

Free stalking term paper sample

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



Introduction

Stalking refers to repeated unwanted attention or obsession targeting a particular individual that would make any reasonable person to feel apprehension or fear (Nadkarni & Grubin, 2000). For a behavior to qualify as stalking, it has to be intrusive and unwanted, and there must be a strong preoccupation with the victim. Stalking activities fall into three categories: following, communicating, and aggression (Nadkarni & Grubin, 2000). Following involves trailing victims to their workplaces and homes, and engineering coincidences. Communicating involves the use of anonymous phone calls, letters, gifts or emails. Aggression involves harassment, threatening victims' friends and families, vandalism or spreading rumors meant to embarrass the victim. Stalking can either be direct by physically trailing the victim or indirectly through the internet. Stalking disrupts the victims' daily routines as they try to avoid the stalker such as changing jobs, homes, phone numbers and mailing addresses.

Theories of stalking

Several theories abound regarding the causes of stalking, and why some people are susceptible to stalking than others. These theories include psychological theories, social learning theory and rational choice theory (Pittaro, 2007). Psychological theories suggest that stalkers have some mental abnormalities or disorders that make them commit such crimes (Bocij & McFarne, 2003 as cited in Pittaro, 2007). Such disorders include paranoia and delusion. For instance, stalkers may erroneously believe that the victims love them back and end up harassing them when victims reject them. Social

learning theory suggests that stalkers have the desire to control others so as to feel powerful or good about themselves (Bocij & McFarne, 2003 as cited in Pittaro, 2007). Stalkers' actions get reinforced when victims, either knowingly or unknowingly, engage in conversations with them. It does not matter whether the discussion is negative or positive, so long as the stalker enjoys eliciting a reaction from the victim. Rational choice theory implies that people freely decide to engage in crimes after carefully considering the pros and cons of such actions. If the consequences are severe, stalkers may abstain from committing crimes.

Types of stalkers

Mullen et al. identified six major categories of stalkers (Jaishankar & Sankary, 2006). The predatory stalker gathers pertinent information about the victim in preparation for an assault at a predetermined future date. The resentful stalker harasses victims as a form of retribution for some perceived wrong or injury committed against them. Intimacy seekers usually pursue loving relationships with the victims. Incompetent suitors seek to initiate relationships with their victims but are, usually, incapacitated by their underdeveloped social or intellectual faculties. Hence, they resort to stalking to achieve their goals. Finally, the rejected stalker pursues revenge against the victim when the latter terminates their prior intimate relationship. The termination may be in the form of a divorce or separation.

Motivation for stalking

Several emotional factors normally motivate individuals to engage in stalking. These factors include sexual desire, obsession for love, revenge,

and ego and power trips (Jaishankar & Sankary, 2006). Stalkers may have sexual desires regarding a target because of the latter's physical attributes. Women mostly fall victims to sexual harassment. Obsession for love arises when the stalker assumes that the victim reciprocates his or her feelings. In addition, such stalkers commonly believe that the victims is their soulmate, and they must be together. Revenge stemming from a previous confrontation or argument are also common. In revenge cases, stalkers mostly resort to physical harm or vandalism.

Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking is an emerging form of stalking where stalkers use the internet and other electronic media to identify and harass their victims (Jaishankar & Sankary, 2006). This form of stalking is becoming more common than traditional stalking because it offers anonymity to stalkers, and they can easily go undetected. Furthermore, it is easy to use, relatively cheap and avails personal information being exchanged online. Cyber stalkers, usually, prowl chat rooms, discussion, blogs and emails to identify their victims. Cyber stalkers share the same motivations and characterization as traditional stalkers.

Cyberstalking can take three forms: email stalking, internet stalking and computer stalking (Jaishankar & Sankary, 2006). Email stalking is the most common form of cyberstalking. Email stalkers send their victims unsolicited emails that may contain threats, obscenities or computer viruses. Internet stalkers act on a public platform by spreading rumors about victims in online chatrooms or social sites with the aim of tarnishing their character or reputation. Internet stalking often leads to traditional stalking such as

vandalism or physical harassment. Computer stalking involves the unauthorized control of the victim's personal computer through operating systems or the internet. Thus, computer stalkers often frustrate victims by denying them the use of their computers, and in some cases, may delete the victim's data on the hard drive.

Current statics on stalking

The statistics regarding stalking are often underestimated because most cases go unreported by victims. Statistics shows that only 35% of men and 41% of women reported cases of stalking in 2013 (Schnell & Garcia, 2013). People underreport stalking because they may consider it to be a private matter or assume that the incidents are minor. Moreover, victims may lack the necessary evidence to get a conviction or may believe that the police would disregard their concern. Despite this insufficiency, the available data show that most stalkers are male while most victims are female. Society views men as strong and bold, thus, are less likely to be stalked unless the stalker is physically stronger than the victim. In contrast, women are usually meek and peaceful in nature, thus, becoming easy targets for stalking by men.

Approximately, 25-35% of stalking involves some form of violence or aggression (Schnell & Garcia, 2013). Statistics indicates that 3 out of every four women that get killed by intimate partners experienced stalking in the year preceding their death. Stalkers are commonly people whom victims are familiar with such as previous friends or spouses. When an individual ends the relationship, and the partner refuses to accept such an eventuality, the latter may stalk the victim in a bid to mend the relationship. Unfortunately,

this intention turns to hatred when the victim moves on to another relationship, leading to murder.

Other data indicate a rise in the number of cyber stalkers who are children (Jaishankar & Sankary, 2006). Widespread access to the internet enables children to blackmail or play pranks on each other. This habit may seem harmless on the surface, but in some cases it causes disastrous effects on the victim. Such harm may result from posting embarrassing photos or information about others on the internet, eliciting negative comments that cause emotional distress to the victim.

Cyberstalking and social media

Recent statistics indicates that 16% of stalkers use social networks (Seomworld, 2014). Data further show that 16% of online stalkers use Facebook, 3% use Twitter, and 1. 5% use YouTube. Moreover, 65% of Facebook profiles are accessible by the public. These statistics depict a worrying scenario where stalkers easily access people’s profiles on social sites in order to get personal information. Their work becomes easy because people willingly post photos, videos, status, addresses and other identifying information on social websites. Social networks allow people to accept friend requests from strangers without critically evaluating them. In addition, others use these sites to stalk their exes or spread hate messages. The latter may relate to intolerance to others opinions, race, ethnicity or religious affiliation. The effects of stalking in the social media are disastrous for victims in cases where the stalker spreads false rumors. Rumors, usually, spread fast in social networks, eliciting negative comments and ridicule from

others that may emotionally drain victims and drive them to severe depression.

Interventions by police

A major barrier to stalking mitigation is the reluctance of victims to report such crimes because they believe the police will not take them seriously. In other cases, victims fear that the police will blame them for the crime. Victim blaming is the act of assigning responsibility, fully or partly, to the victim of crime (Viano, 2006). Family members, friends, the police or medical personnel can cast such blame. Victim blaming makes victims reluctant in reporting future crimes. The police can counter this belief by taking all reported cases seriously and obtain all pertinent information from the victim that may help in profiling the stalker. Profiling will enable the police to identify the stalker quickly and prevent potential harm to the victim. If the stalking persists, the police can issue warnings or arrest warrants where necessary.

Conversely, victim defending absolves the victim of all blame for crimes committed against them (Viano, 2006). Victims usually suffer emotional and physical distress as a result of harassment, property loss or physical attacks propagated by stalkers. The police should consider this distress and empathize with the victims during interrogations to avoid exacerbating an already delicate situation. However, the police should retain their sobriety in conducting fair and thorough investigations since some victims may be lying or are delusional themselves. Some cases of self-harm arise where individuals inflict injuries upon themselves then cry foul and blame others.

Conclusion

Stalking and cyberstalking are serious crimes that should not be disregarded. A simple case of infatuation may turn into an obsession that may lead to violence or murder. The motivations for these crimes include need for love, attention and self-confidence through victimization of those who are weaker or more vulnerable than the stalker. Others may seek revenge for perceived or actual wrong done to them. Whatever the motivation, these crimes cause emotional distress, fear and a sense of isolation in victims. The internet is a modern technology that has revolutionized societal interactions and communication. However, parents and guardians should monitor the online activities of their children and even block the sites that are prone to stalkers. Furthermore, individuals should be wary when posting personal information on the internet because they may fall into the wrong hands.

References

- Jaishankar, K., & Sankary, U. V. (2006). Cyber Stalking: A Global Menace in the Information Super Highway. Retrieved from <http://www.erces.com/journal/articles/archives/volume2/v03/v02.htm>.
- Pittaro, Michael L. (2007). Cyber Stalking: An Analysis of Online Harassment and Intimidation. *International Journal of Cyber Criminology* 1(2), 180-197. Retrieved from <http://www.cybercrimejournal.com/pittaroijccvol1is2.htm>.
- Schnell, P., & Garcia, M. (2013). Connecting the Dots: The Challenges of Identifying and Responding to Stalking. *The Police Chief* 80, 62-64. Retrieved from http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display&article_id=3209&issue_id=122013
- Seomworld. (2014). Social Media and Cyber Stalking Facts. Retrieved from <https://assignbuster.com/free-stalking-term-paper-sample/>

<http://www.seomworld.com/2013/09/social-media-and-cyber-stalking-facts.html>.

Viano, Emilio C. (2006). *Victimology*. 428-435. Retrieved from http://www.uk.sagepub.com/leonguerrero4e/study/materials/reference/05434_victim.pdf.