



A SURVEY OF VICTIMS OF FIVE FORMS OF STALKING AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE AVAILABLE SUPPORT AMONGST THE STUDENT POPULATION, UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER, UK.

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ABSTRACT

A number of studies have highlighted that stalking victimisation is a problem amongst student populations. However, little work has considered the extent of victimisation, types of stalking and levels of reporting with UK student population. Therefore, this paper explores stalking amongst students at Leicester. Using survey data from 477 students enrolled at the University of Leicester, the current study assesses the extent of five forms of stalking incidents amongst the sampled population, determines the nature of relationship that exists between victims of stalking and their perpetrators and evaluates the stalking victim's attitude towards reporting their victimisation. Results from the study reveal: 147 victims, lifetime stalking prevalence 30.8% and 26.0% for cyber stalking. Female students had a higher prevalence 36% than males 23%. Victims in the survey experienced an average of 1.7 stalking incident each (stalking concentration) at the rate of 52 victims to 100 stalking incidents (stalking incidence). The most common form of stalking incidents was unwanted electronic communication 49.4% via telephone 29.1%. Most of the victims were electronically stalked for intimacy by someone they knew. There was a significant positive relationship between violent behaviours and other forms of stalking incidents. More than two third did not seek help; more than half of those that did were from family and friends and less than half of the identified victims would seek counselling help. Findings are discussed in terms of both theoretical and policy implications.

Key Words: *Victims of Stalking, Perceptions of the Available Support and Student Population*

INTRODUCTION

In the United Kingdom, The Protection of Freedoms Act, 2012 which introduces: stalking and stalking involving violence or serious alarm or distress may still be new but stalking is not. The Rt. Hon. Elfyn Llwyd MP, the chair of Independent Parliamentary Inquiry into Stalking Law Reform in England and Wales describes stalking as a hidden crime that breaks up relationships and destroys lives (in Richards, Fletcher and Jewell, 2012). According to Miller (2012:4) stalking is defined' as a deliberate course of persistent interfering and frightening behaviours toward a particular individual that causes the target to feel harassed, threatened, and fearful, or that a reasonable person would regard as being so'. Certainly, the university setting seems to provide opportunities for stalking. Lots of people come together and social media/ mobile technologies facilitate easy contact . All these stalking facilitators (i.e. aggressive social setting) make students with insufficient interpersonal skills to stalk others (Osterholm, Horn and Kritsonis, 2007). Considerably, researchers that focused on university student stalking victimization has increased (Fisher and John, 2007). Given the high prevalence of relational stalking victimization among university student populations and the extent of harm it causes, the plight of the stalking victims need to be looked into (Mullen, Pathe and Purcell, 2000).

Furthermore, Rt. Hon. Elfyn Llwyd MP(in Richards, et al.,2012:2) comments that ' the attitudes of many working in the criminal justice system and society towards stalking remain in the dark ages...Too many victims receive little or no support from the criminal justice system'. Although, Hart and Violet (2011) point out that the trend of crime reporting among university students (victims) to police may be different from those that exist in the general population, Cass and Rosay (2012) argue that victims of stalking had low expectations of police handling their victimisation. Nonetheless, the low level of reporting of stalking victimisation to police/ university raise some concerns which this study also seek to address.



A considerable number of studies have highlighted that stalking victimisation is a problem amongst student populations. But there seems to be an inverse relationship between the prevalence of stalking (i.e. High Prevalence) and the reporting of victimisation (i.e. Low Reporting) to police/ university among students (victims). In addition, not much work has considered the extent of victimisation, types of stalking and levels of reporting with UK student population. Therefore, this study seeks to conduct a study of the prevalence of stalking, the types of stalking victimisation and the support available amongst the student populations of Leicester. The objectives of the study will be to: To measure the extent of five forms of stalking incidents: unwanted direct attention, unwanted electronic communication, harassment, threatening behaviour and violent behaviour among the sampled student population. To determine the nature of relationship that exists between perceived victims of stalking and their perpetrators. To evaluate the stalking victims' attitude towards reporting their victimisation as well as seeking counselling help. Although the study has three primary objectives (see above), the work also aims to explore a number of other themes in relation to stalking. For example, the work also sought: To have an estimate of stalking victims that will be compared to other studies. To determine the most common form of stalking incidents and its medium among the convenience sample of student population. To examine the relationship between gender and stalking victimisation experienced by students. To identify forms of stalking offenders based on victims' description of stalking incidents. To identify reasons why some of the perceived victims do not report their stalking victimisation to police and seek counselling help. To make recommendation towards reducing the perceived estimate of stalking through the introduction of university policy on stalking.

Forms of stalking incidents	Explanations	Examples of Behavioral acts
Unwanted direction attention (Cupach and Spitzberg,2004)	Also known as unwanted interactional pursuit and Intrusion. It involves either face to face contact with person you do not want to meet or contact with the person's gift over a period of time that frighten you	E.g. turns up at your lecture hall, residential hall, home where the person had no business to be there or sending you unwanted gifts, letters .
Unwanted Electronic Communication(Cupach and Spitzberg,2004)	Also known as on-line harassment or electronic stalking or cyber stalking. It is the use Internet, e-mail, face book, twitter, telephone or other electronic communications devices to frighten you or group of people over a period of time.	E.g. abusive or threatening emails, fake identity and pretending to be someone else, hacking into email accounts, contacting your friends, bombarding you with emails, soliciting friends, surveillance and GPS tracking, face book messages and photographs, tweets, text messages, phone calls.
Harassment (Cupach and Spitzberg , 2004)	It is a persistent pattern of behavior with the intent to annoy, terrorize or psychological torment you in order to establish or re-establish or maintain an intimate relationship over a period of time.	E.g. harassing you and your friends, family, children, colleagues, partners or neighbors (e.g. verbal or written, reputational harassment)
Threatening Behaviour (Cupach and Spitzberg, 2004)	It is the contingency of explicit messages or actions that is aimed at securing compliance which has made you fearful for your safe life over a period of time.	E.g. making direct or indirect threats to harm you, your children, relatives, friends, pets or damage to your property.
Violent Behaviour (Cupach and Spitzberg, 2004)	It is causing physical harms or acting violently to you and persons perceived as preventing access to you or protecting you since the unwanted behaviours began.	E.g. slapping, pushing , punching or fondling, hitting, physical fight destruction of property , stealing your personal belongings or assault against third parties.

Table 1.0 Showing Five Different Forms of Stalking Incidents

Adapted- Cupach and Spitzberg (2004): A typology of Stalking and Obsessive Relation Intrusion Tactics

HYPOTHESES

1. This study hypothesized that the most common form of stalking will be through unwanted electronic communication (cyber stalking) than any other form of stalking incidents.
2. This study hypothesized that a higher proportion of victims of stalking will describe their perpetrators as intimacy seekers.
3. This study hypothesized that majority of student victims of stalking will not seek counselling in relation to their stalking victimization.
4. The present study hypothesized that a significant proportion of victims will express a desire for a university policy on stalking.

METHODS

Research Design

The research design for this study is a survey, designed to determine the incidence, frequency and distribution of pattern of stalking amongst student population. It involves gathering of information about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes or previous experiences through self completion questionnaires and the online surveys on stalking



victimization. This is for the purpose of generating descriptive or analytic statistics about the student population.

Participants

The majority of the sampled students 78.2%, (n=373 students) are between the ages of 18- 24. The Undergraduate students are 57.2% (n= 273), Postgraduate Master's level students are : 39.2% (n= 187) and PhD students are: 3.6% (n= 17) . In terms of gender, 40.3% (n= 192) are male students while 59.7% (n= 285) are female students. In all, 477 students participated in the survey.

Research Instrument

The instrument is divided into five sections: Section A : Personal details, Section B: Experience of Victimization through- unwanted direct attention, unwanted electronic communication, harassment, threatening behavior and threatening Behavior. Section C: Reporting Incidents- Did you seek help when you were a victim any of these incidents? Where did you go for help? and Section D- . Do you think victims of stalking should be encouraged to report incidents as early as possible? If available, would you seek any counselling help in relation to your experience of being stalked? Do you think there should be a campus policy on stalking?

Procedure

Convenience sample was used in this study because it afforded the researcher the opportunity to administer questionnaires to students who were available at the University library (6th - 10th May, 2013). The email addresses of several students obtained from the university webmail were contacted and also participants were sought from the University of Leicester Face book page. In all, 477 valid responses were obtained.

METHODS

In the context of this present study, there are more structured questions in the survey that covers the experience of stalking victimisation, reporting of incidents and help for victims. Participants responded to few open-ended questions like description of stalking incidents and reasons for not reporting incidents to police which provided additional insights into the quantitative aspect of the study. Through this combination, the present study was able to compensate for the weakness in quantitative dimension (i.e. the inconsistency of statistical results) through the qualitative aspect that gave more information on motives for stalking and reasons for not reporting stalking victimization to police. Convenience sample was used in this study because it afforded the researcher the opportunity to administer questionnaires to students who were available at the University library (6th - 10th May, 2013). The email addresses of several students obtained from the university webmail were contacted and also participants were sought from the University of Leicester Face book page.

In order to have a bigger sample for more reliable data that will probably remove anomalies and that will make the results to be representative of the population 450 questionnaires were printed and several online versions designed through Survey Monkey .com. were personally sent to participants' university email addresses.

For example, the demographic data for this present study were assigned numeric values accordingly: **Gender** (Male= 0, Female= 1); **Student status** (Undergraduate=0, Master= 1 and PhD= 2).

The data on age that were already numeric, were turned into small and more useful categories

(E.g.18-31, 32- 38, 39 - 45 and 46 -52). For the closed - ended questions with categorical responses: **No** =0 and **Yes** = 1.

Concerning the open-ended questions on stalking victimisation, based on the themes that emerged from victims' responses, they were coded into four offending types of stalkers

(rejected, intimacy seeker, resentful and incompetent stalkers). Also, the emerged themes from the reasons for not reporting stalking victimisation to the police were coded into: not a big deal, not necessary, not serious enough, time consuming, not a threat, lack of faith in the police, able to deal with it, and solved by threatening to call the police. Thus, the coding stage enabled the researcher to generate four forms of offending stalkers and a reduction of several reasons given for not reporting stalking victimisation into smaller groupings for statistical analysis using SPSS.

Although SPSS software is upgraded regularly, this present study used version 20 for windows to analyze the generated data. Both descriptive statistics (about the data collected from the sample) and inferential statistics (drawing of conclusions about a background population from the sample) were used. Descriptive results such as mean and mode were used for comparison of key findings. For example, the most common form of stalking victimisation as well as the most widely used medium was determined by measure of central tendency (mode) with charts. The inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation) was used to examine the nature of relationship between other forms of stalking behaviour and violence. In addition, the Chi - Square was used to determine the association between victims and need for stalking policy. In all, the generated survey data were coded, analyzed and the results presented according to the stated hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations

Inevitably, all university - based dissertations have to pass through a process of ethical approval which involves a closer look at the methodology by a panel of experts. The research ethics ensure majorly that research participants through their involvement in the research are not harmed. Given the risk occasioned by third party intrusion, researcher's commitment to confidentiality and anonymity provide the key foundations for the participants' data protection (Hartley, 2011). Thus, the present study adhere strictly to doing what is morally and legal right in a bid to add to the existing knowledge about stalking victimisation amongst student population.

For the purpose of debriefing, the researcher of this study not only made available his email address to the participants but also made arrangement to contact Network for Surviving Stalking in UK. This is to ensure that any psychological harm that participants may experience through the description of their stalking victimization especially those involving threat and violence were properly taken care by the non- governmental organization. However, the organisation was not contacted for any relevant support services because none of the participants reported any psychological harm to the best knowledge of the researcher.

This study chose to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity. Assuring that respondent's data will be confidential in order to help to build respondents' trust and improve response rate. All the research data were stored in a secured manner through encryption of data (SPSS files) as well as data which were stored in paper format in compliance with Data Protection legislation and best practice on confidentiality.

RESULTS

The survey asked 477 students (through 450 printed questionnaires and several online version) about their experiences of stalking victimisation including: unwanted direct attention, unwanted electronic communication, harassment, threatening behaviour and violent behaviour. Although, students may have experienced other forms of stalking incidents, the analysis in this study was restricted to those stalking forms included in the survey. Students were asked about reporting stalking incidents to the police, university and others (family and friends) but also express their opinions on the need for a university policy on stalking.

Preliminary analysis included checking the frequency distributions of the data; and exploring group differences between specific variables that were being investigated in the study.

Altogether, 477 valid responses were collected for analysis. The majority of the sampled students 78.2%, (n=373 students) were between the ages of 18- 24. The Undergraduate students were: 57.2% (n= 273), Postgraduate Master’s level students were : 39.2% (n= 187) and PhD students were: 3.6% (n= 17) . In terms of gender, 40.3% (n= 192) were male students while 59.7% (n= 285) were female students (see Table 1.0).

Table 1.0.Description of the demographic characteristics of the sampled students .

Age	Frequency n (%)	Student Status/ Level of Study	Frequency n (%)	Gender	Frequency n (%)
18 - 24	373 (78.2%)	Undergraduate	273 (57.2%)	Male	192 (40.3%)
25 - 31	62 (13.0%)	Master Level	187 (39.2%)	Female	285 (59.7%)
32 - 38	22 (4.6%)	PhD	17 (3.6%)		
39 - 45	18 (3.8%)				
46 - 52	2 (0.4%)				
Total	477 (100.0%)		477 (100.0%)		477 (100.0%)

Analysis of prevalence of stalking victimisation in isolation of other crime counts such as concentration and incidence can underestimate the real level of crime (Rogerson, 2004). As such, this study reports three different crime counts that are essential to fully understand the levels of stalking victimisation amongst the sampled student population: stalking prevalence - the proportion of students who are victimised ; stalking concentration - the number of stalking victimisations per victim; and stalking incidence- the average number of stalking incidents amongst the student population. Therefore, the results from survey of victims amongst the sampled student population found:

Prevalence: 30.8% (n = 147) respondents had been victims of stalking.

Concentration: victims in the survey experienced an average of 1.7 stalking incident each

Incidence: 52 victims per 100 stalking incidents.

Based on the level of study, the prevalence rate: Undergraduate 29.6%, Master students 31.6%and PhD student 41.6% (which all reflect the sample size and the number of victims within each level of study). Obviously, the distribution for age mirrors the distribution of sample in this study. 77.6% (n= 114) of the victims were within ages 18-24 with a stalking prevalence of 30.6% which is almost similar to the prevalence of stalking victimisation for the whole study, 30.8%.

In terms of the total stalking incidents found in this study, 251 incidents were experienced by 147 victims from the 5 forms of stalking measured. Notably, 88 victims experienced only one form of stalking victimisation. This implies that the remaining identified victims (i.e. 59 victims) experienced two forms of stalking incidents and above. Invariably, out of the reported 124 incidents of unwanted electronic communication, 60 victims were stalked through the reported various mediums of electronic communication only. The most common form of stalking incidents was unwanted electronic communication 49.4% (See Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Combination of forms of stalking: the frequency distribution of combined stalking incidents experienced by victims.

Forms of stalking Incidents	Combined stalking Incidents experienced by victims					Total No of incidents (n)	Percent
	Alone (n)	With One (n)	With Two (n)	With Three (n)	With Four (n)		
Unwanted Direct Attention	12	16	13	1	3	45	17.9%
Unwanted Electronic Com. Harassment	60	39	2	2	4	124	49.4%
Threatening Behaviour	4	12	9	4	4	31	12.4%
Violent Behaviour	5	8	6	2	4	25	10.0%
Total	3	9	9	1	4	26	10.3%
	88	89	56	8	9	251	100.0%

N .B. Incident per Victim = 1.707 (251/147)

Unwanted electronic communication among the sampled population had a prevalence rate of 26.0%; male 17.1% and female 31.9% (See Table 1.1). In other words, more female victims were cyber stalked than males.

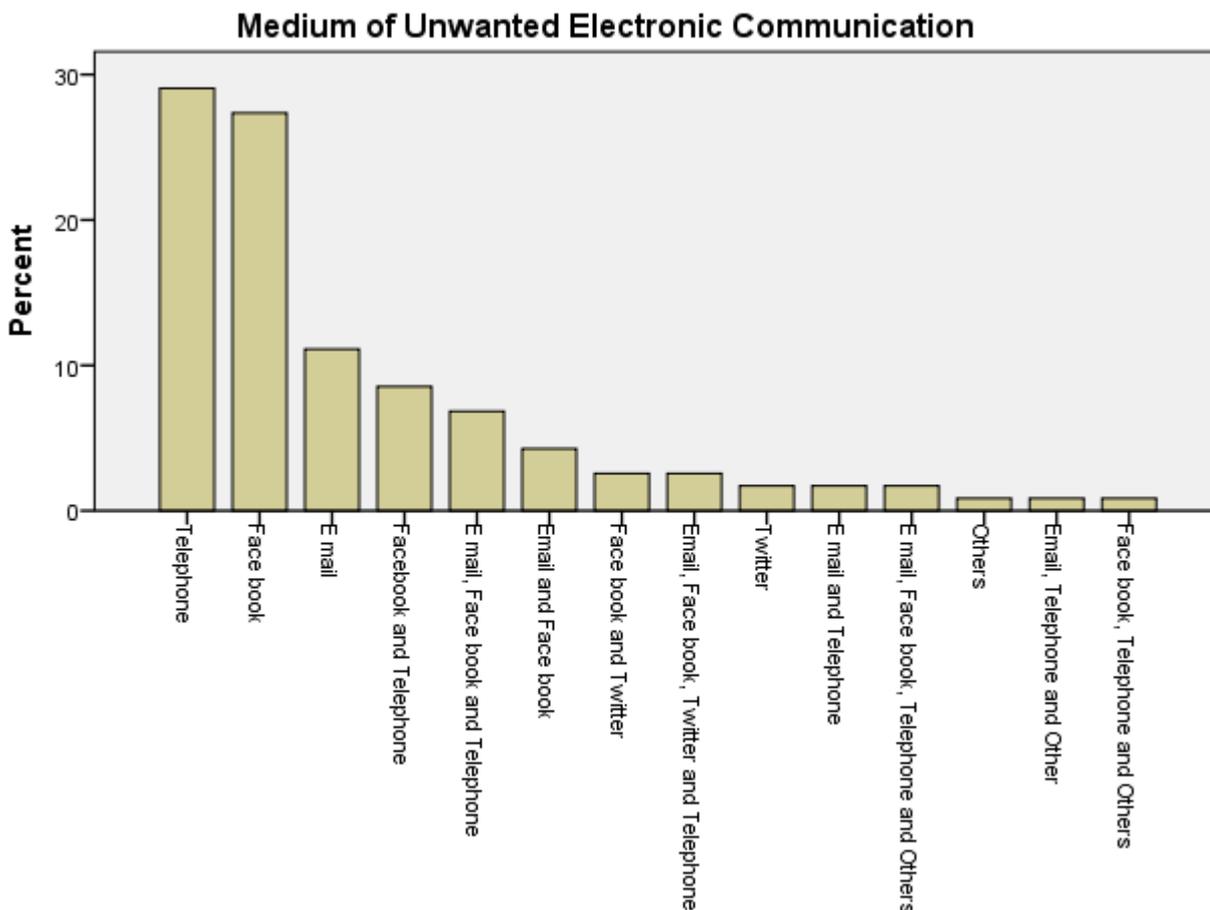
Table 1.1.1 Prevalence of Unwanted Electronic Communication by gender.

Incidents	Gender		Total
	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	
Unwanted Electronic Communication	33 (17.1%)	91 (31.9%)	124 (26.0%)

Baseline: 477 Respondents

Among the various mediums of unwanted electronic communication identified in this study, victims that were stalked through telephone only: 29.1% followed by Face book: 27.4 % and e mail: 11.1%. However, findings from this study revealed that some stalkers combined more than one electronic media to stalk their victims (e.g. face book and telephone or face book, telephone and email). In addition, some of the victims were stalked through other electronic communication (i.e. Others)that were not included in this study (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Showing Mediums of Unwanted Electronic Communication



Medium of Unwanted Electronic Communication

N.B. Baseline figure for unwanted electronic communication- 124 incidents

Although, each of the four forms of stalking incidents measured in this study: threatening behaviour, harassment, unwanted electronic communication and unwanted direct attention had significantly positive relationships with violent behaviour, it was threatening behaviour that showed the highest positive relationship with violent behaviour : $r=.41, p<.01$ (See Table 1.1). However, this level of relationship between threatening behaviour and violent behaviour had a low predictive power (based on the reported correlation coefficient). Therefore, contrary to expectation, none of the four forms of stalking incidents was statistically strong enough to predict violent behaviour but threats might directly precede violence.

A Table 1.1 Reporting Correlations of Violent Behaviour with other Forms of Stalking Incidents.

Pearson Correlation Sig (1- tailed)	Violent Behaviour	Unwanted Direct Attention	Unwanted Electronic Communication	Harassment	Threatening Behaviour
Violent Behaviour	1				
Threatening Behaviour		.283***			
Harassment			.280***		
Unwanted Elect. Com.				.184***	
Unwanted Direct Attention					.413***

Number	438	438	438	438	438
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N.B :Baseline 477 Respondents; Violent Behaviour $p < .01^{***}$

Although, 147 victims were identified from the survey, only 81 of them gave brief descriptions of their stalking incidents that revealed their various forms of offending stalkers (perhaps, due to the sensitive nature of their victimisation, others did not describe their victimisation). As hypothesized, a high proportion of victims (66.7%) described their perpetrators as intimacy seekers (see Table 1.2). The Table below suggests that 79.0% offenders are male and 21.0% are females. In addition, unwanted electronic communication incidents accounted for 70% of stalking for intimacy (see Table 1.2.1). Apparently, the frequency distribution of types of offending stalker reveals stalkers' motives. In other words, the high prevalence reported for intimacy seekers suggest that most of the stalkers (both males and females) of the sampled population were stalking through various forms of social media to establish romantic interest with their victims.

Table 1.2 Types of Identified Offending Stalkers by Gender

Types of Stalkers	Male n (%)	Female n (%)	Total	Prevalence Rate
Rejected stalker	8 (12.5%)	2 (11.8%)	10	12.3%
Intimacy seeker	42 (65.6%)	12 (70.8%)	54	66.7%
Resentful	2 (3.1%)	2 (11.8%)	4	5.0%
Incompetent stalker	12 (18.8%)	1 (5.9%)	13	16.0%
Total	64 (79.0%)	17 (21.0%)	81	100.0%

Baseline for identified stalkers :81

Table 1.2.1 Showing Types of Stalkers and incidents of Unwanted Electronic Communication

	No of incidents Through Unwanted Electronic Communication n (%)	No of incidents Not Through Unwanted Electronic Communication n (%)	Total no of stalkers
Rejected Stalkers	9 (13.0%)	1 (9.1%)	10
Intimacy Stalkers	49 (70.0%)	5 (45.5%)	54
Resentful Stalkers	3 (4.0%)	1 (9.1%)	4
Incompetent Stalkers	9 (13.0%)	4 (36.3%)	13
Total	70 (100.0%)	11 (100.0%)	81

Base line of Unwanted Electronic Communication: 124 incidents

Although, 30.6% of the stalking victims indicated they sought help as a result of their victimisation, the more heavily you are victimised, the more likely you are to report(see Table 1.3). In addition, there were more female victims (73.3%) than males (26.7%)who reported their victimisation. When the victims were asked: where did they seek help from? More than half of the victims 57.8% sought help from family and friends only; 26.7 % reported to police only and 11.1% reported to the university only.

Table 1.3. Frequency Distribution of Stalking Victims and their Help- Seeking Responses

Did you seek Help?	Number of form (s)of Stalking Incidents experienced Per victim					Total Number of Victims n (%)
	One n	Two n	Three n	Four n	Five n	
NO	68	28	14	1	1	102 (69.4%)
YES	20	16	5	1	3	45 (30.6%)
Total	78	44	19	2	4	147 (100.0%)

N.B. 30.6% Victims sought help (i.e. 45/147* 100); 69.4% did not

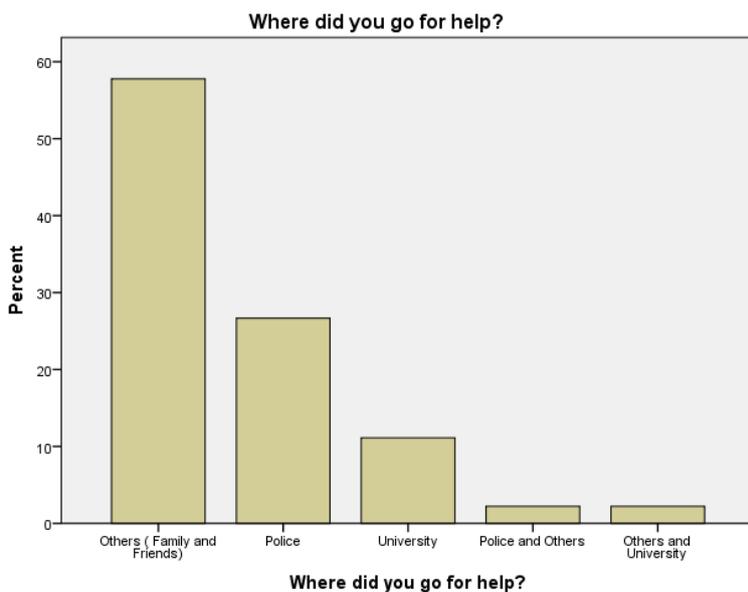
Table 1.3.1 Frequency Distribution of Gender and places reported to for Help

Gender	Where did you go for help?					Total	
	Police n	University n	Others (Family and Friends) n	Police and Others n	Others and University n	n	(%)
Male	5	1	6	0	0	12	(26.7%)
Female	7	4	20	1	1	33	(73.3%)
Total	12	5	26	1	1	45	(100.0%%)

N.B: Male: 26.6% and Female 73.3 % (Male:12/45*100; Female: 33/45*100)

When some of the victims who did not report their victimisation to the police (n= 73; were asked for reasons for not doing so, the following coded reasons were given from their comments: 54.8% Not Necessary, 19.2% Able to deal with it, 15.1% Lack of Faith in Police, 4.1% Time Consuming, 4.1% Solved by the University and 2.7% Lack of evidence (see Figure 2). The major findings of this study suggest low reporting of victimisation and high use of informal coping strategies among the victims

Figure 2 Showing victims and places reported to for help



N.B. Baseline figure for unwanted electronic communication- 124 incidents

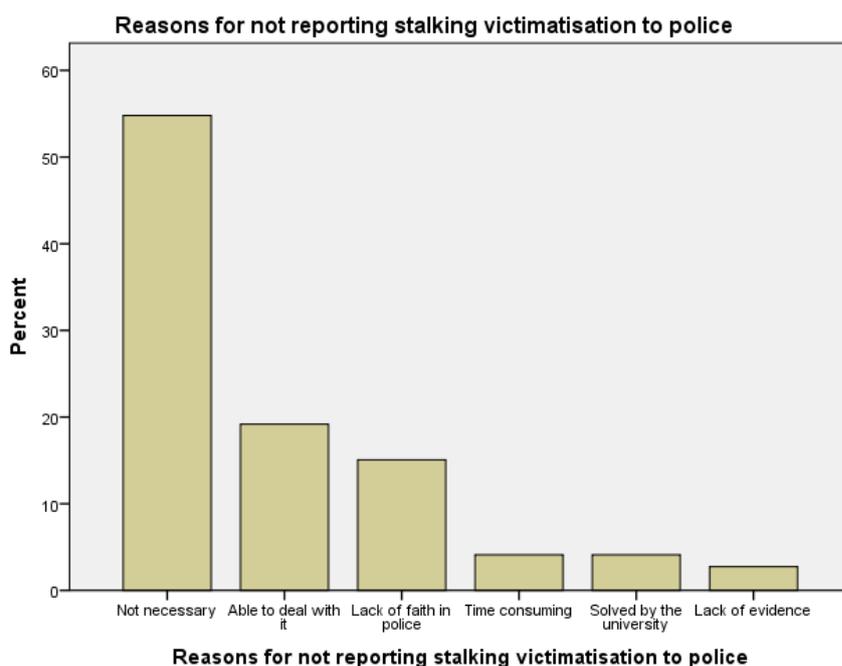
Although, majority of the victims (93.1%) expressed positive desire for early reporting of stalking victimisation , less than half of the victims 42.8% indicated that they would seek counselling help in relation to their stalking victimisation (See Table 1.3.1). To a large extent , the severity of their victimisation will determine whether they will need counselling help or not.

Table 1.3.2 : Victims' Responses on seeking counselling help in relation to victimisation

Gender	Would you seek counselling help in relation to your experience of being stalked?		Total
	No n	Yes n	
Male	23	19	42
Female	55	44	99
Total	78	63	141

Baseline: 147 Victims; YES : 42.8% (i.e.63/147*100)

Figure 3 Showing the various reasons given for not reporting stalking victimisation to Police.



N.B. Baseline figure for reporting of victimisation - 73 victims

Notably, a significant proportion of respondents to the survey, 81.8% expressed favourable support for campus policy on stalking. The chi square value: $(X^2 = 1, N = 444) = 10.792, p = .001$ (Significant). In other words, the chi square value for the analysis of 444 respondents on stalking policy is 10.792 and it is statistically significant because $p < .001$ (i.e. there is a relationship between the respondents and need for stalking policy). This significant finding also reveals a slight difference between males 81.7% and females 92.0% respondents on stalking policy. In other words, more females are likely to state there should be a stalking policy (See Table 1.4) As hypothesized, 85.0% of the reported victims are more likely to support a need for the stalking policy (See Table 1. 4.1).

Table 1.4 Cross tabulation of gender and sampled students' opinions on need for campus policy on stalking

Gender	There should be a campus policy on stalking		Total
	No n (%)	Yes n (%)	
Male	33 (18.3%)	147 (81.7%)	180
Female	21 (8.0%)	243 (92.0%)	264
Total	54 (12.6%)	390 (87.4%)	444

Baseline: 477 Respondents ; YES : 81.8% (i.e. 390/477*100).

Table 1.4.1 Victims' Responses on Stalking Policy

Gender	There should be a campus policy on stalking		Total
	No n	Yes n	
Male	5	37	42
Female	11	88	99
Total	16	125	141

Baseline: 147 Victims; YES: 85.0% (i.e.125/147*100)

Key Findings:

In line with a number of hypotheses tested in this study, the key findings are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Unwanted electronic communication(cyber stalking) was the most common form of stalking reported by the victims (49.4%) among other forms of stalking incidents measured in this study Also most victims of unwanted electronic communication were stalked through telephone (29.1%) - confirmed .

Hypothesis 2 : A high proportion of victims of stalking (66.7%) described their perpetrators as intimacy seekers - confirmed .

Hypothesis 3: More than two third of the victims (69.4%) did not seek help in relation to their stalking victimisation while more than half (57.8%) of those that did, were from family and friends. Less than half of the identified victims 42.8 % indicated that they would seek counselling help in relation to their stalking victimisation- confirmed.

Hypothesis 4 : The major findings of this study suggest low reporting of victimisation and high use of informal coping strategies among the victims while 85.0% of the reported victims are more likely to support a need for the stalking policy.

DISCUSSION

The present study adds to the previous work on forms of stalking incidents among university populations. The most common form of stalking incidents was unwanted electronic communication (49.4 %) and its most common medium was telephone (29.1 %). With a prevalence rate of 26.0% (i.e. unwanted electronic communication) more females (31.9%) were electronically stalked than males. The prevalence rate of unwanted electronic communication in this study is higher than 16.2 % found by Finn (2004) but much lower than 44.9% reported by Buhi et al., (2009) and 43.3% by Lindsay and Krysik (2012). It is possible that the higher results of those cited studies may have been influenced by gender (females only) compared to the present study. However, the higher prevalence of female victims supported some previous studies reporting higher rates of female victimization for cyber stalking amongst university students (Alexy et al. 2005; Amar, 2006; Björklund et al., 2010; Fisher et al., 2000; Finn ,2004; Jordan et al., 2007; Kraft and Wang 2010; Smock, 2003; Spitzberg and Hobbler, 2002). These findings suggest that females were more likely than males to indicate that they had been cyber stalked.

In contrast to the above findings, one of the major findings of the first study of its kind to investigate the extent and effect of cyber stalking taking place in social networking sites at Bedford University (using email and mobile phones) found that almost 37% of men were cyber stalked compared with 23% of women (ECHO cited in McVeigh ,2011). Thus far, findings from previous studies on whether or not there are differences between males and females in relation to unwanted electronic communication experiences have been mixed. However, the emerging trend from studies is that women have more relational interactions online than men (Donn and Sherman, 2002; Pujazon-Zazik and Park, 2010).Hence, online behaviours that are targeted at establishing intimate relationships, particularly those of females, are likely to increase students' vulnerability to risk of unwanted electronic communication (Lindsay and Krysik, 2012).

Notably, unwanted electronic communication (cyber stalking) is an emerging crime and there is evidence that with technological advances it will increase in frequency and intensity (Parsons-Pollard and Moriarty, 2009). In this direction, research suggests that students who were cyber stalked were not only likely to have experienced other forms of stalking victimization (such as, harassment, threatening and violent behaviours) but also were significantly more likely not to do anything because they thought that the situation would stop (Alexy et al., 2005; Fisher et al., 2000). Although, none of the four forms of stalking incidents measure in this study had high correlation with violence, study revealed that 15% of campus stalking incidents involved violence either threatened or perpetrated against the victim (Fisher, et al.,2000). In this direction, Roberts (2005) found threats to be a statistically significant predictor of violence and suggested that threats made by stalkers should not be ignored . As such, this tends to substantiate the findings of this study. Even though stalking begins with harmless or accidental contacts through non - threatening e-mail messages or telephone calls, with time, it turns to harassment and intimidation through unwanted invasion of the victim's private life. Thus, all stalkers may become more threatening and dangerous to their victims. Aptly, the most dependable predictor of stalker's violent behaviour is the stalker's history of violent behaviour and some stalkers with no history of violence have been known to move to a more dangerous level (Smock, 2003).

Research has shown that insecure attachment may also underlie stalker-victim relationships where intimacy is the motive (Patton et al., 2010). In addition, research evidence suggests that insecure adult attachment increases an individual's propensity to stalk and impair

stalker's ability to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships (MacKenzie, et al., 2008). This study corroborates previous research that reported more male perpetrators 89 % than females 7% (National Union of Students, 2010). However, the present study found more male stalking perpetrators 79.0 % than females 21.0 %. The noticed increase in female perpetrators in the present study compared to the online survey conducted by the National Union of Students (female only) could result from the survey frame of the former (both males and females). Previous studies have found that more females than males used social media for relational interactions (Donn and Sherman, 2002; Pujazon-Zazik and Park, 2010). However, the females online relational interaction could be with the same - sex or opposite sex. As reported by two identified female victims, their female perpetrators were stalking to establish intimate relationship with them. This view is illustrated below:

'I was approached by a female who suggested that we could get together and exchange nude photos online with her other female friends. I immediately upped all my privacy settings' - Victim 122
'Received inappropriate e-mails of a sexual nature which then turned into e-mails of a nasty/cruel nature when I did not respond' - Victim 132

In addition, Bjerregard, (2002) reported that 32% of stalking incidents were males stalking males compare to 4% of females stalking females. Intimacy stalking via internet among students is not only limited to the opposite sex but also to the same- sex stalking which involves the exchange of nude pictures. Research has found intimacy seekers to be persistent stalkers attempting to establish relationship with the victim through unwanted attention and communication (Mullen, et al.,2000).

As found in this study, a high proportion of identified victims of stalking were stalked for intimacy. These quotes below highlight the common settings/ context of stalking. First, from the females' perspectives :

'A Fellow student followed me to a different part of the library (I had moved there to avoid him) and handed me a letter saying he loves me' -Victim 94.

' A male student on a course that shared modules with me would wait for me after lectures and follow me home, send me emails telling me I HAD to talk to him because he loved me, even after being repeatedly told I was not interested. Victim 124.

'In the David Wilson Library, a man kept coming to find me and ask me for my number and dates. This happened at various places in the library intermittently as though the man was always looking for me'- Victim 144

'Would visit my hall of residence, once followed me upstairs to my corridor. Tried to force himself into my room as I was trying to close the door' - Victim 53

'random taxi driver trying to call and text to ask me out '- Victim 75

'From our current neighbours ...Sent presents, daily phone calls ending in daily visits... step up the harassment to threatening behaviour. Texts that were very detailed and bordering on violence'

- Victim 126

'Occasionally I get contacted on social media sites such as Kirk or Twitter where people ask for naked pictures but usually if I don't respond they stop eventually' -Victim 114

Although, stalkers can be unknown to their victims, some of the female victims that shared their experiences indicated that their stalkers were known to them. (They are students, neighbours, drivers). As discovered, stalkers' proximity to the identified victims also made them to be more vulnerable to receiving nude pictures, unwanted visits, gifts, calls, surveillance, harassment and threatening behaviours (even from social media such as Kirk that was not included among the mediums of unwanted electronic communication in this present study).

On the other hand, some male victims shared their experiences:

'... She would not take NO for an answer and would text me constantly to abuse whenever I refused to meet her.'- Victim 29

'a girl liked me a lot and always messaged me constantly to annoy me' - Victim 42

' I received persistent messages from a girl I didn't know' - Victim 101

' Girl following me in lectures/ hiding in my residential hall'- Victim 92

'... Was approached by a female who suggested that we could get together and exchange nude photos online with her other female friends' - Victim 122.

Sexting (which is receiving of nude pictures) reported by both male and female stalking victims require a considerable attention. In relation to stalking, sexting is not only harmful and harassing but a maladaptive behaviour. In a study conducted by Drouin et al., (2012), it was found that sexting is also associated with attachment styles. Individuals with attachment avoidance are more likely to engage in sexting behaviours. In this direction, Lindsay and Krysik (2012) reported that the time students spent on social networking sites was positively related to the experience of online harassment and suggest that online activities among students population via social media that are directed at building intimate relationships are likely to increase students' risk for cyber stalking.

Theoretically, it has been suggested that university years are still a learning phase for many students in regard to complex social situations and some of them might be maladaptive in social skills, predisposing them to stalking (Ravensberg and Miller, 2003). Additionally, depending on the style of attachment that a student develops, insecurely attached students can be obsessed with intimacy, anxiously needing connections with others (Cupach and Spitzberg, 2004). Furthermore, the university settings provide opportunities to establish new relationships and develop new social networks among students. The buildings and residence halls provide relatively easy access to individuals who desire to enter the premises and may enhance the probability of stalking as well as attract the attention of a would-be stalker to intensely monitor the routine activities of victims (Mustaine and Tewksbury, 1999).

This study suggests that the dynamics of crime reporting among university students (victims) to police may be different from those that exist for the general population (Hart and Violet, 2011). In congruence with previous research, Cass and Rosay (2012), victims of stalking in this study had low expectations of police handling their victimisation. Appropriately, expectancy theory stipulates that victims of stalking believe that there are connections between their efforts of gathering and reporting stalking incidents, the outcome of their reporting and the justice they receive from their efforts (Lunenburg, 2011). A student victim's decision to report stalking victimisation to the police is largely based on victim's faith in the police (e.g. built through personal experience or shared experiences) that reporting will lead to arrest and arrest will lead to prosecution of the stalker. The more likely the positive outcomes on stalking cases reported to the police, the more the victims of stalking are more likely to report their concerns. If otherwise, such victims will not report. For example, some of the identified victims felt that police were not helpful. This view is illustrated below:

'I did not want to get him in trouble and I thought police would not have been able to help' -

Victim 3 'The police is not always helpful, too much bureaucracy involved' - Victim 10

'It would make it worse, police can't really do much' - Victim 17

In congruence with previous research, a considerable number of victims of stalking tend to handle their victimisation themselves before seeking legal intervention and most of them who have sought help from the police were not completely satisfied with the standard and the types of service provided (Brewster, 2003). In addition, research suggests that under reporting of stalking could result from victims not wanting to make it public, be ashamed or may still feel some loyalty to the perpetrator (Lorraine Sheridan as cited in BBC News, 2011b). In this regard, some of the victims gave such reasons for not reporting their stalking victimisation to the police:

'Because it was not necessary. We sorted that out between us' - Victim 48

'Because this would put another friend in danger and the perpetrator is also suicidal' -Victim 16

'I could have also gotten into trouble' - Victim 37

'Didn't think it was serious enough/ blocked them on face book/ boyfriend threatened person who kept calling' - Victim 54

I just ignored that guy and for couple of weeks, I stopped using face book'- Victim 6



'Thought that would have been a bit much especially since the incident didn't turn into anything' - Victim 53.

Some of the victims who did not report their stalking victimisation to the police did report to the university or to someone in an official role at the university. Two of such victims reported positively and believed they were taken seriously because their student perpetrators were made to stop their stalking behaviours. This view is illustrated below:

'I reported to the library staff. I also told my family and if he had continued, I would have spoken to the campus security' - Victim 114

'After reporting it to the university and the guy was spoken to and given a formal warning he stopped. And they blocked his email from emailing me' - Victim 124

On one hand, the above formal stalking coping strategy used by these students is not only noteworthy but also provides valuable information about a good practice within the university system. On the other, the findings of this study suggest that stalking victims largely depend on informal help which is in congruence with previous research (Amar, 2006; Björklund and Häkkänen-Nyholm, 2010; Fisher et al., 2000; National Union of Students, 2010). In other words, many of the victims did not report seeking help from police and the university but relied more on informal coping resources (friends and family).

In line with previous research all the cited reasons for not reporting stalking victimisation in this study have been found to have effects on victims' help-seeking behaviour (Fisher et al., 2000; Björklund and Häkkänen-Nyholm, 2010; Jordan et al., 2007). In addition, females are more likely than males to report their stalking victimisation; overall the reporting of victimisation is low (Bjerregaard, 2002; Truman and Mustaine, 2009). Hence, the present findings suggest a high sense of apathy towards reporting stalking victimisation (with the exception of few that were reported to police and university).

Given that police were perceived as not being helpful, it is important for police to be involved in awareness efforts to build students' confidence in the criminal justice process. Although the nature of the sample limits generalizing these findings to all university students, current findings could have important policy implications for university administrators too. Nonetheless, this present study draws attention to the relevance of informal help from friends and family which cannot be over emphasized.

In addition, the Association of Chief Police Officers (in BBC News, 2011a) suggests that lives are at risk because quite many young victims of stalking are not reporting it. More so, the Assistant Chief Constable Garry Shewan points out that usually young victims believed that their ex-lovers will eventually stop the stalking behaviour but if they persist, the consequences can be terrible. In addition, Dr Lorraine Sheridan (as cited in the BBC news) suggests that under-reporting of stalking could result from victims not wanting to make it public, be ashamed or may still feel some loyalty to the perpetrator. However, she argued that under-reporting based on research revealed that three-quarters of young stalking victims who do report a crime wait for at least 120 incidents before contacting the police. Aply, the BBC News, (2011b) reported the findings of Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt University where 5,000 incidents of stalking and harassment between 2008 and 2011 were examined. It was found that some 48% of victims aged 19-25 went to the police for help, rising to 62% in older age groups. Hence, the present study hypothesized that the majority of student victims of stalking will neither report their stalking victimization to the police and also a significant proportion of victims will express a desire for a university policy on stalking.

Although, students may have experienced other forms of stalking incidents, this study is restricted to five stalking forms included in the survey based on extensive literature reviews and their relevance to research aims and objectives. In addition, lifetime reference frame is used which covers any experiences prior to becoming students as well as current



experiences. Perhaps, as a measure of stalking over lifetime, there could be a chance that much of the stalking reported could have happened prior to university life. However, the victims' descriptions of their stalking victimisation may prove otherwise.

The above stated methodological issues have raised a salient issue concerning comparability in prevalence research. Thus, the high incidence of stalking in this present study may be 'attributed to actual increases or to increased awareness of and sensitivity to the crime' of stalking amongst the sampled student population (Cupach and Spitzberg, 2004:51). As such, stalking concentration (1.7 per victim) and stalking prevalence (30.8%) of this present study can help to understand distribution of stalking incidents (52 victims per 100 stalking incidents) needed to make an informed choice of stalking reduction strategies. Therefore, for effective reduction of stalking, strategies must be tailored towards the distribution of stalking (that is strategies must be based on prevalence, concentration or a mixture of both) amongst the student population. Certainly, with a prevalence rate of 30.8 %, it suggests stalking is an issue amongst the sampled population.

This study has some limitations that must be considered when interpreting its results. First, the results were based on retrospective self-reports in which memory distortions may occur. Second, the respondents were provided with five forms of stalking incidents and it is possible that some incidents that they had experienced might be missing from the lists. This present study did not assess ethnic background of the stalking victims, the duration of stalking victimization, stalking victimization involving teaching and non teaching staff of the university, reasons why victims prefer informal coping strategy to formal (e.g. university and police). Future research should examine stalking victimization involving the whole university population and their reporting pattern.

Despite its limitations, the present study has several strengths and provides firsthand information on stalking to the university administrators. First, this study reports stalking prevalence and concentration that can help to understand the distribution of incidents of stalking amongst the sampled population (Rogerson, 2004). Second, a clear behaviourally specific experience of stalking victimization, which better assesses actual stalking incidents was used (McNamara and Marsil, 2012). In addition, respondents were able to share their experiences in a text box apart from the structured questions. Third, the help-seeking behaviours of students who reported being stalked were examined while identifying who and where victims seek help from will assist the university to develop support services and educational programmes for students (Buhi et al., 2009; Truman and Mustaine, 2009). In all, the present findings provide useful information for policy makers of the University of Leicester and law enforcement agents in estimating the risk of stalking among students population.

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