Stalking Savvy:
How College Students Cope with Stalking

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Objectives

- Describe physical and psychological effects of stalking
- Identify coping strategies employed in response to stalking
- Evaluate proactive and adaptive methods for assessment and intervention
Stalking

What exactly is it?

- A crime of intimidation and psychological terror that often escalates into violence and has serious health consequences for its victims.
- The willful, malicious, and repeated following or harassing of another person that threatens his or her safety.

National Center for Victims of Crime, 2007; Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2001
Stalking

- How often does it occur?
  - In national survey, 8% of women in the US at some point in their lives.
  - Between 13% and 40% of undergraduate students.

Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; Fisher et al., 2000; Haugaard & Seri, 2003; Roberts, 2005
Significance

Coping and Psychiatric Symptoms in Response to Stalking

- Withdrawal
- Avoidance
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Depression
- Anxiety

Kamphuis, Emmelkamp, & Bartak, 2003; Kraaij, Arensman, Garnefski, & Kremers, 2007
Coping and Behaviors in Response to Stalking

- Ignore
- Confrontation
- Victim changed schedule
- Seeking support from friends/family
- Few sought support from law enforcement

Fremouw, Westrup, & Pennypacker, 1997
Coping with Stalking

- Passive coping
- Expressive support-seeking coping
- Active coping

Kraaij, Arensman, Garnefski, & Kremers, 2007
Coping Typology in Response to Stalking

- Five categories
  - Moving inward
  - Moving outward
  - Moving away
  - Moving toward or with
  - Moving against

Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004; Spitzberg, 2003
Methods

- Descriptive study
- Electronic survey – SurveyMonkey
- IRB approval

Amar & Alexy, 2010
Measures

- Stalking Items from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS)
  - Current study – Cronbach’s alpha = .83

- Coping Survey (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2004)
  - 40-item scale measuring five categories
  - Cronbach’s alpha = .88
Findings – Sample

- College students who experienced stalking in the last year \((n = 68)\)
- Female 76% \((n = 52)\)
- Mean age 21 \((SD = .97)\)
- White, non-Hispanic 90% \((n = 62)\)
Findings – Stalking Behaviors

- Receiving unsolicited phone calls
- Being followed or spied on
- Receiving unwanted attempts at communication
Findings – Coping

Moving inward
- Ignoring the problem
- Minimizing the problem

Moving away
- Distancing
- Detaching or depersonalizing
- Using verbal escape tactics
- Attempting to end the relationship
- Controlling the interaction
- Restricting accessibility
Limitations

- Self-report data
- Convenience sample
- Small sample size
Implications for Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing Practice

- Assess stalking from a behavioral perspective
- Intervene – Provide counseling and resources to clients
- PMH nurses need to partner with clients to assist and support effective coping strategies to manage stalking situations
- Work to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies with campus/school stakeholders
Implications for Research

- Future studies need to expand the definition of other “unwanted communications”
- Coping strategies employed by victims of stalking require further examination
References

References


