the ratio of river bed length
 322 to dam length. By comparing the experimental data and the field data of Turzewski et
 323 al. (2019), it can be found that field data falls within the range of experimental data.
 324 Experimental models took more influence factors into account in this paper, while the
 325 field data of Turzewski et al. (2019) only focused on the Yigong landslide dam case.
 326 This may be why the field data range is smaller than the experimental data in this paper.

327 Wu et al. (2020) classified the boulder bars in the downstream reaches of the

328 Yigong River into three types according to their shapes and used the length to width
329 ratio as the indicator of a bar shape. The 16 boulder bars in the downstream reaches of
330 the Yigong River have a length to width ratio of 2.5-15. As can be seen from Fig. 9, the
331 length to width ratio of the boulder bar formed in this experiment is in the range of 7 to
332 16, which indicates the field data could prove the experimental results.



333

334

Figure. 9 The ratio of boulder bar length to width

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336

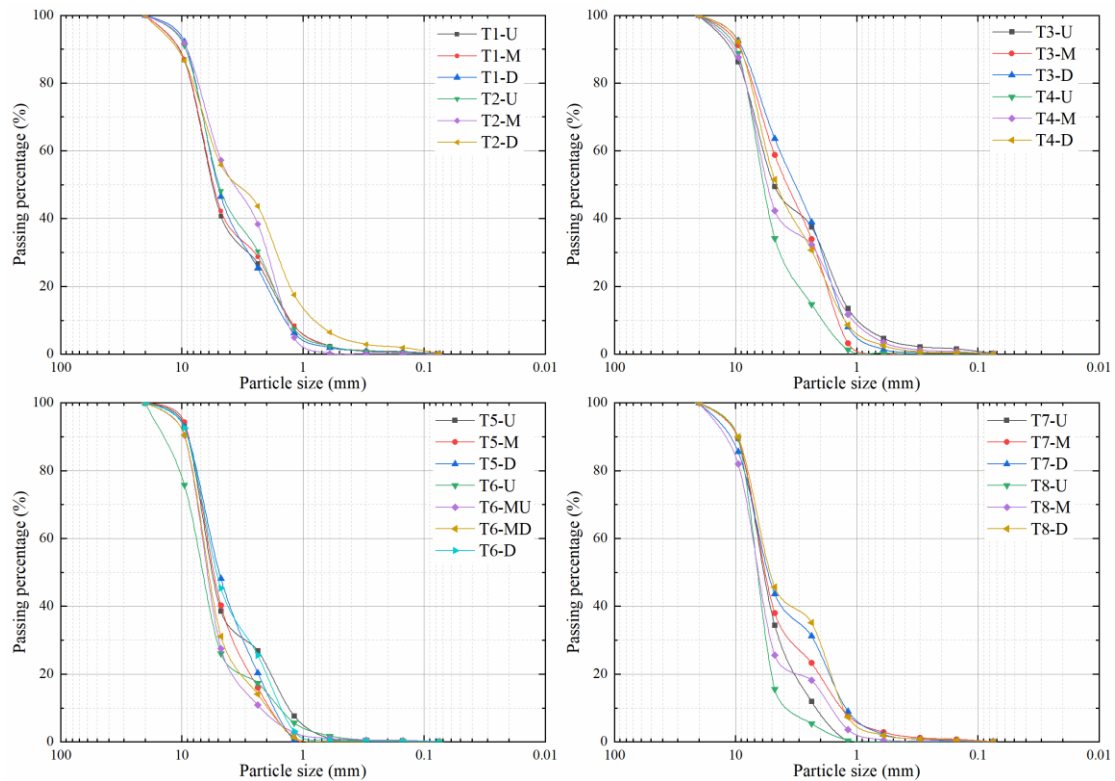
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Turzewski et al. (2019) measured the sizes of boulder bars. They found that grain sizes of boulder bars decrease downstream. In this experiment, boulder bar materials from different river bed sections were collected. And after screening and analysis, it was found that as the distance between the boulder bar and the dam increases, the particle diameter in the bars shows a decreasing trend, as shown in Fig. 10. This feature is consistent with the description of Turzewski et al. (2019).



341
 342 **Figure. 10** Gradation curve of the boulder bar materials. Notation: U, M, D, MU, and MD,
 343 represent the boulder bar near the upstream reaches, the boulder bar near the middle reaches, the
 344 boulder bar near the downstream reaches, the boulder bar near the middle-upstream reaches, and
 345 the boulder bar near the middle-downstream reaches, respectively.

346 Based on the above points, it can be seen that the experimental results in this paper
 347 are consistent with the actual boulder bars in the field. Therefore, the experimental
 348 results can provide guidance for the field study of the boulder bar formed by the
 349 outburst flood.

350 6. Conclusion

351 In this paper, a downstream moveable bed for 4 to 7 times the length of landslide
 352 dam length along the channel was set, and through eight flume experiments, 25 boulder
 353 bars were formed downstream channel caused by overtopping flow. The boulder bars'
 354 development characteristics, the influences of dam volume and the released flood

355 volume on boulder bars were also analyzed. The main conclusions are as follows.

356 (1) Boulder bars first appear near dam toes (upstream reaches located on the dam's
357 initial breach sides. Inertia force made sediment accumulate on the opposite banks of
358 the channel bed, resulting in boulder bars' formations downstream. During the landslide
359 dam failure process, the boulder bars' upstream edges are mainly in siltation states. The
360 boulder bars' lengths increase with failure time, mainly caused by boulder bars'
361 upstream edges move upstream. The downstream edges develop slowly and basically
362 near the initial positions. And the developments of boulder bars' downstream edges are
363 much smaller than the developments of boulder bars' upstream edges.

364 (2) During the dam failure process, the lengths varied faster than the widths and
365 heights of boulder bars. And the boulder bars' lengths along the river are the largest,
366 followed by widths, and lastly the heights when the dam completed failed. The volumes
367 of the boulder bars increase with dam failure, and boulder bars' volume characteristics
368 are consistent with boulder bars' lengths characteristics.

369 (3) After dam failure, the dam sediment is the material source for the development
370 of the boulder bars, and the flow is the external driving force for the development of
371 the boulder bar. When the dam volume is larger, more dam materials will be deposited
372 on the river bed and participate in the boulder bar's growth, then the total boulder bar
373 volume increases. When the released flood volume increases, the boulder bars' total
374 volume on the river bed also increases.

375 (4) The experimental results are compared with Yigong outburst flood from three
376 aspects: the ratio of the number of boulder bars on the river bed to the ratio of river bed

377 length to dam length, the ratio of boulder bar length to width, and the particle size of
378 the boulder bar. The experimental results are in good agreement with the Yigong
379 landslide dam case, which shows that the experimental results have certain reliability
380 and can provide a reference for the field research of the boulder bar formed by the
381 overtopping outburst flood.

382 **Author contribution**

383 Xiangang Jiang was responsible for the experiments, article thinking, and writing.
384 Haiguang Cheng was responsible for calculating the article parameters. Lei Gao was
385 responsible for the article's pictures, and Weiming Liu was responsible for checking the
386 full article.

387 **Competing interests**

388 The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or
389 personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this
390 paper.

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397 **Code and data availability statement**

398 The codes and data that support the findings of this study are available from the
399 corresponding author upon reasonable request.

400 **Reference**

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