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The impact of stalking and harassment in females of intimate partner violence in Johannesburg following the breakup of a relationship

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2024

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

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Du Toit, Marlene. (2024). The impact of stalking and harassment in females of intimate partner violence in Johannesburg following the breakup of a relationship [Masters dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WReDSpace. <https://hdl.handle.net/10539/44811>



**THE IMPACT OF STALKING AND HARASSMENT IN FEMALES OF INTIMATE
PARTNER VIOLENCE IN JOHANNESBURG FOLLOWING THE BREAKUP OF A
RELATIONSHIP**

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A research report submitted to the

Faculty of Humanities at the

University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

in

partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Arts Clinical Psychology

Supervisor: Lynne Goldschmidt

Date: 31 May 2023

Declaration

I, Marlene Du Toit, declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology Degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

Signature of candidate:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MDuToit', written in a cursive style.

[Marlene Du Toit]

Date: 31 May 2023

Abstract

Stalking and harassment should be considered a gender-based violence crime. Literature suggests that stalking and harassment often occur post-breakup of a relationship. It is often difficult to prove that a person is being stalked and harassed, hence the lack of legal avenues to protect oneself from stalking and harassment discussed herein. This research focused on stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner. The total number of participants was eight. The participants were recruited via Lifeline, an organisation that offers support to community members. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. The participants narrated their experiences and allowed the researcher to explore further during interviews. The interviews were recorded for analysis purposes. Thematic analysis was chosen as a method of analysis. Findings highlighted a form of abuse within the relationship that continued to evolve into stalking and harassment post the breakup. Former intimate partners sometimes used family members and friends to reach their victims. Technology was also used to reach the victims when unwanted visitation proved to be unsuccessful. Victims suffered psychological and physical distress due to stalking and harassment. Participants employed different coping mechanisms and used resources at their disposal, much outside of the judicial realm. There was a need expressed for the justice system to be more supportive and regard stalking and harassment seriously as a crime.

Keywords: Former intimate partner, harassment, intimate partner violence, stalking

Acknowledgements

I would first like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Lynne Goldschmidt, who guided me throughout this project. Thank you for being generous with your time and for the learning opportunities provided to me. My thesis completion is credited to your support.

A special thank you to all my research participants for sharing your experiences and trusting me with the delicate content.

I would like to say thank you to my husband, Johan. You were patient, and loving and held down the fort so I could work on this project. I will always appreciate and value the endless hours you sat with me and listened to me talk about my thesis. A special thank you to my son, Arian, for being my reason to pursue a MA Degree. To my brother, Reuben, thank you for your support and encouragement to push through and finish my research study.

Above all, I sincerely appreciate God for His strength, benevolence, and faithfulness in my life.

This research study would not have been possible without all of your contributions and support.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1. Healthcare System

Figure 3.2. Female centred responses

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Characteristics of the participants

Table 5.1. The main themes that emerged in the study

Table 5.2. Demographic information of the research participants

Table 5.3. A description of what the relationship was like

Table 5.4. The categories of violence experienced by the participants

Table 5.5. The use of substances by the former intimate partner

Table 5.6. The methods that were employed to stalk and harass the participants

Table 5.7 Other forms of violence experienced during Stalking and Harassment

Table 5.8. The duration of how long the participants were stalked and harassed

Table 5.9. How participants coped with stalking and harassment

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Gender-based violence (GBV)

Global positioning system (GPS)

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Protection order (P.O).

Thematic Analysis (TA)

United Kingdom (UK)

United States (US)

World Health Organization (WHO)

CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background and Rationale of the Study	1
1.2 Elucidation of key constructs.....	4
1.2.1 The complexity of Stalking.....	4
1.2.2 Stalking as Defined by the South African Legislature.....	5
1.2.3 Harassment.....	6
1.2.3.1 Harassment as Defined in a South African Context.....	6
1.2.4 Violence.....	7
1.2.5 Gender-based Violence.....	8
1.2.6 Culture and its relation to Stalking and Harassment.....	9

1.2.7 Who is a victim?.....	9
1.3 Problem Statement.....	10
1.4 Research aim.....	11
1.5 Research Questions.....	12
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	12
1.7 Outline of the report.....	13
CHAPTER 2: A THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	15
2.1 Introduction.....	15
2.2 Why use both a theoretical and a conceptual framework?	15
2.2.1 Social Support Theory.....	17
2.2.2 A Conceptual Framework of how females cope with Stalking and Harassment.....	19
2.3 Conclusion.....	20
CHAPTER 3: A LITERATURE REVIEW	21
3.1 Introduction.....	21
3.2 A Global view on Stalking and Harassment.....	21
3.3 Stalking and Harassment in a South African context.....	25
3.4 Cultural and Gendered Perceptions of Stalking and Harassment in South Africa	27
3.5 Stalking behaviours and females as victims.....	28

3.6 The severity of Stalking and Harassment as a risk factor for other forms of violence.....	29
3.7 The methods employed to Stalk and Harass females.....	31
3.8 Cyberstalking	31
3.9 The impact of stalking and harassment on females by a former intimate partner	32
3.9.1 The Psychological footprint of Stalking and Harassment.....	33
3.9.2 The Occupational effect of Stalking and Harassment.....	35
3.10 How females cope with Stalking and Harassment.....	35
3.11 Help-seeking behaviour post experiences of Stalking and Harassment	38
3.12 The law regarding stalking and harassment Globally.....	39
3.12.1 Global North.....	39
3.12.2 Global South.....	39
3.12.3 A South African context in managing GBV and Stalking and Harassment.....	40
3.13 Resources Available and Accessible to Victims in South Africa	42
3.14 Review of relevant studies	44
3.15 Conclusion	45
CHAPTER 4: METHODS.....	46
4.1 Introduction.....	46
4.2 Research design	46

4.3 Sampling	49
4.4 Data collection	50
4.5 Ethical Considerations	54
4.6 Data Analysis: TA.....	56
4.7 Trustworthiness.....	58
4.8 Reflexivity.....	58
4.9 Conclusion	60
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	62
5.1 Introduction.....	62
5.2 Research Findings: Themes	63
5.2.1 Demographics.....	64
5.2.2 Participants' experiences of the relationship before the breakup.....	65
5.2.2.1 Description of what the relationship was like before the breakup.....	65
5.2.2.2 The categories of violence described by the participants.....	68
5.2.2.3 Use of alcohol/substances by former partners.....	69
5.2.2.4 Why is he so paranoid?.....	70
5.2.3 Participants' experiences of Stalking and Harassment post-breakup.....	70
5.2.3.1 Methods employed to Stalk and Harass.....	71

5.2.3.2 Unwanted contact: Social-media, phone calls.....	71
5.2.3.3 Repeated contact leading to unwanted visits.....	73
5.2.3.4 Stalking and Harassment of family and friends.....	75
5.2.3.5 Duration of Stalking and Harassment.....	76
5.3 Effects of Stalking and Harassment.....	76
5.3.1 Psychological effects.....	76
5.3.2 Occupational effects.....	80
5.3.3 Psychosocial effects.....	81
5.4 How participants coped with Stalking and Harassment.....	83
5.4.1 Methods employed to dissipate Stalking and Harassment.....	83
5.4.2 The influence of culture on Stalking and Harassment on how females cope.....	87
5.5 Conclusion.....	90
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION	91
6.1 Introduction.....	91
6.2 Summary	91
6.3 Discussion	92
6.3.1 Who is a victim?.....	92
6.3.2 Participants' experiences of the relationship before the breakup.....	93

6.3.2.1 Substance use and violence.....	93
6.3.2.2 Why is he so paranoid?.....	94
6.3.3 Participants' experience of Stalking and Harassment after the breakup.....	94
6.3.3.1 Methods employed to Stalk and Harass.....	94
6.3.3.2 Stalking and Harassment of family, friends and co-workers.....	96
6.3.3.3 Duration of Stalking and Harassment.....	97
6.3.4 The effects of Stalking and Harassment.....	97
6.3.4.1 Stalking and Harassment: A crime of violence against females.....	97
6.3.4.2 Psychological distress.....	98
6.3.5 How participants coped with Stalking and Harassment.....	101
6.3.5.1 Methods employed to dissipate Stalking and Harassment.....	101
6.3.5.2 The lack of support from the justice system in South Africa.....	102
6.3.5.3 External influences on coping with Stalking and Harassment.....	103
6.4 Conclusion.....	106
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	107
7.1 Limitations of the current research	108
7.2 Implications.....	109
7.3 Recommendations for future research	110

REFERENCES.....	111
APPENDICES.....	129

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Rationale of the Study

An intercultural phenomenon of old behaviour,

but a new crime

Meloy, 2020

Stalking and harassment are phenomena that have left its remnants across centuries (James & MacKenzie, 2018). Despite the latter, scholarly literature related to stalking and harassment remains sparse (Bendlin et al., 2022), from both a global and local perspective (Chan & Sheridan, 2020).

In addition, although stalking has been an issue for centuries, the advancements and accessibility of technology have given new ways to enable stalking behaviours, thus resulting in an expansion in the context of violence (Freed et al., 2017). Despite technological advances, and the inclusion of technology in modes of stalking, there is also a dearth of data available related to cyberstalking (Dreßing et al., 2014). The lack of scholarly attention is attributed to several factors including the multi-layered nature of this repetitive and innocuous crime (Bendlin et al., 2022). Further hypotheses suggest that countries that strongly uphold patriarchal biases are less likely to place increased emphasis on the implications and necessary legal and policy processes required in response to stalking and harassment (Novisky & Peralta, 2015). This is attributed to stalking and harassment being a gender-based violence concern and that focus on female's rights and well-being is not central or beneficial to all political agendas (Sen & Mukherjee, 2014). As such, only select

nations recognise stalking as a global public health concern and a violation of human rights (van der Aa, 2018).

To reduce the rates of stalking and gender-based violence, it is suggested that females should be included in the development and carrying out of the laws against these crimes (Buss, 2023). The effects that violence has on victims can be physical, mental and emotional. Additionally, due to the severity of these long-term effects, it is important to conduct research on violence to bring awareness to the public and to assist the judicial and healthcare system to develop effective prevention measures (Siemieniecka & Skibińska, 2019).

In response to the dearth of political and scholarly attention on stalking and harassment, stalking as a form of violence is frequently reviewed in relation to other forms of gender-based violence. The most prevalent form of violence against females globally are intimate partner violence and sexual coercion (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021), 30% of females experienced a form of violence from either a former or a current intimate partner globally, adversely affecting the victim's physical and mental well-being. WHO further reports that females who have experienced physical, emotional and sexual violence are 2.3 times more likely to develop an Alcohol Use Disorder and 2.6 times more likely to develop Anxiety and Depression related Disorders (García-Moreno et al., 2013). Whilst these are some of the mental health implications of violence against females, a specific lens focussing on stalking and harassment is required.

The regressed pace of scholarly attention on stalking and harassment is evident across social studies, particularly concerning the impact of stalking and harassment as a form of violence on mental and psychosocial well-being (DeKeseredy et al., 2017). Thought-provokingly, initial desktop reviews of available literature suggest an increased emphasis on stalking and perpetrators (Ferreira & Matos, 2013). It has been asserted that the research data available on female stalking

victims are sparse and based on non-random samples (Diette et al., 2014). Research from the Global North however indicates that females subject to stalking and harassment are at an increased vulnerability to depressive disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (Bailey & Morris, 2021). It may however be suggested that the fear and distress in females who are stalked only represent a component of the “psychological footprint” caused by the trauma (Diette et al., 2014).

A literature search focussing on stalking in South Africa revealed limited results. This is despite an increasing prevalence of gender-based violence within the South African context (Dlamini, 2021). Intimate partner violence in South Africa is rampant and the effects are experienced on a multi-faceted level (Amenaghawon & Salawu, 2020). The physical effects of intimate partner violence serve only as one measure of harm, the psychological and emotional effects also demand attention (Karakurt et al., 2014). In South Africa, it is unclear what crimes make up gender-based violence and femicide-related crimes and whether stalking and harassment are included as crimes (Mofokeng & Tlou, 2022). The reason for the ambiguity is that violence is most often seen as physical and there is a struggle of viewing anything non-physical or anything difficult to prove as a form of gender-based violence. Furthermore, gender-based violence and femicide-related crimes are not categorised in the South African Police Service statistics (Mofokeng & Tlou, 2022). There is little known about stalking or the effectiveness of a protection order in South Africa as empirical research data is sparse (Chan & Sheridan, 2020), there is also a sparsity of knowledge on cyberstalking as a cyber-crime (Sissing, 2013).

It has been offered that stalking and harassment by former intimate partners are not fully understood (Cheyne & Guggisberg, 2018); thereby necessitating the exploration of the impact of these behaviours on females.

The study will contribute to the literature resources in South Africa. The contributions of this research will be of interest to healthcare workers, police officers and counsellors as it gives insight

into the impact of stalking and harassment by a former partner on females. The research can assist in delivering care to victims based on how they are impacted by stalking and harassment. The study also highlights the significance of social support and the influence of culture in coping with stalking and harassment.

1.2 Elucidation of key constructs

1.2.1 The Complexity of Stalking

Stalking may be defined and understood in a multitude of ways, given its multivarious implications on physiological health, psychiatric health, as well as the psychosocial well-being of those impacted (Owens, 2016).

According to James and MacKenzie, (2018, px), *“the term stalking was initially popularised in the 1980s to describe the intrusive activities of members of the public towards Hollywood celebrities. Presently, the prevalence of stalking varies according to the definition used, the methodology employed, and the population or sub-population sampled.”* Given the complexity of defining and acknowledging stalking and harassment as intentional acts, it was once accepted as part of courtship behaviour (Başar, 2019).

Former partners were found to engage in stalking after the breakup of an intimate relationship that may or may not have been sexual in nature. James and MacKenzie (2018), further suggested that the goal of stalking may be reconciliation, vengeance, or oscillating between both, although this implication may be contested. Other research offers that the act of stalking may be linked to a reconciliation of the lost relationships, as well as intimidating and terrifying the victim (Miller, 2012). It is further suggested that stalking is a form of coercive control (Katz et al., 2020) because stalking behaviours are intended to control and intimidate victims (Woodlock, 2017).

This research project will employ the definition as conceptualised by Spitzberg and Cupach (2007), defining stalking as an intentional and repeated, unwanted action or behaviour that occurs twice at a minimum and causes fear in the victim. Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) suggest that stalking behaviour takes on different forms and levels of intrusion. The authors suggest five groups of stalking.

- Hyper-intimacy: which involves sending unwanted forms of communication including cyberstalking.
- Proximity: following the victim and family
- Invasion: unlawfully gaining access to the property of the victim
- Intimidation: use of threats against the victim
- Violence: including physical and sexual assault

Other methods employed to stalk and harass females will be discussed in Chapter 5.

1.2.2 Stalking as defined by the South African Legislature

In South Africa, stalking has been defined by the South African Law Reform Commission (2006) as any behaviour that is harassing and intimidating resulting in a person fearing for his or her safety. Additionally, the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998, provides an option to individuals who have experienced stalking, who are or were in a romantic relationship with the offender, to report the behaviour South African Reform Commission, 2006). The Domestic Violence Act defines stalking as “*repeatedly following, pursuing or accosting the complainant*”. Despite the aforementioned Act, stalking is not distinguished as a criminal offence in South Africa (Sissing, 2013). The current criminal law concentrates mainly on illegal behaviours. In the case where stalking behaviour represents a criminal act, such as physical harm, then the criminal law may be evoked to prosecute a stalker (South African Reform Commission, 2006).

1.2.3 Harassment

Stalking is a complex social problem that takes on many forms, harassing behaviours being one of them (Hirtenlehner et al., 2012). Harassment is defined as a form of aggression displayed in inappropriate behaviour (Boehnlein et al., 2020). Harassment against females has historically taken the form of unwanted sexual attention (Page & Scott, 2021). With the expansion of technology and increased social interaction on web-based platforms, technology is increasingly used to harass females with unwanted contact (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). This has been referred to as cyberstalking and harassment, which is defined as the use of a digital communication device to repeatedly harass or threaten a person (Short et al., 2014). With the increased usage of technology and cyberspace, the risk of cyberstalking and harassment has also observed an increase (Stevens et al., 2021). Research has indicated that the use of cyberstalking and harassment has an impact similar to offline stalking and harassment, thus resulting in various forms of emotional and psychological distress (Short et al., 2014). These may include, but are not limited to posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anger or fear (Short et al., 2014).

1.2.3.1 Harassment as Defined in a South African Context

Harassment is the direct or indirect harm caused by the conduct of another person by following, watching, accosting at home or work, engaging in any medium of communication and sending gifts and also includes sexual harassment (Harassment Stalking Act 17 of 2011, as cited by SA Law Reform Commission Report, 2006). In addition, according to the Protection from Harassment Act (Republic of South Africa, Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011), harassment refers to the “participation in a pattern of conduct that induces the fear of harm to someone”. The behaviour includes:

- “repeatedly watching or loitering near where the victim resides, works, studies or happens to be”

- “repeatedly making phone calls or inducing another person to make phone calls as well as engaging in verbal, electronic or any other communication aimed at the victim”
- “repeatedly sending letters, telegrams, packages, facsimiles, electronic mail or any other object to the victim”.

Although Act 17 of 2011 does address Harassment, there is still a need to include a more holistic form in which these acts unfold, such as cyber and online platforms (Batchelor & Mota Makore, 2021).

1.2.4 Violence

Violence can be defined as acts that are deliberate to cause physical harm and damage. It can be further described as social and cultural destruction (Hamby, 2017). Intimate partner violence is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as “any behaviour by an intimate partner that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm” (Kalokhe et al., 2015). Violence against females mostly occurs in intimate partner relationships and includes stalking and harassment (Krahé, 2018). It is therefore suggested that violence against females occurs after females have left their partners, that is, violence against females is sometimes committed by a former partner (for example, stalking and harassment).

Given the various ways in which violence may be enacted in the practice of stalking and harassment, the concepts of assault and criminal defamation are included in the conceptualisation of violence. Assault may be defined as an unlawful, intentional aggressive contact with another person where physical injury may or may not occur and resulting in the victim feeling threatened (Pompeii et al., 2015). In turn, Criminal Defamation may be defined as “the unlawful and intentional publication of a matter concerning another” person using social networks, causing damage to reputation (Burgess, 2013).

1.2.5 Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence refers to acts of violence aimed at a group of people based on gender. It may cause physical and psychological harm, as well as harm to self-esteem, thus violating human rights (Terry, 2007). Gender-based violence is an act against a person based on gender or sex and can result in emotional, physical, mental or sexual harm. A gendered approach to defining stalking is essential to understand the lived experience of abuse in females, for which the impact and severity originated from gender discrimination. Gender-based violence itself is an outcome of gender inequality and stalking is considered to be a form of gender-based violence (Proctor, 2018).

Present-day research also shows that South Africa displays a high rate of gender-based (Meyiwa et al., 2017). The most common forms of gender-based are found to be intimate partner violence and sexual coercion. The negative impact on a female extends to physical, mental, sexual and reproductive challenges. Gender-based violence was also found to harm the economy (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). Violence can be linked to masculinity where a perpetrator is concerned, suggesting that the female form takes on the role to function as a tool against the display of power by a male (Blok, 2020). Gendered norms influence what is perceived as violence (Sundaram, 2013). Gender-based violence is often linked to patriarchy and gendered norms, making females vulnerable to abuse.

Intimate partner violence is also known as domestic violence and is well-known globally as a health matter as it causes physical and mental harm to females (Yakeley, 2022). Intimate partner violence impacts six (6) percent of American females every year. As a result, physical and mental issues are noted in females (Dudgeon & Evanson, 2014).

In South Africa, females who experienced intimate partner violence described feeling controlled, verbal abuse and physical abuse (Stadler et al., 2014). A study was conducted in South Africa, Gauteng in 2017, where 511 females participated. It was found that the females experienced PTSD

and depression. Additionally, fifty (50) percent of the females had experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime (Machisa et al., 2017).

This research will make use of the terms related to violence interchangeably.

1.2.6. Culture and its Relation to Stalking and Harassment

Throughout history, there has been a culture of silence regarding the oppression of females and the various forms of violence thereof (Bannerji, 2020). It was suggested that addressing the culture of silence may be useful in preventing gender-based violence (Piedalue et al., 2020). Violence against females is a community problem and where violence itself and inequality between males and females exist as norms, gender-based violence prevails (Jewkes et al., 2015). It is suggested that the manner in which males view masculinity and identity is likely to influence their gender norms and perceptions. Furthermore, it may then perpetuate violence against females (Fulu et al., 2013).

This research paper refers to culture related to gendered perceptions, patriarchy and cultural perceptions and beliefs related to stalking and harassment. Societal and cultural norms held within a belief system frequently dictate what is considered appropriate behaviour. When a male is viewed as superior to a female, it was found that gender-based violence programmes were hindered as stalking and harassing behaviours may not be seen as harmful (Perrin et al., 2019).

1.2.7 Who is a victim?

It can be challenging to define a victim. It is based on the affected individual's view of whether they are a victim, the societal acceptance that the affected individual is a victim and the acceptance of a victim by what is considered a crime from a legal standpoint (Strobl, 2004). Additionally, a person may be a victim if they can name a single unwanted event that occurred where they felt threatened by someone who violated a socially shared norm (Strobl, 2004). According to Act number 34 of 1995, South Africa defines a victim as a person who has suffered damage caused by

another person, where human rights were violated or physical, psychological or financial loss was sustained (Moyo et al., 2020). Present-day research also defines violence against females as a form of violence where power is unevenly dispersed between males and females and it serves to infringe on the rights of females as well as carry on the subordination of females (Boyle, 2019). In the present research, the participants self-identified themselves as victims.

1.3 Problem Statement

South Africa has consistently observed the highest rate of intimate partner violence against females globally. Furthermore, it was found that 10% to 21% of adolescent and young females were victims of some form of intimate partner violence (Kuo et al., 2021). Additionally, in 2015, it was found that 25% to 28% of females over the age of 18 years old had experienced sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner in South Africa (Shai & Sikweyiya, 2015). A study conducted in Canada to report on police statistics found that females between the ages of 15-34 had been stalked (Burczycka & Conroy, 2018). There is no clear reason as to why younger females are more affected. It may be posited that younger females may be unlikely to identify harassment and abuse as criminal as it has been normalised, thus also making this unlikely to be reported to the police (Hlavka, 2014). It is also reported that in South Africa, close to one in five females are victims of intimate partner violence (South African Law Reform Commission, 2006). However, official statistics on how many females are victims of stalking and harassment in South Africa by a former partner are sparse even in the context of such high rates of intimate partner violence (South African Law Reform Commission, 2006). Overall, there is limited data and research available in South Africa on stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner. The study aims to contribute to understanding how females are affected by stalking and harassment by a former partner.

Understanding the impact of stalking and harassment requires knowledge of how and to what extent victims are stalked. Stalking can go on long-term and the impact on the victim can also be

experienced chronically (Mechanic et al., 2008). Stalking victimisation is life-altering and its psycho-social effects are multifaceted, long-term and often traumatic (Korkodeilou, 2017).

The effects of stalking and harassment can persist even when the stalking and harassment have ceased. The sequelae may include psychological effects such as depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances and suicidal ideation (Churcher & Nesca, 2013). In addition, the latter authors also identified medical conditions such as asthma, irritable bowel syndrome, hypertension and diabetes in survivors.

Understanding this impact can lead to more informed measures of intervention for the victims of stalking and harassment. It may also facilitate an understanding of the barriers to accessing support, whether psychosocial or legal. Understanding how females cope with stalking and harassment can add to the existing body of knowledge of what resources may be lacking or are effective for intervention. In addition, research is also required to develop an understanding of cultural perceptions and beliefs related to stalking and harassment. Cultural beliefs about gender and intimate partner relationships can no doubt influence perceptions of stalking and harassment worldwide (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2012). It is crucial to gain greater understanding of the role that culture plays in this perception within the local South African context. For example, help-seeking behaviour may be limited by a victim if it is perceived as contravening a cultural norm (Perrin et al., 2019). In addition, some females may be less likely to express distressing feelings about stalking and harassment if it is accepted that this is a normal part of the culture. It would be beneficial to understand the role that culture plays to offer support that takes into consideration the beliefs of the victim.

1.4 Research aim

This exploratory research aimed to investigate the effects of stalking and harassment on females who experience this conduct from a former intimate partner. The study also aimed to explore the

factors that influence how females cope with stalking and harassment. Finally, the study aimed to explore the role of cultural perceptions in stalking and harassment.

The primary aim of this exploratory research was to investigate the effects of stalking and harassment on females who experience this conduct from former intimate partners.

The secondary aims of the study were to:

- Explore the factors that influence how females cope with stalking and harassment.
- Explore the role of cultural perceptions of stalking and harassment on females.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions were explored:

1.5.1 What are the experiences of females with stalking and harassment after ending an intimate partner relationship?

1.5.2 What are some of the factors that influence how females cope with stalking and harassment after the breakup of an intimate partner relationship?

1.5.3 What role do cultural perceptions play in how females experience stalking and harassment?

1.6 Significance of the Study

It is not well understood how intimate partner violence, stalking and harassment upon ending a relationship are linked (Senkars et al., 2021). In a study in Sweden by Ornstein (2013), it was found that during their lifetime, nearly ten (10) percent of all females become victims of stalking or assault upon ending intimate partner relationship. Furthermore, it was found that measures of control during the relationship were a risk factor for being stalked and assaulted when the relationship ended (Ornstein & Rickne, 2013).

This study may contribute to the body of knowledge in South Africa. The contributions of this research may be of interest to healthcare workers, law enforcement and counsellors, as it gives insight into the effects of stalking and harassment on females by a former intimate partner. The research may assist in informing the delivery of care to victims based on how they are subjectively affected by stalking and harassment. This research study also highlights the significance of social support and the influence of culture on how females cope with stalking and harassment.

1.7 Outline of the Research Report

The research report comprises seven (7) chapters. A summary of the chapters will be outlined below to assist in providing an overview of the research considerations.:

1.7.1 Chapter 1

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the conceptualisation and understanding of stalking and harassment. It provides the reader with background information on the concepts of stalking and harassment. The chapter defines terminology and establishes a problem statement and depicts the phenomenon of stalking and harassment on global and national levels. It also outlines the objectives of the study and clearly states the research questions that aim to be explored. It concludes by affording the reader with reasons why the study was significant.

1.7.2 Chapter 2

It offers a conceptual and theoretical framework to explain stalking and harassment of females by former intimate partners.

1.7.3 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 presents a literature review on stalking and harassment. It explores the methods employed to stalk and harass females, the impact on females as well as how females may cope with the acts of stalking and harassment as well as how they may cope with the impact of stalking and harassment. It further explores the laws on stalking and harassment to assist the reader to gain more insight into stalking and harassment.

1.7.4 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 depicts the qualitative research design and how data was collected from the participants. It also highlights why a qualitative approach was relevant to the current research project. It shares the processes involved in obtaining informed consent and how the sampling of participants was conducted. It concludes by providing the reader with details on ethical considerations and reflexivity.

1.7.5 Chapter 5

Chapter 5 reports on the findings of the data collected and provides an analysis. The relevant results were reported objectively based on the themes that were highlighted.

1.7.6 Chapter 6

Chapter 6 depicts a discussion of the research findings and links it to the literature. It aimed to interpret the results of the current research. It concludes by exploring the implications of the research study.

1.7.7 Chapter 7

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter of the current research. It focuses on the limitations of the current research and the recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

2. A THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks serve as a lens through which the researcher conducts the study and makes sense of the data collected (Adom et al., 2018). It, therefore, serves as a comprehensive framework to facilitate an understanding of the overall research initiative (Kim & Yang, 2014). As such, whilst the use of theory informs the research design process (Green, 2014), it also serves to guide the analysis and an understanding of the research (Sanchez, 2012).

Given the complexity of stalking and harassment, and holding in mind the overall research initiative, the current research will apply both a theoretical and conceptual framework.

2.2 Why use both a theoretical and a conceptual framework?

A clear distinction between a theoretical and a conceptual framework is often lacking across research initiatives. The terms are often used interchangeably, or with varied conceptualisation across research and literature (Ngulube et al., 2015). Despite the latter, theoretical and conceptual frameworks should be understood as separate constructs, in terms of both its conceptualisation as well as in terms of its application across the research process (Imenda, 2014).

Ngulube et al., (2015) postulates that a theoretical framework is similar to a conceptual framework in that, they can both work as a tool to understand data, are suited for qualitative research and are important tools for the analysis in social sciences. Additionally, they differ in that, theoretical frameworks are based on one theory and conceptual frameworks are based more on different theories (Ngulube et al., 2015). A conceptual framework can also be referred to as an analytical framework and it can display relationships between concepts and their impact on what is being

researched. Concepts are an important part of theories. Furthermore, they can be used as a lens through which to explain and understand the data, similar to a theoretical framework (Ngulube et al., 2015). During the process of utilising semi-structured interviews for data collection, conceptual frameworks can allow for analysis of both the subjective account of a lived experience as well as a broader social context (Gregory, 2020). It can be argued that a conceptual framework is a less developed theory compared to a theoretical framework. However, it may still provide an understanding of the data rather than offering a theoretical explanation.

Existing theoretical frameworks are inadequate to fully understand the complexity of the phenomenon of the impact of stalking and harassment on its victims, how the victims cope and what role culture plays. Most theoretical frameworks about stalking and harassment explain the perpetrators' behaviour and not the female who is being stalked. There are limited studies conducted to theoretically explain stalking victimisation (Fox et al., 2016). Additionally, gaps in the literature have made it challenging to apply a theoretical framework related to how victims and survivors respond to the former intimate partners' stalking behaviours' as well as formal or informal coping strategies to assist the victim and the role of culture in coping with the effects of stalking (Cao & Wang, 2020). Existing frameworks may not be easy to use for a particular research study in a 'ready to use manner.' Therefore, where an area does not possess a well-developed theoretical framework, a theoretical framework and a conceptual framework may be useful to guide the research (Ngulube et al., 2015).

In response to the needs of this research initiative, a theoretical and conceptual framework was applied. The Social Support Theory provided the theoretical frame, providing insight into how females are impacted by the act of stalking and harassment as well as how they experience the psychological impact. It may further explain how females cope with the trauma. A conceptual

framework by Spitzberg and Cupach, (2007) was applied to understand how females were affected by stalking and harassment and how they coped.

2.2.1 Social Support Theory

Social Support Theory was developed by Don Drennon-Gala and Francis Cullen who posited that social bonds are important (Martins et al., 2014). The Social Support Theory was developed in the mid-1970s to early 1980s and focuses on the relationships between people and systems (Sarason, 2013). Social support acts as a shield against challenges in life and perceptions of social support are also important (Martins et al., 2014). Social Support Theory places a focus on four elements: Emotional support that conveys empathy, educational support that delivers education and guidance, instrumental support that delivers tangible services and appraisal support that communicates a sense of belonging and validation. A lack of social support can influence a person's well-being and overall coping in a damaging way (Peterson & Bredow, 2019). It further explains that individuals are not isolated from society and therefore have the potential to thrive against aberrant behaviours in society by having a social support network. It further argues that deviant behaviours can be contained where trust exists between social bonds. Social support networks are built from families, neighbours, friends, work colleagues, communities, private organisations and societal institutions (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). Social Support Theory may be considered a crime theory and explain stalking victimisation for risk of vulnerability as well as how females cope (Cao & Wang, 2020). Dwelling arrangements such as living alone are explored and stalking risks are reduced when a person has strong social bonds. Neighbourhoods and community views on stalking and other crimes influence whether the stalking acts are reduced and how females cope with the support or lack thereof. When a female places trust in local police and community then stalking behaviours may be reduced (Cao & Wang, 2020). This alludes to stalking being a social problem that causes psychological distress for the female victim and also the public as a whole (Diette et al., 2014).

Finally, diminished social bonds increased the risk of becoming a victim of stalking as well as having poor mental health outcomes in coping (Cao & Wang, 2020). The stress and coping perspective suggest that support plays a role in promoting good health by protecting people from the unfavourable impacts of stress (Toussaint et al., 2016).

The social constructionist perspective suggests that support affects a person's health by encouraging self-esteem, and the relationship perspective suggests that the well-being outcomes of social support are closely linked to the relationship dynamics that co-exist with support, "companionship, intimacy and low social conflict". It then inferred that social support research and intermediations should be steered by theory in order for studies to contribute to the knowledge of how social support impacts health and well-being (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). One study suggested that where there is low social support within communities a higher crime rate exists (Orrick et al., 2011). When a victim believes that she is cared for by a social network, it has positive outcomes for mental and physical health (Taylor, 2011).

Social stressors impact overall health relating to physical and psychological well-being and social support is multi-dimensional. How one views resources as available is positioned psychologically against the threats encountered and this is possibly where social support plays the biggest role (Sarason, 2013). Life events can lead to poor mental health and social support can mitigate these risks (Lin et al., 2013). A study found that females who were abused by an intimate partner had better outcomes in mental health when they had social support networks (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). Stalking victims were found to receive help from informal social networks of support to help cope (Reyns & Englebrecht, 2014).

Some studies have been helpful to understand the victim and one study in Canada built on prior work to use Social Support Theory to understand victims of stalking by a former intimate partner in a more comprehensive manner (Cao & Wang, 2020).

The Social Support Theory should be considered for future theoretical understandings of former intimate partner stalking as it mediates the effects of stalking (Nguyen et al., 2012).

2.2.2 A Conceptual Framework of how females cope with Stalking and Harassment

According to Spitzberg and Cupach, (2007), a conceptual framework is described by first, second and third-order effects to explain the impact suffered by victims. First-order effects are suffered by the victim directly in response to experiencing stalking and harassment or in trying to avoid the stalker. It can include psychological harm, physical harm, financial loss and emotional harm. Second-order effects impact the victim's social life and how she interacts with people in her life (family, friends and co-workers). Third-order effects occur when the stalker directly engages with family, friends and co-workers and they begin to also experience the effects of stalking and harassment. Females may experience all three orders of effects at the same time. The conceptual framework explains how stalking and harassment behaviour affects a victim holistically and how it escalates. The offender's controlling behaviour escalates and the stalking and harassment forms worsen (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007).

The conceptual framework proposed by Spitzberg and Cupach (2014) is comprehensive and includes internal and external considerations that influence the frequency and severity of stalking and harassment. The impact on victims identifies five coping strategies when faced with stalking and harassment.

‘Moving inward’ -The female believes that stalking and harassment is her problem to resolve and blames herself for these behaviours. Coping can involve denying that the problem exists or waiting for it to resolve itself.

‘Moving away’ - Here the victim will change her address and cut off all communication with the stalker. Females felt that formal ways of coping were not effective. The victim may change her

phone number and her routine to avoid the stalker. One study found that moving away and avoiding the stalker was the most common approach used by females (Jutras et al., 2013).

‘Moving with’ - The victim will try to reason with the stalker face to face in an attempt to negotiate with the perpetrator about leaving her alone.

‘Moving against’ -The victim will confront and sometimes assault the stalker. The female will actively seek out legal avenues to prosecute and keep the stalker away from her.

‘Moving outward’ - The victim believes that she cannot deal with the stalker by herself and seeks out social support to gain assistance. Family, friends, the police, and mental health care resources are sought to cope. Some studies, for example, Geistman et al. (2013), have found that females who moved outwardly and sought help from their social support showed reduced stalking experiences.

2.3 Conclusion

The current research used Social Support Theory to understand victimization and coping from the female’s stance. The theoretical framing has been supplemented with the theoretical concepts extracted from Spitzberg and Cupach’s, (2007) model.

CHAPTER 3

3. A LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The discussion commences with stalking and harassment as a form of violence in itself. It incorporates the methods employed to stalk and harass victims, including highlighting the nature of stalking by means of historically traditional modes of stalking to cyberstalking. The role that culture may have on females who were stalked and harassed by former intimate partners is explored. The impact of stalking and harassment on females by a former intimate partner is looked at in detail and how females coped is also explored. International and national laws on stalking and harassment are examined. The present research discusses resources available in South Africa for victims of stalking. Lastly, the occurrence of stalking and harassment in South Africa is reviewed.

3.2 A global view on Stalking and Harassment

Stalking and harassment is a social problem. It contributes to the effects of gender-based violence and its effects extend to the community (Carney & Barner, 2012). Stalking is therefore a societal problem, although, public perceptions are often that former intimate partner stalking is not as serious as when a female is stalked by a stranger. Additionally, most studies offer a Western perspective on this phenomenon (Chung & Sheridan, 2022).

In the early 1990s, the link between stalking and subsequent domestic violence was increasingly made clear by studies conducted in the United States (US) where researchers noted how stalking behaviours, in general, caused fear in victims (Lowney & Best, 2017). Another study found that females who were physically abused by a current intimate partner were more likely to experience stalking after the relationship ended (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2014). One study made comparative representations of females stalked by a former intimate partner versus a non-partner stalker. It was

found that females are more likely to be the victims of stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner and that former partners were more threatening and intrusive, and their attacks are more severe than non-partner stalkers. Furthermore, the study showed that the type of stalking behaviour employed by the former intimate partner directly impacted the level of fear and mental health outcomes in the victim (Logan, 2020b).

A study was conducted in the United States where it was found that females who had experienced the deleterious effects of stalking and harassment by a former or current partner were found to have symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other signs of emotional distress (Westrup et al., 1999). Females who survived intimate partner violence whilst in a relationship, were at risk for stalking or harassment post-breakup by their former intimate partner.

A study that was conducted in Canada suggested that females are more likely to be stalked as it is a gender-based risk factor (Reyns et al., 2016). It was found that most females are the victims of stalking and that it occurred mostly in the age group of 15-34 years old by males who were known to the females being stalked (Burczycka & Conroy, 2018). Most stalking studies focus on a younger group of females (Reyns et al., 2016).

Research shows that most female stalking victims are stalked by a former or current intimate partner (Spitzberg & Caditz, 2002) and some estimates suggest females are four (4) times more likely than males to be stalked by a former partner (Geistman et al., 2013). A study in Sweden found that ten (10) percent of all females will become victims of post-breakup stalking or assault (Ornstein & Rickne, 2013). Furthermore, it was found that of the 152 females who were stalked and harassed in person post-breakup by a former intimate partner, 46 of those females were also stalked and harassed in an online platform (Woodlock, 2017). These females described experiencing fear of unwanted contact and humiliation from the former intimate partner sharing sexualised content with

them (Woodlock, 2017). The effects of violence against females place an incumbrance on the victim and societies worldwide.

The slow and complicated acknowledgement of stalking as a form of violence has contributed to an absence of focus from a legal and policy perspective (Goodmark, 2018). Stalking was only legally recognised as a crime in the United States of America, as recently as 1990 (van der Aa, 2018). This has facilitated some traction amongst other nations of the Global North. Africa, and specifically South Africa, have however been highlighted as being in slow pursuit of similar legislature (Chan & Sheridan, 2020).

It is only as late as the 1990s that this conduct has been recognized as criminal across most states in the United States (Spitzberg & Caditz, 2002). Stalking is considered to be a gender-based crime. However, the legal definitions of stalking, as well as stalking victimization are not clearly defined in the US (Owens, 2016). and they differ across states. As a result, there is no universal definition of stalking (Labuschagne & Stollarz, 2020a). One in five females have or will experience stalking in their lifetime (Weller et al., 2013). A study conducted in the United States found that ex-partner stalking was more prevalent in females.

Stalking is violent and repetitive and should therefore have laws in place to protect victims (Başar, 2019). Stalking has been associated with violence since its very definition changed over the years, thus making it a new type of crime (Lowney & Best, 2017). As late as 1990 this conduct was increasingly recognized as criminal and was codified as such in most states across the United States (Spitzberg & Caditz, 2002). Stalking has also evolved from the traditional modes of stalking and has now moved towards technological modes of stalking.

Whilst stalking was once considered conduct targeted at celebrities and perpetrated by strangers, it is now recognized that stalking mostly occurs across former intimate partners (Geistmale et al., 2013; Spitzberg & Caditz, 2002). The media contributed creation of the stereotypes associated with

stalking such as the stalker being afflicted with psychopathology, and a stranger to the victim.

Females are reportedly four (4) times more likely than males to be stalked by a former intimate partner (Geistmale et al., 2013). Hence, the focus of the current research is on females.

A study conducted in Kenya found that even when formal and informal resources to cope were available to females experiencing intimate partner violence, help-seeking behaviours were hindered by sociocultural factors. Intimate partner violence was accepted as a normal part of the culture (Odero et al., 2014). A study found that educated females were more likely to seek help against intimate partner violence as they could access more resources (Kaukinen et al., 2013). Females are more likely to seek help from informal resources rather than formal resources such as the police (Goodson & Hayes, 2021).

The perception of stalking and harassment by the victim is important as it influences her decision to report, leave the relationship or seek other resources for assistance (Chan & Sheridan, 2020).

Aggression directed at females has been recognized as a serious social and public health problem across a multitude of societies around the world (World Health Organization, 2014). Attitudes of violence against females also shape and influence perceptions of stalking and harassment in intimate partner relationships. One of the impacts of stalking and harassment is murder. Stalking and harassment can lead to murder (Quinn-Evans et al., 2021). It is reported that 57.1% of females who die by homicide are murdered by a current or former intimate partner (Wet-Billings & Godongwana, 2021). The WHO estimated that globally 12 out of every 100 000 females are murdered annually (World health organization, 2018). In South Africa, this is five times higher than the global average (Ndlovu et al., 2020).

Violence against females is socially constructed at a macro level based on contravening societal laws and on a micro level based on dyadic interactions of males and females where the roles and rights of females render them marginalised (Krahé, 2018). It can be surmised that perceptions of

stalking influence how females cope. The concept of stalking is complex as some victims may not view their experiences as stalking (Fox et al., 2016). When a female is stalked by a former or current intimate partner it can be challenging for her to view the unwanted pursuit as stalking (Owens, 2016).

International research shows that on average a female is stalked for 22 months (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). A higher number of females are stalked by a former intimate partner, and this involves physical and sexual violence. It is imperative to recognize the severity of stalking as a crime (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007).

Research findings by Peltzer et al., (2013) found that 51.9% of females reported severe PTSD symptoms and 66.4% reported severe depressive symptoms. The use of violence in the methods used to stalk and harass females is more likely to occur with former intimate partners (McEwan et al., 2017). Additionally, sexual and physical violence that accompanied stalking, was closely linked with PTSD and psychological violence was closely linked with depressive symptoms. Lastly, the study found that a significant number of females who sought a protection order reported experiencing PTSD and depressive symptoms as a result of stalking and harassment (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2014).

3.3 Stalking and Harassment in a South African Context

There is a shortage of data regarding stalking and the impact thereof in under-researched countries including South Africa (Smith et al., 2017). Whilst South African literature about stalking and harassment is limited, available global literature suggests increased vulnerability for females in terms of mental health and psychosocial well-being.

As it is not a defined crime, there are no statistics on the prevalence of this behaviour against females by current or former intimate partners, nor by stranger stalking. It also alludes to the

challenges females will face when trying to seek help legally or judicially, as stalking and harassing behaviours are not clearly defined. While the Domestic Violence Act 116 and Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011 exist, stalking can only be indirectly prosecuted as a violent act, “invasion of privacy or impairment of the victim’s dignity” (South African Law Reform Commission, 2006). The impact of stalking and harassment on a victim has shown to have serious consequences which compel the need for clear anti-stalking legislation (Chan & Sheridan, 2020). The prevalence and nature of stalking and harassment are not well documented and understood in these ill-fated relationships.

In South Africa, close to one in five females are victims of intimate partner violence however, official statistics on how many females are stalked and harassed in South Africa by a former intimate partner are sparse (South African Law Reform Commission, 2006) even in the context of such high rates of intimate partner violence. Research on gender-based violence and the vulnerability of females in South Africa however suggest that South Africa has the highest statistics for GBV in the world, with one woman killed every three (3) hours (Dlamini, 2021). It is suggested that at least fifty-three (53) percent of South African females have experienced partner or non-partner GVB, either physically or sexually (Zinyemba & Hlongwana, 2022). 0.3 % of females report GBV to the police, and four (4) females are killed every day by their partner, moreover, the second leading cause of murder is that females end the relationship and females suffer on average at least 35 assaults before they report to the police (Mobieg, 2022).

A study conducted in Soweto suggested that there is a link between substance use by the offender, such as alcohol, and gender-based violence (Backe et al., 2022). A failure to fully understand gendered violence hinders attempts at addressing gender-based violence (Graaff, 2021).

3.4 Cultural and Gendered Perceptions of Stalking and Harassment in South Africa

The political and cultural influences must be considered when assessing the crimes of stalking and harassment. A clash of cultural rights must not suppress the rights of females. A participant in Nelspruit, from a study conducted for the South African Law Reform Commission, expressed that laws that constitute what stalking and harassment entail are derived from a Western context and that not everyone living in South Africa will conform to a Western approach. That, in seeking a partner, a rebuff of advances further motivates him to exert more effort in trying to pursue her (SA Law Reform Commission Report, 2006).

Patriarchal dominance increases the stalking problem in South Africa, as in a multi-cultural society there will be room for discord between culture and law. As laws on stalking are not clearly defined in South Africa, criminal reporting and prosecution are more difficult (Labuschagne & Stollarz, 2020b). In a study by Dunlap et al., (2015), it was found that males who adopted stereotypical traditional gender roles were more accepting of the myths surrounding stalking. These myths accounted for the differing perceptions between males and females about stalking, and how the unwanted pursual causes distress and fear in the victim (Dunlap et al., 2015).

In South Africa, a project conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) in 2003 was conducted to assist abused females. Females expressed that their intimate partners engaged in extra-marital relationships, placed unreasonable demands on them and physically abused them. The males expressed that they are acting under what is culturally acceptable and had challenges to view females as equal. Females were terrified to leave the relationship or seek the support of the police as their partners were well-known in the community and they did not believe that they would receive help. Mediation was offered to allow females to communicate their feelings and it was noted that it was the first time some females could express how they felt without being beaten, as the mediator made them feel safer to speak about their

experiences and feelings. The mediator was part of the domestic violence restorative justice group that aimed to help abused females (Dissel & Ngubeni, 2003). Community leaders can be recognized as potentially influential in making gender relations equitable. Involving community leaders to mediate relationship conflict may reduce intimate partner violence in Africa (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019).

3.5 Stalking Behaviour and Females as Victims

It has been proposed as a theory of evolution that stalking has a purpose to acquire and keep a partner and that stalking has evolved to also regain a relationship that has ended. It is also theorized that a stalker who seeks to cause harm has a mental illness (Duntley & Buss, 2012). This theory focuses on a former way of how males acquired a partner, in the past when there was an imbalance of power and a lack of gender equality. Within the context of such power imbalance, it is of interest to know how females perceive and are impacted by unwanted stalking behaviour.

Females rather than males are by far more likely to be victims of stalking. Additionally, while some studies suggest that males and females can be equally aggressive, both physically and psychologically in intimate relationships, males are more likely to commit a sexual crime, display coercive control, and stalk a former or current intimate partner (Swan et al., 2008). Indeed, most research focuses on females as victims and males as offenders. The research proposes that former intimate partners are most likely to be threatening, stalking, harassing and likely to attack females (Logan, 2020a). While there are studies, for example, Sheridan et al. (2002) that show how males can be at risk for the effects of stalking and harassment, females are the predominant victims of this conduct.

The UK reported in 2018 that one in five females over the age of 16 were stalked by a stranger, or former or current intimate partner (Townsend, 2020). It is important to discover on average how

long a female is stalked and harassed in South Africa to fully understand the pervasive impact and how to effectively intervene.

3.6 The severity of stalking and harassment as a risk factor for other forms of violence

Global research has shown that stalking and harassment may be risk factors for further violence in escalated forms, and a higher rate of violence was experienced by females who were divorced or separated from a violent partner (Meloy et al., 2001). A higher number of males who stalked females were former intimate partners and the stalking escalated to other violent acts including homicide, upon termination of the relationship. A link was found between former intimate partner stalking and homicide (Monckton Smith, 2020).

The use of a firearm was two times more likely to be used in a homicide when intimate partner stalking had occurred source. Additionally, where there was a history of abuse documented by an intimate partner, the likelihood of homicide was three times more likely. Intimate partner violence had the greatest risk for homicide (Rai et al., 2020). Worldwide, one in seven homicides involved the murder of an intimate partner and former intimate partner stalkers displayed the highest risk for fatal and nonfatal violence. Whilst the role of stalking in deadly partner violence has not been well researched, it was found that high rates of stalking did occur before the killing of a current or former intimate partner (Rai et al., 2020). Females who had experienced being ‘followed or spied on’ in the preceding 12 months were more than twice as likely to become victims of attempted or completed intimate partner homicide than females who did not experience this type of stalking (Kivisto, 2015). Although not all stalking will escalate to homicide it is problematic to envisage which stalking behaviour can. Therefore, it is imperative to recognize stalking and take it seriously (Monckton-Smith et al., 2017).

In a study by Rai et al., (2020), several effects of stalking were noted. Former intimate partners became more violent with the use of firearms to threaten abuse and murder. Futile attempts to gain

reconciliation with the victim or having advances rebuffed increase the rejection and anger. The level of violence escalated. In addition, Rai et al. (2020) also found that unmarried females in an intimate partner relationship were five times more likely to be victims of homicide.

Stalking is by definition a form of violence as it is a violation of the security in the lives of victims (Korkodeilou, 2017). The personal experience of violence impairs a sense of security. It may lead to both physical and emotional harm. Additionally, stalking causes the victim to fear for her safety (James & Sheridan, 2020). The crucial fears of stalking lie in the victim's fear and other emotional distress as a result of a stalker's repeated following, harassment and plausible threats and violence against victims (Cao & Wang, 2020).

A former intimate connection influences the severity and duration of the stalking and stalking can be considered as a form of domestic violence against females (Van der Aa, 2012). The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention added stalking to its definition of intimate partner violence (Dardis et al., 2017).

Stalking by a former intimate partner, denigration, sexual coercion, violence and control were also experienced by females (Roberts, 2005). The effects are directly related to the form that stalking takes. Stalking and intimate partner abuse are related (Melton, 2012).

Individuals who stalk their former intimate partners can be seen as partners whose relationship requests were rejected. Also, some studies suggest that rejected partners were more likely to carry out threats of violence (McEwan et al., 2009).

Although most former intimate partners who become intrusive and persistent in efforts to reconcile do not necessarily escalate in violence, their conduct is often punctuated by obsessive pursuits to exact revenge, counter rejection and deal with the jealousy from the breakup that fuels their anger

(Heckels & Roberts, 2010). A large number of stalking victims were physically and sexually assaulted by ex-partners (Carney & Barner, 2012).

Stalking is often dealt with as a domestic violence problem and most females were stalked having been battered in the relationship and subsequently ended the relationship yet the stalking continued (Melton, 2004).

3.7 The methods employed to Stalk and Harass females

Post-breakup, females described being followed in public by former intimate partners, unwanted contact where they worked and receiving repeated phone calls (Messing et al., 2017).

Other females described receiving telephonic threats from their former intimate partner, unwanted visits and being followed (Ornstein & Rickne, 2013).

Post-breakup, some females experienced being followed as well as becoming the victims of sexual violence and verbal abuse by former intimate partners (Smith et al., 2018).

Similarly in South Africa, stalking consists of repeated acts that may escalate from bothersome to unlawful conduct that causes imminent harm to the safety and well-being of the person source. The escalation may include violence and homicide. Stalking behaviours include following or watching a person at home, work or when out in public, making unwanted contact through any communication medium including silent calls, sending items to the person, leaving offensive material for a person, the use of intimidation and harassment, making threats, violence towards to the person inclusive of the destruction of property, keeping the person under surveillance and any other controlling behaviour (SA Law Reform Commission Report, 2006).

3.8 Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking has gained popularity since the rise of the digital era, making it easier for victims to be reached through multiple channels. Females described being followed and harassed, as well as having their family members harassed by their ex-partners. It was also found that offenders employed proxy stalkers to further distress the victim (Logan, 2020a). Forced confrontation with the victim, use of technology and proxy stalking were noted with ex-partner stalking (Logan, 2022).

In some cases, technology was used to assert dominance over the victim to isolate and become punitive. Some offenders used GPS to track their victims. It was further aimed at humiliating the victim or ex-partner by threatening to share sexual content over the internet (Woodlock, 2017). Cyberstalking and harassment are considered a form of stalking (Nobles et al., 2014).

Traditional modes of stalking have evolved beyond following, hanging up calls and sending unwanted gifts to a victim. As technology has advanced, new stalking behaviours have emerged. Surveillance can now include tracking a victim's location with the use of tracking devices and applications as well as using hidden cameras to monitor a victim's movements. Online databases and social media platforms are also used to stalk and harass victims (Southworth et al., 2005). Technology may have consequences for the legal and social support female stalking victims can access (Lippmale, 2018).

A study in Australia found that technology may be used to produce a sense of the offender's ubiquity to "punish and humiliate domestic violence victims". Offenders also threatened to expose sexualized matter online to "humiliate victims" (Woodlock, 2017).

3.9 The impact of stalking and harassment on females by a former intimate partner

Females experience physical and sexual assault and stalking increases the risk of more severe physical abuse and femicide (Mechanic et al., 2008). In a study by Melton, (2004), it was found that

females who experienced more severe forms of stalking were more likely to also experience violence and females who were not physically harmed did not believe that much could be done to alleviate the unwanted pursuit nor gain support from law enforcement (Melton, 2004).

The study by Page and Scott (2020) showed that females experienced sex-based harassment in the form of receiving inappropriate gifts, staring and groping. Sexual harassment is common and creates a different dynamic of fear. In South Africa, the crime rate for rape is high (South African Law Reform Commission Report, 2006). Females reported physical violence and rape from their current or former intimate partner stalking experiences (Breiding, 2015). Females reported severe sexual abuse and physical abuse as well as emotional abuse upon terminating the relationship and the stalking also increased.

Depression and PTSD showed high rates as a result of stalking (Mechanic et al., 2000). The physical and sexual violence experienced by females by former intimate partners has long-term and detrimental effects on their mental health over time (Smith et al., 2017). Intimate partner violence and physical and sexual harm through stalking cause long-term effects on the mental health of females including PTSD (Peterson et al., 2018).

In many societies worldwide, the impact of stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner has evidenced the severity of the long-term effects on a victim and her community. The effects of stalking and harassment manifest in a multi-layered manner (Villacampa & Pujols, 2019).

Understanding the degree to which societies are affected by it warrants an understanding of how a female is stalked. The different ways in which stalking impacts females are highlighted below:

3.9.1 The psychological footprint of Stalking and Harassment

Depression and PTSD were linked as a resultant effect of stalking and harassment, where trauma-based treatment options were explored (Warshaw et al., 2013). Therefore, it is suggested that

victims of stalking should be assessed for PTSD (Davin et al., 2022). Present-day research supports these assertions (Logan & Walker, 2021).

Psychological abuse has a higher rate of PTSD than physical abuse. PTSD can be a long-term condition. The effects of stalking and harassment and the challenges faced to resolve the problem can lead to long-term psychological effects. Females were found to experience fear and physical symptoms in response to being stalked, especially when the stalking and harassment involved being followed (Ngo & Paternoster, 2016). Some victims were reported to not experience fear (Owens, 2016), whilst others did express fear and anxiety over the threat of being physically harmed (Bjerregaard, 2000, Nicastro et al., 2000 as cited by Geistman et al., 2013).

The effects extend beyond physical, psychological and sexual injury, the victims are often driven into isolation out of fear and helplessness. Our attention is drawn to view stalking for what it is and not just as following someone, to better understand the fear of safety the victim feels.

Some studies attribute high suicide rates by females to coercive control and domestic abuse, while others point to the correlation between obsession and fixation in stalking behaviours and increased intimate partner homicides (Monckton-Smith et al., 2017). PTSD, anxiety, loss of financial income and depression are noted in victims (Meloy et al., 2001). Former intimate partner stalking has the most malicious impacts on females. The longer the stalking goes on, the more detrimental the effects are (Johnson & Thompson, 2016). These effects extend beyond the emotional, but they affect females in other areas of their lives.

A female may also suffer stigma from the community if she is stalked and harassed by her former partner. The forms of stalking can often humiliate the victim and the stigma can further isolate her (Campbell & Moore, 2011).

The psychosocial effects are traumatic, long term and complex. For society and the criminal justice system to address the psychosocial effects of intimate partner stalking, it has to be better understood (Korkodeilou, 2017).

Females reported physical abuse and physical injury by former intimate partners when being stalked and harassed (Breiding, 2015). It was noted that females were physically attacked when stalked by a former intimate partner (Smoker & March, 2017). Females also experienced physical injury, chronic pain, lower abdominal pain and bowel issues, dysmenorrhoea, eating disorders, chest pains and sleep disturbances (Mason & Magnet, 2012).

3.9.2 The occupational effects of Stalking and Harassment

In a study by Spitzberg and Cupach, (2007), it was found that females had days lost at work due to emotional and psychological distress and fear and general disruption of life (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007). The psychological trauma makes it difficult to function and complete daily activities including a job. The constant fear and distraction lead to disruption at work and possible loss of finances thereof.

3.10 How females cope with Stalking and Harassment

Coping can be defined as any behaviour that the victim adopts to reduce the unwanted and intrusive behaviour of the stalker (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001). When trying to understand how females cope with stalking broader psychosocial factors such as personality and social relationships play a prominent role. The stress event of being stalked and harassed is judged by the victim as to how severe it is.

Previous studies have identified numerous coping methods employed by females to reduce victimization from stalking and harassment. In the research of obsessional relational intrusion, it was found that females employed the following methods of coping: retaliation towards the stalker,

change of number to prevent the stalker from accessing her, getting a gun to feel protected, hanging up on the stalker's calls, making a police complaint and report, asking family and friends to help, and changing jobs and moving to a new location (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2003). Other females described coping by staying home and isolating themselves to prevent being found by stalkers in public places. Extra precautions were taken to feel safe, such as locking the doors. Females who were raped by their stalkers dressed modestly. Some females chose to be busy at work to distract themselves (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001). Escapism was also noted when the females wished the stalking would go away (Nguyen et al., 2012).

A study conducted with Latino females who experienced a form of violence suggested that 76.6% of the victimized participants sought help from informal resources and 68.9% sought help from formal resources. Parental support was the most common form of "informal help". Latino females who experienced childhood abuse were considerably less likely to seek formal and informal help. Latino females who had experienced stalking were considerably less likely to seek formal help (Sabina et al., 2012).

In addition, the Elastic Band Strategy refers to how a female will go through phases of opposing the stalking and violence to protect herself and giving in to the stalking and violence to keep the peace (Hayati et al, 2013). The method to cope is related to this appraisal and affects the outcome. It is noted that outcome efficacy is not well-researched and methods that work for victims will be subjective (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). How a victim copes, is relative to how severe the form of stalking and harassment is and whether physical violence occurs.

Given the long-lasting physical, psychological and social effects that stalking and harassment have on a victim, early intervention to manage these effects is needed (Spitzberg et al., 2002; Tjaden et al., 1997, as cited in Geistman, 2013). Whilst the need for early intervention is crucial in managing the effects of stalking and harassment, it is necessary to know if informal strategies are effective as

formal strategies are indicated to have shortcomings. The informal strategies were researched and found to be effective when the victim sought assistance from family and friends to effectively reduce the stalking and harassment as opposed to victims who dealt with it alone (Geistman et al., 2013).

It was suggested that globally, females may use alcohol consumption to cope with gender-based violence, although this is not well understood (Yalch et al., 2023). A study conducted in the Western Cape of South Africa also suggested that females may use alcohol consumption to cope with various stressors, including gender-based violence. Additionally, this may be due to a lack of resources and support provided to them (Petersen Williams et al., 2020).

South Africa has limited scope to frame and understands stalking in a legal realm. Females who sought formal coping strategies such as seeking a protection order and reporting stalking and harassment to the police expressed that it was difficult to provide the required proof of the acts of stalking (Geistman et al., 2013). Most South Africans cannot afford the formal, legal avenues for assistance with stalking and harassment and there is no data to show the efficacy of protection orders in reducing stalking and harassment. Fifty percent (50 %) of the females were not satisfied with the outcome being effective in stopping stalking and harassment. Victims felt that without effective help from law enforcement, they had to look elsewhere for help (Geistman et al., 2013). It would therefore be interesting to understand what informal strategies South African females adopt to cope with stalking and harassment and to have some insight into resources accessed within such informal frames of reference. The informal coping strategy encompasses internal and external factors that may assist a victim to cope. For example, previous studies have found that neither moving inward (ignoring a stalker) nor moving away (distancing oneself from the stalker) demonstrated clear efficacy for victims (Amar & Alexy, 2010). It would also be of value to

understand if South African victims experience a reduction in stalking and harassment based on information or formal coping strategies.

To conclude, stalking and harassment is a complex social issue and South Africa has a limited scope of data regarding this phenomenon. Internationally it has been found that stalking and harassment have a profound impact on the victim in multi-faceted ways. It has also been recognized that this conduct is a risk factor for violent behaviour by the offender and that the victim's perception of stalking and harassment do influence help-seeking behaviours and how females cope. This research aims to deepen the understanding of females' experiences of stalking and harassment in the South African context.

3.11 Help-seeking behaviour post experiences of stalking and harassment

Experiences of childhood trauma can influence how females cope with intimate partner stalking and harassment. When violence is normalized, females may be less likely to seek help (Kelly et al., 2020). Violence against children in South Africa is prevalent and the statistics are not very clear (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014). In the Optimus study, it was found that one in three adolescents in South Africa had experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime (Artz et al., 2018).

Some studies have suggested that the factors that influence help-seeking behaviours to cope with stalking were the severity of the stalking, the offender's conduct being perceived as stalking, and fear of offender retaliation (Reyns & Englebrecht, 2014). Stalking victims who respond with anger were more likely to elicit societal perceptions that the stalking is innocuous. Stalking victims who respond with fear are more likely to elicit societal perceptions that the stalking conducts against them is dangerous (Uhl et al., 2017). Additionally, the latter authors also noted that legal definitions of stalking vary, hence societal perceptions of what stalking entails in terms of behaviour and threat severity influence judgements and support to a victim.

3.12 The law regarding stalking and harassment globally

In Europe and America, police are taught to view stalking as a precursor to violence (Mullen et al., 2000). For a prosecution to take place, the victim has to show evidence that stalking and harassment have taken place. This involves much documenting and logging accounts of the acts against her.

3.12.1 Global North

In the UK and Wales, stalking protection orders aim to prevent offenders from accessing their victims (Aa & Romkens, 2013). Although, it is also argued that it may put victims at higher risk for homicide by also preventing prosecution of the offenders (Nichols, 2013). It has been argued that the only way to protect a stalking victim is to make certain that the offender is in custody (Dunn, 2018). Stalking is about obsession and fixation so nothing less than custody will keep victims safe (Fabian, 2014). It was further reported that although reports of stalking increased the prosecution declined between 2015 and 2018. It further suggested that offenders should be charged criminally as a protection order does not allocate a criminal record to the offender (Townsend, 2020). Trust in police who are sometimes the first point of contact for a stalking victim, determines whether a female will be likely to report the crime (Finnegan et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the high rates of protection-order violations documented in the US may contribute to females' perceptions that they cannot be helped when being subjected to stalking and harassment. It was highlighted that former intimate partners in the US are more likely to assault third parties associated with the victim of stalking after a protection order is sought (Logan, 2010).

3.12.2 Global South

A study in India found that legal efforts to stop forms of domestic violence could not be effectively enforced nor provide the victim with reassurances of a crime reduction (Ghosh & Choudhuri, 2011). One study found that protection orders are less effective where the victim has ties to the

offender (Dowling et al., 2018). A US study found that protection orders were ineffective in reducing violence (Grau et al., 2018). Violence may escalate once a protection order is obtained (Artz, 2011). A study in America found that protection orders were only useful in reducing abuse if there was no physical violence experienced by the female during the relationship. Where there was a history of physical violence, the protection order was found to be ineffective (Grau et al., 2018).

A key element identified in the prosecution of stalking and harassment crimes is the actual stalking behaviour and the perception of the public. For example, cyberstalking was found to be normalized based on gender perceptions of what is allowed in pursuit of a female, as well as culturally acceptable allowances for stalking behaviour (Becker et al., 2020). Some victims expressed a fear of retaliation from the offender and disbelief from the police as reasons why the crime was not reported (Boehnlein et al., 2020). This can be a helpless and powerless feeling for the victim.

3.12.3 A South African Context in Managing GBV and Stalking and Harassment

The laws on stalking and harassment are not clearly stated in South Africa. Depending on the act of stalking and harassment, a victim may pursue charges. According to Badenhorst (2011), “*Crimen injuria consists of the unlawful, intentional and serious violation of the dignity or privacy of another person*”.

A study in South Africa found that females who sought a protection order against a stalker by a current or former intimate partner experienced a reduction in violent behaviours towards them (Peltzer et al., 2013). However, there is no robust research data available for the efficacy of protection orders in the context of stalking and harassment in South Africa.

Civil law responses state: “To keep the peace in terms of section 384 of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1955 (Act 56 of 1955) 36, a person who has been a victim of violent conduct by another person, or who has been threatened with injury to himself or herself or his or her property by

another person, or where the other person has used language or behaved in a manner towards the victim that defamatory remarks in chat rooms, on social networking sites, e-mails, text messages or instant messages to third parties are some of the methods of committing cyber bullying that will fall within the ambit of this criminal offence. 8 CJCP Issue Paper 10 August 2011 is likely to provoke the breach of peace or assault, that person may approach a magistrate for an order to keep the peace.”

“Upon receipt of the application for a protection order, the court must, if satisfied that there is prima facie evidence that: v the respondent is engaging or has engaged in harassment; v harm is being or may be suffered by the complainant or a related person as a result of that conduct if a protection order is not issued immediately and v the protection to be accorded by the interim order is likely not to be achieved. It is therefore clear that a purely criminal justice response to cyberbullying and sexting, in applicable cases, does not provide a sustainable solution to the problem. 14 CJCP Issue Paper 10 August 2011, if prior notice of the application is given to the respondent, issue an interim protection order against the respondent.”

There is no clear definition of stalking hence victims have to make use of the criminal and civil laws to report stalking and harassment. Using civil law, the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 will be used. “The Commission noted that the existing criminal law focuses primarily on the punishment of specific prohibited acts whereas stalking behaviour involves a series of discrete and often seemingly unrelated acts which may or may not be illegal. The Commission found that although existing criminal laws cover some aspects of stalking behaviour, they do not address stalking as an independent phenomenon where the whole is worse than the sum of the parts of any individual act. The Commission concluded that in terms of criminal law, little can be done to deter or punish a stalker until he or she causes or threatens to cause immediate direct harm to an individual or an individual’s property” (South African Law Reform Commission, 2006).

3.13 Resources Available and Accessible to Victims in South Africa

Prevention of violence was highlighted as a means to reduce intimate partner femicide and rape in South Africa (Abrahams et al., 2013). A study in South Africa, Gauteng, found that younger females who experience gender-based-violence may benefit more from peer-based support groups (Baron et al., 2020). A South African article reflected on the murders of Reeva Steenkamp (2013), Jayde Panayiotou (2015), Susan Rhode (2016) and Karabo Mokoena (2017). It probed the question of how “victims of intimate femicide” are represented in the South African media. The media coverage on intimate femicide depicts the killing of females by their intimate partners as atypical instances as opposed to a systemic issue located within a social context of “male dominance” (Spies, 2020). Research suggests that stalking and harassment are a form of violence that has the potential to escalate in its severity and thus should be regarded with scrutiny, taking into account that females require support from the legal avenues as well as family and friends.

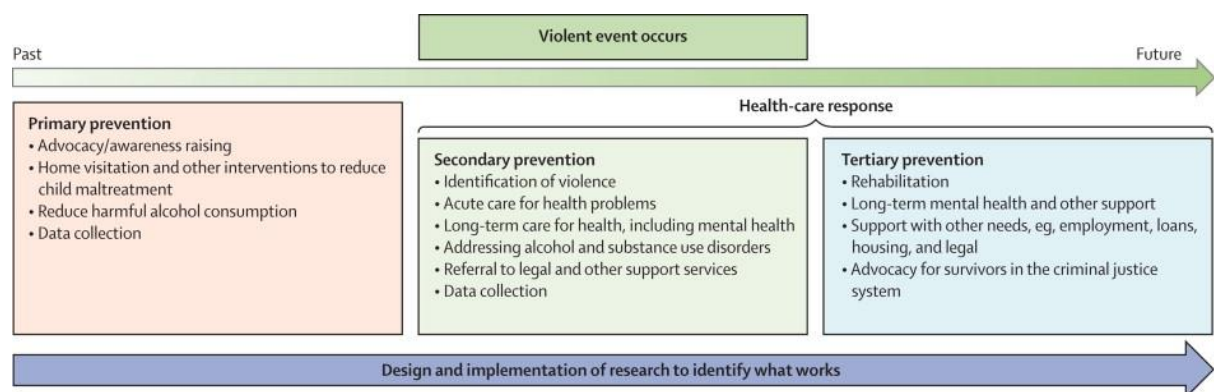
Victims may seek help from formal or professional or informal resources (Fissel, 2021). Formal or professional resources may include law enforcement where the stalking and harassment may be reported as a crime, or through the court to request a protection order. Further, it may include seeking help from a shelter, social worker or therapist (Nikupeteri, 2017) and formal services like the police and judiciary (Evans & Feder, 2016).

Informal resources may include family, friends, classmates or co-workers (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). Informal resources included pastors and local leaders. Some females also seek help from local victim support services. When a culture or societal norms do not perceive the offender’s behaviour as problematic, it poses challenges for the victim to receive help (Klein, 2012). Informal resources also include non-profit organisations such as SADAG and LifeLine that offer counselling services.

In South Africa, violence against females has been highlighted as a significant issue. The healthcare system introduced a plan to empower females and depict what support may look like (García-Moreno et al., 2013), this may be seen as a formal resource. Below are the plans proposed by the Health Care System:

Figure 3.1

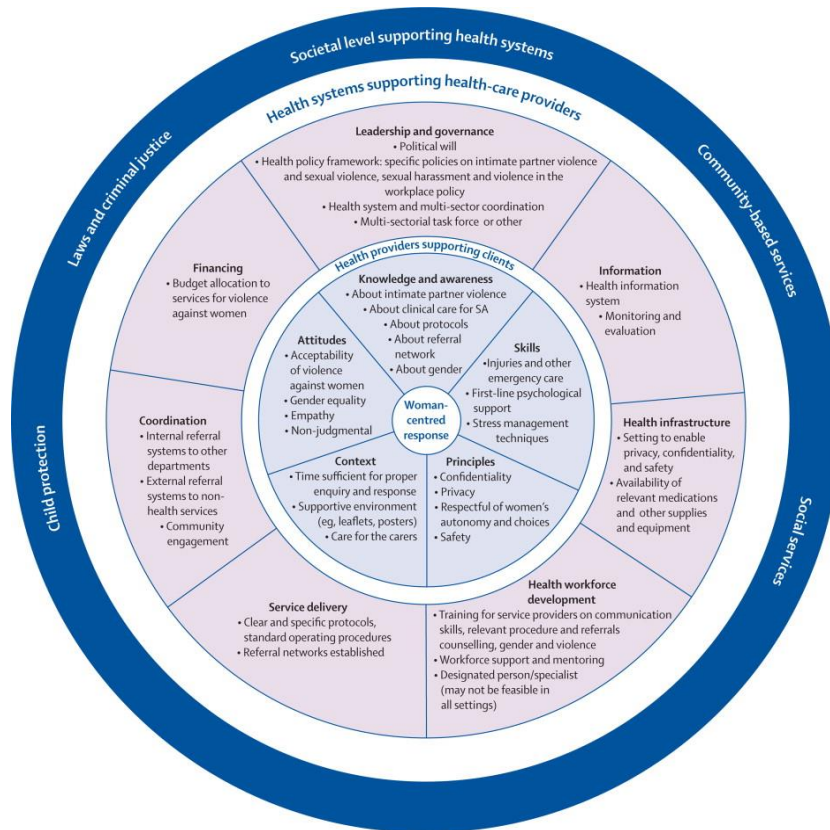
Healthcare response



The plan depicts the prevention of violence at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. It does not include stalking and harassment specifically (García-Moreno et al., 2013).

Figure 3.2

Female centred response



Proposed female responses for effective prevention and service delivery (García-Moreno et al., 2013).

3.14 Review of relevant studies

The differences highlighted here necessitated this type of research, where stalking and harassment are explored exclusively from a former intimate partner perspective. The studies to be highlighted here highlighted the importance of this type of research, particularly in the South African context as most studies explored intimate partner violence in current relationships.

A study by Katz and Rich (2015) titled: Partner Victimization and Post-Breakup Stalking, Pursuit, and Violence: A Retrospective Study of College Females alluded to abuse by a former intimate partner. The authors hypothesized that abuse within the relationship would predict stalking, and ongoing abuse after breaking up. The sample of 99 undergraduate college females provided their

account of IPV during and after the relationship, including stalking and ongoing pursuits following a breakup. There was also ongoing intimidation and threats reported by the victims post-breakup.

This study has similarities with the current in that, both studies concentrate on post-breakup stalking and violence by a former intimate partner. The main differences lie in the sample as a whole and the sample size. The current study approached the study using participants who were already on the path to help-seeking whereas the study by Katz and Rich (2015) approached their study by speaking to college students.

Another study by Melton (2007) was titled, “Stalking in the context of intimate partner abuse: in the victim’s words.” The study explored stalking occurring in the current relationship and not by a former partner even though some of the male partners had already broken up with their victims. 21 females were interviewed, these females experienced stalking and harassment from male partners. Findings included motivators for stalking, the impact on the victims, and the behaviours employed to stalk victims. This study has similarities with the current study, in that, it is looking at the impact of stalking on victims, as well as the method employed to stalk victims and also what motivates former partners to stalk victims is what came out of the current research. Both studies approached their studies from the victim’s words and participants in both studies were already seeking help. Participants from the study by Melton (2007) were seeking help via the criminal justice system whereas participants in the current were seeking psychological or emotional help.

3.15 Conclusion

Stalking and harassment is a complex phenomenon. The literature that exists for a South African context is limited. Current research suggests that laws are recognizing stalking and harassment as a criminal offence. Defined laws on stalking and harassment will inform the interventions that are needed to safeguard victims of stalking as well as the resources that are needed to support them.

CHAPTER 4

4. METHODS

4.1 Introduction

Through this qualitative and explorative study, the researcher aims to contribute to the literature and understand how females are impacted by stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner told through their lived experience. LifeLine is an organisation that offers free counselling services to individuals, couples and families who struggle with various challenges. Participants for the current research were recruited via LifeLine. Furthermore, the study aims to provide an understanding of how females cope and the role that culture plays in coping with stalking and harassment.

This chapter discusses and describes the research process whereby Thematic Analysis was the methodological approach used (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It provides details on the research design used and why it was appropriate. The various stages of the research process will be discussed as well as the researcher's role in this qualitative study on reflexivity.

4.2 Research design

Research refers to a methodical procedure to explore a topic to uncover new information from existing evidence and it develops into a 'scientific understanding' of this existing evidence to derive new information that may be applied to contribute to discovering proficient answers to common difficulties (Bairagi & Munot, 2019). Research design is an essential part of the research process and encompasses the methods to be employed throughout the research process (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018).

This research applied a qualitative, exploratory research design (De Vos et al., 2018). The qualitative method is used to gather comprehensive information on a specific subject matter (Rahi, 2017). This particular design method addresses the category of considerations for research, for example, 'human behaviours.' People do not respond in the same way to a particular situation hence it is challenging to offer an extrapolative deduction. The emphasis is positioned more on people and less on generalities and outcomes are established about qualitative considerations (Bairagi & Munot, 2019).

The objective is to not only capture true accounts of experiences but also the meaning behind them (Lal et al., 2012). It was appropriate and adequate to use the semi-structured research interview protocol for data collection as the research scope on stalking and harassment is limited. This design allowed for an in-depth view of the experiences of the participants by engaging in a verbal conversation to better understand the experiences of stalking and harassment of females. It also has the potential to allow us to better understand the experiences of females being stalked and harassed and how available resources and culture contribute to their shared stories of their lived experiences.

It is suggested that qualitative research proposes a different way to think about a psycho-social issue. Participants can therefore share their experiences which includes their reference to societal norms and cultural influence (Taylor-Dunn et al., 2021). It may also assist to support the participant to make sense of their world through their storytelling (De Fina & Johnstone, 2015).

According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the following key features of qualitative research are observed during the research process:

- In qualitative research, the participants are selected in a purposeful manner where each one is randomly selected from a particular sector based on inclusion and exclusion criteria which allows for a variety of participants to ensure the exactness of the results.

- In qualitative research, the research is conducted to collect data in an environment that the participant identifies with.
- Conclusions were drawn by the researcher based on the answers to the research questions, given by the participants.
- Qualitative research employs several methods of research.

The research employed semi-structured interviews. The participant plays a crucial role in the research process in qualitative research. The researcher aimed to observe different meanings and understanding from the subjective contributions of each participant devoid of it being pre-ascribed by previous research conducted. The task of the researcher in qualitative research holds significance from the start of selecting a topic of interest, the method for data collection to the write-up of the report. The researcher's task in partaking in the research process assists to allow an interpretation of the data. The researcher was also responsible to uphold ethical principles, for example, explaining the research study to the participant, answering all queries that the participant may have, obtaining informed consent or activate the distress protocol if needed. Qualitative research places a focus on justification rather than statistics in the research. It also offers flexibility where if the route of the research study alters at any phase, then the researcher adapts where appropriate. For example, if a new research problem arises then the researcher will adapt to seek to understand it and explore new information (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Conducting assessments that are understanding and suitable in a setting of diversity relating to culture and socio-economic status can be difficult at times. This can be said about research too. The gold standard is emic assessment. Emic assessment can be described as a method to study a specific language or culture relating to its internal features and meaning as told by the research participants as opposed to a prevailing external schematic (Laher & Cockcroft, 2017). The researcher aimed to analyse the data and present the findings with a representation of the participants' meaning and

understanding as a self-schema of stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner following the breakup of the relationship being the focus.

4.3 Sampling

In this study, purposive sampling, a selective non-probability sampling technique, was used to recruit participants for the study. ‘Purposive sampling’ was used because the informants were accessible, appropriate and signified characteristics the research student wanted to study (Silverman, 2000). Purposive sampling is also known as judgemental sampling based on the judgement of the researcher. The sample is comprised of components that are made up of characteristics and represent a population that best serves the purpose of the study (De Vos et al., 2018, p. 232). The rationale for choosing this approach was that the research student wanted to obtain an understanding and knowledge about the impact of stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner on females following the breakup of a relationship, which could be told by the participant’s lived experience.

LifeLine Johannesburg had granted permission to the research student, upon receipt of ethical clearance. The recruitment invitation advert (Appendix B) contained details about this research study and the contact details of the research student. The potential participant then chose to contact the research student directly to obtain more information. The research student provided detailed information about the intent of the research as well as information about what participation in the research study may involve. The research student chose a participant aligned with the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study. The inclusion criteria were that participants identify as female, be eighteen (18) years and older, and who must have been in an intimate partner relationship where they had experienced stalking and harassment post-breakup by a former intimate partner. The exclusion criteria were if a potential participant was currently dealing with symptoms of trauma, they were asked to not participate to avoid further distress.

When the potential participant remained interested in participating in the study, an appointment to participate in the interview was scheduled at a time that was convenient for them. Eight (8) females were invited to participate in the interviews via Zoom or MS Teams or telephonically to share their experiences. As the researcher was sampling to saturation, eight (8) participants appeared to be an appropriate number. The interview times were selected by the females so that they could ensure privacy to share their experiences in a private and safe setting. The females were residing in Johannesburg, diverse in race, socio-economic status, levels of education and their ages ranged between 18 and 61 years old. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the participant characteristics.

Table 4.1

Characteristics of the participants

Pseudonym	Age at time of interview	Race
Jay	18	Black
Lilly	30	White
Pumla	31	Black
Kat	32	Black
Don	37	White
Rose	39	Indian
Lola	42	White
Dane	61	White

4.4 Data collection

LifeLine Johannesburg was approached by the research student to assist with the recruitment of research participants. LifeLine posted a research invitation on LifeLine Facebook, LifeLine Instagram, LifeLine Twitter, the LifeLine website and on the LifeLine intake form. The LifeLine intake form was accessed on the LifeLine website by people who wanted to request counselling for issues that were not necessarily linked to stalking and harassment. They may have requested counselling for various challenges they may have been facing related or unrelated to stalking and

harassment. The research invitation advert appeared at the bottom of the intake form. LifeLine Johannesburg posted the recruitment invitation advert once the research student had obtained ethical clearance from the University of Witwatersrand and the ethics committee for the research study. The recruitment invitation advert (Appendix B) contained details about this research study and the contact details of the research student. The participants then contacted the research student using the contact details supplied in the research recruitment advert. The prospective participants called, emailed, texted or communicated via WhatsApp. The research student provided further details about the study and answered questions that the potential participant may have had.

Participant Information Sheets (PIS) were shared with prospective participants (Appendix C). The prospective participants were asked to review the PIS and advise if they had any questions. If the prospective participants agreed to proceed with the interview, the researcher reviewed the participant information sheet with the participants again, to ensure understanding, and to provide another opportunity to address any possible questions. The prospective participants were also allowed to ask any question, even if it did not appear on the PIS.

The interview appointments were arranged at a time convenient for the participant using a platform that the participant preferred (Zoom, Microsoft Teams or telephonic). The rising recognition of digital forms of communication shows that a broader population may be eager and capable to participate in research using this option and digital means of interviewing could be used as a feasible choice for qualitative data collection (Nehls et al., 2015). An online medium was discovered to be a suitable source of data for qualitative research (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). Online interviewing has both advantages and potential limitations. Online platforms to conduct research data collection offers new opportunities to engage with participants in a manner that is time and cost-efficient which can present a growing variety in the sample population. It can also have the potential to disrupt rapport-building and observe non-verbal cues as a potential

limitation. However, it can offer a feasible option as a data collection tool for qualitative researchers (Lo Iacono et al., 2016). This research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. In highlighting how to adapt research methodology during the Covid -19 pandemic whilst still maintaining social distancing and other precautionary measures, Dodds and Hess, (2020) found, online interviews in qualitative research offered a comfortable, ‘non-intrusive, convenient and easy’ option in which to engage with participants whilst a potential for lack of non-verbal communication and challenges with privacy were suggested as limitations.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect data from participants (Appendix E). Semi-structured, qualitative interviews were used to collect data, which is useful in various methodological settings and allows for various research questions to be addressed (Appendix E). It is also useful when a participant’s lived experience is expressed as it yields a unique perspective sought to be understood by the researcher (McGrath et al., 2019).

The interview was a self-designed, semi-structured interview schedule and served as primary data collection. This pre-determined set of questions can be an appropriate instrument to focus the attention of the participant and also assist the researcher to identify narrative themes (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, as cited in De Vos et al., 2018, p. 352). As the interviews of the current research were semi-structured, the questions, although pre-determined, were loosely structured and allowed the participants to freely express themselves, as well as engage in topics that were not about the questions so that they could share their stories as they wanted to. In addition, a semi-structured interview schedule based on the work of Spitzberg and Cupach (2014) allowed the researcher to foresee possible difficulties that may have arisen such as triggering feelings for the participant and having measures in place to manage these potential responses in the form of a Distress Protocol (Appendix F). However, consistent with qualitative methodologies it was also important not to view the interview schedule as a rigid, static measure, but to allow for further self-refining as the

research process unfolded. For example, questions were reordered based on the participant's emotional state at the time.

The interview schedule comprised five (5) demographic questions and fifteen (15) open-ended questions. The interview time took between thirty to sixty minutes. The demographic questions included age, population group, education level, occupation and what area of Johannesburg the participant resides in. The subsequent section of the interview schedule aimed to gather data on the duration of the stalking and harassment, the forms of stalking and harassment experienced, as well as the effect of the stalking and harassment. The interview schedule also explored how the females coped with stalking and harassment, the factors that influenced the coping strategies employed and if culture played a role in stalking and harassment behaviours by the offender.

The questions were open-ended to gather in-depth data, however, the participants were allowed the freedom to share their experiences in a way that made them feel comfortable. All interviews were conducted by the researcher. With the participants' permission, the interviews were recorded so that it could be transcribed accurately at a later stage. Consent was obtained separately for recording. The recordings were done via Zoom for interviews conducted on this platform. At the time of the interview, the researcher explained the topic of the study and asked if the participant had any questions which were addressed accordingly. The research student made attempts to build rapport with the participants to put them at ease and to create a conducive environment for experiences to be shared freely. The participants were informed that if they had any questions after the interview the research student can be contacted. The interviews took up to one hour to complete.

Participants were provided with the option of terminating the interview if they deemed it to be triggering and distressing. A list of counselling services and legal resources was provided on the participation information sheet. The participants were informed that they may contact the research student if they had any questions, and the contact details were provided. All participants were

contacted ten (10) days after their respective interviews to check in to gauge how they were doing after the interviews. It was noted that all the participants shared that they were not triggered by the interviews.

The study being qualitative, had a small sample size. Therefore, the results are only relevant to a small group of the population. The data collected does not represent South Africa as a whole and the data cannot be generalised to a larger population.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The concept of ethics clearance is well-founded in research (Aro, 2016). The university and ethics committee approved ethical clearance for this study to be conducted (Appendix A). The identification of vulnerable sample populations in research began in 1979 when some participants were deemed to be placed at higher risk for harm than others (Bracken-Roche et al., 2017).

Vulnerable can be defined as a person who is ‘susceptible to harm or risk’ (Surmiak, 2018).

Participants were identified as moderate risk for this study. Ethics clearance was first obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand (H21/06/05). Ethical principles were adhered to throughout the research process.

Participation in the research study was voluntary and, the participant had the option to withdraw from the study at any time before the examination of the research. Furthermore, there was no payment made for the participation.

Informed consent for participation and audio recording was obtained in writing via email or verbally. The relevant documents were emailed to the participants to be read, signed and returned to the researcher. Consent was confirmed verbally when a participant did not provide consent via email. Informed consent (Appendix D) was obtained for the participation and recording of the interviews. Upon completion of the research project, a summary- feedback will be provided to

Gender-Based Violence Johannesburg (LifeLine) on the whole group (no individual feedback) and the participants may also request a copy via email if they would like to have it (from the researcher student) of which they were informed. The research data will be stored with password protection by the research student and or the research supervisor on personal computers. The research student had access to the audio recordings of the interviews. The interviews were password protected and no identifiable information appeared on the questionnaires, nor will it appear in the research report. Recordings of the interviews are digitally stored, and password protected. This audio data will be destroyed after 5 years.

The research student aimed to ensure transparency throughout the process of providing the information and during the interview. Informed consent was obtained by providing an information sheet (Appendix C) describing what the research was about and how the results will be reported (Ketefian, 2015). Consent was confirmed verbally, and audio recorded before the interview started, when emailed consent was not received before the scheduled interview. Upon contacting the participant to arrange the interview, the consent form was emailed, and she was asked to read, sign and email the form back to the research student. An information sheet was included to explain the nature of the research and that results will be used for research in masters.

In the context of research studies, confidentiality refers to limiting access to a participant's personal information (Ethicist, 2015).

The research student aimed to maintain confidentiality by observing the data protection of the interviews, as well as the personal information of each participant.

In, the context of research studies, anonymity is to protect the participant's identity by removing unique identifiers. This includes visual anonymity so that the participant remains concealed from public inspection (Burkell, 2006).

While anonymity could not be guaranteed, as the researcher was in contact with participants, confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. Participants were informed that the interviews will be transcribed without the use of personal information, thus making it unidentifiable. The quotes used in the final write-up were anonymized and used with the consent of the participants and data protection was also observed (Surmiak, 2018). Upon completion of the write-up, summarized feedback will be given in the aggregated form. No individually identifiable information will be contained in this feedback. Anonymity will be maintained in the feedback.

The research student also aimed to protect the participants from physical, social and mental harm to uphold the value of beneficence and do no harm (Ketefian, 2015). The participants were shown respect throughout the research interviewing process.

4.6 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

The recordings of the narrative experiences were transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis (TA) was used to identify themes and sub-themes as they emerged based on the recordings of the narrative experiences which were transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis is defined as a method to discover, analyse and then interpret themes that emerge in the data collected (Clarke & Braun, 2014a).

Thematic analysis is the data analysis procedure which focuses on the identification, description, explanation, substantiation and linkages of themes (Clarke & Braun, 2014a). Thematic analysis was used to uncover further meaning through analysis of central themes and sub-themes from the narrative lived experiences of the research participants.

TA was deemed most appropriate to use for this study as this approach identifies the core ideas and underlying sub-themes from interviews of lived experiences that the researcher can organize, interpret and report on semantically as this topic of research is not well-understood. Perhaps in future research latent themes may be explored. It is a flexible method that allows for themes to

evolve (Clarke & Braun, 2014a). The themes were identified during the process of analysis and guided by theoretic frameworks these themes and meanings were interpreted.

According to Braun and Clark (2006), thematic analysis is a commonly used analytic method in psychology as it is both flexible and can be used with any theoretical approach as the basis using the following six steps:

In the first step, the research student read the transcripts several times to become familiar with the data. As the research student was responsible for conducting the research interviews, some familiarity had been gained during the data collection process. Whilst themes and meanings were noted, no formal coding had taken place yet.

This was followed by the second step of generating initial codes. The initial codes allowed the research student to organize the data.

The third step involved organizing the initial codes to formulate themes. The research student began to consider themes and sub-themes to further organize the data.

The fourth step involved reviewing the themes from the third step to refine them to appear more logically without losing their initial meaning.

In the fifth step, the research student renamed the themes that were identified and defined each accordingly. Consideration was given to the themes and sub-themes in terms of how they correlated with each other and the whole data set to formulate a comprehensive structure.

The sixth step involved the report writing as part of the final analysis. The report entailed documenting the findings in a way that depicted a holistic representation of the data set using the data and themes from start to finish. It provided a description of the participants' experiences, the

student researcher's interpretations and how it related to the research aims of the research study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.7 Trustworthiness

'Trustworthiness' is an important part of Qualitative Research that influences the integrity of the results and can be defined as a level of confidence in the data. Furthermore, Trustworthiness is determined by the Credibility, Rigour and Transferability (Connelly, 2016). Credibility requires the results to be congruent and relevant. This implies that a description of the data can be provided with use of verbatim quotes from the participants (Daniel, 2019). Rigour refers to how appropriate the research design is for a particular study. This is often conveyed by sharing the details of the design and methodological considerations (Johnson et al., 2020). Transferability suggests that the findings from one study may be applied to another research setting and that the participants have knowledge or lived experiences of the phenomenon being explored (Daniel, 2019).

4.8 Reflexivity

Reflexivity can be defined as the awareness of the researcher's role in the research conducted and how the process and outcomes can be influenced (Haynes, 2012). In qualitative research, reflexivity is understood as mindfulness of the effect the researcher can have on the participant or research subject matter. It also concurrently identifies how the research involvement affects the researcher. There has been no empirical study of how researchers essentially practice reflexivity and incorporate it into the research process. A researcher's honesty does not give the assurance that the expressions of participants have been accurately characterized. However, reflexivity is still a significant tool that allows the researcher to remain involved in self-awareness during the research process (Probst, 2015).

I have taken caution to not make rigid theoretical assumptions. I recognise that my values can influence the interpretation of data and I must be aware of my subjective values. Reflexivity allows for the research processes and outcomes to adapt in response to the reflections and to acknowledge that I am part of the research process. “Reflexivity involves a self-scrutiny on the part of the researcher; a self-conscious awareness of the relationship between the researcher and ‘another’ (Bourke, 2014, p.2). The researcher must be aware of how his or her role has the potential to impact the conversation as a co-creator of the data (McGrath et al., 2019). Culture, socioeconomic status, social context, self-disclosure of the researcher and values are some elements that can influence the formation of knowledge in the research process about the participant. The researcher has the potential to influence the research results and the process itself. I gave thought to my own values and how they could contribute to affect the research. For research to be valuable, emphasis is placed on the process and not the outcome only as it is a continuous process that is co-constructed by the researcher and participant. People make meaning from their subjective identity. An awareness of bias is necessary as it influences how one engages with a participant. (Clarke & Braun, 2014b). It has been posed that some researchers do not have the ‘knowledge and skills’ to conduct research successfully therefore engaging in reflexivity may assist to create ‘trustworthiness’ in the process (Xerri, 2018).

According to Knaggård et al., (2018), a researcher will form an ‘academic identity’ through reflexivity using the three elements of reflexivity. The personal elements refer to the values of the researcher, the functional elements refer to the research process where the research student formulates conclusions based on interpretations and the disciplinary elements comprises the broader issues and type of methodology selected by the researcher.

Qualitative research can be challenging as the consensus by which the standards for credibility are judged is sometimes not as clear. While quantitative research focuses on reliability and validity,

qualitative research places a firm focus on the soundness of the research relating to the application and appropriate methods employed to conduct the research and the integrity of the conclusions (Noble & Smith, 2015). I aimed to take steps to ensure that the research findings possess trustworthiness and the credibility of the design and implementation.

Neutrality was maintained by accounting for personal biases which may influence the findings. Consistency was followed by meticulous record-keeping so that interpretations of data were transparent and consistent. Applicability was shown by representing different perspectives of participants by establishing comparisons and similarities. Truth value was upheld by transcribing the participants' accounts verbatim to support findings (Noble & Smith, 2015).

I am an older, Indian, married female. I am a mother. I am independent and have worked in a professional occupational environment for about twenty years. I am a co-contributor of the running of my household. I was raised in a low socio-economic status, religious household with the belief that the male is the head of the household. Although, I am not religious and believe that males and females are equal. I am aware that culture influences research and acknowledge that I could have identified with the participants and ensured that my views and experiences were not imposed nor disclosed during the interviews. I am also aware that in the data collection phase, the participants were of different age groups than me, different race groups where languages were not similar where first languages were different and socio-economic status differences comparative to the participants were also present. I was able to put aside my understanding of the topic to allow the narrative experience of the participants to provide information. I displayed respect for all participants throughout the process.

4.9 Conclusion

The current research utilized a qualitative research approach as it allowed for an interpretation of the narrative experiences of the research participants. The study engaged in the following questions:

- What are the experiences of females with stalking and harassment after ending an intimate partner relationship?
- What are some of the factors that influence how females cope with stalking and harassment after the breakup of an intimate partner relationship?
- What role do cultural perceptions play in how females experience stalking and harassment?

The processes involved in the sampling and data collection process have been discussed in this chapter. The ethics that guided the research project and reflexivity have also been discussed.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Data analysis is the most vital step in qualitative research (Mayer, 2015). This study aimed to investigate the effects of stalking and harassment on females who experienced this conduct from a former intimate partner. The study also aimed to explore the factors that influenced how females coped with stalking and harassment. Finally, the study aimed to explore the role of cultural perceptions in stalking and harassment. The researcher obtained this information during the data collection process from the eight research participants.

Through this qualitative approach, using a semi-structured interview schedule, the researcher aimed to contribute to the literature and understand how females are impacted by stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner told through their lived experience. Furthermore, the study aimed to provide an understanding of how females cope and the role that culture plays in coping with stalking and harassment.

The central research questions for this study were as follows:

- What are the experiences of females with stalking and harassment after ending an intimate partner relationship?
- What are some of the factors that influence how females cope with stalking and harassment after the breakup of an intimate partner relationship?
- What role do cultural perceptions play in stalking and harassment?

This chapter presents the findings of the interviews facilitated with the eight participants. The data has been analysed and interpreted and a summary will be presented relating to comparable and dissimilar findings. The themes and sub-themes have been assessed and appraised relating to the available literature.

It was imperative to establish the demographic information of the participants as well as if they had experienced stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner. The research student then explored the participants' subjective experience of stalking and harassment, the impact it placed on their lives and the role of cultural perceptions. There is a shared account of fear, hopelessness, powerlessness help-seeking behaviours and resilience.

5.2 Research Findings: Themes

The following information depicts the narrative accounts of eight (8) females who were stalked and harassed by former intimate partners upon the cessation of the relationship. The females were of different ages, races, cultures and economic statuses. The experiences shared by these females may assist in better understanding the challenges they faced.

Table 5.1 The main themes that emerged in the analysis

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
Who is a victim?	Demographics of participants
Participants' experiences of the relationship before the breakup	Description of the relationship
	Violence in the relationship
	Former partner's use of substances
	Why is he so paranoid?
Participants' experiences of Stalking and Harassment after the breakup: Nowhere to hide	Methods employed to Stalk and Harass
	Stalking and Harassment of family or friends
	Duration of the Stalking and Harassment
Effects of Stalking and Harassment: The footprints of Stalking and Harassment	Psychological
	Occupational
	Psychosocial

How participants coped with Stalking and Harassment	Methods employed to dissipate Stalking and Harassment
	Lack of support identified by participants
	External influences on how females coped with Stalking and Harassment

The themes were noted and then subdivided into sub-themes.

5.2.1 Demographics

Table 5.2

The demographic information of the research participants.

Participants	Current Age	Age when stalked and harassed	Identified Ethnicity	Highest Level of Education	Occupation	Relationship status during courtship period
Jay	18	18	Black	Grade 11	Currently in Grade 12	Dated
Lilly	30	28	White	Honours	Teacher	Dated
Pumla	31	30	Black	Diploma	Editor	Dated
Kat	32	31	Black	BA Degree	Physiotherapist	Dated
Don	37	33	White	BA Degree	Teacher	Dated
Rose	39	37	Indian	Masters Degree	Advocate	Dated
Lola	42	41	White	Diploma	Online retail	Dated
Dane	61	30	White	Diploma	Financial Advisor	Married

The demographic information pertains to the age, population group, level of education and occupation of each participant. The ages at which the stalking and harassment occurred can be categorised as 18-41 when the stalking and harassment occurred. All of the participants except one (5) fall into the older age range. ¹Three (3) participants, Kat, Jay and Pumla identified as Black, one (1), Rose, identified as Indian, and four (4), Don, Lola, Lilly and Dane identified as White. Also listed, is the relationship status before the breakup.

¹ South African racial groups identified as Black, White, Coloured and Indian

5.2.2 Participants' experience of the relationship before the breakup

5.2.2.1 Description of what the relationship was like before the breakup

Table 5.3

A description of what the relationship was like

Participant	Description of what the relationship was like
Jay	<i>"I was being stressed and he was abusing me emotionally. And he made me feel like I'm not human. He made me feel like I'm not enough. So, he always played games. Like, he made me like, I don't know, he like, he made me like stupid and would belittle me. He was older, he was 21 and I was only 17 and like I had no-one to turn to. Yeah, he made me so depressed... all this blame me for everything."</i>
Lilly	<i>"So it was, it was toxic in that way because all of the foundations of our relationship were built on that lifestyle, that type of space. Like I had to look after him. I paid, like his bills. And then when he wasn't using (drugs), he still had a bad temper. greatest. Like I said, it was toxic."</i>

Pumla	<i>“Toxic, yeah, it was difficult. So, I think it was what he tried to do for a while and I was really tired of the relationship with him. He was always cheating and he was abusive when we were dating.”</i>
Kat	<i>“Well, it's had its ups and downs, of course. But can I say it was toxic, sometimes it was, sometimes it was great and then toxic.”</i>
Don	<i>“Well, it was quite a tricky one because he was very jealous of my ex-husband, who has now recently passed away, sadly. So, there was always that, or he would always compare me to his ex-wife. So, it was harassment and emotional and mental abuse right through the relationship. So, it was permanently walking on eggshells.”</i>
Rose	<i>“Toxic, so toxic. He went from being my best friend to someone whom I did not even want to be around. It was like he did not even know me anymore. I would wonder why he wants to be with me when all he ever did was accuse me of doing things I never even did. I was always walking on eggshells</i>

	<i>because it felt like anything would make him jealous and cause us to fight.”</i>
Lola	<i>“You know, he was very calculated. Everything, everything was calculated. And if it were, if you were to catch him off guard kind of a thing, he would pretend to sleep or he would pretend to fall asleep, or he would pretend to be tired.”</i>
Dane	<i>“He was a narcissist. Not great you know. There were good times, but there were a lot more negative times. Eventually, you get tired of hearing that you are not good enough and anything you do is not good enough. He was always playing mind games and he was manipulative. I'm his, you know, his property. So that also starts to eat away at your self-worth. Because you, you know, you always think, ‘am I wrong?’”</i>

These are the accounts of how the participants experienced the intimate relationship before the breakup. Many of the accounts convey similar themes, with participants describing the relationships

as ‘toxic’ and their former partners as controlling, emotionally abusive, manipulative and mistrusting.

5.2.2.2 The categories of violence described by the participants

Table 5.4

The categories of violence experienced by the participants before the breakup

Participant	Verbal	Physical	Emotional	Sexual
Jay	x		x	
Lilly	x		x	
Pumla	x	x	x	x
Kat	x	x	x	x
Don		x	x	
Rose	x		x	
Lola	x		x	
Dane	x		x	

These are the categories of violence that were experienced by the participants before the breakup.

Verbal and emotional abuse appears as a common thread whilst physical and sexual abuse occurred with at least three (3) participants.

Don described her former partner as abusive in many ways.

“He was not only verbally and mentally and emotionally abusive, he was financially abusive. He was physically abusive.”

Similarly, Jay described the emotional abuse.

“I was being stressed and he was abusing me emotionally.”

Kat described the severity of the violence she suffered.

“He hit me, he would verbally assault me. I think the verbal assault and also, he sexually assaulted me.”

Lola described her former partner as manipulative and controlling.

“He was controlling. It got to a point where he was very manipulative.”

5.2.2.3 Use of alcohol/substances by former partner

Table 5.5

The use of substances by the former intimate partner

Participant	Use of Alcohol/Substances by former partner
Jay	None reported
Lilly	CAT
Pumla	None reported
Kat	None reported
Don	Alcohol
Rose	Alcohol
Lola	None reported
Dane	Alcohol

It was noted that four (4) participants shared that their former intimate partner engaged in substance use during the relationship, and whilst they were stalking and harassing the females post-breakup.

Don attributed the use of substances to worsen her former partner’s violence. She also noted that when he began stalking and harassing her, he would be more verbally abusive towards her when he was intoxicated with alcohol.

“So, when he wasn't drinking, he was quite pleasant.”

Lilly described how her former partner’s use of CAT intensified his anger.

“He was on CAT. And like, I had never really known the world of drugs, to be quite fair. His anger was always a lot worse when he was using drugs like it was, it was quite bad. Oh, his temper was quite bad when he was using.”

5.2.2.4 Why is he so paranoid?

Participants highlighted that their former partners displayed behaviour that was paranoid and suspicious. The mistrust contributed to the verbal and emotional abuse.

Jay stated the following:

“He did not trust me.”

Concerns related to trust and suspicion was evident across other participant experiences as well, with Dane describing the following:

“I was always accused of having an affair with, it doesn't matter if it's a friend, any male, I was always accused, he was so controlling, always telling me what to do and where I can go.”

The suspicion of infidelity appeared to evident across select experiences, as highlighted by Rose:

“He was paranoid, he constantly accused me of cheating and I never did.”

Don's experience also included a concern related to a suspicion of infidelity:

“He was very jealous. He would ask, ‘who are you online with, who are you phoning, you are busy with other men?’ And it happened every day.”

5.2.3 Participants' Experiences of Stalking and Harassment post-breakup

The commonality amongst participants was the repeated and unwanted calls, messages and visits from their former intimate partner.

The participants also reported feeling harassed by their former partners, and that the harassment extended to their family members and friends. The former intimate partner would contact their family members and friends and repeatedly harass them.

5.2.3.1 Methods Employed to Stalk and Harass

Table 5.6

The methods that were employed to stalk and harass the participants

Participant	Unwanted phone calls, visits	Unwanted social media contact	Followed	Workplace harassment	Image-based abuse	Stalking family/friends	House breaking
Jay	x	x	x			x	
Lilly	x	x	x			x	
Pumla	x	x	x				
Kat	x	x	x				
Don	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Rose	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lola	x	x	x		x		
Dane	x			x			

Table 5.7

Other forms of violence experienced during Stalking and Harassment

Participant	Threats	Verbal abuse	Physical violence	Sexual assault
Jay	x	x		
Lilly		x		
Pumla	x	x	x	x
Kat	x	x	x	
Don	x	x		
Rose		x		
Lola	x	x		x
Dane		x		

5.2.3.2 Unwanted contact: Social-media, Phone calls

Don described continuous stalking and harassment that began after the breakup a year prior. To date, she still receives harassing and threatening emails from her ex-partner. She had to take measures to stop him from accessing her via social media and other technological platforms, the participant highlights below:

“So he put that all over his social media and his WhatsApp, and it was everywhere. So I had to get my school to block him off all our emails and our social media platforms. Yeah, I also got threats by emails and phone calls saying that he's going to kill me”.

Lola believed that her ex-partner recruited the help of others to stalk by proxy and harass her. The participant referred to her technological devices and profiles being tainted with pornographic images:

“So they hacked my phone and my computer, like, literally took it over. I couldn't go into the internet and type in what's for dinner tonight because it would just be porn, porn with my face splattered all over it”.

Lilly described the persistent ways in which her ex-partner would attempt to contact her as well as the people she knew. He also employed ways to monitor if she was home. He constantly found ways to contact her even after she had attempted to block all contact, the participant said:

“So, I do constantly still hear from him after we broke up. And somehow, he always finds a way to get in touch with me, even if I've blocked him.”

Jay was dealing with a recent miscarriage when she was stalked and harassed by her ex-partner. She described his incessant unwanted contact and the fear she felt. She also described the hopelessness she felt:

“After we broke up he started harassing me. He called me during the night, and during the day to harass me, that I shouldn't breakup with him and I killed his baby. I would block his number, and he will continue calling me with other numbers that I didn't know”.

Pumla alluded to her former partner seemingly enjoying seeing her sad and not having any close relationships, whenever she formed any kind of relationship or seemed happy or progressing in other areas of her life, he would start stalking and harassing her again. He also used Facebook as a platform to harass her.

“Then he was always calling me, texting me, messaging me.”

Rose described in detail how her ex-partner stalked and harassed her at work and also employed unwanted contact with her sister. She also expressed that her ex-partner had a history of stalking a former girlfriend. She felt afraid and hopeless, the participant highlighted the details below:

“He would send me emails and messages with vicious content. The content would be using profanity and saying nasty things to me or repeatedly asking me to take him back. He would just go back and forth. I would not reply and he would continue. He would call me over and over on my cell phone, work number and home number. I would block his number and he would call from a new number”.

5.2.3.3 Repeated contact leading to unwanted visits

Kat further alluded to her former partner reaching out to those closest to her in an attempt to get closer to her, making them believe that he loved her. It seems as if the participant found it difficult to confide in her parents or family members as it seemed as though they did not believe anything negative about the former partner. She further described that if she ignored him then he would wait outside her home. He threatened her with violence and she was afraid of him. Kat indicated that:

“Then he was telling my parents that I am not talking to him and my parents wanted me to talk to him. And if I was saying what he was doing to me then like no-one was listening. Then if I will not talk to him I will find him outside my house. Then he decided that he was going to come to my house, stood by the gate at night because we have a gate and he would cry and then scream and yell for me all the time. And I was scared that he was going to come into my house. He was violent. And he was following me also”.

Pumla describes her ordeal of enduring rape and pregnancy whilst being stalked and harassed by her ex-partner. He continues to stalk and harass her to date, also not wanting the participant to be around friends or anyone else who seems to be having a closer relationship with the participant.

“Yeah, when I end up going out a couple of months later after I broke up with him, I started going out with a friend and he was following me all the time, he would stand outside my house. It's a very uncomfortable thing and like in the dark at night and he was outside and he was staring in the window. He would always come to my house. Sometimes when I got home from work he was already there waiting. If I have a new job or if I look happy then he will hang over me and harass me then disappear again. So like, I don't know, like you can't be hanging over my shoulder.”

Dane described how she endured the stalking and harassment that occurred about 30 years ago and did not know that it was a crime. Her ex-partner also harassed her at work. She further described his controlling behaviours that became apparent after marriage:

“He was very different before we got married. In the days after we got married, I think he decided that he that he owns me and that I'm not a person anymore. I'm his, you know, his property”.

The most common methods employed to stalk and harass victims were unwanted contact/communication via family members, visits, calls, messages, emails, WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram. Another common method was following or surveilling the participant. Less common were harassment at the workplace, image-based abuse and cyberstalking, harassment and violence towards people known to the victim. Also, less common were threats and physical and sexual assault. One participant experienced her ex-partner break into her home. All participants were noted to have experienced verbal abuse.

5.2.3.4 Stalking and Harassment of family and friends

Kat described that her former partner would also harass her friends telephonically.

“Then he was calling my friends all the time then they were getting angry with me.” Well, if I could say that they were affected, my friends and my family because he was irritating them on the phone then they were getting upset with me also. You know he was always calling the one friend who lives next to me and telling her to come ask me to come outside at night.”

Other participants had similar experiences, with their former partners reaching out to either their family or friends,

Lilly: “He did try to get hold of people afterwards, like my niece. He tried to invite her on Facebook. I don’t understand why, like he still has my family on his friend’s list or whatever. So like my mom blocked him. My niece blocked him, everybody, except for like a couple. And then he also tried to get hold of my friends”.

Amongst the participants, Don, Lilly, Kat and Rose shared that their former partners would repeatedly seek contact with their respective family and friends. Don felt angry that her former partner made contact with her friends online and threatened them with violence. Lilly asked her

family and friends to block her former partner on social media. She described a time when her former partner reached one of her friends on Facebook and made derogatory comments to him. Rose asked her sister to block her former partner on social media. The interaction included the former partner making harassing and threatening comments to them.

5.2.3.5 Duration of Stalking and Harassment

Table 5.8

The duration of how long participants were stalked and harassed

Participant	Duration of stalking and harassment
Jay	1 year until it ended
Lilly	2 years until it ended
Pumla	6 years and ongoing
Kat	1 year and ongoing
Don	1 year and ongoing
Rose	2 years until it ended
Lola	+/- 6 months until it ended
Dane	+/- 1 year until it ended

It was noted that three (3) of the eight (8) participants shared that they still experience a degree of stalking and harassment from their former intimate partners.

5.3 Effects of Stalking and Harassment

5.3.1 Psychological Effects

Don described the ongoing mental abuse she suffers and the resultant effect of low self-worth. She has to remind herself that the offender's behaviour is not right and continues to deal with his unwanted contact and abusive content. She also spoke of the shame that she experienced later on, this is indicated by her words below:

''So it was harassment and emotional and mental abuse right through the relationship. But it was very degrading. It was very degrading. My dignity was absolutely shattered. You know, you kind of self-doubt yourself at one point you think, 'maybe he's right, but no, he's not right.' And my friends are saying, 'no, he's not right,' you know because you kind of actually stop believing them'. you feel so degraded that you feel there is no way out. ''

Lola described the continuous anxiety she experiences along with the fear that she may be harmed again. Her experiences have felt isolating for her and left her feeling unsupported and misunderstood:

''I'm still sick, physically sick. And I suppose mentally sick because of this. I don't think I can sleep well. I'll never sleep again, I think. I'm awake because I'm so afraid that something might happen again, you know? 'The more I try to relax, the more I feel like I'm forcing myself to relax because, you know, and that just starts the thing rolling all over again.' ''

Lilly described the regret and guilt she feels over being in the relationship for ten years and the anxiety she experiences at the thought of her ex-partner's unwanted contact.

''You know what, if I think about it, I, whenever I see his name pop up on my phone, I just get this like feeling in my body that... And that's why I say that I don't ever want to like, I don't want to keep in contact with him. So when it ended, I really just, I had a really, really bad taste in my mouth about the whole experience. I'll be laying in bed and thinking, like, I really hope he doesn't phone now. I was in that sort of like it just felt like anxiety the whole time, which is also how I felt in the relationship. I just get the sense of anxiety because I just know who he is and how

he is. And it's, yeah, he's, he's just a lot to deal with. And so like, I just get really anxious”

Kat described the fear and anxiety she experienced. She also isolated herself out of fear of seeing him.

“Like I was going mad, he was blaming me for everything. I was scared even at night when I want to sleep I was scared. You know this thing, I was always having anxiety”.

Jay described feelings of depression, anxiety and fear over the threats made against her and the stalking and harassment. She also suffered low self-esteem over the verbal abuse.

“It got to a point that I was scared that maybe he will do something to me and I decided to change my number also. It was awful, and I would think ‘I could have depression’. So I was really scared. The he would say he was going to hit me, then he would say he was going to kill me. I was scared. And all the things he was saying, it made my self-esteem so low”.

Pumla described how challenging it is for her to trust people now. She also suffered from low self-worth. She is afraid of her ex-partner and does not pursue new relationships. She suffers feelings of anger and anxiety. She struggles to trust that things can go well as she is afraid that he will show up and ruin it. She also deals with parenting a child born out of rape. She said:

“Yeah, it is hard for me to trust anyone. I don’t know, like, my self-worth is so low and I feel so wounded. I am so scared of him....And I cannot see anyone new because he will never allow it. Sometimes I just get so angry because I am always stressed with him. I don’t feel like a good parent because she (child born out of rape by former intimate partner) represents like a very dark place in my life from that time.

Well, what happens is like, if he will, he does not care for her but if every time when I progress in life it's like he comes back to ruin it and will say he wants to see his child but just ruin my progress. If I have a new job or if I look happy then he will hang over me and harass me then disappear again.''

Dane described the mental and emotional abuse she experienced. She also highlighted that stalking and harassment were not always seen as a form of gender-based violence or a crime. The intensity of her anxiety resulted in her becoming obsessive and compulsive to cope with her feelings. The powerlessness that she felt in being stalked and harassed caused her to exert control where she could, the participant indicated this by explaining that:

"It was more mentally abusive than physically abusive if I can put it that way and ja, that was the, I think, the biggest problem. I never knew that it was actual stalking back then and I just thought that I must tolerate him you know. You know, I became OCD in terms of packing and cleaning because I didn't want to go anywhere. So what I started doing was repacking cupboards and I became an incredible, neat person because I packed things like, you know, in rows and I made sure everything was perfect, I can just be my own little world. So that became quite excessive being my packing. Maybe I was depressed, I do not know".

Rose felt humiliated at her workplace. She also described feelings of fear and anxiety. Her life was consumed by the offender's behaviour, and she felt she had no peace. She also did not pursue new relationships out of fear of how her ex-partner's behaviour may escalate. The participant highlighted this by explaining that:

"I felt he made me look unprofessional at work, he was always humiliating me. That was scary. Sometimes I was fearful and anxious. I did not think he was capable of physically hurting me but then at one point, I would have never thought he would

be capable of stalking me and assaulting my security so who knows? I never had peace though. Sometimes he would just message and threaten to show up, not show up, just threaten and it was like he wanted me to be on edge. I also stopped trying to date anyone else because I was scared he would do a lot more if he knew”.

Lola described the somatic experiences of eczema and weight gain as a result of the distress she suffered. Sleep disturbances and headaches were also mentioned by participants. The physical impact of stress was explained by the participant as followed:

“So, yeah, my, my eczema, for instance, it's, it's come back with such a vengeance and nothing I do will go away. I've got constant skin things that it's, it's the stress of everything just keeps on going. It doesn't want to go away. And I need to lose weight because I've also, also started eating myself into a... You know... I Suffer from a lot of weight. I think I've, I've quite literally doubled in size”.

5.3.2 Occupational effects

Don shared how her employer and co-workers were supportive of her when her ex-partner stalked and harassed her at work. They assisted with blocking all contact with her, the participant explained below:

“I did contact the HR department to blacklist all his emails. I gave them his cell phone number, his email address, his full name and surname, his ID number so he can't put anything on any of our social media pages, or he can't email me through work at all or any of my bosses or anybody that's superior to me”.

Rose expressed feeling humiliated at work. She felt that her ex-partner had tried to ruin her reputation at work and eventually moved house and changed jobs. The participant elaborated below:

“I would have to ask the staff at work to lie for me and say I was not there when he would call, it was so embarrassing because he was tarnishing my reputation. He would come to my workplace. At that time I worked for someone else. He would shout outside the building and ask to see me. He knew how hard I worked for what I have and it felt like he wanted to destroy my career. I felt he made me look unprofessional at work, he was always humiliating me. I changed jobs, I am not saying that I was not going to change jobs eventually as I had ambitious plans, but he made me want to have a private practice even faster. What he did make me do was move. I moved to a new suburb just so that I would not have to wonder if he was going to be waiting outside my flat or if I would bump into him”.

Similarly, Pumla shared that her co-workers “got tired” of her former partner contacting them to harass them.

5.3.3 Psychosocial effects

Don described how her friends and children were impacted by stalking and harassment. She attributes losing friendships to stalking and harassment and it felt out of her control. Her children have received counselling due to the trauma. She stated the following:

“So he then started harassing and finding my friends on social media and sending them messages. My children saw everything. All three of them, my 13-year old, 11-year old and 3-year old, I've now got them in trauma counselling”.

Lola felt that stalking and harassment is not well understood and her family and friends did not offer her the support she needed. The participant further explained:

“This is why I say because the story is so complex and there's so many different avenues and people involved. It was difficult for people to believe us, which is why

I think the only reason why we, we, when I actually...The normal people can't fathom this, you know, yeah, they can't fathom this”.

Pumla shared that some friends were supportive, however, her family and some friends collude with the former partner and she felt a lack of support. She also felt that she cannot date anyone else as her ex-partner had control over her. The participants shared:

“I was worried that I'll see him somewhere then maybe he will do something like hit me or anything, so I stopped going to my grandmother's house, so now I cannot go and see her because he didn't know where I stay with my parents but he knows where my grandmother lives”. Jay

“Some of the friends would ignore him then I also found out like, some friends were actually telling him where I was and giving my location then he would find me. I, I was betrayed by them. I blocked some friends. Then also my family puts pressure on me, on me to get back with him”. Don

Rose felt guilt and shame that her family was impacted by the stalking and harassment. Further to that, the security guard in her complex was assaulted by her ex-partner:

”My sister had moved in with me for a short time when all of it was going on, she arrived from overseas. He knew her well. He would call and harass her too. He would tell her really awful things about me. I felt so guilty because around this time my sister was diagnosed with Depression and I felt I added to her Depression or even caused it. My mother was always worried about me and was afraid of him, that night when he tried to get into my window my mother was there and it scared her so much. On my 30th birthday, all my friends and family found out just how bad his stalking was because he called and harassed me all day. One day a new security was there and actually did let him in, he actually tried to climb into my window and I had to call security to come get him. That was scary. Sometimes I was fearful and anxious”.

5.4 How participants coped with Stalking and Harassment

5.4.1 Methods Employed to Dissipate Stalking and Harassment

Table 5.9

How participants coped with stalking and harassment

Participant	Blocking	Ignoring	Avoid	Social/Family Support	Confronted	Prayer	Work longer hours	Alcohol Use	Change Jobs/Moved Away	Police Report/PO
Jay	X	x	x		X	X				
Lilly	X	x	x	x						
Pumla	X	x	x						X	
Kat	X	x	x							
Don	X	x	x	x	x	x				x
Rose	X	x	x	x		x	x		x	x
Lola	X	x	x	x				x	x	x
Dane		x	x	x					x	

It was noted that the most common form of coping was to attempt to avoid contact with the stalker.

Don shared that she confronted her stalker, she also sought help from friends, family and the police.

Initially, she blocked and ignored her stalker. Faith in God was also attributed as a coping mechanism. The participant explained below:

“So my social media is very blank. He's blocked on all my platforms, but I don't check into places. I don't put personal stuff up. So when he does violate my privacy or he does harass me, I don't respond anymore, before I would because I get so upset. Well, I did get a restraining order against him, and I actually got a friend that's very involved with the CPS and the CPS, and they got the police captain to contact him and that seemed to have simmer down because he's quite scared of authority and police and stuff like that. So that seemed to help. My

religion definitely helped me through and obviously me being brought up where I've had to survive helped because if it was anyone weaker, I don't think a lot of girls would have survived. You can lean on people, speak about it. Don't be quiet about it because people don't know what you're going through and ask for help. I have a very good support system at work, so we've got a counsellor on, on, on the property. So I was seeing her and then I'm on anti-anxiety and antidepressants.''

Lola uses substances to cope with the distress. She also expressed disappointment in finding the police to be unhelpful and dismissive of her concerns.

"I have a whiskey every night. And I try to keep it to one. And then 8 later... Yeah. So I have managed to stop smoking. It's got to be such a bad point, too. I was smoking two to three packets of cigarettes a day. Now, I just need to drop the whiskeys. The police, the police are a joke. I got no help from them. They don't know what hacking is. Or phone cybercrimes probably about eight times they said to me they're busy and I must phone 10111".

Lilly described gaining support from a friend and her mother. She also blocked her ex-partner on social media. The participant explained:

"You know, I'm not really someone who likes to talk about how I feel and whatever, so I do take a lot on myself, I really do, like I said, there were two people who knew. So my mom, who I didn't really share lots with because she was not a fan of him from the beginning of our relationship. I have a friend who I spoke to a lot like she knew everything and so, you know, like when I was having my really down days, like where I was crying or whatever or questioning if I'm making the right decision like I would, I would talk to her".

Kat employed the method of ignoring her ex-partner and reflected that it did not work to end the stalking and harassment:

"Well, I just know, you know, just kind of just ignore it. Then he was always calling me and I was just staying at home because I don't want to see him somewhere where I can go."

Jay expressed blocking her ex-partner, confronting him to stop and threatening to report him to the police. This participant too expressed trouble with speaking to her parents about the stalking and harassment experienced at the hands of the former partner, she said:

"Okay, the texts he sent me over and over then I blocked him. Yeah. 'No, it is the end and now I'm tired', so I decided to, no, let me go and meet him and tell him in person that 'please stop harassing me. It was not my fault. And please stop calling me'. If, if he continues doing this, I think 'I have to tell my dad or my mom because he will be busy harassing me taking advantage of me when parents don't know what happened. So 'please stop calling me a now' I like just stop it. It was not my fault... And if he continues doing this then I told him, 'I am going to report you to the police or go to my parents because I'm really tired of you. So please leave me alone. I decided to change my number also."

Pumla blocked contact and moved away to avoid her ex-partner. The participant explained that moving away did not help because he could still reach her using telephone calls. This participant too explained the difficulty in having family believe what was happening to her, she said:

"I used to avoid him and just stay home by myself but it is hard because my family welcome him like I am crazy. I also blocked him. I moved away, for a few years I

went to Durban but then I lost my job and had to come back to Joburg. But even in Durban, he was calling all the time so he does not go away”.

Dane confided in one friend about her distress over being stalked and harassed though largely coped by herself. She attributes the death of her ex-husband being the reason that the stalking and harassment stopped. She also believed that she could not have gone to the police for help. She explained:

”The only one I really spoke to is my one friend, but she was living overseas, I couldn't really talk to her a lot. But when I, when I did speak to her, she came to visit me when she was here, used to check on me, but nothing major. I kept it mostly to myself, which is also a problem. I think I don't talk about our problems”.

“I think I just kept busy and work. I would work till late at night. I never went out or anything. I did volunteer work with youth groups because I felt I needed to be distracted. And my faith in God also helped me cope. The biggest thing was that in 2015 I obtained a P.O, I did not want to, I had learnt that his ex-girlfriend had a P.O against him and I really wanted him to just back off on his own. In some weird way I felt that would hurt him and I did not want to ruin his life, I just wanted him to leave me alone and I asked him so many times, I tried to reason with him. I wanted to escape him. He would not stop and I felt he forced me to get the P.O. At that time I did not think of my experiences as trauma, but now I think it was traumatic”. Rose

Three participants Don, Jay and Rose mentioned faith in a religion as a means to cope with their distressing feelings arising from the stalking and harassment.

Rose expressed that she kept busy at work to deal with her distress. More so, she obtained a PO and that ended the stalking and harassment. She did also note that it is difficult to successfully obtain it and she was able to based on her knowledge of legal matters. She explained:

“I think it really did. I was lucky. When he opposed it, I was meant to appear in court each time, but I would send my candidate attorney to represent me and I would reply via an affidavit, I just did not want to see him. It was made final and served and is still in effect”.

Participants described a lack of support from law enforcement in that they felt the police are not trained to manage stalking and harassment.

5.4.2 The Influence of Culture on Stalking and Harassment on how females cope

Don expressed that her ex-partner was controlling and perhaps this was because of the age difference between them. This might have given the former partner the impression that his behaviour was not wrong and perhaps, the behaviour was disciplinary. She tolerated his actions despite the effects it had on her. The participant highlighted this when she said:

“And to be honest, I think, yes, he's South African, is also a White male, but he's a lot older than me, so he's 12 years older than me. And he grew up in a family where it was children should be seen and not heard kind of thing. And if they were out of control they would get a beating. So I think those were a lot of his, his issues that he kind of thinks he had authority over everybody, his ex-wife, he was like that with as well”.

Lilly felt that differences in culture and economic status may have contributed to her ex-partner's behaviour. The participant explained that:

"I think in a lot of ways because he didn't come from a very good family, they didn't have a lot of money. He had, three of them and he had a single mom. His dad was never there. And they were quite poor, to be quite honest, if, yeah, if I'm being straightforward and I grew up really, really privileged, I did. There was nothing that I, I didn't ever go without anything. He's, he was born in South Africa, but his family is German and we are Afrikaans."

Participants Kat and Jay expressed beliefs that patriarchy contributed to their ex-partner's behaviour, as well as cultural beliefs that influenced her family's perception of what stalking and harassment are. They also alluded to power and control originating from the belief that a male has the right to do it:

Kat: "Because he is a male and I am a female then he can say what he wants and I cannot have a choice. If he was the one to break it off then okay but I cannot be the one. Then my family also were telling me that I must respect him and I cannot switch my phone off. Yes... in terms of like, maybe as... culturally as a male, he has the rights... Yeah. So I'd say that because he is, is Zulu then he knows my family will support him not me. Yes. And so the males believe in... they have to be powerful and, the decisions, they make the decisions. Yes, because in my culture, you know, you can't, you can't, really date someone and just go and then date another one, and another one. It's seen as it's just typical in a way that you must stay with the guy even when he is cheating and hitting you...you must just stay."

Jay: "It also influenced because he would say, 'I need you to respect me'".

Jay added that she did not feel that her parents would understand her struggles due to their societal norms, this is why the participant has not confided in their parents. This elevated the participants' trust issues, the participant said:

"Do you know African parents? So I didn't want them to know. Yeah, that's why I kept it to myself because I didn't trust anyone. I'm still having trust issues with everyone. I cannot even think how I will trust someone because I trusted this guy. I don't trust anyone. I don't. I mean, like African parents, they always jump to conclusions. They don't want to listen to you. They do not listen to your opinion when you try to say something. It's like they're going to make you feel like you're at fault."

Pumla expressed that culture and societal norms did not regard her attack as rape and instead asked her to reconcile the relationship with her ex-partner. Furthermore, their beliefs did not accept that her ex-partner was stalking and harassing her as it was seen as acceptable behaviour. The participant explained:

"And in my culture he has to be in my life, especially with him being the father of my child. My family do not support me, and it's always like, 'oh bullshit, this is the father of your child so sort it out with him'. They do not understand. They tell me that this happens to everyone and not just me and even that time they told me that it is not rape when you were dating the guy before. My family do not focus on emotions especially, the females, they just take what the males do. Yes because look at how my mum looks at relationships, like the male is in charge.

So even if someone ill- treated you as long as they give you money, then whatever they do is okay. You know, then it does not matter and you know. Black females are always in survival mode trying to escape. And people don't see the level of abuse that happens in that. It's scary. Even in my community, I can see how many females are abused and they just take it. The pressure of my family. Yeah. There's a lot of pressure to save them from their decisions also you know. You dated him so it is your fault and it is not rape because you dated him and

you can't report it because you dated him. And when he is abusing me you cannot report it".

Dane and Rose believed that culture supported patriarchy and resulted in controlling behaviours. There was also an age difference highlighted here which the participant thought might have also contributed to the former partner's behaviour:

Dane: "Because I was married to an Afrikaaner. Yeah. So, yeah, yeah, we spoke Afrikaans, and he grew up in a very, very strict Afrikaans home. Then he was also older so he expected I must just obey him you know. I must just listen".

Rose: "I was raised to respect males no matter what and I never wanted to hurt him in any way and it took me a long time to get the P.O. My norms and my culture are to not hurt a male and I felt responsible for him. So many females deal with stalking and harassment after a breakup as though it is normal and there is trauma behind it and it affects our lives you know".

5.5 Conclusion

This section provided an overview of the findings, as illustrated through participant extracts. Stalking and harassment in females by former intimate partners were explored through their narrative accounts. The following section will provide an understanding of these findings, in relation to the theoretical and conceptual frame, as well as the related literature.

CHAPTER 6

6. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

This qualitative research aimed to investigate the effects of stalking and harassment on females who experience this conduct from former intimate partners. The study also aimed to explore the factors that influence how females cope with stalking and harassment. Finally, the study aimed to explore the role of cultural perceptions in stalking and harassment.

Thematic Analysis was used to understand the lived experiences of the eight (8) participants who shared their experiences of being stalked and harassed by former intimate partners. The use of semi-structured interviews provided saturated data to provide information on the impact of stalking and harassment, as well as the role of culture and how females coped of which a discussion follows.

The research questions were:

- What are the experiences of females with stalking and harassment after ending an intimate partner relationship?
- What are some of the factors that influence how females cope with stalking and harassment after the breakup of an intimate partner relationship?
- What role do cultural perceptions play in stalking and harassment?

6.2 Summary

The study was located in a framework of Social Support Theory and Conceptualisations of how females are affected (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007) and coped (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014) with Stalking and Harassment. Data was collected from eight (8) semi-structured interviews. The research questions were: What are the experiences of females with stalking and harassment after

ending an intimate partner relationship? What are some of the factors that influence how females cope with stalking and harassment after the breakup of an intimate partner relationship? What role do cultural perceptions play in stalking and harassment?

This discussion aims to explore how the findings that emerged from the interviews answer the research questions. It also aims to show how the findings of the current study relate to the existing literature on stalking and harassment in females by former intimate partners.

6.3 Discussion

6.3.1 Who is a victim?

The racial categories of the participants included three (3) Black, four (4) White, and one (1) Indian participant. All of the participants except one, Jay, who was in Grade 12, had obtained tertiary education and were employed.

The participants ages ranged between 18 and 41 years at the time they experienced stalking and harassment. The current study therefore aligns with global research findings that suggest that females aged 15 to 34 years old are vulnerable to stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner (Burczycka & Conroy, 2018). Whilst research on stalking and harassment is limited in Africa, a study focussing on low and middle-income countries including East and Southern Africa, indicated that young adult females were at higher risk for gender-based violence (Decker et al., 2015). This was further supported by another South African study which suggests that younger females aged between fifteen (15) to twenty-four (24) years old, have the least power in society and still face intimate partner violence (Karim & Baxter, 2016). It is further suggested that patriarchy serves a central role in gender-based violence (Thobejane, 2019).

The current study suggests that in South Africa, females are vulnerable to stalking and harassment irrespective of age or socio-economic status. This may be attributed to the influence of cultural

perceptions on stalking and harassment (Chung & Sheridan, 2022), where females are less likely to recognise stalking and harassment as a form of violence and have access to resources to speak out against it. It also suggests that females of any age are vulnerable to a sense of powerlessness regarding stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner. This will be discussed further on how females coped with stalking and harassment.

6.3.2 Participants' experiences of the relationship before the breakup

6.3.2.1 Substance use and violence

Participants Don, Lilly, Dane and Rose also described that the stalking and harassing behaviours escalated in its intensity when their former partners were intoxicated with the use of alcohol or other substances. They also shared that the former partners were more 'toxic' when using substances before the breakup. Don stated that during the relationship, he was 'quite pleasant' unless he was intoxicated, and that upon cessation of the relationship, she experienced more stalking and harassment when he was intoxicated. Rose shared that her former partner would engage in more risky stalking and harassing behaviours when he was intoxicated, such as breaking into her home and physically assaulting a security guard at the complex where she resided.

The current research findings are similar to global findings where substance use was noted in perpetrators of former intimate partner stalking, harassment and other forms of violence during courtship (Gilchrist & Hegarty, 2017; Matjasko et al., 2013).

The findings of the current research also aligns with South African research where a link between substance use and gender-based violence was noted (Masiko & Xinwa, 2017). The findings may also suggest that, whilst substance use was noted to escalate the violent behaviours towards four (4) of the participants, substance use may not be the only risk factor to violence. Further research may be needed to explore other risk factors.

6.3.2.2 *Why is he so paranoid?*

The participants of the current research shared that their former intimate partners were mistrusting and suspicious during the relationship, as well as when the relationship ended. Their stalkers often accused them of cheating, as with participants Don, Jay, Pumla, Dane and Rose. This aligns with global research where it was found that intimate partner stalkers displayed paranoid (El-Bassel et al., 2022) and suspicious behaviours (Salari, 2007). Whilst global meta-analysis research findings concluded that this degree of paranoia is due to mental illness, specifically Personality Disorders, the current research cannot make that conclusion due to a lack of access to information about the perpetrators.

6.3.3 Participants' experiences of Stalking and Harassment after the breakup

6.3.3.1 *Methods employed to Stalk and Harass*

The participants each described the significant ways in which they were stalked and harassed by a former intimate partner upon cessation of the relationship. The degree of how they were affected appeared to be related to the extent to which the participant was stalked and harassed. Technology also made it possible for victimisation to continue in the form of access to social media profiles. Former partners used technology to stalk and harass.

Stalking and harassing behaviours employed by the former intimate partner included unwanted calls, emails, messages, social media, visits and drive-by attempts at work and home. It also included being watched, surveillance, followed, the threat of violence and unwanted contact with friends/family or people known to the participant. The methods were both pervasive and repetitive, and aligned with the findings of global research.

As observed in this study, research indicates that stalking and harassment take various forms and these experiences include being followed (Messing et al., 2017), as well as unwanted forms of

contact such as receiving unwanted calls and visits as well as receiving threats (Carney & Barner, 2012; Ornstein & Rickne, 2013). In addition to these forms of stalking and harassment, further forms of violence include being subject to verbal abuse and sexual violence (Smith et al., 2018). This supports the experiences of the participants who reported verbal and sexual abuse, whilst this research study also highlighted the prevalence of emotional and physical abuse. Another study found that offenders would send unwanted messages, gifts or notes, make unwanted calls, employ following and surveillance of their victim, use of offensive or sexual language in unwanted communication, make threats and sexually harass females. It further found that during lockdown due to Covid-19, offenders used technology to continue to stalk and harass their victims (Bracewell et al., 2020). The use of technology including, social media, phones, emails and messaging, were also employed to stalk and harass in this study.

The current findings align with global research regarding the methods used to stalk and harass females in a manner that was also repetitive and pervasive.

A study conducted in Australia found that images of a victim were used without his/her permission by being uploaded to the internet. It was further found to be more prevalent in cases where the victim ended a relationship with a partner and impacted the victim's dignity and autonomy.

“Image-based abuse has emerged so rapidly that it is inevitable that law and policy are playing catch-up. Yet in the absence of adequate legal and support responses specifically addressing these wrongs, victims have had limited access to justice” (Henry et al., 2017). One participant in the present research reported that she experienced cyberstalking and image-based abuse. This finding on the use of cyberstalking a former intimate partner cannot be compared to South African research and perhaps suggests that further studies can be done in this area.

6.3.3.2 Stalking and harassing family, friends and co-workers

The current research found that family members and friends were also harassed and threatened by the former intimate partner. Global research found that offenders also stalk and harass family members (Miller, 2012). Family and friends who are stalked also experience distress (Fleming et al., 2012). A stalker that engages with the family and friends of a victim is described as third order effects (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2007).

It was also found in global studies that stalkers use children from within the former intimate relationship to gain access to their victim (Nikupeteri, 2017). One study found that sharing a child with a former intimate partner who is now stalking and harassing a victim, increases the risk of violence towards the female (Burczycka & Conroy, 2018). Another study found that former partners used the children to threaten, emotionally abuse and stalk the victim (Toews & Bermea, 2017). The current research also included participants who were victims of the same occurrence. Participants Don and Kat found it difficult to avoid their stalkers when access was gained with the pretext of visiting the children. This further impacted their well-being with the resultant effect of stress and anger on how to manage this situation.

Females experienced stalking and harassment by ex-partners at the workplace where the unwanted contact extended to their respective places of employment. This resulted in females experiencing career disturbances and in some cases loss of work (Sheridan et al., 2019). Females are often impacted at their jobs too as the ex-partners gain access to them and cause disruption in their work performance and humiliation (Mason & Magnet, 2012). The participants in the current study also expressed the intensity of the fear and humiliation when they were stalked and harassed at work. Don and Rose noted that their respective employers were supportive and prevented the ex-partner from accessing them. Lola described resigning and finding new work in the hopes of the ex-partner

not being able to find her and that the ex-partner would harass her co-workers. The findings are not compared to a South African study as this particular area does not appear to be well-researched.

6.3.3.3 Duration of the Stalking and Harassment

Global research suggests that a female is stalked on average for 22 months (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014) or 24 months (McEwan et al., 2020). Some of the findings of the current research align with this in that in some cases the stalking dissipated between 6 and 24 months. It differs in that three of the participants described that the stalking began between one (1) to six (6) years ago and is remains ongoing in varying ways. This may be attributed to a different set of resources available in South Africa for victims of stalking and harassment.

6.3.4 The effects of Stalking and Harassment

6.3.4.1 Stalking and harassment: a crime of violence against females

In some cases of the current research, the stalking and harassment escalated into violence in the forms of breaking in and entering the home, physical and sexual assault. It also suggests that stalking by a current or former intimate partner does not receive the serious attention it warrants (Van der Aa, 2012). Research also suggests that females who are stalked by a former intimate partner are at higher risk for violence compared to females stalked by a stranger (Gerbrandij et al., 2018). Females who were victimized whilst in the relationship were found to suffer physical and sexual assault and stalking upon cessation of the relationship (Katz & Rich, 2015). Other studies found that being threatened with a weapon such as a gun was more common (Logan & Lynch, 2018).

The current findings are consistent with global research that suggests stalking is a form of violence and that females are at greater risk to become victims of violent acts. The females in the current study were either threatened with physical violence, whilst others were physically assaulted. The

current study supports these findings due to the violent nature of how the participants were stalked and harassed. It implies that stalking and harassment in South Africa ought to be viewed as a crime of violence against females. The current findings also align with a South African study by Peltzer and Pengpid, (2014) where a link was found between intimate partner violence and stalking.

6.3.4.2 Psychological distress

Global research suggests that stalking and harassment by an ex-partner are more threatening and attacking (Logan, 2022). Studies have also found that females who were stalked by an ex-partner were at greater risk to develop PTSD and psychological distress (Sheridan & Lyndon, 2012). The harm of being stalked is more than the effects of the violence but also the cumulative effect it has on a victim over time (Logan & Walker, 2017). Anxiety and depression were found to occur in females who were stalked (Worsley et al., 2017). This led to feelings of powerlessness, shame, guilt and anger. When a female blames herself it is described as ‘moving inward’ (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014).

Global research also suggests that females experience verbal, physical and sexual abuse as well as depression and anxiety as a result of stalking (Acquadro Maran & Varetto, 2018). Emotional and physical trauma affects the mind, body and brain. PTSD and other trauma-related conditions due to life experiences have long-term effects on an individual (Van der Kolk, 2014). The effects of psychological trauma can have a somatic effect on the body. A fight or flight response to a threat is considered a reflexive response. Exposure to a perceived threat can cause chronic dysregulation. This can cause functional impairments as a result of conditions such as PTSD. Studies have found that PTSD may have similar impairments as found in patients with traumatic brain injury (Sherin & Nemeroff, 2022). The harm of being stalked is more than the effects of violence but also the cumulative effect it has on a victim over time (Logan & Walker, 2017).

Similarly, the participants in the current research experienced the psychological, emotional and physical effects of being stalked, the impact is long-standing and still ongoing. The current research found that participants described feeling anxious and depressed. Additionally, it found that physical symptoms such as weight gain and skin issues were described, suggesting an impact relating to anxiety and reduced self-esteem. Some also engaged in therapy and were also prescribed medication to treat anxiety and depression. The current study found that participants blamed themselves for the stalking and harassment and were left feeling that their self-worth had declined. This aligns with research focussing on mental health, that highlighted the prevalence of feelings of guilt and self-blame (Karakurt et al., 2014). For some participants of the current research, shame and guilt were experienced as a result of dealing with stalking and harassment, as well as the humiliation that they suffered. Further studies also found that females experienced shame, guilt and low self-worth due to intimate partner violence (Alsaker et al., 2016; Toews & Bermea, 2017). Another study found that females experienced shame and blame which isolated them from others (Nikupeteri, 2017). The direct impact from the stalking and harassment to the participant are described as first order effects described by Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) and highlights the severity of the consequences to well-being.

A study found that females who were stalked and harassed were more likely to experience self-harming behaviour and suicidal ideation (McMaleus et al., 2021). “Chronic conditions such as headaches, insomnia, pelvic pain, depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder and suicidal thoughts were also present” (Puronvarsi & Ruotanen, 2017). Participants in the current study described somatic complaints as a result of stalking and harassment, such as eczema, weight gain and headaches. Another participant in the current study also expressed suicidal ideation as she felt hopeless that the stalking and harassment would end. Depression and helplessness may lead to suicidal thoughts (Alison & Alison, 2013).

One participant in the current research shared how distressing it was for her when she suffered revenge porn. She described feeling humiliation, mistrust and depression. Another study showed that females who were the victims of revenge porn suffered trust issues, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. The study further found that revenge porn was a serious action, had a significant impact on the victim's mental health and the impact was likened to a sexual assault (Bates, 2017).

Females also experienced physical injury, chronic pain, lower abdominal pain and bowel issues, dysmenorrhoea, eating disorders, chest pains and sleep disturbances (Mason & Magnet, 2012). The participants in the current research also reflected on how their physical health was impacted by pain, loss/increased appetite and sleep disturbances.

Research suggests that victims of stalking experience fear for themselves and the people closest to them due to the threat that the offender poses. Some research also found that the longer a female was stalked, the more the fear was felt (Podaná & Imříšková, 2016). Another study found that fear resulting from stalking is a complex emotion (Pereira & Matos, 2016). The current research findings are aligned in that the participants experienced intense fear resulting from stalking and harassment. The fear of sleeping, the fear of going out, the fear of their former partner having access to them, the fear of going to work and the fear of confiding in their loved ones due to not being believed. It may therefore be argued that the stalking and harassment has series of implications, which may be understood in relation to Spitzber and Cupach's (2007) postulations with regards to the impact to one's social life, in terms of second order effects.

The current research also found that at least one participant expressed that her children were impacted with psychological distress and had to seek therapy. Research has found that children of stalking victims also develop PTSD and psychological distress (Elklit et al., 2019). The children

were exposed to and also witnessed the stalking and harassment therefore, they also developed the fear that something more drastic might happen to their parents.

6.3.5 How participants coped with Stalking and Harassment

6.3.5.1 Methods employed to dissipate the stalking and harassment

The findings of this study highlighted that the participants employed various methods to avoid stalking and harassment.

Global research found that females use technology to mitigate stalking and harassment (Matthews et al., 2017). The findings of this study found that participants coped by being passive (moving away), avoiding the stalker (moving inward) or compliance (moving towards) (Chan & Sheridan, 2020). This way of coping is described as ‘moving away’ where social contact is blocked, and the victim moves to a new dwelling place.

Similarly, the current research also found that participants described blocking all contact with their ex-partners. Some also were compliant and felt hopeless that the ex-partner would leave them alone. In most cases, participants attempted to hide or move away so that their former partners could not get access to them, but this was futile because the access to technology made it easy to get in contact with the victims or their loved ones.

Global research suggests that when a female ‘moves with’ and attempts to reason with the stalker in an attempt to dissipate the occurrence, it is sometimes effective (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). In the current study, Jay described meeting with her former partner and explaining to him how much his behaviour affected her. She also threatened to report him to the police. This ended the stalking and harassment. ‘Moving against’ the stalking and harassment includes confronting the stalker as well as seeking out legal avenues to dissipate it (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). Don and Rose both enacted

this way of coping. Don still experiences a degree of stalking and harassment and Rose shared that her former partner stopped contacting her.

Global research suggests that some females resort to substance or alcohol use to cope with stalking and harassment (Mason & Magnet, 2012). One participant in the current research also shared that she drank alcohol and smoked cigarettes to cope with the psychological distress she suffered.

One participant shared that she used alcohol and cigarettes to cope with her trauma. She attributed this to feeling unsupported by family, friends and the police. Global research suggests that females who are stalked do use substances and other forms of self-harm (Reid et al., 2021) to cope and in South Africa a study found that females who experience GBV also use this way of coping (Selowa et al., 2022).

6.3.5.2 The lack of support from the justice system in South Africa

A study found that a lack of support for females stalked by former partners results in varying degrees of distress (Short et al., 2014). The importance of support is therefore highlighted.

Previous research related to stalking and harassment suggested that females often felt that their trauma was unseen and suffered long-term. Additionally, they felt the justice system did not support them (Korkodeilou, 2017). Participants of the current study also expressed a lack of support in the legal system which further exacerbated their struggles with mental health. It was found that females believed that police are not properly trained to assist them with stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner. This is of concern, given that one in five females will be stalked in their lifetime and it is therefore necessary for adequate training to be in place (Weller et al., 2013).

Participants in the current study expressed feeling let down by police as they did not feel heard and felt unsupported. The validation of trauma is necessary for support. This includes an awareness of

trauma for marginalised groups of people who were previously unseen. The healing only begins when the trauma is seen and understood (Newton, 2022).

One study found that victims who did not express feeling fear were not as likely to be granted a protection order as they were not seen as vulnerable. Further to that it found that even in the absence of a clear verbal threat, the victims still experienced distress (van der Aa, 2018). There was found to be an increase in threats, violence and stalking from an ex-partner when females sought help from the police (Messing et al., 2017). One participant shared that she felt that when she reported cyberstalking and revenge porn as well as stalking and harassment, she was mocked and mistreated by the police and believed that they were not trained to help her. This highlights the assertions of Sissing, (2013), that there is more to learn about cyberstalking and related crimes in South Africa. One participant shared that as she had access to legal and court-related proceedings, she had the knowledge and access to obtain a protection order. She also offered that if one does not possess the knowledge, it can be difficult to obtain it.

6.3.5.2 Support from family and friends

Research suggests that support from family and friends was most successful in ending the stalking behaviour (Geistman et al., 2013). Females were found to cope by confronting their former partner or by seeking help from family and friends.

The participants in the current research described working long hours to distract themselves from the effects of being stalked and harassed. Some participants also attributed prayer as a means of how they coped.

6.3.5.3 External influences on coping with Stalking and Harassment

When a female engages ‘moving outward’ social support is sought (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2014). The participants in the current research expressed that patriarchy and culture did not consider the

behaviour to be stalking and harassment and this also prevented the family and community from supporting them to end the stalking and harassment. One participant shared that she was made to feel that the child she conceived when her ex-partner stalked and raped her, was not born out of rape at all as they once dated. The participants seem to be controlled by the culture and gendered or societal norms they found themselves around (Perrin et al., 2019). The gendered perceptions embedded in different cultural beliefs are the cause behind family members and friends not being supportive when females express allegations of stalking and harassment (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021).

Participants of the current research described experiencing coercive control whilst they were in the relationship which escalated post-breakup. The participants also described feeling that they were 'owned' by their ex-partners and had lost autonomy. Research has found that abusive intimate partner control is goal oriented and achieved with the use of threats (Hamberger et al., 2017).

Another study explored whether younger females do not seek help because gender-based violence is normalised (Palermo et al., 2014). This aligns with the findings of the current research where the participants highlighted external influences as a barrier to seek help. This included cultural perceptions of what male behaviour is acceptable and whether speaking out on stalking and harassment would yield support or leave the victims feeling unheard. The current research also found that participants felt that friends and family were either a source of support or they lost a connection with them as the stalking and harassment were hard to believe and understand leaving the participants feeling further isolated. Social Support Theory highlights that a connection with others is possibly the most beneficial form of help a victim can acquire (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). With participants Don and Rose, it was found that social support from others and the legal system, the stalking and harassment reduced.

Patriarchy was also referred to when speaking about former partners who were much older, and thus, treated their partner as though they were children. The older partner demanded to be respected and this took the form of abuse, which post-breakup became stalking and harassment. Research relevant to the South African context has highlighted the role of patriarchy in the prevalence of gender-based violence (Allen, 2018).

A participant alluded to African parents, in a sense, the African culture. The participant highlighted that the African culture does not allow one to speak truthfully without any judgements. This made it difficult for the participant to speak to her parents about her experience in the relationship and after the relationship ended. It should be noted that the participant did not speak out to her parents about the stalking and harassment experienced. This sentiment aligns with South African research on gender-based violence in that it is challenging for females to speak about their experiences (Abiolu, 2022). Another participant referred to the Zulu culture as being a culture that demanded that she respects a partner she is with, even if there is physical abuse involved. The participant referred to the female in the relationship being seen as less than the male, this also meant that family members were more likely to listen to the male than the female. In this case, a female is meant to obey the male, despite the ‘challenges’ experienced in the relationship. A study done in South Africa suggested that when “ilobolo” is paid as a “bride price” it may actually perpetuate a form of violence when the bride is viewed as “property” and devoid of rights (Mazibuko, 2016). These perceptions made the participant feel hopeless and also displayed a lack of potential support from family. The participant’s concerns may be understood in relation to research by Mazibuko (2016), that explored the possible link between notions of African culture and how these may influence power dynamics within relationships.

Another participant made reference to the Afrikaner culture, referencing strictness and obedience. South African literature has placed considerable emphasis on the link between the Afrikaner culture

and patriarchy (Coetzee, 2021; Robert, 2021). Recent literature has also explored the practice of patriarchy in relationships (Steenkamp, 2016).

Whilst participants may consider their experiences unique based on either African or Afrikaner culture, it may be suggested that a broader culture of patriarchy may be operational within the South African context. This argument does not discount that the practice of patriarchy may be distinct in response to specific cultural practices or beliefs but suggests that these distinct practices may be influenced by broader patriarchal structures.

6.4 Conclusion

The discussion served to provide an overview of the central themes surmised from the research findings in response to the research questions and existing literature.

Overall, the findings suggest that there is an impact on females who experience stalking and harassment by former intimate partners. The impact includes psychological, physical, occupational and psychosocial effects. These effects appeared to have long-term distress for each participant.

It was further suggested that cultural and societal and gender norms influence perceptions of stalking, and this ultimately impacts how females cope with stalking and harassment.

Females who showed help-seeking behaviour from informal sources appeared to have a better outcome in the cessation of stalking and harassment as well as a sense of support.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The female participants of this study indicated being stalked and harassed by their former partners. The research findings highlighted the psychological, physical and occupational impact on the participants. Participants lived with anxiety and fear for their lives due to threats from their former intimate partners, unwanted visits, and also being followed and tracked via social media platforms. This would cause some participants to hide from the world to hide from their stalkers. However, technology was not making this possible as the participants were able to be tracked down digitally and even through their loved ones.

An important research finding is that participants expressed ambivalence in reaching out to the South African Police Services (SAPS). This may be attributed to the challenges experienced when trying to obtain a Protection Order (PO) or reporting occurrences of cyberstalking, as well as a feeling that the police did not take their accounts of stalking and harassment seriously. However, amongst the participants who reached out for POs, it was not an adequate barrier to prevent stalking and harassment.

The participants coped mainly by seeking psychological help. Some participants coped by seeking help from their loved ones and those closest to them.

However, the research findings highlighted that within a patriarchal society, gendered norms and biases cloud the judgements of those who should be a support system to victims. Though participants attributed their difficulties to what they perceived as specific cultural norms, an overview of the participant experiences suggest a broader patriarchal culture. As such, the broader patriarchal culture and the ways in which it is enacted within particular groups may act as a barrier against help-seeking behaviour.

In conclusion, the research findings convey the significant and long-lasting implications of stalking and harassment on psychological and psychosocial well-being. Moreover, the findings demonstrate the different ways in which violence is enforced, although the current South African law enforcement system does not facilitate an appropriate response in response to the different forms of violence. This contributes to an overarching system that hinders supportive structures, given the patriarchal norms embedded within the broader South African society, as expressed in the lack of support provided within family systems.

7.1 Limitations of the current research

The study was restricted to participants who visited the Lifeline online platforms, as well as those who were residing in Johannesburg. It is important to note that given the recruitment process, the participants included in this study already demonstrated an awareness of select support services such as Lifeline as well as an intent for help-seeking. It would therefore be important for future studies to explore the experiences of those who have not sought professional assistance.

The study employed a qualitative approach and was exploratory. The data cannot therefore be generalised to a broader South African population of females who have experienced stalking and harassment.

Data collection was done by the researcher and there was a potential for subjective interpretation. The researcher tried to minimise bias by placing topics in separate categories and summarising answers whilst maintaining the integrity of the original context.

There is limited research in South Africa on stalking and access to literature was found to be a limitation. Despite the latter, many of the findings in this study align with the global body of literature available on stalking and harassment. It is therefore surmised that the research findings from this study can contribute to South African literature pertaining to stalking and harassment.

Participants were trusted to answer honestly in this exploratory research study via semi-structured interviews. As the topic was sensitive, there was a potential limitation in that the participants may not have fully expressed the extent of their experiences. The researcher aimed to address this by establishing rapport and informing participants that they had the option of not answering a question that they were not comfortable with.

The sample size was small and did pose a risk of potential data limitation as the researcher did not recruit a large number of respondents. Sample size depends on the quality of the data collected and not the number of participants. It also depends on the topic and the available resources (Boddy, 2016). Although it was possible to extract rich data, the researcher cannot use it to generalise.

7.2 Implications

The implications of the study are two-fold. Firstly, relating to the implications of the impact of stalking and harassment on females by a former intimate partner and secondly relating to the support of females who are victims. The findings indicate that the participants experienced significant impact on psychological, physical, occupational and psychosocial well-being. Therefore, the understanding of stalking and harassment through more traditional theoretical views could be expanded to include complex views of the systemic challenges within a South African context.

It would be helpful to acknowledge stalking and harassment as unwanted, and a form of violence against females. To this end, legal (formal) support can be extended to assist females. The law on stalking and harassment should be clear and the role of the judicial system and police should also be clear. Support to females should include elements to attend to their safety and protection from harm. It should also attend to their psychological needs to manage the impacts on their well-being.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

Whilst this study focused on the impact on females by stalking and harassment, how they coped and the role of culture, it would be helpful to also study this in greater depth. The sample size was small and perhaps a larger size would allow comparisons in terms of culture to be made. Gendered perceptions of stalking may also be explored in greater detail.

Quantitative research on understanding risk categories for vulnerable females may be required to understand stalking and harassment by a former intimate partner.

Findings indicated that stalking and harassment have an impact on overall well-being. Greater insight is needed on the long-term effects of stalking and harassment and future research may do well to focus on specific psychological or psychosocial implications. Moreover, it may also be beneficial for future studies to explore the role of protection orders and whether these serve as adequate deterrents in South Africa.

Further research may also be needed on the role that police and the judicial system play as support to females who are victims of stalking and harassment. It is believed that this information may be useful to assist females and intervene to prevent and reduce the impact of stalking and harassment. Many females reported a lack of action to assist concerning the police. It is proposed that the focus of stalking and harassment be placed on the impact on the victim as well as the behaviour of the offender (Taylor-Dunn et al., 2021).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical clearance

Appendix B: Participant recruitment invitation

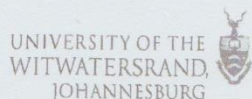
Appendix C: Participant information sheet

Appendix D: Informed consent

Appendix E: Participant questionnaire

Appendix F: Distress protocol

APPENDIX A



Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Du Toit

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: H21/06/05

PROJECT TITLE

The impact of stalking and harassment on females of intimate partner violence in Johannesburg following the break-up of a relationship

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Mrs M Du Toit

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

Human and Community Development/

DATE CONSIDERED

21 May 2021

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved
Risk Level: Medium

EXPIRY DATE

17 August 2024

DATE

18 August 2021

CHAIRPERSON

(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Prof L Goldschmidt

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.**

Signature

20 / 08 / 2021
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX B

University of the Witwatersrand

Discipline of Psychology School of Human and Community Development



You are invited to participate in a research study

My name is Marlene Du Toit and I am a Masters student in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I am investigating ***the impact of stalking and harassment on females of intimate partner violence in Johannesburg following the breakup of a relationship.***

This research project aims to find out the effects of stalking and harassment, the factors that influence how females cope and the role of cultural perceptions in stalking and harassment.

I would like to invite you to voluntarily take part in this research project remotely via Zoom, Teams Viewer or telephonically. This activity will involve sharing your experiences of a former abusive intimate partner	You must be over the age of 18 and reside in Johannesburg to participate. If you are currently feeling distressed over stalking and harassment from a former intimate partner, I ask that you	If you have any questions about this research feel free to contact me on the details listed below. If you would like to participate, an appointment for an interview will be set up with you at a time that is convenient for you.
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relationship that involved stalking and harassment.	do not participate at this time to avoid further distress.	
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Research student: Marlene Du Toit

Mobile Number: 064 700 5786 (Whatsapp also available)

Email Address: 2335018@students.wits.ac.za

APPENDIX C

Participant Information

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

Discipline of Psychology

School of Human and Community Development



Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Marlene Du Toit and I am a Masters student in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project. I am investigating the impact of stalking and harassment on females of intimate partner violence in Johannesburg following the breakup of a relationship under the supervision of Lynne Goldschmidt. This research project aims to find out the effects of stalking and harassment, the factors that influence how females cope and the role of cultural perceptions in stalking and harassment.

As part of this research project, I would like to invite you to take part in a research interview. It will be conducted remotely, online via Zoom, Teams Viewer or telephonically. This activity will involve sharing your experiences on abusive intimate partner relationships involving stalking and harassment and will take approximately 2 hours.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this interview, you will not receive any direct benefits from participation. There are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. The interview will be recorded so that I may accurately transcribe your answers. I will utilize an app to transcribe the audio recordings and it will be password protected. The audio will be encrypted and stored for future use with the consent of the participant. Your answers may be used in my final research report verbatim and I will not use your name. You may withdraw at any time before the examination of the research or not answer any question if you do not want to. The questionnaire will be completely confidential, and the information you give to me will be held securely. I will discuss the research with my supervisor only. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, you can stop the interview and/or resume at another time. If you need some support or counselling services following the questionnaire, these are available free of charge at Lifeline, Gender-Based Violence and SADAG. The contact detail for LifeLine is (011) 728 1331, the contact number for Gender-based Violence is (011) 715 2000 and the number for SADAG is 0800 456 789. The Emthonjeni Centre can also be contacted for online counselling and Ms Paballo Lepota can be emailed at paballo.lepota@wits.ac.za or contacted at (011) 717 4513). Wits Law Clinic can be contacted for any legal advice/services that may be needed and the contact number is (011) 717 8562. I will

contact you ten days after the interview to check in on how you are doing. If you are currently dealing with symptoms of trauma you should not participate in this study to avoid further distress.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me at the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, kindly request it using my email address and I will be happy to send it to you (optional). The feedback maintains anonymity and is a summary of the feedback of the whole group and not an individual. No individual feedback is given. I will provide GBV/LifeLine with the summary feedback via email. The data collected from this research project will be stored by the research student and or research supervisor and will be kept for 5 years. With your permission, the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers in an anonymized format. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), by telephone at (011) 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Marlene Du Toit

Research student:

Marlene Du Toit, 064 700 5786, 2335018@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor:

Lynne Goldschmidt, 082 307 5174 , lynne.goldschmidt@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX D

Consent

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

Discipline of Psychology

School of Human and Community Development



Title of project: The impact of stalking and harassment on females of intimate partner violence in Johannesburg following the breakup of a relationship.

Name of research student: Marlene Du Toit

I agree to participate in this research project, I give consent to be a participant. I have read the information sheet and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain confidential	YES	NO
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I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his / her research report	YES	NO
---	-----	----

I agree that the information I provide may YES NO
be used in an anonymized format after this
project has ended, for academic purposes by
other researchers, subject to their own ethics
clearance being obtained

There are no financial benefits to
participating

YES/NO
and if I experience any distress I can contact
the free counselling services with the
contact details provided

I can choose to not answer any questions that YES/NO

I am not comfortable to answer

I consent to an audio recording of the research interview

Signature:

I consent to the use of an app to transcribe the audio recording which will be password protected

Signature:

I consent to the encryption and storage of the audio and transcripts for future research use which will be destroyed after 5 years

Signature:

APPENDIX E

Interview Schedule

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

Discipline of Psychology

School of Human and Community Development



Thank you for your consent to participate, audio record and transcribe with an app.

How are you feeling?

Demographics:

Age: ____ Years

Ethnicity/Population Group: _____Black:_____ White: _____Indian:

_____Coloured:_____Other: _____

Education Level Tertiary: _____Secondary (Grade 12): _____Secondary (Other

Grade Completed):_____Primary School (Grade Completed): _____No formal schooling:

_____What study-

Occupation:

What area of Johannesburg do you live in?

Semi-structured interview questions:

1. What is the current status of your relationship with your former partner (e.g., separated, divorced)
2. For how long were you in the relationship?
3. What was the relationship status when you were together? (e.g., married, dating). How would you describe the relationship with your former partner?
4. Stalking is any behaviour that is harassing and intimidating and results in a person fearing for his/her safety. It consists of repeated acts that may escalate from bothersome to illegal conduct that causes imminent harm to the safety and well-being of the person. Did you experience stalking and harassment after the relationship ended?
5. These experiences can be difficult to talk about to others. Do you feel you can tell me more about the experiences of stalking and harassment: YES/NO
6. Can you describe the ways that you were stalked and harassed?

7. For how long did this stalking and harassment go on?
8. Can you describe the areas of your life that were affected by the stalking and harassment?
9. How did you cope with the stalking and harassment? Support?
10. Was there an activity that you used to try and end the stalking and harassment? (Did it work?)
11. Did the stalking and harassment affect people close to you? If so, how?
12. How did the people close to you respond to you being stalked and harassed?
13. How do you think cultural attitudes influenced the behaviour of your ex-partner towards you?
14. How did cultural attitudes influence the way you coped with stalking and harassment?
15. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me or is there anything you would like to add?
16. What we discussed has the potential to stir many different emotions. How are you feeling right now? [If, “okay” provide referral data. If triggered, provide appropriate containment, debriefing, and referral].

The audio recordings will be deleted after the examination of the research report. With consent, the audio will be transcribed using an app and then password protected. With the participants’ permission, anonymised transcripts will be stored on the researcher and her supervisor’s password-protected computers for potential future research use.

The participant can choose to not answer any questions that they are uncomfortable with. The interview will be terminated if the participant appears or verbalises distress and the distress protocol will be enacted. The participant will be contacted ten days after the interview regardless to check in on how they are coping and a referral will be made for counselling/therapy if needed.

I will now share my screen/verbally state/email to provide you with referral resources for mental health care if you require this in future and you may contact me at any time should you feel distressed following the interview.

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX F

Distress protocol

In an emergency where, for example, a participant becomes distressed during an interview, the interview will be terminated and the distress protocol will be enacted.

The participant will be referred to the following institutions for counselling free of charge:

- The Emthonjeni Centre can be contacted for online counselling. Ms Paballo Lepota can be emailed at paballo.lepota@wits.ac.za or contacted at (011) 717 4513
- LifeLine: (011) 728 1331
- GBV: (011) 715 2000
- SADAG: 0800 456 789
- WITS Law Clinic can be contacted for legal-related advice/services at (011) 717 8562

The participant may contact the research student at any time, following the interview should they feel distressed and a referral will be made

The research student will contact the participant ten (10) days after the interview has taken place to check in on how they are doing