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# Impact of Stalking on Female College Students: An Empirical Study

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SNIGDHA SARMA<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of stalking on female college students and to understand its prevalence, forms, consequences, coping strategies, and reporting behaviours. The study used a mixed-methods approach. A quantitative survey was conducted on 50 female students, followed by qualitative interviews with some of the participants. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The most commonly reported consequences were irritability, experienced by 53.5%, and anxiety, reported by 27.9%. The majority of respondents experienced stalking from strangers, and the majority of the respondents experienced psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and academic performance. Overall, the survey results highlight the significant and detrimental impact that stalking can have on the mental health of college-going girls, emphasizing the urgent need for effective prevention, support, and intervention strategies to address this issue. There is a need for increased awareness, support services, and resources for victims, as well as improved protocols for handling stalking incidents by law enforcement and campus authorities.*

**Keywords:** *Stalking, Female college students, Victimization, Psychological distress, Reporting.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Stalking is a pervasive issue that disproportionately affects female college students, with research consistently demonstrating the significant negative psychological impact it can have on this population. The campus environment, where women often adhere to strict schedules, travel to the same locations at the same times for classes, and have their contact information publicly accessible, can place female students in a position of increased vulnerability to stalking. Additionally, factors such as being in a dating relationship, belonging to specific groups like sororities, living on-campus, and engaging in certain social activities have been identified as risk factors for stalking victimization among this demographic.

Psychological research has consistently shown that female college students who are victims of stalking experience significantly higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

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symptoms and other mental health issues compared to their non-stalked peers. Stalked students have been found to endorse more severe PTSD symptoms and higher levels of overall psychological distress, as measured by various subscales of the Symptom Checklist-90-R<sup>2</sup>.

The consequences of stalking victimization can be far-reaching for female college students, impacting their academic performance, social life, and overall well-being. Despite the availability of legal remedies, many victims are reluctant to seek formal help or report their experiences to authorities, with changes in personal behaviour being a more common coping strategy. This reluctance to seek legal or institutional recourse may be an extension of the broader gender inequality in responses to sexual violence against women.

Feminist theories of stalking emphasize the gendered nature of this form of violence, attributing it to deliberate efforts by men to control and subjugate women. However, research on risk factors for stalking victimization considers a range of individual and environmental factors that may contribute to the high prevalence among female college students.

Addressing the issue of stalking on college campuses and providing adequate support services for victims is crucial not only for their immediate mental health, but also for their long-term retention, progression, and graduation. Understanding the scope, risk factors, and psychological impact of stalking on female undergraduates is essential for developing effective prevention strategies and interventions to create a safer and more supportive campus environment<sup>3</sup>.

This empirical study aims to further explore the impact of stalking on female college students, examining the prevalence, risk factors, and psychological consequences of this form of victimization. By shedding light on the experiences and needs of this vulnerable population, the findings of this research can inform the development of comprehensive policies, resources, and support systems to address the issue of stalking on college campuses.

## **II. CONCEPTUALIZATION**

Stalking is a serious form of interpersonal violence that involves constant unwanted attention, harassment and intrusive behaviour towards an individual. This can take many forms, including physical stalking, online stalking and other forms of unwanted stalking or harassment. Stalking has been identified as a major public health problem with profound psychological, emotional and social consequences for victims. Although stalking can affect any gender, research shows

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<sup>2</sup> Westrup, D et al. "The psychological impact of stalking on female undergraduates." *Journal of forensic sciences* vol. 44,3 (1999): 554-7.

<sup>3</sup> Lana Stermac, Jenna Cripps and Veronica Badali 'Women's Experiences of Stalking on Campus', *Behaviour Changes and Access to University Resources*, 67, 67-76 (2018).

that women, especially young women, are disproportionately affected. Among young women, female students constitute a particularly vulnerable population due to factors such as increased social interaction, dependence on social media and the transitional period of university life. The purpose of this empirical study is to examine the impact of stalking on female college students and to understand its prevalence, forms, consequences, coping strategies, and reporting behaviours.

Studies show that stalking is alarmingly common among female students. According to a study by the National Center for Victims of Crime, approximately one in five female students have experienced harassment since entering college. Additionally, the prevalence of stalking among college students is higher than among non-college students of the same age group. This suggests that the college environment may present unique risk factors for victimization perpetration among young women.

Researchers found that about 21 percent of college students have been stalked<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, data from a national sample shows that 74% of stalking victims were between 18 and 39 years old. Persecution is reported by 7 students of both sexes, 13 to 52.4 % of female students and 11 to 23.2 % of male students<sup>5</sup>.

Stalking can take many forms, including physical stalking, online tracking, surveillance, and unsolicited communications. Physical stalking can include following, following, or repeatedly showing up at the victim's home, workplace, or campus. Cyberstalking, on the other hand, involves the use of electronic communication tools such as social media, emails, text messages and instant messages to harass, intimidate or threaten a victim. Research shows that cyberbullying is particularly prevalent among young adults, with female students at high risk<sup>6</sup>.

It can have serious psychological, emotional and social consequences for victims. Students who experience bullying may report symptoms of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health problems. They may also experience social isolation, fear for their safety and disruption in their academic and daily lives. Research has shown that victims of stalking often report decreased academic performance, increased absenteeism, and difficulty concentrating in class.

College students who experience stalking can use a variety of coping strategies to manage the

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<sup>4</sup> Amar, AF. Behaviors that college women label as stalking or harassment. *J Am Psychiatr Nurs Assoc.* 2007; 13: 210-220.

<sup>5</sup> Fisher, BS, Cullen, FT and Turner, MG. *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*, Washington, DC: National Criminal Justice Reference Service, US Department of Justice; 2000. NCJRS Publication No. 182369.

<sup>6</sup> Rana Sampson, Cyberstalking: An Old Problem in a New Guise, 17 *Computer Law.* 3 (2000).

effects of such bullying<sup>7</sup>. These strategies may include seeking help from friends, family, and campus resources, as well as self-care activities such as exercise, journaling, and mindfulness.

Reporting incidents of stalking to colleges or law enforcement is essential for safety and well-being as victims of persecution. However, research shows that many victims of stalking, including female college students, may not report the harassment to authorities. Reasons for underreporting may include lack of awareness of available resources, fear of not being taken seriously, privacy concerns, and fear of stalker retaliation.

### III. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Stalking is a widespread problem that seriously affects female students. Research shows the prevalence, risk factors and psychological consequences of this type of victimization. The literature underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support systems and interventions to effectively address stalking on college campuses<sup>8</sup>.

#### (A) Prevalence and Risk Factors

Studies show that female students have an alarming rate of stalking victimization, ranging from 25% to 45% over a lifetime. prevalence and 13-22% since the beginning of postsecondary education. A number of risk factors increase the likelihood of becoming a victim, including being in a romantic relationship, belonging to certain groups such as sororities, living on campus and participating in certain social activities<sup>9</sup>. In addition, campus environments where women often have busy schedules and their schedules and contact information are available online can increase vulnerability to stalking<sup>10</sup>.

#### (B) Psychological Effects

Psychological research shows that victims of stalking, especially female students, experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and higher levels of psychological distress compared to individuals who are not stalked. Victims of stalking have more severe PTSD symptoms and higher anxiety scores, highlighting the adverse mental health effects of stalking<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Fremouw, WJ and Westrup, MA. Pennypacker BA. Stalking on campus: The prevalence and strategies for coping with stalking. *J Forensic Sci.* 1997; 42; 666-669.

<sup>8</sup> Christina M. Dardis, *The Prevalence of Stalking Among College Students: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*, 35 *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* 595 (2014).

<sup>9</sup> Tracy L. Smith, *A Comparison of On-Campus and Off-Campus Students' Experiences with Gender-Based Violence*, 17 *J. Coll. Stud. Dev.* 495 (2016).

<sup>10</sup> Lana Stermac, Jenna Cripps and Veronica Badali 'Women's Experiences of Stalking on Campus', *Behaviour Changes and Access to University Resources*, 67, 67-76 (2018).

<sup>11</sup> Carabellese, F., La Tegola, D., Alfarano, E., Tamma, M., Candelli, C. and Catanesi, R. (2012) 'Female stalking: a systematic review', *Research and Reports in Forensic Medical Science*, 2, 31+, available:

### (C) Strategies and Legal Actions

College female students often use personal behavioural changes as a coping strategy after stalking incidents like adding security guards, taking self-defence classes, or changing routines to avoid or ignore stalkers to get away. Despite the availability of legal remedies, victims rarely seek legal or criminal proceedings following incidents of stalking, and police and court involvement is the least reported resistance strategy<sup>12</sup>.

### (D) Gender dynamics and institutional responses

Feminist theories of stalking emphasize the gendered nature of persecution. This form of violence is considered due to the deliberate attempts of men to dominate and subjugate women. However, research on victimization risk of consequences takes into account various individual and environmental factors associated with stalking. Institutional responses to stalking, including legal action across universities, are often inadequate, leading to a gap between victims of stalking and those seeking formal redress<sup>13</sup>.

## IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. **To assess the prevalence and forms of stalking:** This objective involves conducting a comprehensive survey to find out what proportion of female students have experienced stalking. It also seeks to identify the different types of stalking they have experienced, such as physical stalking, cyber stalking (such as through social media or email) and other forms of unwanted practices or harassment.
2. **To explore the psychological, emotional and academic impact:** The objective is to understand how stalking affects the mental health, emotional well-being and academic performance of female students. By analysing data on psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and academic performance, the study provides insight into the significant effects of stalking on these areas of students' lives.
3. **To explore coping strategies and social support:** This goal includes exploring coping mechanisms that female students use to investigate stalking cases. It also seeks to

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[accessed 01 May 2024].

<sup>12</sup> McNamara, Corinne L, and Dorothy F Marsil. "The prevalence of stalking among college students: the disparity between researcher- and self-identified victimization." *Journal of American college health: J of ACH* vol. 60,2 (2012): 168-74.

<sup>13</sup> Stermac, L., Cripps, J. and Badali, V. (2017) 'Women's Experiences of Stalking on Campus: Behaviour Changes and Access to University Resources', *Canadian Woman Studies*, 32(1-2), 67+, available: <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A551496031/AONE?u=anon~369b5693&sid=googleScholar&xid=1a573f24>  
[accessed 01 May 2024].

explore the role of social support networks, including friends, family and campus resources, in helping students cope with the emotional and practical challenges of stalking.

4. **To provide prevention and intervention recommendations:** Research findings aim to develop practical recommendations to prevent stalking and support those who experience it. These recommendations may include educational initiatives to increase awareness of stalking, training programs for campus personnel to recognize and respond to stalking, and developing support services tailored to the needs of affected students.

#### **(A) Methodology**

The study used a mixed-methods approach to examine the effects of stalking and cyber-adventure on female college students. A quantitative survey was conducted on 50 female students, followed by qualitative interviews with some of the participants. The survey and interviews gathered information about the frequency, forms and consequences of persecution, as well as the strategies and reporting behaviours of participants. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. Ethical considerations were followed throughout the research process, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring participant confidentiality. The results of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the impact of stalking on female students and help develop effective prevention and intervention strategies.

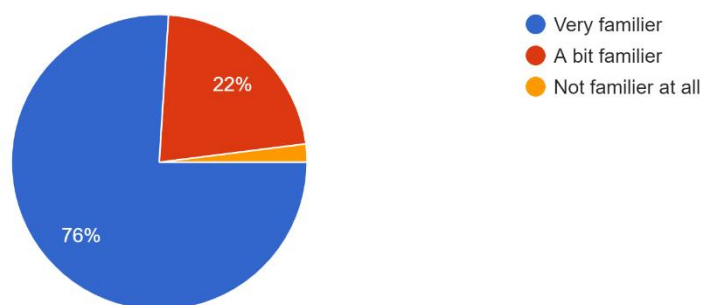
## **V. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

### **(A) Familiarity with the terms “stalking” and “cyber stalking”**

Out of the 50 respondents, 38 (76%) indicated that they are very familiar with the terms "stalking" and "cyber stalking." This suggests a high level of awareness among the respondents regarding these terms and the behaviours they represent. Stalking refers to unwanted or obsessive attention by an individual or group toward another person, often causing fear or concern. Cyber stalking, on the other hand, involves the use of electronic communication to stalk someone, whether through social media, email, or other means. With the majority of respondents being very familiar with these terms, it indicates a significant understanding of the issue, which is crucial in combating and preventing such behaviour. Additionally, 11 respondents (22%) stated that they are a bit familiar with these terms, while only 1 respondent (2%) said they are not familiar at all, further emphasizing the widespread awareness of stalking and cyber stalking among the surveyed group.

How familiar are you with the terms "stalking" and "cyber stalking"?

50 responses

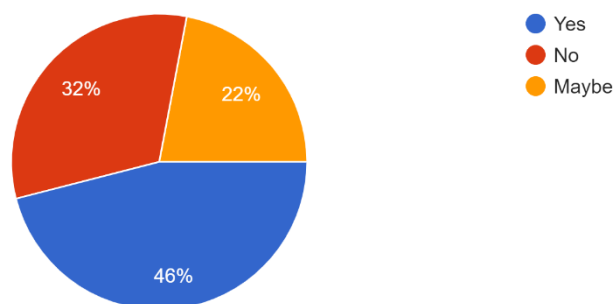


### (B) Female college students being a victim of stalking

Out of the 50 respondents, 23 (46%) stated that they have been victims of stalking during their time in college. This indicates that almost half of the respondents have experienced stalking behaviours at some point during their college years. Stalking involves unwanted or obsessive attention by an individual or group toward another person, often causing fear or concern. Additionally, 16 respondents (32%) reported that they have not been victims of stalking, while 11 respondents (22%) were unsure, stating "Maybe." These statistics shed light on the prevalence of stalking among college students and emphasize the importance of raising awareness about this issue and implementing measures to prevent and address such behaviours on college campuses.

Have you ever been a victim of stalking during your time in college?

50 responses

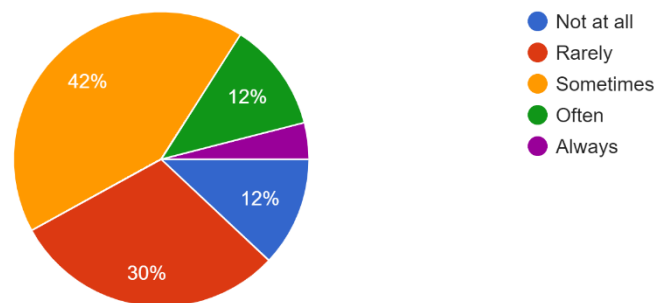


Among the 23 respondents who reported being victims of stalking during their time in college, the frequency of experiencing stalking behaviour varied. 42% (10 respondents) stated that they sometimes experienced stalking behaviour, while 30% (7 respondents) reported experiencing it often. Additionally, 12% (3 respondents) said they rarely experienced stalking behaviour, and



the same percentage reported experiencing it always. Interestingly, 26% (6 respondents) stated that they did not experience stalking behaviour at all. These statistics indicate that for a significant portion of college students who have experienced stalking, it is not an isolated incident but rather a recurring issue. This highlights the importance of addressing and preventing stalking behaviours on college campuses to ensure the safety and well-being of students.

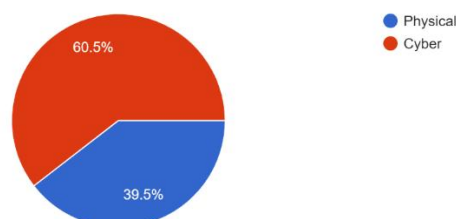
If yes, how often have you experienced stalking behaviour?  
50 responses



**(C) Forms of stalking that have been encountered by the victims**

Out of the 23 respondents who reported being victims of stalking during their time in college, 60.5% (26 respondents) stated that they have encountered cyber stalking, while 39.5% (17 respondents) reported experiencing physical stalking. Cyber stalking involves the use of electronic communication to stalk someone, whether through social media, email, or other means. Physical stalking, on the other hand, involves unwanted or obsessive physical presence or attention by an individual toward another person. These statistics indicate that cyber stalking is more prevalent among college students compared to physical stalking. The widespread use of technology and social media platforms may contribute to the higher incidence of cyber stalking, highlighting the importance of raising awareness about online safety and implementing measures to prevent and address cyber stalking behaviours on college campuses.

What forms of stalking have you encountered?  
43 responses

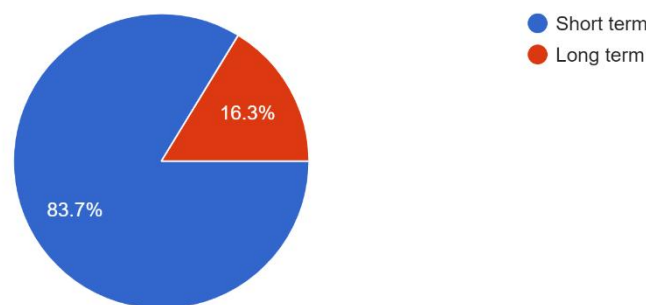


### **(D) Duration of the stalking behaviour**

Out of the 43 respondents who reported being victims of stalking during their time in college, the majority, 83.7% (36 respondents), stated that the stalking behaviour lasted for the short term, while only 16.3% (7 respondents) reported experiencing long-term stalking. These statistics indicate that for the majority of college students who have experienced stalking, the behaviour was short-lived. However, it's crucial to note that even short-term stalking can have significant effects on the victim's well-being and sense of safety. While it is somewhat reassuring that the majority experienced short-term stalking, it also underscores the need for swift and effective intervention to prevent the escalation of stalking behaviours and to support victims during their ordeal.

How long did the stalking behaviour last?

43 responses

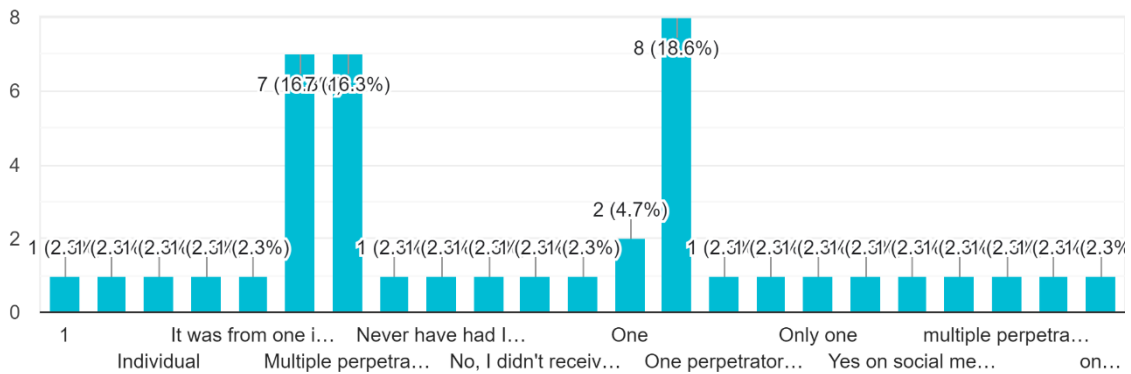


### **(E) Perpetrator- single or multiple**

Out of the 43 respondents who reported being victims of stalking during their time in college, 41.9% (18 respondents) stated that they experienced stalking behaviour primarily from one individual. This indicates that for a significant portion of college students who have experienced stalking, the behaviour was predominantly perpetrated by a single person. On the other hand, 16.3% (7 respondents) reported being stalked by multiple perpetrators, suggesting that a notable number of victims have had to deal with stalking from more than one individual. Additionally, 18.6% (8 respondents) reported experiencing stalking behaviour from one individual, but some respondents provided more detailed responses, mentioning that they were stalked by one person physically or online, while others experienced stalking from multiple individuals primarily online. These statistics underscore the varied nature of stalking experiences among college students, highlighting the importance of implementing comprehensive strategies to address and prevent stalking behaviours on college campuses.

Have you experienced stalking behaviour from multiple perpetrators, or was it primarily from one individual?

43 responses

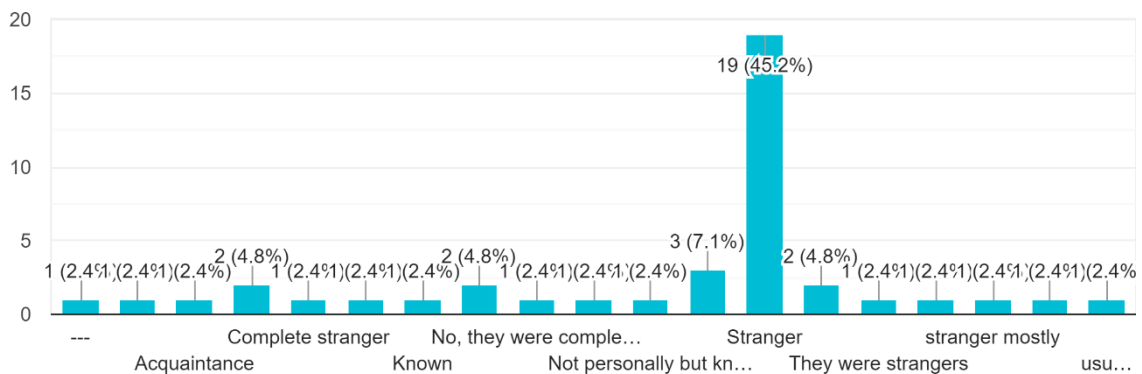


**(F) Perpetrator- known or stranger**

Out of the 42 respondents who reported being victims of stalking during their time in college, the majority, 45.2% (19 respondents), stated that the perpetrator was a complete stranger. This suggests that a significant portion of college students who experience stalking encounter the behaviour from individuals they do not know. Additionally, 7.1% (3 respondents) reported that they knew the perpetrator personally, while 4.8% (2 respondents) stated that the perpetrator was an acquaintance. Some respondents mentioned that while the perpetrator was not personally known to them, they were familiar with the individual. The fact that a considerable number of respondents experienced stalking from strangers underscores the importance of campus safety measures and awareness campaigns aimed at preventing and addressing stalking behaviours, particularly those perpetrated by strangers.

Did you know the perpetrator personally, or were they a stranger?

42 responses

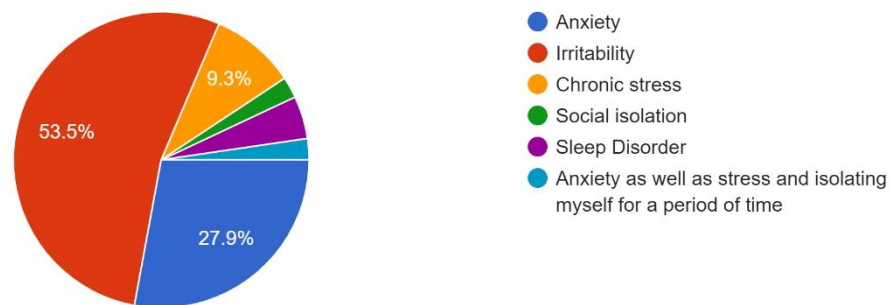


### (G) Consequences of stalking in victims

Out of the 43 respondents who reported being victims of stalking during their time in college, the consequences of the stalking behaviour varied. The most commonly reported consequences were irritability, experienced by 53.5% (23 respondents), and anxiety, reported by 27.9% (12 respondents). Additionally, 9.3% (4 respondents) mentioned experiencing chronic stress, while 4.7% (2 respondents) reported sleep disorders. One respondent (2.3%) mentioned experiencing social isolation as a consequence of stalking. One respondent reported experiencing a combination of anxiety, stress, and social isolation. These statistics highlight the significant negative impact that stalking can have on the mental health and well-being of college students. The prevalence of anxiety, irritability, chronic stress, and sleep disorders among victims of stalking underscores the importance of providing support services and resources for victims to cope with and recover from the effects of stalking.

What were the consequences of the stalking for you?

43 responses

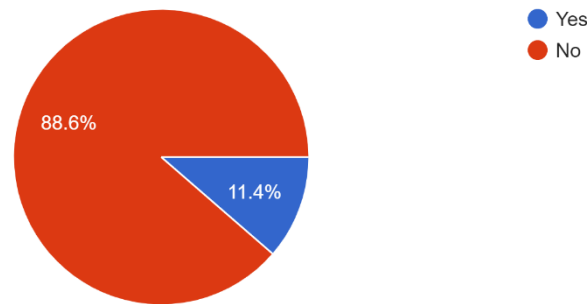


### (H) Reporting to the authorities

Out of the 44 respondents who reported being victims of stalking during their time in college, the majority, 88.6% (39 respondents), stated that they did not report the stalking behaviour to law enforcement or campus authorities. Only 11.4% (5 respondents) reported the stalking to the authorities. These statistics indicate a significant underreporting of stalking incidents among college students. There could be various reasons for this, including fear of retaliation, concerns about privacy, or a lack of confidence in the authorities' ability to address the issue effectively. However, it's essential to recognize the importance of reporting stalking incidents to ensure the safety of the victim and prevent further escalation of the behaviour. This underscores the need for increased awareness, support, and resources for victims of stalking on college campuses, as well as improved protocols for handling such cases by law enforcement and campus authorities.

Did you report the stalking to law enforcement or campus authorities?

44 responses

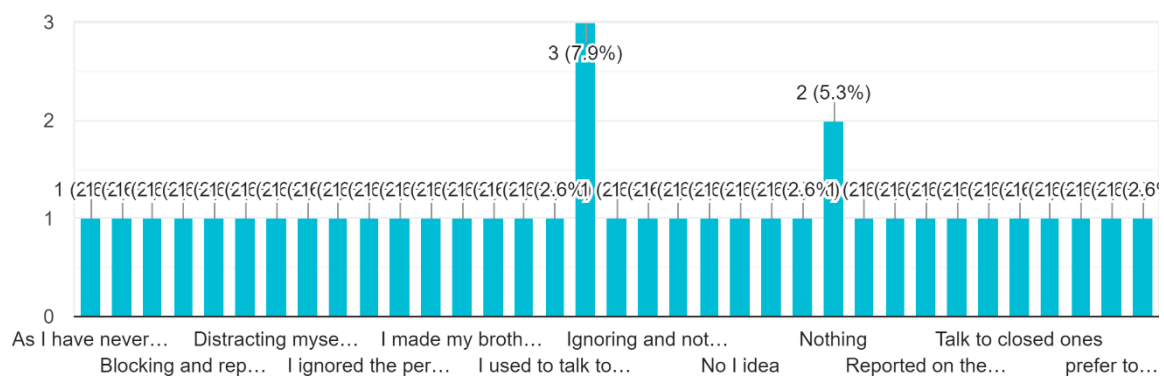


**(I) Coping mechanisms that were employed by the victims**

Out of the 38 respondents who reported being victims of stalking during their time in college, various coping strategies were employed to deal with the stalking behaviour. The most commonly reported coping strategy was ignoring the perpetrator, mentioned by 7.9% (3 respondents). Additionally, 2 respondents (5.3%) mentioned blocking the perpetrator on social media platforms, while another 2 respondents (5.3%) reported distracting themselves and trying to avoid the person. Some respondents mentioned seeking support from family and friends, with one respondent mentioning that they made their brother talk to the perpetrator. One respondent reported changing their regular route to college to avoid the perpetrator. A few respondents mentioned reporting the stalking behaviour to the authorities or relevant platforms. It's notable that some respondents mentioned feeling unsure about how to cope with the stalking behaviour, with one respondent stating they had no idea how to cope. These statistics highlight the importance of providing support and resources to victims of stalking on college campuses and the need for increased awareness and education about coping strategies to deal with such behaviour effectively.

What coping strategies did you employ to deal with the stalking?

38 responses



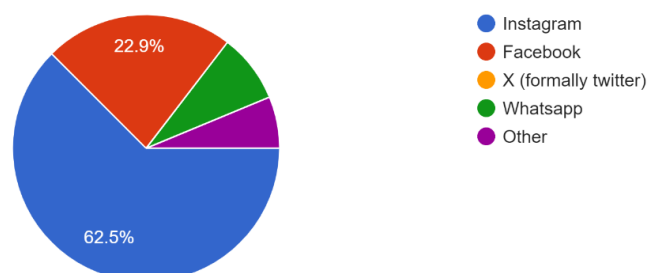
### (J) Affecting the mental health of the victims

Stalking or cyber stalking can have severe and far-reaching effects on the mental health of college-going girls, as indicated by the responses from 37 participants. The most commonly mentioned effects included anxiety, stress, and depression. Many respondents highlighted that being stalked could make a person feel scared, insecure, and unsafe, leading to anxiety and fearfulness. Stalking behaviour often results in the victim feeling isolated, both physically and socially, as they may avoid certain places or interactions out of fear. This isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness and social withdrawal. Additionally, stalking can affect a victim's confidence and self-esteem, making them doubt themselves and their abilities. Some respondents mentioned that stalking could trigger post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other long-term psychological effects. Stalking behaviour can also interfere with a victim's daily life and activities, impacting their studies, work, and overall well-being. Overall, the responses highlight the significant and detrimental impact that stalking can have on the mental health of college-going girls, emphasizing the urgent need for effective prevention, support, and intervention strategies to address this issue.

### (K) Online platforms and social media prone to cyber stalking

Out of the 48 respondents, the majority, 62.5% (30 respondents), believe that Instagram is the most susceptible social media platform to cyber stalking. Following Instagram, 22.9% (11 respondents) mentioned Facebook as being highly susceptible to cyber stalking. WhatsApp was mentioned by 8.3% (4 respondents) as a platform vulnerable to cyber stalking. Interestingly, no respondents mentioned Twitter (referred to as "X" due to character limit) as a highly susceptible platform. Additionally, 3 respondents (6.3%) mentioned other platforms not listed, indicating that there may be other social media platforms perceived as susceptible to cyber stalking. These statistics suggest that Instagram and Facebook are the social media platforms of greatest concern regarding cyber stalking, highlighting the need for increased awareness and safety measures on these platforms to prevent and address cyber stalking behaviours.

What online platforms or social media do you believe are most susceptible to cyber stalking?  
48 responses

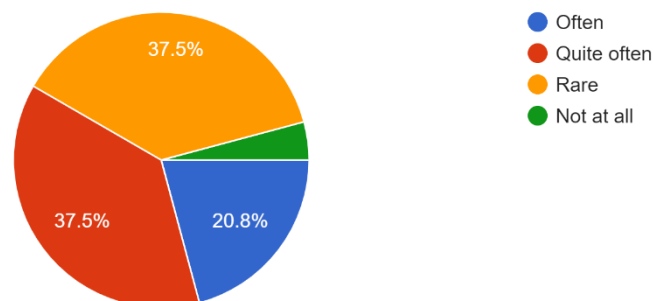


## VI. DISCUSSION AMONG PEERS AND FRIENDS

Out of the 48 respondents, 37.5% (18 respondents) stated that they quite often discuss or share their experiences related to stalking or cyber stalking with their friends and peers. Additionally, another 37.5% (18 respondents) reported discussing or sharing their experiences rarely. 20.8% (10 respondents) stated that they often engage in discussions about their experiences with stalking or cyber stalking, while only 4.2% (2 respondents) reported not discussing or sharing their experiences at all. These statistics indicate that a significant portion of respondents are open to discussing their experiences with stalking or cyber stalking, either quite often or rarely, highlighting the importance of having supportive social networks for victims to share their experiences and seek advice and support. However, there is still a smaller percentage of respondents who do not feel comfortable discussing their experiences with others. This underscores the need for increased awareness and support services for victims of stalking and cyber stalking.

How often do you discuss or share your experiences amongst your friends and peers related to stalking or cyber stalking?

48 responses



## VII. FACTORS OF UNREPORTING OF CASES OF STALKING

According to the responses from 37 participants, several significant factors contribute to the underreporting of stalking or cyber stalking incidents on college campuses. Fear emerged as the most commonly cited factor, with respondents expressing fear of various consequences associated with reporting such incidents. Many mentioned fears of retaliation from the stalker, particularly if the stalker was someone known to the victim. There was also fear of embarrassment, fear of harming one's reputation, and fear of being judged by society. Some respondents pointed out the lack of trust in authorities and the belief that reporting may not lead to any meaningful action. Additionally, shame and embarrassment were mentioned as factors preventing victims from reporting stalking incidents. Respondents also highlighted societal

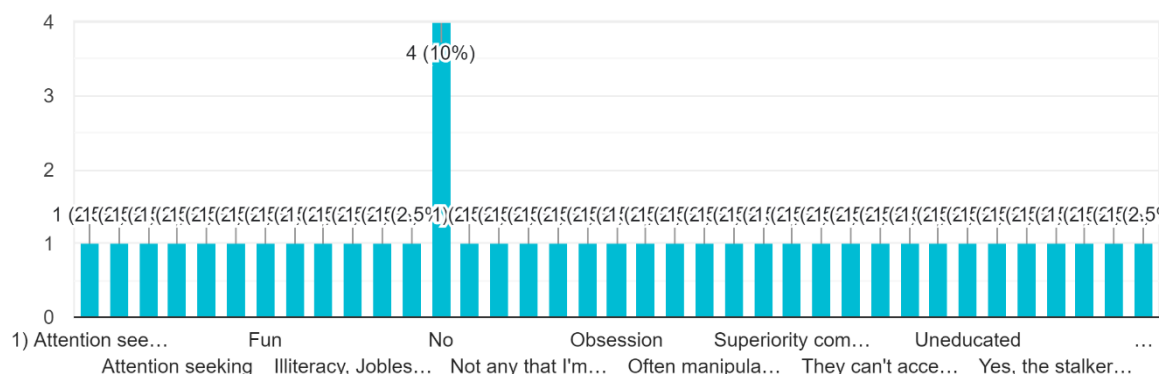
misunderstandings and victim blaming as factors contributing to underreporting. The stigma associated with being in the limelight for the wrong reasons and the potential negative repercussions on a victim's image and reputation were also mentioned. Lack of awareness about the seriousness of stalking and cyber stalking, as well as a lack of understanding of the reporting process, were cited as contributing factors. Family pressure and societal expectations, including the notion that women are supposed to be tolerant, also deter victims from reporting. Overall, these factors create a complex web of challenges that hinder victims from coming forward and reporting stalking incidents on college campuses. Addressing these challenges requires increased awareness, education, and support services for victims, as well as improved protocols for handling such incidents by authorities on college campuses.

### VIII. SPECIAL TRAITS OF THE PERPETRATOR

According to the responses from 40 participants, several specific traits are associated with the person committing stalking or cyber stalking. The most commonly mentioned trait was obsession, with respondents indicating that stalkers often become fixated on their victims. Additionally, many respondents mentioned traits such as attention-seeking behaviour, manipulation, and a sense of superiority. Some respondents also associated stalking behaviour with individuals who are unemployed or uneducated. Interestingly, a few respondents indicated that there were no specific traits associated with stalkers, while others mentioned that the behaviour could stem from factors such as fun or a lack of acceptance. Overall, the responses suggest that stalkers may exhibit a variety of traits, including obsession, manipulation, and a desire for attention or control. These traits may vary from one individual to another, making it challenging to identify potential stalkers. However, understanding these traits can be crucial in recognizing and addressing stalking behaviour effectively.

According to you, are there any specific traits associated with the person committing stalking or cyber stalking?

40 responses





## **IX. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

Stalking and cyber stalking are significant issues affecting college campuses, as evidenced by the responses from 50 participants. According to the survey, 46% of respondents reported being victims of stalking during their time in college, indicating the prevalence of this behaviour among college students. Among these victims, 60.5% reported encountering cyber stalking, while 39.5% experienced physical stalking. The consequences of stalking were severe, with 53.5% experiencing irritability and 27.9% experiencing anxiety. However, despite the prevalence and impact of stalking, 88.6% of victims did not report the behaviour to law enforcement or campus authorities.

Fear was identified as a significant factor contributing to the underreporting of stalking incidents, with respondents expressing concerns about retaliation from the stalker and fears of embarrassment or harm to their reputation. Lack of trust in authorities, societal misunderstandings, and victim blaming were also cited as barriers to reporting. Additionally, many victims felt unsure about how to cope with the stalking behaviour, highlighting the need for increased awareness and support services for victims.

In terms of coping mechanisms, victims employed a variety of strategies, including ignoring the perpetrator, blocking them on social media, and seeking support from friends and family. However, some victims felt unsure about how to cope with the stalking behaviour, indicating the need for increased awareness and education about coping strategies.

When asked about the traits associated with stalkers, respondents identified obsession, attention-seeking behaviour, manipulation, and a sense of superiority as common characteristics. However, some respondents noted that there were no specific traits associated with stalkers, while others mentioned that stalking behaviour could stem from factors such as fun or a lack of acceptance.

Regarding cyber stalking, Instagram was identified as the most susceptible social media platform, followed by Facebook and WhatsApp. This underscores the need for increased awareness and safety measures on these platforms to prevent and address cyber stalking behaviours.

Overall, the survey results highlight the prevalence and impact of stalking and cyber stalking on college campuses. To address this issue effectively, there is a need for increased awareness, support services, and resources for victims, as well as improved protocols for handling stalking incidents by law enforcement and campus authorities. Additionally, efforts should be made to educate students about the seriousness of stalking and cyber stalking and provide them with the

necessary tools and information to protect themselves online and offline.

## **X. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study underscore the pervasive and detrimental impact of stalking and cyber stalking on the safety, well-being, and academic success of female college students. The prevalence of stalking among respondents, with nearly half reporting victimization during their time in college, highlights the urgent need for increased awareness, support services, and prevention strategies on college campuses. Cyber stalking emerged as the most common form of stalking encountered by victims, reflecting the significant influence of technology and social media on stalking behaviours among college students. The severe consequences of stalking, including anxiety, irritability, chronic stress, and sleep disorders, underscore the need for comprehensive support services and resources for victims. Despite the prevalence and impact of stalking, the majority of victims did not report the behaviour to law enforcement or campus authorities, citing fear, lack of trust, and societal misunderstandings as barriers to reporting. To address this issue effectively, there is a need for increased awareness, education, and support services for victims, as well as improved protocols for handling stalking incidents by authorities on college campuses. By implementing these recommendations, colleges and universities can create safer and more supportive environments for all students, ensuring that victims of stalking receive the support and assistance they need to heal and recover from their experiences.

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