



A Systematic Review of Cyberstalking Victimization and Offending Behaviors

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Abstract

A systematic review of literature investigating cyberstalking offending and victimization was conducted, considering multiple key words and phrases used to label the behavior: cyberstalking, cyber dating abuse, cybervictimization, Internet, interpersonal electronic surveillance, and victimization. The following electronic databases, with the indication of peer-reviewed journal articles as a requirement, were searched: Academic Search Complete, Criminal Justice Database (ProQuest), Google, JSTOR and PsychInfo. After sorting through the studies using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 31 studies remained for review. Correlates of the behaviors were discussed for each categorization, with main themes including negative characteristics of relationship behaviors, and social media and online use as main predictors of victimization and offending. There is a strong need for further research utilizing older age groups and individuals who are married, as well as a need for longitudinal research.

Keyword Internet · Victimization · Cyberstalking · Harassment

Introduction

Cyberstalking, or the use of the Internet and other technological devices (e.g., computers, cellular telephones, pads) to monitor or harass another person in a threatening way that can become intimidating or fear-invoking (Bocij & McFarlane, 2003; Reyns et al., 2012), has become one of the more prominent forms of online victimization and offending. It has become especially problematic with adolescents and

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young adults, affecting their quality of platonic and romantic relationships and the expectations for what is acceptable in these relationships. Cyberstalkers gather personal information to harass a victim, or continuously send unwanted emails or text messages. These offenders may hack into social media or email accounts to impersonate their victims, or even monitor their location with listening devices, cameras or spyware.

The term “cyberstalking” is often used in tandem with other concepts of similar behaviors. For instance, the term “interpersonal electronic surveillance” (IES) refers to frequent checking and review of a person’s online presence, often performed by romantic partners who spend large amounts of time monitoring another person’s online behavior without their direct knowledge (Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Fox et al., 2014; Marshall, 2012; Tokunaga & Gustafson, 2014). The Internet also allows individuals to stay connected, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, even after romantic relationships have ended. When ex-partners remain online “friends” with their ex, they can still monitor behaviors and new love interests. This monitoring by the unsuspecting party is termed “creeping” or “Facebook stalking,” even accomplished with the use of legitimate professional sites, such as LinkedIn, to monitor a person’s career transitions and approximate physical location. There are multiple websites, such as Spokeo or Whitepages.com, which allow for searches of a person’s home address and linked relatives.

Cyberstalking and the term “cyber dating abuse” are also interchangeable (Borrajó, Gamez-Guadix, Pereda, & Calvete, 2015; Lyndon et al., 2011; Zweig et al., 2013). Behaviors considered cyber dating abuse often mirror the same behaviors identified as cyberstalking: monitoring and surveillance of a partner (Burke et al., 2011; Lyndon et al., 2011); sending threatening or rude emails and messages (Bennet et al., 2011; Hinduja & Patchin, 2011; Kellerman et al., 2013; Zweig et al., 2013); and posting humiliating photographs (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011; Lyndon et al., 2011). These abusive behaviors can cause serious repercussions for victims, including distress, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicidal ideation (Prospero, 2007; Shorey et al., 2011, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to provide a systematic review of the research involving the realm of behaviors discussed above, as to date, there are no related publications performing the same task. Based on the continuous overlap of definitions provided in each one of the labels, indicating these are essentially the same type of cyber-criminality despite the different terms. Predictors of these behaviors will be discussed based on the categorization of the terms, as well as limitations of these studies. In addition, we will provide recommendations for future research.

Methodology

Initial Search

The initial search for empirical studies occurred between September 1, 2020 and April 30, 2021. The extensive literature search was conducted using the following electronic databases, with the indication of peer-reviewed journal articles as a

requirement: Academic Search Complete, Criminal Justice Database (ProQuest), EBSCO, Google, JSTOR and PsychInfo.¹ The reference pages for the studies initially selected were also reviewed for appropriate studies. Based on the terms used in past empirical studies, the following key words and phrases were used in the search: cyberstalking, cyber dating abuse, cybervictimization, electronic aggression, electronic harassment, Internet, interpersonal electronic surveillance, online victimization, stalking, technology facilitated violence, and victimization.

Selection Criteria

Inclusion criteria: Studies were included if they:

1. Presented data on criminal offending or victimization categorized as cyberstalking behaviors.
2. Presented data on criminal offending or victimization categorized as cyber dating abuse behaviors.
3. Presented data on criminal offending or victimization categorized as interpersonal electronic surveillance behaviors.
4. Presented data on criminal offending or victimization categorized as online victimization behaviors if those behaviors indicated cyberstalking or cyberharassment.
5. Published within the past 10 years, creating a limitation of studies published from 2011 to 2021.²

Exclusion criteria: Studies were excluded if they:

1. Were not available in English.
2. Were not available in full text.
3. Presented data that examined victimization or offending involving cyberbullying.
4. Presented data that did not involve criminal offending or victimization utilizing technology.

¹ The criminology/criminal justice journals included the following: *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Crime & Delinquency*, *Deviant Behavior*, *European Journal of Criminal Policy and Research*, *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *SAGE Open*, *Victims & Offenders*, *Violence & Victims*, and *Youth & Society*.

The psychology journals included the following: *Current Psychology*, *Cyberpsychology*, *Behavior & Social Networking*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Journal of Family Violence*, *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *Personality and Individual Differences*, *Psychological Reports: Relationships & Communications*, *Psychology*, *Crime & Law*, *The American Journal of Family Violence*, and *Violence Against Women*.

The communication/computer science journals included the following: *Computers in Human Behavior*, *Social Science Computer Review* and *Surveillance and Society*.

The medical journals included the following: *The Journal of School Nursing*.

² As techniques of offending rapidly change in the field of cybercrime based on technological adaptations, the authors felt as if inclusion of research published within the past 10 years would have the most contemporary and accurate findings of predictors of the behavior.

Study Characteristics

All of the studies reviewed examined correlates of cyber dating abuse (CDA). The analysis samples for these studies ranged from 54 to 5,718. The average age of the studies ranged from 12.4 to 40.84 years old. Seventeen of the studies examined juveniles and young adults (Cava et al., 2020; Fissel, 2021; Fissel et al., 2021a; Lara, 2020; Marcum et al., 2014; Mosley & Lancaster, 2019; Navarro et al., 2016; Novo et al., 2014; Pereira & Matos, 2016; Peskin et al., 2017; Stonard, 2020; Temple et al., 2016; Van Ouytsel et al., 2017; 2018; 2020; Zweig et al., 2013; Zweig et al., 2014), and eight studies examined individuals from the general public (Ahlgrim & Terrance, 2021; Cavezza & McEwan, 2014; Fissel et al., 2021b; Fissel & Reyns, 2020; Hertlein & van Dyck, 2020; Messing, Bagwell-Gray, Brown, Kappas, & Durfee, 2020; Ngo, Piquero, LaPrade, & Duong, 2020; Nobles et al., 2014). The remaining twenty-two studies examined college students (Borrajó et al., 2015; Brem et al., 2019a, b; Curry & Zavala, 2020; Deans and Bhogal, 2019; DeKeseredy et al., 2019; Duerksen & Woodin, 2019; Henson et al., 2013; Hernandez-Santaolalla & Hermido, 2020; Kircaburuna et al., 2020; Lancaster et al., 2020; Marcha et al., 2020; Marcum et al., 2017, 2018; Reyns, 2019; Reyns et al., 2018; Reyns, Henson, & Fisher, 2019; Strawhun et al., 2013; Tokunaga, 2011, 2015; Toplu-Demirtas et al., 2020; Van Baak & Hayes, 2018).

Study Selection

The literature searches using the search terms outlined above resulted in 53 articles that were deemed appropriate for initial review. After thorough assessment by two reviewers, 11 of the papers were excluded based on the criteria above. As a result, 48 studies were utilized in this analysis and can be seen in Table 1.

Results

Table 2 presents an analysis of each of the studies used in the examination. Included are the analysis used, dependent variable(s) and major findings from each study. Below is a summary of the correlates found in each of the categorizations of cyberstalking. The categorizations by the researchers and depicted in the tables were based on how the behaviors were labeled in the articles utilized.

Correlates of Behaviors Labeled “Cyberstalking”

Empirical studies included in this systematic review using the term “cyberstalking” as a categorization of the offending behavior utilized samples with the mean age ranging from 13.98 to 39.64 years of age. While all studies indicated Caucasian to be the predominant race/ethnic categorization of their respondents,

Table 1 Selected articles examining cyberstalking behaviors

Study ID	Authors	Study Date	Method of Data Collection	Sample Size	Mean Age	Predominant Sex	Predominant Race
1	Ahlgren & Terrance	2021	Online vignette survey	245	32.52	Men	White
2	Borrajó, Gamez-Guadix, and Calvete	2015	Questionnaire	433	20.4	Female	N/A
3	Brem, Stuart, Cornelius, Shorey	2019	Online survey	578	19.05	Female	Caucasian
4	Brem, Romero, Garner, Grigorian, Stuart	2019	Online survey	258	19.44	Evenly split	Caucasian
5	Cava, Martinez-Ferrer, Buelga, & Carrascosa	2020	Survey (ranked scales)	492	15.0	Female	Caucasian
6	Cavezza & McEwan	2014		36 cyberstalkers 36 stalkers	37	Male	N/A
7	Curry & Zavala	2020	Online survey	261	24.7	Female	Hispanic
8	Deans & Bhogal	2017	Online questionnaire	189	19.2	Female	NA
9	DeKeserdy, Schwartz, Harris, Woodlock, Nolan, & Hall-Sanchez	2019	Online survey	5718	22.1	Female	White
10	Duerksen & Woodin	2019	Online survey	278	20.5	Female	White
11	Fissel	2021	Online survey	576	22.83	Woman	White
12	Fissel, Fisher & Nedelec	2021	Online survey	1500	22.83	Woman	White
13	Fissel, Graham, Butler & Fisher	2021	Online survey	1500	36.79	Cisgender men	White
14	Fissel & Reynolds	2020	Online survey	477	22.62	Women	White
15	Henson, Reynolds & Fisher	2013	Online survey	838	20.17	Female	White
16	Hernandez-Santaolalla & Hermida	2020	In-person survey and focus groups	311	20.65	Female	Spanish
17	Hertlein & van Dyck	2020	Survey	259	29.48	Female	Caucasian

Table 1 (continued)

Study ID	Authors	Study Date	Method of Data Collection	Sample Size	Mean Age	Predominant Sex	Predominant Race
18	Kircaburun, Jonason & Griffiths	2020	Paper Questionnaire	761	20.7	Female	N/A
19	Lancaster, Seibert, Cooper, May, & Fincham	2020	Questionnaire	177	20.7	Female	Caucasian
20	Lara	2020	Questionnaire	1538	18.27	Female	Chilean
21	March, Litten, Sullivan, & Ward	2020	Online survey	405	24.7	Female	Caucasian
22	Marcum, Higgins, & Nicholson	2017	Online survey	890	18 to 20	Male	Caucasian
23	Marcum, Higgins, & Nicholson	2018	Online survey	890	18 to 20	Male	Caucasian
24	Marcum, Higgins, & Ricketts	2014	Paper survey	1617	15.77	Female	Caucasian
25	Messing, Bagwell-Gray, Brown, Kappas, & Durfee	2020	Paper survey Online survey Interviews	1137	35–38	Female	White
26	Mosley & Lancaster	2019	Secondary data analysis	1960	16	Female	White
27	Navarro, Marcum, Higgins, & Ricketts	2016	Survey	1,617	15.77	Female	Caucasian
28	Ngo, Piquero, LaPrade, & Duong	2020	Online survey	284	39.64	Female	White
29	Nobles, Reynolds, Fox & Fisher	2014	Survey	1533	40.84	Male	Non-Hispanic
30	Novo, Pereira, & Matos	2014	Survey	627 (students)	13.98	Female (students)	Portuguese
31	Pereira & Matos	2016	Online survey	627	13.98	Female	Portuguese
32	Peskin et al	2017	Baseline Survey	424	12.40	Male	Hispanic
33	Reyns	2019	Online survey	1310	20	Women	White
34	Reyns, Henson, & Fisher	2016	Online survey	850	0.37 (less than 21)	Female	White

Table 1 (continued)

Study ID	Authors	Study Date	Method of Data Collection	Sample Size	Mean Age	Predominant Sex	Predominant Race
35	Reyns, Fisher, & Randa	2018	Online Survey	1,987	20.35	Evenly split	Caucasian
36	Sanchez-Hernandez, Herrera-Enrique, & Exposito	2020	Questionnaire	224 females 120 males	20	Female	Spanish
37	Strawhun, Adams, & Huss	2013	Questionnaire packet	248	19.18	Female	Caucasian
38	Stonard	2020	Focus groups	54	13.8	Male	Caucasian
39	Temple et al	2016	Paper and online surveys	780	18.09	Female	Hispanic
40	Tokunaga	2011	Online survey	126	23.3	Female	Caucasian
41	Tokunaga	2016	Online	126	23.3	Female	Caucasian
42	Toplu-Demirtas, Akcabozan-Kayabol, Araci-Iyigydin, & Fincham	2020	Google Survey	390	22.68	Female	Turkish
43	Van Baak & Hayes	2018	Paper survey	662	20.21	Female	N/A
44	Van Ouytsel, Torres, Choi, Ponnet, Walrave, & Temple	2017	Paper Survey	408	18	Female	Hispanic
45	Van Ouytsel, Ponnet, & Walrave	2018	Questionnaire	466	17.99	Female	Flemish
46	Van Ouytsel, Ponnet, & Walrave	2020	Questionnaire	331	17.99	Female	Belgian
47	Zweig, Dank, Yahner & Lachman	2013	Paper survey	3745	N/A (high school age)	Female	White
48	Zweig, Lachman, Yahner & Dank	2014	Paper survey	3745	N/A (high school age)	Female	White

Table 2 Analysis information on selected articles examining cyberstalking behaviors

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
1	ANOVA	Impact of perpetrator gender on cyberstalking scenarios	Respondents viewed male perpetrators as more dangerous in the cyberstalking scenarios. Victim gender was found to impact the amount of blame assigned to a victim, with females blamed less than male victims. Male victim claims were also perceived as less legitimate
2	Multiple linear regression	Cyber dating abuse	The results showed that over 50% of the participants had been victims of some type of cyber dating abuse in the last six months. Victims of cyber dating abuse were victimized repeatedly, an average of 23 times in the last six months. The data also showed that cyber dating abuse appear usually in a context of jealousy. Finally, the results revealed a significant relationship between cyber dating abuse and offline psychological dating aggressions
3	Path analysis	Cyber dating abuse	Results indicated that alcohol problems predicted psychological and physical dating abuse (DA) for college students with high and average emotion dysregulation only. Alcohol problems did not predict cyber DA independently or in conjunction with emotion dysregulation. Cyber DA predicted psychological and physical DA. Results extend DA conceptualizations and highlight the importance of targeting emotion dysregulation in college DA intervention programs

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
4	Moderation analysis	Cyber dating abuse	<p>Results revealed a significant three-way interaction; the moderating role of romantic jealousy in the relation between alcohol problems and cyber dating abuse (CDA) perpetration varied by sex. Alcohol problems positively related to CDA perpetration for women with high, but not low, romantic jealousy. Alcohol problems did not relate to CDA perpetration regardless of men's level of romantic jealousy. These preliminary results suggested that alcohol-related partner abuse models may be useful for conceptualizing CDA perpetration and identifying CDA intervention components</p>
5	Kruskall Wallis tests	Cyber-control Cyber-aggression	<p>The results revealed a higher prevalence of cyber-control behaviors and a different predictive weight of the analyzed variables in relation to cyber-control and cyber-aggression for boys and girls. Physical and relational offline dating violence were significant predictors of cyber-aggression for boys, while sexist attitudes and romantic myths were the main predictors for girls. Hostile sexism and relational offline dating violence were positive predictors of cyber-control for boys, while romantic myths and verbal-emotional offline dating violence were the main predictors of cyber-control for girls</p>
6	Univariate analysis	Cyberstalking	<p>The majority of cyberstalkers in the sample also stalked offline. The majority of cyberstalkers were diagnosed with a personality disorder or problematic traits. Cyberstalkers were more likely to target ex-intimate partners and receive restraining orders</p>

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
7	OLS Regression	Cyber dating abuse victimization	Results employing OLS regression show that cyber dating abuse victimization is associated with measures of general strain and social learning, but not self-control, in both full and reduced models. For cyber abuse perpetration, general strain, social learning, and self-control measures show significant associations in reduced models; however, in a full model only measures of strain retain significance
8	Multiphase linear regression	Cyber dating abuse	The study explored whether aggression (verbal aggression, physical aggression, anger and hostility), romantic jealousy (emotional, cognitive and behavioral jealousy), and gender predicted perpetration of cyber dating abuse (n = 189). The researchers found that hostility, behavioral jealousy, and gender significantly predicted perpetration of cyber dating abuse
9	Regression analysis	Technology-facilitated stalking	Thirty-four percent of female respondents reported victimization via technology-facilitated stalking. Women who received pro-abuse informational support were two times more likely to be victimized via technology-facilitated stalking. Respondents with attachments to abusive peers were three times more likely to be victimized via technology-facilitated stalking. Women who received negative peer support were twice as likely to receive unwanted sexual messages or images

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
10	Hierarchical regression analysis	Cyber dating abuse	Results showed experiencing cyber dating abuse (CDA) victimization was related to increased alcohol use for both men and women, and increased fear of partner for women, even after controlling for in-person intimate partner violence (IPV). For depression, perceived stress, relationship satisfaction, quality of life, social support, and post-traumatic stress, CDA victimization did not predict levels above in-person IPV victimization
11	Binary logistic regression	Perceived cyberstalker motivation	Victim perception of cyberstalking motivated by retaliation, revenge or rejection was more likely to cause fear as a result of repeated online behaviors. If the victim felt their perpetrator was motivated by affection, they were less fearful
12	Binary logistic regression	Cyberstalking perpetration	Low self-control and moral disengagement are significantly related to cyberstalking perpetration. Victimization via cyberstalking, cyberbullying, and stalking are significantly related to cyberstalking perpetration
13	Parameter logistic regression and confirmatory factor analyses	Intimate partner cyber abuse	Cyber direct aggression, cyber-monitoring and cyber-control dimensions are correlated with various health outcomes, especially with headaches and stomach aches. Cyber-control was experienced by 15.8% of the sample. Cyber-monitoring was experienced by 13.2%, followed by experiencing cyber direct aggression (8.6%), sexual coercion and financial control (7.27%). The experience of the IPCA behaviors ranged from 28% experienced at least one of the behaviors to 1.13% experienced all five behaviors

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
14	Binary logistic regression	Consequences of cyberstalking victimization (school, work, health and social)	Of the 477 cyberstalking victims, 74% had negative consequences as a result of the victimization. Victims who were stalked for longer periods of time were more likely to have multiple forms negative consequences, as well as individuals stalked offline. Results also indicated that cyberstalkers stalked offline. Results also indicated that cyberstalking victimization by a stranger experienced less negative consequences compared to stalking by an intimate partner. In addition, victims experienced increased negative consequences if the cyberstalker was a woman compared to a man
15	T-tests and OLS regression	Fear of online interpersonal victimization (OIPV)	University students are significantly more afraid of OIPV by strangers than by a current or former intimate partner. Respondents who have a higher perceived risk of OIPV also have a higher fear of OIPV
16	Pearson's r and thematic coding	Electronic surveillance practices	Findings from the current study show that the respondents believed that social networks incited jealousy and promoted control and surveillance practices, thus making romantic relationships more conflictive and artificial. However, they tended to blame individual users more than the inner workings of social networks. For instance, some respondents regretted having resorted to certain invasive practices, while others justified those practices because they had allowed for the detection of infidelity-related behaviors
17	Hierarchical regression	Interpersonal electronic surveillance	Technology use (time spent on the phone, meeting romantic partner online, and expectation of technology in a relationship) and relationship factors (previous cheating behaviors and relationship satisfaction) significantly contribute to interpersonal electronic surveillance

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
18	Mediation analysis	Cyberbullying Cybertrolling Cyberstalking	Multiple mediation analyses demonstrated cyberbullying and cyberstalking fully mediated the relationship between Machiavellianism and Problematic social media use (PSMU) in the total sample and among men. Narcissism was indirectly associated with PSMU via cyberstalking in the total sample and among women. The relationship between sadism and PSMU was fully explained by cyberbullying and cyberstalking in the total sample. Cyber trolling was associated with sadism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, although it was not related to PSMU
19	Hierarchical Multiple regression analysis	Cyber dating abuse	The findings detail an interaction between cyber dating abuse and attachment avoidance pertaining to positive, but not negative, relationship quality. Victims of cyber dating abuse who were high in attachment avoidance reported significantly lower positive relationship quality compared to those who are not victims of cyber dating abuse
20	Confirmatory factor analysis	Cyber dating abuse victimization and perpetration	Approximately 74% of the sample were victims of at least one form of control and aggression behavior. The most frequently experienced was checking last connection in mobile applications. Prevalence of control was higher than direct aggression
21	Multiple regression analysis	Intimate partner cyberstalking	Controlling behaviors were a significant predictor of intimate partner cyberstalking. Female gender, vulnerable narcissism, direct sadism, and secondary psychopathy were significant, positive predictors of intimate partner cyberstalking
22	OLS Regression	Cyberstalking	Results indicated that low self-control and deviant peer association are significant predictors of cyberstalking, specifically attempting to log in to a person's social media, as well as social media presence and sex

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
23	OLS Regression	Cyberstalking	Results indicated that low self-control is a significant predictor of perceiving a negative impact by a victim as a result of cyberstalking, such as breaking up the relationship or taking revenge on the offender, as cyberstalking offenders with low self-control do not believe their behaviors would have a negative impact
24	OLS Regression	Cyberstalking	As an individual's level of self-control decreased, the likelihood of stalking, or repeatedly contacting someone online even after they requested it stop, increased. Increases in deviant peer association resulted in an increase in the likelihood of stalking. Finally, as an individual's grade point average increased, the likelihood of stalking, or repeatedly contacting someone online even after they requested it stop, increased
25	Descriptives and qualitative analysis	Stalking, cyberstalking and technology-based abuse	Between 60–63% victims of intimate partner violence experienced stalking and technology-based abuse. These behaviors were contingent upon multiple factors, including history of abuse, patterns of behavior and frequency
26	Hierarchical multiple regression	Cyber dating abuse	Time spent on a computer and cell phone have a significant positive relationship with cyber dating abuse
27	Binary logistic regression	Cyberstalking	The results indicated there is a significant relationship between Internet addiction and cyberstalking in adolescents

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
28	Logistic regression	Experience of seven forms of online victimization, including harassment by strangers and non-strangers	College students who spent extended hours on social media and on instant messaging were more likely to be harassed online by someone they know. Older respondents and those employed were less likely to be harassed by someone they know. Further, communicating with strangers online increased the odds of experiencing harassment by a non-stranger by 230%. Respondents with more education were 335% more likely to experience harassment by someone they know
29	Chi square Negative binomial regression	Self-protective behaviors against stalking and cyberstalking	There were more male and white victims of cyberstalking in the sample compared to physical stalking. Victims of cyberstalking reported higher household income and level of education. Stalking and cyberstalking victims performed similar self-protective behaviors, such as changing daily travel routines, changing appearance, and obtaining a weapon. Cyberstalking victims were more likely to take time off work or school (or quit), and avoid friends. Both types of victims who experienced greater out of pocket costs and had greater fear were more likely to participate in self-protective behaviors. Cyberstalking victims who were female and had presence of an attack were more likely to participate in self-protective behaviors
30	Logistic regression	Cyberstalking victimization and perpetration	Male youth were more likely to perform cyberstalking behaviors, especially sending insulting messages and pornographic material. Predictors of cyberstalking perpetration included looking at erotic pages, meeting with someone unknown online, and shopping online. In addition, youth who had a lower level of parental supervision were more likely to perpetrate cyberstalking

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
31	Binary logistic regression	Variance of fear	Results indicated that fear associated with cyberstalking victimization was strongly associated with messages of exaggerated affection, consistent cyberstalking, and older offenders. In addition, female victims were more likely to report fear
32	Multivariate analysis	Perpetration of cyber dating abuse	Using a cross-sectional design, across multiple levels of the socioecological model, the individual-level factors of (a) norms for violence for boys against girls, (b) having a current boyfriend/girlfriend, and (c) participation in bullying perpetration were correlates of the perpetration of cyber dating abuse. Collectively, the findings suggest that dating violence interventions targeting these particular correlates in early adolescents are warranted
33	Logistic regression	Cyberstalking perpetration	Almost 5% of university students reported cyberstalking perpetration. Students with low self-control were more likely to perpetrate cyberstalking. In addition, females and students who participated in sexting were more likely to perpetrate cyberstalking
34	Binary logistic regression	Cyberstalking and online pursuit behaviors	Respondents who live with parents are twice as likely to experience cyberstalking victimization, as well as those who added strangers as social media friends and noted peers as deviant were more likely to experience this form of victimization. Respondents who reported to be female or multiple social networking accounts increased cyberstalking victimization risk. Offline guardianship measures do not protect individuals from cyberstalking victimization

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
35	Path analysis	Cyberstalking	Findings from a path model revealed significant direct effects for opportunity and having a control deficit on cyberstalking. The effects of self-control were indirect through these two measures, whereas having a control surplus was not related to victimization risk
36	Hierarchical regression analysis	Controlling relationship behavior via technology	Both men and women perceive controlling behavior with other peer couples, but few recognize the behavior in their own relationships. Very few recognized suffering in their relationships as a result of this behavior
37	Linear regression	Cyberstalking	Results indicate that, given preliminary evidence, cyberstalking-related behaviors are related to past measures of traditional stalking and cyberstalking, although prior attachment, jealousy, and violence issues within relationships are significant predictors of cyberstalking-related behaviors. In addition, unexpected gender differences emerged. For example, women admitted greater frequencies of cyberstalking perpetration than males
38	Thematic analysis	Cyber dating violence	Two superordinate themes identified the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in cyber dating violence (CDV) as (1) enabling and (2) disenabling potential instigators and/or victims of CDV. The findings highlight implications for educating adolescents about the nature and impact of CDV and for promoting constructive and healthy responses to abuse in relationships

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
39	Path model	Cyber abuse perpetration and victimization	Traditional and cyber abuse were positively associated, and cyber abuse perpetration and victimization were correlated at each time point. Cyber abuse perpetration in the previous year (spring 2013) predicted cyber abuse perpetration one year later (spring 2014), while controlling for traditional abuse and demographic variables. In addition, physical violence victimization and cyber abuse perpetration and victimization predicted cyber abuse victimization the following year
40	Factor analysis and Chi-square	Internet electronic surveillance	The findings reveal that interpersonal surveillance over social network sites is influenced by age, the time individuals spend on their partners' profiles, the integration of social network sites into daily routines, and Internet self-efficacy
41	Confirmatory factor analysis	Internet electronic surveillance	The results find that indicators of low-quality relationships, such as low satisfaction, are associated with online surveillance. Interpersonal surveillance over social networking sites is in turn related to larger amounts of time spent on romantic partners' profile pages
42	Multiple serial mediation model	Cyber dating abuse perpetration	The results show that the prevalence of cyber dating abuse perpetration (CDAP) is high and that attachment theory offers a promising framework for identifying predictors of CDAP in emerging adults
43	Multivariate analysis	Cyberstalking offending and victimization	Victims and perpetrators scored lower on the self-control scale than respondents who indicated they had not been victimized or engaged in cyberstalking. The odds of females experiencing cyberstalking victimization are two times as likely than that of male respondents. In other words, females were over three times as likely to report they engaged in cyberstalking than males

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
44	Odds ratio	Cyber dating abuse	One out of ten youth said that they had perpetrated cyber dating abuse, with females reporting greater levels of non-sexual cyber dating abuse perpetration than males; by contrast, male youth were significantly more likely to report perpetrating sexual cyber dating abuse. Victims of sexual cyber dating abuse were seven times more likely to have also experienced sexual coercion (55 vs. 8%) than were non-victims, and perpetrators of sexual cyber dating abuse were 17 times more likely to have also perpetrated sexual coercion (34 vs. 2%) than were non-perpetrators
45	Logistic regression	Cyber dating abuse	Having had sexual intercourse or using alcohol or drugs before having sex was significantly linked with cyber dating abuse perpetration, as was poor physical health, and substance use
46	Linear regression analysis	Cyber dating abuse	Linear regression analysis suggests that engagement in online risk behavior, the length of the romantic relationship, engagement in sexting with the romantic partner, and the amount of social networking site use were significantly linked to victimization of digital controlling behavior
47	Linear regression analysis	Cyber dating abuse	Linear regression analysis indicates that being female, being older, the perceived social norms of peers, the endorsement of gender stereotypes, and having observed intrusive controlling behaviors by the father are significantly and positively related to adolescents' perpetration of digital monitoring behaviors

Table 2 (continued)

Study ID	Analysis Used	Dependent Variables	Findings Reported by the Authors ¹
48	Logistic regression	Cyber dating abuse	Experiences of cyber dating abuse were most significantly correlated with being female, committing a greater variety of delinquent behaviors, having had sexual activity in one's lifetime, having higher levels of depressive symptoms, and having higher levels of anger/hostility. Further, cyber dating abuse appeared somewhat more strongly related to depressive symptoms and delinquency than did other forms of teen dating violence and abuse

¹Findings presented in the table were derived from the results and discussion section of each of the studies

there was a fairly even distribution of studies that noted female or male as the predominant sex. All the studies used either a paper or online survey to gather data for the analysis.

Several predictive factors of cyberstalking in this younger subset of the population were revealed. Female respondents were found to be more likely to be victimized by cyberstalking in several of the highlighted studies (DeKeseredy et al., 2019; Kircaburun et al., 2020; Reyns et al., 2016; Van Baak & Hayes, 2018), as well as those who use multiple social media accounts and performed risky behavior on these sites (Kircaburun et al., 2020; Marcum et al., 2017; Reyns et al., 2016). Research also indicated in multiple studies negative external factors in platonic and romantic relationships increased the likelihood of cyberstalking victimization. For instance, DeKeseredy et al. (2019) found women who were attached to abusive peers and consistently received pro-abuse support were more likely to be victimized via cyberstalking. March, Litten, Sullivan and Ward (2020) found romantic partner behaviors exhibiting narcissism and sadism were significant predictors of cyberstalking victimization for females. Ahlgrim and Terrance (2021) also found gender affects perception of offender and victim legitimacy, indicating male perpetrators of cyberstalking were viewed as more dangerous compared to females, but male victims were viewed as less legitimate.

The presence of fear and corresponding reaction was noted in several studies. Fissel (2021) found victims perceived fearful occurrences of cyberstalking were motivated by the three R's: retaliation, revenge and rejection. In addition, continued victimization via cyberstalking increased level of fear (Henson et al., 2014; Fissel, 2021; Pereira & Matos, 2016). Nobles et al. (2014) also investigated how victims of stalking and cyberstalking reacted to victimization. Both stalking and cyberstalking victims reported self-protective behaviors such as change of daily routine and obtaining a weapon for security, while victims of cyberstalking were more likely to take time off work and school and avoid social situations.

Research within the past decade found multiple factors were associated with cyberstalking perpetration. A series of studies performed with high school and university students revealed low self-control and peer association had a significant effect on cyberstalking offending behaviors (Fissel et al., 2021a; Marcum et al., 2017; Marcum et al., 2018; Marcum et al., 2014), as well as low levels of parental supervision (Novo et al., 2014). There were also significant associations between social media use and cyberstalking offending behaviors (Marcum et al., 2017). Youth who spent more time online, performing behaviors such socializing with people they do not know and looking at erotic materials, were more likely to perpetrate cyberstalking (Novo et al., 2014). Navarro et al. (2016) further delved into the effect of Internet addiction on high school students and found a significant relationship between high levels of Internet addiction and cyberstalking. Complementing the findings of these studies, Reyns et al. (2018) further determined control deficits and opportunity had significant direct effects on cyberstalking.

Correlates of Behaviors Labeled “Cyber Dating Abuse”

Empirical studies included in this systematic review using the term “cyber dating abuse” as a categorization of the behavior utilized samples the mean age ranging from 12.4 to 36.8 years of age. The predominant race/ethnic categorization of respondents were either Hispanic or Caucasian in each of the studies, and all but one study noted female as the predominant sex. All used a survey to gather data for the analysis.

These studies found several common predictors of cyber dating abuse in samples of juveniles and young adults, many focusing on negative relationship behaviors and characteristics such as aggression and hostility (Borrajo et al., 2015; Deans & Bhogal, 2019; Lara, 2020; Peskin et al., 2017) and attachment avoidance (Lancaster et al., 2020; Temple et al., 2016; Toplu-Demirtas et al., 2020). One common theme was romantic jealousy by the perpetrator as a significant predictor of cyber dating abuse (Borrajo et al., 2015; Brem et al., 2019a, b; Deans & Bhogal, 2019). Van Ouytsel et al. (2020) also found the length of a romantic relationship and sexting with a romantic partner can increase likelihood of cyber dating abuse, indicating these can also be used as methods to control a significant other. Further, alcohol use and/or a noted pattern of problem drinking by the perpetrator increased the likelihood of cyber dating abuse (Brem et al., 2019a, 2019b; Duerksen & Woodin, 2019; Van Ouytsel et al., 2018). According to Curry and Zavala (2020), measures of strain and social learning (as can result in the behaviors noted above) are significant predictors of cyber dating abuse victimization in young people.

Another notable finding in multiple studies examining cyber dating abuse was that females are more likely to be victims of this form of cyber-criminality (Van Ouytsel et al., 2017; Zweig et al., 2013; Zweig et al., 2014). This is supported by similar findings in studies using the term “cyberstalking” to explain the behavior (DeKeserdy et al., 2019; Kircaburun et al. 2020; Van Baak & Hayes, 2018). Victims of cyber abuse often experience negative health outcomes, including stomach aches and headaches (Fissel et al., 2021b), as well as personal and professional consequences (Fissel & Reynolds, 2020). These replicated findings indicate the need for better education and resources for young women in regard to forming and maintaining healthy relationships, as well as warning signals for negative relationship behaviors.

Correlates of Behaviors Labeled “Interpersonal Electronic Surveillance”

Empirical studies included in this systematic review using the term “interpersonal electronic surveillance” as a categorization of the behavior utilized samples with a mean age ranging from 20.65 to 29.48 years of age. The predominant race/ethnic categorization was Caucasian in each of the studies, and all noted female as the predominant sex. All used a survey to gather data for the analysis, with an additional study using supplemental focus groups.

Not surprisingly, the level of access to technology enabled an increase in the aforementioned offending behaviors. The use of social media was a significant

predictor of interpersonal electronic surveillance (Tokunga, 2011; 2016), indicating the expansive ability these sites allow for unknowing monitoring of victims. Time spent online was also shown as a significant predictor in these studies. Further, negative relationship characteristics such as jealousy and previous cheating were indicators of perpetration of interpersonal electronic surveillance (Hernandez-Santaolalla & Hermido, 2020; Hertlein & van Dyck, 2020).

Discussion

The current review provided evidence that cyberstalking, cyber dating abuse, and interpersonal electronic surveillance have several correlates. One consistent theme throughout all of these literatures was that females were the most likely victims of all three behaviors (DeKeseredy et al., 2019; Kircaburun et al., 2020; Van Baak & Hayes, 2018). Women and young girls were consistently shown to report higher rates of victimization via cyberstalking, and also to be held less blameless for their victimization compared to males (Ahlgrim & Terrance, 2021). In addition, samples analyzed in this systematic review indicated individuals who spent more time on social media were more likely to be victims of cyberstalking (Ngo, Piquero, LaPrade, & Duong, 2020). This victimization risk included social media behaviors such as adding strangers as “friends” on platforms like Facebook and Instagram (Reyns et al., 2016) and spending extended amounts of time on these platforms (Ngo et al., 2020). As social media has become such an invasive part of life for many Internet users, this indicates a need for better education for all Internet users regarding safer social media use: for instance, refraining from providing personal information to strangers online, and engaging in precautionary behavior when friending others on social media.

Several pieces of literature linked risky behavior with cyberstalking. Theoretically, cyberstalking literature showed that those with low self-control (Marcum et al., 2014, 2017, 2018) and those who suffered with alcohol and drug addictions (Navarro et al., 2016) were more likely to be victims of cyberstalking. Individuals who associated with deviant peers (i.e., social learning theory), especially those whose peers were abusive, were more likely to be victimized via cyberstalking (DeKeseredy et al., 2019). Victims of cyberstalking spent more time around abusive peers to have the abusive behavior reinforced. In other words, if this behavior is supported by important people within one’s peer circle, it is more likely it will be imitated by the individual.

Perpetrators of cyberstalking behaviors in the featured studies often indicated levels of low self-control and moral disengagement (Fissel et al., 2021a, b), demonstrating that those engaging in cyberstalking behaviors did not consider the long-term effects of these actions on themselves or the victims. These cyber-offenders often participated in risky online behavior, such as viewing of erotic pages or making “friends” with strangers online (Novo et al., 2014), potentially as a result of low parental supervision. Another interesting finding was that perpetrators of cyberstalking were more likely to have been victimized themselves in this form, as well as via cyberbullying. Their potentially traumatic experiences could have influenced their

future desire to enact vengeance on another person in the same manner, possibly indicating they did not receive proper help after their victimization to cope with the experience.

Several factors were related to victimization of cyberdating abuse. The literature showed that romantic jealousy (Borrajó et al., 2015; Brem et al., 2019a, 2019b; Deans & Bhogal, 2019), aggression-hostility (Borrajó et al., 2015; Deans & Bhogal, 2019; Peskin et al., 2017), attachment avoidance (Lancaster et al., 2020; Temple et al., 2016; Toplu-Demirtas et al., 2020), and length of romantic relationship were related to cyber dating abuse. These findings asserted that negative relationship characteristics increase the likelihood of this form of abusive behavior, indicating the need for better education for young adults and adolescents on healthy relationship practices. With these negative relationship behaviors becoming more integrated into online practices, it is possible younger Internet users believe them to be acceptable and therefore not a reason for ending the relationship (Sanchez-Hernandez et al., 2020).

Other risky behaviors were shown to be related to behaviors identified as cyber dating abuse, and also found in behaviors identified as cyberstalking. Alcohol use and abuse were related to cyber dating abuse (Brem et al., 2019a, 2019b; Duerksen & Woodin, 2019; Van Ouyste et al., 2018). Sexting, another risky behavior often found in romantic relationships or relationships of romantic interest, was also related to cyber dating abuse (Van Ouytsel et al., 2020). Theoretically, the literature showed that Agnew's (1992) version of General Strain Theory (GST) and Akers's (1998) version of social learning (Curry & Zavala, 2020) were significantly related to cyber dating abuse victimization and perpetration. In other words, individuals who cope with strain in deviant ways and relationships with deviant peers can increase the likelihood of cyberstalking involvement as victim or offender.

Lastly, the interpersonal electronic surveillance (IES) literature showed four factors were related to the victimization of this behavior. Two of these factors are related to increased time, and they are as follows: time on social media and time spent online (Tokunga, 2011, 2016). Jealousy and previous cheating were also related to IES (Hernandez-Santaolalla & Hermido, 2020; Hertlein & van Dyck, 2020). These significant factors are similar to the findings for cyberstalking and cyber dating abuse, providing yet more evidence of the link between the labeled behaviors.

Limitations of the Literature

The literature on cyber dating abuse and cyberstalking are reliant on self-report data coming from questionnaires (e.g. paper-and-pencil or Internet) or interviews (e.g. focus groups). These methods have their advantages and disadvantages. Questionnaires are able to provide the respondent with anonymity and confidentiality, while focus groups are, generally only able to provide confidentiality. Both methods are designed to provide the respondent with the opportunity to provide sensitive information without being embarrassed about the situation.

Unfortunately, these methods also have a number of disadvantages which it is necessary to understand. The respondent may not provide a complete disclosure

of the events. This may arise because of discomfort or a repression of the events. The reviewed studies rely on these methods. Because of this reliance, we believe it is prudent to remember the occurrences mentioned are likely to yield conservative estimates of cyber dating abuse and cyberstalking.

One additional limitation of these studies is the predominant sex that participated in these studies. The majority of the studies relied on female samples. This is reasonable given the evidence points to females being victims of these behaviors more than males. Yet, males can and do experience the victimization of cyber dating abuse and cyberstalking. The reviewed studies are likely to provide a conservative estimate of the male experience with these behaviors (Marcum et al., 2017, 2018).

Further, it is important to note the lack of longitudinal studies in this systematic review, indicating a need for future research in this manner. There are several common variables emerging from these studies as predictors of cyberstalking offending and victimization behaviors. In order to better understand the relationship of these variables to the perpetrators and victims, as well as the potential long-term effects on well-being and other deviant behaviors, longitudinal studies would provide better clarification (also discussed in the next section).

Future Research

The compilation of research examined in this study focuses mainly on juvenile, young adult, and college-aged samples. While these age groups have demonstrated themselves to be at risk for victimization via cyberstalking, cyber dating abuse, and IES, individuals of all ages are using the Internet and are in relationships. Online relationship building, maintenance, and cessation is not only characteristic for those under age 30; therefore, it is expected adults over 30 are just as likely to be experiencing some of these behaviors. We encourage research that investigates predictors of behaviors categorized as cyberstalking, cyber dating abuse and/or interpersonal electronic surveillance for individuals in the working adult range (30–60 years old), as well as retirement age (60+ years old).

The present literature does not provide much information about these issues for those who are married. Married individuals provide a dyad that typically functions in a manner different than that of a dating couple. We believe it is possible that controlling behaviors between married individuals via the Internet is just as relevant for those who are not married but in a relationship. In other words, we believe that research on marital abuse via cyberstalking and interpersonal electronic surveillance is vital to our future understanding.

Longitudinal research is necessary for further understanding of cyber victimization, because to date our understanding has only come from cross-sectional data that provides a “snapshot” of the victimization. Longitudinal research will help researchers understand the pervasiveness or severity of the perpetration and victimization. Furthermore, longitudinal data may provide some indication of the potential reciprocal nature of the perpetration and victimization. In other words, it may help provide a deeper understanding of the toxicity of the relationships under study. To date, the literature does not contain this type of information.

Conclusion

In sum, the current review shows that being or identifying as female is the most pervasive correlate of victimization via cyberstalking, cyber dating abuse, and interpersonal electronic surveillance. Studies have also shown that victimization by cyberstalking, cyber dating abuse, and interpersonal abuse are related to abusive peers, aggression-hostility, jealousy, alcohol use, social media use, time spent online, low self-control, strain, and social learning. The review shows that additional research that considers different age groups, other methods of collecting data, the experiences of married couples, and samples with a better balance of males, as well as longitudinal research will be important in furthering our understanding of these behaviors. For now, the literature shows us that being a victim of cyberstalking, cyber dating abuse, and interpersonal electronic surveillance involves more complex situations than just being or identifying as female.

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