FORMS OF STALKING PREVALENT AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN CHENNAI CITY

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ABSTRACT

Stalking is broadly defined as a set of repeated and unwanted behaviours that are experienced as intrusive by the recipient, which makes them feel distressed or fearful. While the legal definition only mentions the act of following and contacting the victim, various seemingly normal behaviour can also be considered stalking, if such acts cause the recipient to feel distressed or experience fear. Stalking can be an indicator of abuse, harassment and other forms of crime, and past studies conclude that youth were at the highest risk of experiencing stalking behaviour. However, glorification of stalking behaviour as a sign of courtship may result in such acts being dismissed as normal or even desirable behaviour. This study is an attempt to identify the various forms of stalking prevalent among college students in Chennai, and to compare the rate of victimization among female and male respondents. Using a questionnaire developed for this purpose, data were collected from the sample of college students from one university in Chennai. The outcome of the analysis forms the major part of the paper.

INTRODUCTION

The term Stalking is broadly defined as a set of repeated and unwanted behaviours that are experienced as intrusive by the recipient, which makes them feel distressed or fearful (Mullen et.al., 2000). This can be observed as a repetitive pattern of two or more incidents, however the frequency of the occurrence of the incidents that determines whether such behaviours are considered stalking varies from country to country. Such behaviours may manifest in various forms, including, but not limited to, unwanted phone

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calls, threatening the victim, following the victim repeatedly, taking photos of the victim without their consent, installing video cameras that give access to the victim's personal life (video-voyeurism), tracking one's cyber activity, persistently spamming the victim's social media platform, and so on (Allan, 2023).

Behaviours that may seem normal and acceptable can also be considered stalking when the recipient feels distressed by such action, or when such behaviours are a part of the stalking incident (SPARC, 2023). For instance, sending gifts is considered an ordinary behaviour and is fairly common. However, if the recipient keeps receiving unwanted gifts despite expressing their wish to not receive such gifts and considers such behaviour to be intrusive, unwanted, and threatening, then such behaviour may also be an indicator of stalking. Similarly, any behaviour that is used to contact, harass, track, or threaten a person is considered as stalking (Allan, 2023).

Legal Implications

The legal definition of stalking differs from country to country. Under Section 354D of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, "Any man who either follows or attempts to contact a woman in order to foster a personal connection despite a clear rejection and refusal to, or monitors a woman's activity through any form of electronic connection, is considered to have committed the offence of stalking" (Indian Penal Code 1860).

Stalking is legally defined, under Section 354D of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, as the offence committed by a man, who follows or contacts a woman in order to cultivate a personal relationship despite her disinterest, or who monitors a woman's use of electronic communication. However, this definition is gender specific, clearly labelling the perpetrator as a male and the victim as a female when in reality, stalking is a gender-neutral offence. This leads to cases of male victims-female perpetrated stalking remain unreported. As a result, there is little to no data on male victims of stalking in India.

Conversely, the legal definition of Stalking is different in the UK, which defines stalking under Section 2A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 as:

> "A person is guilty of an offence if −
>
> (a) the person pursues a course of conduct in breach of section 1(1), and
>
> (b) the course of conduct amounts to stalking."

Stalking and Harassment are offences classified under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. The breaches mentioned in Section 1(1) includes a series of more than one incident that amounts to harassing. As a result of the gender-neutral legal definition of stalking, sufficient data on male victims of stalking in the UK exists. Victims of stalking, regardless of gender, are protected by the law, which is stringent.

The Office for Violence Against Women, Department of Justice, USA, defines the term stalking as – "engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019). It is described as a "crime of power and control" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019). Stalking is recognized as a crime in all 50 states of the United States. Similar to the UK, male victims of stalking are recognised and assisted by the law enforcement.

Where does it take place?

Stalking can happen virtually anywhere. A person can be stalked when they are in public, while travelling, in their residential place or even online. In fact, cyberstalking is observed extensively, especially since the influx of modern technology. It is due to this fact that stalking is broadly divided into two forms: "Terrestrial Stalking" and "Cyberstalking" (Davis, 2001). However, it was found out that the absence of a capable guardian increased the likelihood of stalking victimization to occur. This can be observed in a campus lifestyle, which offers few capable guardians owing to the autonomy on campus

(Wood & Stichman, 2018). Since the presence of a capable guardian plays a role in deterring such incidents, it is apparent that in the absence of such capable guardianship in a campus setting, the incidents of stalking may increase.

The act of stalking is directed toward a specific person or the victim. However, the perpetrator may also contact, or attempt to contact the victim's family and friends as part of the stalking process (SPARC, 2023). Most perpetrators are someone who knows the victim – it could be an obsessed fan, a co- worker, or an ex-partner. While it is true that stalking is a gender-neutral offence, women tend to get stalked more than men. A reason as to why it is so could be understood by how women are viewed through the patriarchal lens by men – most cases of male perpetrated-female victim stalking involve elements of a pervasive need to control the movements of a woman by a man.

Why do people stalk?

The major reason someone may stalk a person is in order to foster a personal relationship with that person. Some may have mistakenly assumed that their feelings are reciprocated, while others may intend to control the person by monitoring their activities (Mullen et.al., 1999). A person may also stalk as a result of unsettled grudges and vendetta, and unnatural obsession. The major types of stalkers observed can be classified in two categories: Psychotic (those suffering from psychotic disorders like schizophrenia, delusional disorder, etc.) and Nonpsychotic (those who stalk in pursuit of revenge, anger, obsession, jealousy, etc.) (Mullen et.al., 2000)

Fear is the main element that sets stalking apart from other behaviours. When a person is stalked, they are reasonably expected to experience fear. This may be disguised by other emotions like anger, irritation, frustration, or hopelessness. Fear can be contextual, meaning that what is experienced as scary by one person may not necessarily be scary to the other person (SPARC, 2023). For example, the act of receiving a gift from a person is not necessarily scary, but when a person receives a gift from an abusive partner, the see the behaviour as frightening to them. Stalking victims may also change their routine

behaviour, in order to cope with the stalking. Such coping mechanisms might be an indicator that the victim is afraid of the whole situation (SPARC, 2023).

The act of stalking leaves a physical and psychological impact on the victim. The victim may be tempted to change their phone number, or relocate, or introduce similar drastic changes into their daily routine, just so that they could escape from the stalking. This tends to take a toll on the victim (Abrams & Robinson, 2008). Psychologically, the victim may experience paranoia and fear, which might lead to disorders like depression, social anxiety, or in some extreme cases, even psychotic disorders like delusion and schizophrenia. Lamber Royakkers describes stalking as – "a form of mental assault, in which the perpetrator repeatedly, unwantedly, and disruptively breaks into the life- world of the victim, with whom they have no relationship" (Royakkers, 2000).

Past Research and the Severity of Stalking

Various researches identified that stalking victimization rates were higher among those who were between the ages of 18 to 29. They concluded that the risk and extent of stalking victimization decreased with increase in age, and that the youth were the highest risk of experiencing stalking behaviours (Catalano, 2021). These findings correlated with the real-life experiences, where many cases of young women getting stalked were reported. Similarly, it was identified that women were the primary victims, while men were the primary perpetrators (Catalano, 2021). However, even as much research prove this, a few research pointed out that men were also victimised by stalking behaviours similar to how women get victimized (Sheridan et al., 2002).

Findings from the National Violence against Women Survey, conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, revealed that 8.1% of women and 2.2% of men had been stalked at some point in their life. Approximately, 1 million women and 371,000 men were stalked annually in the United States. It was also found that 52% of the respondents, who were aged between 18-29, were the primary targets for stalkers. The primary victims were identified as women (78%) while the primary perpetrators were

identified as males (87%). The survey findings also showed that most of the perpetrators of stalking were intimate partners for females (59.5%); whereas in the case of males, the perpetrators were mainly strangers (35.3%) (Catalano, 2021).

Stalking may be an indicator of other forms of violence among victims. Various forms of crimes against women listed under the Indian Penal Code, including murder, rape, acid attack, kidnapping and abduction, human trafficking, assault, might have occurred alongside stalking. For instance, a woman may be approached by a man many times, whom she rejects. As a result, she might be placed in a threatening situation where she might get assaulted by the perpetrator. Various cases of murder, acid attacks, and assault have recorded instances of stalking at the earlier stages. Hence, it is imperative to understand and find out the various forms of stalking experienced by the victims, the extent of such behaviours, and the other factors associated with stalking, in order for one to attempt to identify the victims likely to be placed in a threatening situation due to stalking. In turn, this might help in identifying the patterns of victimization caused as a result of stalking.

Stalking, much like domestic abuse, is normalized, and sometimes even glorified by the society. They simply tell the victims to “move on” or ask them not to make a big deal out of it. In some cases, the victims are even blamed for being stalked, by “enticing the stalker” and “seeking for attention”. In addition, the media had portrayed stalking as a courtship behaviour, because of which the victims fail to see stalking as a grave issue. In contrast, male victims of stalking are never taken seriously, with even the victims disregarding or being oblivious to their victimization.

The current study focuses on identifying the forms of stalking prevalent among college students in Chennai city. In addition, this study would attempt to identify how stalking experiences of female respondents differs from male respondents. The study would also attempt to identify the places where the victims might get stalked, the gender of the perpetrator, and the victim-perpetrator relationship.

Need and Significance

While extensive studies have been done on the forms of stalking and the prevalence of stalking in different countries, only a limited number of studies upon stalking prevalence and forms has been carried out in India. Most studies address workplace harassments and cyberstalking, and not stalking itself. Stalking can be an indicator of abuse, harassment, and even subsequent attacks. Unfortunately, stalking as a behaviour had been glorified by the media, which highlights stalking as a desirable trait. This leads to stalking to be viewed as something right, rather than an undesirable, uncomfortable behaviour, and is mistaken for courtship behaviour.

In addition, there is very little data about the male victims of stalking. The law predetermines that a man is a perpetrator of stalking; also, there is no legal provision that states that a man can be a victim of stalking as well. Despite stalking being a gender-neutral offence, both the law and the society views stalking as a gender specific offence. As a result, there is little to no information about how and where a man is stalked, or if his stalking victimization experiences are similar to that of a woman.

Hence, the current study would endeavour to identify the various forms of stalking observed by males as well as females, and would attempt to find the difference, if any, between the experiences of male and female respondents.

Statement of the Problem

Stalking is a gender-neutral offence; however, females are more prone to be victimized than males. Also, in most scenarios, the perpetrator would most likely be male. Because of this, stalking is considered a gender-specific offence.

Stalking may be an indicator of other forms of violence against the victim, as various forms of violence like murder, acid attacks, and assault might occur as a result of stalking.

The present study attempts to study the prevalence of stalking among college students and compare the rate of victimization among male and female respondents.

Objectives

The following are the objectives of the current study:

- To find out the various forms of stalking prevalent among college students.
- To find out the difference in the forms of stalking experienced by male and female respondents.
- To find out the places where the victims were stalked.
- To find out the gender of the perpetrators.
- To find out whether the perpetrator was familiar to the victim.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Wood and Stichman (2018) used the Routine Activity Theory foundation to investigate incident levels of stalking, and the influence of suitable target and campus guardianship factors on the stalking victimization of college students. In addition, they compared the experience of female and male students, and whether the influence of suitable target and guardianship variables differ by gender. The sample was derived from a survey distributed to students in a Midwestern University. A proportioned stratified sampling technique was used to collect data from the students. Chi-square test was used to measure the differences between male and female students' experiences with types of stalking. They concluded that among the total female sample, 43% of them had been stalked at some point in their lifetime, while 13% have been stalked during their time at the university. Similarly, among the male students, 34 had experienced stalking at some point, while 18% were specifically stalked at the university. Women who displayed perceived vulnerability were more likely to have been stalked at any point than women who did not report vulnerable tendencies. This might be due to vulnerable women appearing more suitable to stalking and victimization. However, for male students, vulnerability was unrelated to stalking.

Sheridan et.al. (2019) focused on comparing perceptions and experiences of intrusive activity and stalking between the three ethnic sub-groups in Singapore. Because a universal definition of stalking does not exist, this study will measure experiences of behaviours in order to obtain further insight into

how they differ between cultural groups. They focused on females aged 18-30, as previous finding points out that females are more likely to be stalked, and that the age group of 18-30 are the most vulnerable to stalking. A quasi-experimental design was used for the study. Chi-square tests were conducted on each of the 47 items to investigate if the individual experiences of intrusive behaviours differed between the three ethnic groups, and were found that few differences were found in terms of how unacceptable the three sub- groups judged the 47 behaviours.

Fedina et.al., (2020) studied the prevalence and sociodemographic factors that were associated with stalking victimization among a demographically diverse sample of college students. Cross-sectional data for the study was collected from students 18 and older across eight universities. The survey was advertised as a wellness and safety survey to avoid potential response bias. For this study, the assessment of stalking victimization was adapted from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. It was found using Chi- square and t-Test that there were significant differences in the prevalence of stalking victimization among student sub-population based on sexual orientation, gender identity and race. Transgender and gender-nonconforming students (29.9%) reported the highest rate of stalking, followed by cisgender females (20.2%) and cisgender males (11.9%). Results from logistic regression suggest that age, gender identity, sexual minority status were significantly associated with stalking victims. In specific, younger students were more prone to stalking victimization than older students, and cisgender females were twice as vulnerable to stalking victimization as compared to cisgender males.

Rosay et.al., (2020) examines the psychometric properties of stalking behaviours that were included in the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), conducted in the year 2010, and make valid comparisons of stalking victimization across gender groups. The objective was to find out the prevalence of stalking in the United States. The NISVS questionnaire was modelled after the National Violence against Women Survey. From the survey, 16507 responses were taken for this study. Results show that more than a third of the respondents had experienced at least one episode of stalking, while a third of them had experienced two or more stalking episodes. Women were more prone to have

experiences of stalking compared to men: 44.5% of women had experienced at least one stalking episode, while 38.6% had experienced two or more stalking episodes. Respondents of both genders have experienced receiving unwanted phone calls the most. Women were more likely to receive unwanted gifts than men.

Miglietta et.al., (2021) found out the role played by benevolent and hostile sexist belief in people's viewpoint of how a stalking pair is composed. The role of sexist beliefs determine how stalking is seen, i.e., it is assumed that women are the victims and men are the perpetrators. Such beliefs also undermine the victimization of males, and cases where males are stalked by females are considered unlikely to occur. The participants were asked to rate how much they considered the following three stalking pairs – female offender vs. male victim, female offender vs. female victim and male offender vs. male victim - as likely to occur in a real-life scenario. The sample consisted of 226 Italian adults, who participated on a voluntary basis. Results indicated that differences in the endorsement of negative attitudes are related to views of the three nonconventional stalking pairs as unlikely to occur. This partially confirmed the expectations about the role of benevolent and hostile sexist beliefs in participant's viewpoint that same-sex stalking pairs may occur.

Chung and Sheridan (2021) examines whether the influence of prior relationship between perpetrator and target influences people's perception of stalking, and whether cross-national differences in stalking perception existed between people based in Malaysia (where stalking is not criminalised) and England (where stalking is criminalised). A total of 464 samples were collected from the student community using opportunity sampling. For the study, a One-paragraph vignette was used to measure the perception of respondents. The vignette described a stalking scenario between the perpetrator and victim and was followed by five 11-point Likert-type statements, which was used to measure the participant's perceptions of stalking. Three versions of the vignettes, representing the degrees prior relationship between the victim and perpetrator - strangers, acquaintances and ex-partners - were used, and participants were randomly assigned to the vignettes. They concluded that prior relationship between the

perpetrator and the victim of stalking influenced how participants responded on the perception scale items. Participants were also more likely to believe that the victim was responsible for their victimization, when the perpetrator was depicted as an e-partner. Findings showed that while relational bias existed across both samples, Malaysian participants were less likely to label perpetrator behaviour as stalking and more likely to judge the victim as responsible for encouraging the perpetrator's behaviour.

Mennicke et.al., (2021) collected secondary data from an online survey conducted among college students between ages 18-24 to study disclosure rates across experiences of sexual violence and harassment, dating violence and stalking. The secondary data was collected from 8070 undergraduate students from a public Southeastern university. The items that were used to measure victimisation experiences were modified from the American Association of Universities (AAU) survey. The prevalence rates of four types of violence were described. Findings reveal that a substantial minority of college students have experienced victimization from stalking. The regression predicting type of disclosure after stalking was significant. Compared to women, men had lower odds of disclosing their victimization to friends and family than disclosing to no one. Disclosure of victimization experiences is most likely to occult to friends and family.

Logan and Walker (2021) focused on finding the proportion of men and women who report stalking and stalking-induced fear, and those who do not. They conducted a cross-sectional descriptive study, and collected 2719 samples for the study. Results showed that for both men and women, the higher the degree of fear, the greater the number of course of conduct items were experienced. Also, respondents with higher degree of fear reported being assaulted within the course of conduct. 40.8% of women reported being assaulted during the course of stalking, as compared to 27.6% of men.

White et.al., (2022) focused on identifying the various patterns of stalking behaviours from a victim's point of view, especially in the context of ex-partner stalking. Data was collected from the National

Stalking Helpline Database, and 1626 samples were collected for the study. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple logistic regressions were applied on the sample to find out the common pattern of behaviours among the subgroups of stalkers. Results showed that ex-partner stalkers exhibited more stalking behaviours than other stalkers.

METHODOLOGY

This study follows the Descriptive Research method. Descriptive research describes the characteristics of the problem. It seeks to address the following: what is the problem, when is it experienced, where is it experienced. In addition, Quantitative method is used to collect quantifiable data for statistical data analysis. The study would find out the various forms of stalking, the places where the respondents experienced the stalking, the gender of the perpetrator, and the victim-perpetrator relationship. It would seek to describe the characteristics of the population. It would also try to find out more about and understand stalking as a behaviour.

The independent variables used are age, gender, living arrangements and mode of transport. The frequency of the ages is calculated to identify the majority age of the victims. Other variables like place of stalking incident, gender of perpetrator and victim-perpetrator relationship were also identified. The personal experience of stalking is the major dependent variable used, as it is used to define which behaviour was most experienced.

The research tool used for this study is a questionnaire, which was adapted from the Stalking: International Perception and Prevalence Questionnaire (SIPPQ), used by (Sheridan et al., 2002) and Sheridan et.al. (2019). The tool was modified to fit the Indian context. The SIPPQ comprises of 4 segments: Sociodemographic factors, Individual perception of intrusive behaviour exhibited, Individual experience of Intrusive behaviour, and Actual Stalking experience. This questionnaire was used in nine previous studies and shows good face validity.

For this study, only Sections 1 and 3 of the SIPPQ were incorporated. Twenty-two types of intrusive behaviours were identified from real-life experiences for the questionnaire. These behaviours were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale, where 5 being “Very Often” and 1 being “Never”. In addition, three questions were added to identify any contributing factors to stalking: The Place of Victimization, The Gender of the Perpetrator, and the Familiarity of Perpetrator to Victim (Victim-Perpetrator relationship). The Questionnaire did not contain the word stalking, to avoid labelling, and to prevent reporting bias.

The Questionnaire went through a series of drafts before being introduced in the field. The final questionnaire comprised three sections:

- Sociodemographic factors: Age, Gender, Education level, Living arrangements, Mode of transportation used (Items 1 - 8).
- Personal Experiences of Intrusive behaviour: The twenty-two behaviours were asked to be measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated “Never” and 5 indicated “Very Often” (Items 9.1 - 9.22).
- Additional Factors of Stalking: Place of Victimization, Gender of Perpetrator, Familiarity of Perpetrator to Victim (Victim-Perpetrator relationship) (Items 10 – 12).

The questionnaire comprised of a brief declaration of the purpose of the study, and stated that the survey was voluntary and anonymous, ensuring the confidentiality of the data. No data on personal information were collected for the study.

Data Collection

The population for this study includes college students studying in one university in Chennai. To ensure that the comparative analyses between males and females are uniform, equal number of male and female samples was collected from the population. Data were collected from the population using Convenience sampling, due to it cost-effective and time-saving method.

The sample was collected from 152 students studying at one university in Chennai, consisted of an equal number of 75 males and 75 females which. Two respondents chose not to reveal their gender and were placed under the category “Prefer not to say”. Before the survey, the respondents were asked their consent to participate in the study and were informed prior that their data would be kept confidential and used for purpose of the study alone. The questionnaires were provided to the respondents, who filled them out. To ensure anonymity, no kind of personal information was collected. It took 10 minutes for the participants to fill the questionnaire.

The Data collected was analysed using Microsoft Excel as the primary analysis tool. Simple Frequency and percentage distribution of the types of behaviours experienced were identified for the samples, which were then subjected to comparison analysis, in order to find the differences in the experience of stalking between males and females.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive statistics method of data analysis was employed for this study. Simple frequency and percentage distribution tests were conducted on the final data. Since the sample showed to have very little missing value (~0), all samples were employed for the final analysis. All analyses for this study were conducted using Microsoft Excel. Simple Frequency distribution and Percentage Analysis were conducted on the Age and gender of the respondents. The percentage distribution of personal experiences of intrusive behaviour was done separately for female and male samples, in order for their results to be compared against each other. Similarly, Percentage distribution was conducted separately for female and male samples.

About 92% of the respondents were aged between 20-25. This implies that a majority of stalking victims lie between the ages of 20 to 25. This finding correlates with those findings from the existing literature and shows that those aged between 20 and 25 are more vulnerable to stalking victimization.

In order to compare the forms of stalking experienced by males and females, the gender of the respondents

was collected in equal numbers (n = 75). However, there were a few respondents who preferred not to disclose their gender. Their data were not accounted for the comparative analysis between female and male respondents, since the sample size for the "Others" option (n = 2) was too small to be of computable value.

Among the twenty-two intrusive behaviours listed in Table 4.1, the 5 most common behaviours identified among the entire sample were: "Someone unknown to you is calling you when you don't want to receive a call from them" (6.94%), "Someone is expressing jealousy when you spend time with other people of the opposite gender" (6.73%), "Someone is following you" (5.91%), "Someone is spying on you" (5.71%), "Someone is refusing to accept the end of your relationship with them" (5.48%).

Table 4.1: Percentage distribution of the Intrusive Behaviours experienced by the respondents.

S.No	Intrusive Behaviour	Total	Female	Male
1	Someone is Following you	**5.91%**	**5.54%**	**5.12%**
2	Someone is spying on you	**5.71%**	4.89%	**5.49%**
3	Someone unknown to you is calling you when you don't want to receive a call from them (other than customer service calls)	**6.94%**	**6.28%**	**6.30%**
4	Someone is taking photos of you repeatedly without your knowledge	4.98%	4.07%	5.00%
5	Someone is loitering outside your house/college regularly	4.98%	4.33%	4.55%
6	Someone is continuously and regularly watching you while you are travelling form your house to college	1.89%	**5.41%**	3.38%
7	Being approached by a stranger repeatedly in order to form a personal relationship, despite them being rejected before	5.16%	4.68%	4.72%
8	Someone is leaving/giving excessive notes/letters that you are not comfortable receiving from them	4.71%	4.07%	4.47%
9	Someone is leaving/giving unwanted gifts that you are not comfortable receiving from them	4.71%	4.16%	4.31%

10	Getting a threatening phone call from someone who you are unable to identify	4.80%	4.11%	4.60%
11	Someone is threatening to harm you if you don't listen to what they say	4.55%	3.98%	4.27%
12	Someone is threatening to harm themselves if you don't listen to what they say	5.05%	**4.68%**	4.51%
13	Someone is threatening to harm your family or friends if you don't listen to what they say	4.05%	3.55%	3.82%
14	Someone damaging your belongings in order to make you do as they say	2.55%	3.94%	4.55%
15	Someone is sending you inappropriate texts/emails/letters that you are not comfortable receiving from them	2.55%	3.29%	**5.04%**
16	Someone is sending you inappropriate pictures, videos etc. that you are not comfortable receiving from them	5.00%	4.37%	4.72%
17	Someone is expressing jealousy when you spend time with other people of the opposite gender	**6.73%**	**6.02%**	**6.18%**
18	Someone is visiting you despite being told not to visit	1.57%	4.24%	2.81%
19	Someone is purposefully and repeatedly visiting the places you often visit, in order to see you	4.80%	4.24%	4.47%
20	Someone is refusing to accept the end of your relationship with them	**5.48%**	**5.20%**	4.84%
21	Someone is asking for a date more than once despite being rejected before	1.50%	4.94%	2.68%
22	Someone is hurting your current partner verbally or physically out of jealousy	4.46%	3.98%	4.15%

Among Females, the 5 most identified behaviours were: "Someone unknown to you is calling you when you don't want to receive a call from them" (6.28%), "Someone is expressing jealousy when you spend time with other people of the opposite gender" (6.02%), "Someone is following you" (5.54%),

"Someone is continuously and regularly watching you while you are travelling from your house to college" (5.41%), "Someone is refusing to accept the end of your relationship with them" (5.20%). Females were also found to be more vulnerable to stalking victimization where the perpetrator threatens to hurt themselves if they do not do as the perpetrator says (4.68%). A reason as to why females are more prone to experiencing this form of behaviours might be due to the perpetrator's perception that women are gentler in disposition, and hence easier to manipulate. In addition, the act of threatening to hurt oneself to gain the victim's obedience is a behaviour commonly observed in abusive relationships. This might be an indicator that those women who experienced this form of victimization might be dealing with an abusive partner or ex-partner.

Among the percentage distribution of the intrusive behaviours experienced by male respondents, the 5 most identified behaviours were: "Someone unknown to you is calling you when you don't want to receive a call from them" (6.30%), "Someone is expressing jealousy when you spend time with other people of the opposite gender" (6.18%), "Someone is spying on you" (5.49%), "Someone is following you" (5.12%), "Someone is sending you inappropriate texts/emails/letters that you are not comfortable receiving from them" (5.04%).

These Findings indicate that to a significant extent, the forms of stalking experienced by females and males are similar. Both females and males are vulnerable to stalking behaviours like receiving unknown calls from a potential stalker, being told off for spending time with the opposite gender and being followed.

However, their victimization experiences are not necessarily the same for both genders. For instance, females are more likely to be pursued by the perpetrator who refuses to accept the end of a relationship than males. Similarly, males are more prone to than females to experience stalking in form of receiving inappropriate media and messages. This might be an indicator of cyberstalking; the possibility of the

perpetrator being a stranger, or a friend or partner could only be speculated, however, as one cannot precisely identity the perpetrator.

Table 4.2 shows the percentage distribution of the places where the respondents were victimized. From the complete dataset, it was calculated that victims experience stalking mostly while travelling (16.32%), and while in public (15.79%). This indicates that there is a lack of capable guardian in these settings, which leaves the victims vulnerable to stalking. Also, the opportunity for the perpetrator to stalk victims in a public setting is high, as there is no one to question the acts of the perpetrator. Conversely, the rate of victimization in a residential area is comparatively lower. This might be due to a concrete presence of a capable guardian in the form of family and neighbours, who might question any questionable acts, thus deterring the perpetrator from stalking the victim in a residential area.

Table 4.2: Percentage Distribution of Places of victimization.

Places of Victimization	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
College/University	11.11%	16.47%	13.68%
Residential neighbourhood	15.15%	5.88%	11.05%
Public place	18.18%	11.76%	15.79
Travelling	16.16%	15.29%	16.32%
Online	2.02%	2.35%	2.11%
Not Applicable	37.37%	48.24%	41.05%

Surprisingly, Females are victimized in their residential neighbourhood at a much higher rate than males (15.15% as compared to 5.88%). This could be concerning as it implies that the perpetrators are persistent enough to stalk their victims, going as far as continuing the same in the presence of guardianship. Males, however got victimized in a campus setting at a much higher rate when compared to females (16.47% as compared to 11.11%). This finding is a unique one, as it implies that while females are the safest in a campus environment, males are in turn the most vulnerable in a campus environment. One possible

reasoning to this contrasting finding might be that while awareness of stalking among women increases, such awareness might not have reached men. Plus, the concept of males being victims of stalking was not even addressed in the law, and as a result, men might be completely oblivious to their own victimization.

Table 4.3: Percentage Distribution of Gender of the perpetrator

Gender of Perpetrator	Female (%)	Male (%)
Mostly Male	52.00%	18.67%
Mostly Female	4.00%	22.67%
Do not know	20.00%	37.33%
Both male and female	0.00%	4.00%
Not Applicable	24.00%	17.33%

Table 4.3 shows the percentage distribution of the gender of perpetrators, for both male and female respondents. Males were the primary perpetrators of female stalking victims (52%). This finding correlates with findings of previous literatures. One reason why women were mostly stalked by men could be answered by analysing the findings of the personal experiences of stalking victimization (Table 4.1). About 20% of females were victimized by means of dating related behaviour exhibited by the perpetrator. This implies that one of the major reasons for male perpetrators to target a female victim is in order to go on a date or to form a relationship with the victim.

While studying of the percentage distribution of perpetrator gender among male respondents, however, it was observed that male victims were more prone to be victimized by female perpetrators, although there is no significant difference between the distribution of female perpetrators (22.67%) and male perpetrators (18.67%). Further, 4% of the respondents indicated that they were victimized by both males and females. This indicates that male victims are equally vulnerable to be victimized by both male and female perpetrators. While it could be guessed as to why a female would stalk a male victim, it is challenging to draw conclusions as to why a male would stalk a male victim. It might be due to reasons of anger; however, no conclusions could be drawn without further research. However, the findings do highlight on the

existence of male victims of stalking, and that their experiences are often overlooked by victims themselves.

Among the victims, one-fifth of the female respondents and one-third of the male respondents did not know the gender of their perpetrator. This could once again be a result of the lack of awareness about stalking, and failure to recognise the same. Further, the difference in the ratio shows that male respondents are largely oblivious to the phenomenon of male victimization of stalking.

Table 4.8: Percentage Distribution of Victim-Perpetrator relationship.

Victim-perpetrator relationship	**Female (%)**	**Male (%)**
Strangers	42.47%	46.84%
Acquaintances	17.81%	11.39%
Friends	16.44%	17.72%
Partners / Ex-partners	15.07%	6.33%
Not Applicable	8.22%	17.72%

From Table 4.8, it could be observed that both male (46.84%) and female (42.47%) victims indicated their stalkers were mostly strangers. However, many respondents did not know who their stalker was, and entered “Strangers” on default. Again, this proves that victims are not completely aware of whether the person that stalked them is someone that they know or do not know. While 17.81% of female respondents indicated that their perpetrators were someone they knew as acquaintances, 17.72% of males indicated that their perpetrator were their friends.

While the overall percentage of partners/ex-partners being the perpetrators is low, the percentage of partners or ex-partners playing a role in the victimization of female victims (15.07%) is significantly higher when compared to the same among male victims (6.33%). One possible explanation for this could once again be drawn from the table of victimization experiences (Table 4.4). Roughly 11% of the victimization

experiences by female victims are attributed to current and ex-partners. This implies that the perpetrator is not ready to accept rejection and continue stalking the victims as a result.

Discussions

Results show that men and women share similar stalking experiences. However, females experienced certain behaviours that were not experienced by males: being watched while travelling from home to college, being asked on a date more than once despite being rejected before, and the perpetrator refusing to accept the end of a relationship with them.

It was found that 18.18% of females experienced stalking in a public place, compared to 16.47% of males being stalked in colleges. One unique thing about this finding was that while females experienced the least amount of stalking in a campus setting and were relatively safer, males were in contrast more victimized in a campus setting.

Females were more likely to be stalked by males (52%), while males were more likely to be stalked by females (22.67%). This finding was similar to those from the previous literatures, and show that the perpetrator is more likely to choose the victim from the opposite gender. Also, one-fifth of the females and one-third of the males were not aware of the gender of their perpetrator. This could again be due to the lack of awareness on stalking victimization.

When it came to victim/perpetrator relationship, both males and females were stalked majorly by strangers. However, Females were more prone to be stalked by their partners/ex-partners than males. This could be due to a significant part of their victimization experience being linked to partners and ex-partners.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the overall experiences of stalking were similar for both males and females. It was found that men were stalked as well as women, proving that stalking is a gender-neutral offence. It

was also found that there were certain behaviours experienced by females that were not experienced by males, and vice versa. Such differences could be attributed to the gender of the respondent, the place of victimization and the victim- perpetrator relationship.

Since this study shows that men are equally stalked as women are, it is beneficial to address such issues. It was also found that men perceived that they would not be victims of stalking, showing that men were largely ignorant about their own stalking experiences. This could be due to the fact that stalking in India is largely viewed as a gender-specific offence. In order to control the rate of stalking, it is imperative to raise awareness among the public of the impact of male victimization of stalking. This study could also be extended to find out the stalking victimization experiences of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals.

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