Title Registration for a Systematic Review: Interventions to protect adults and adolescents from stalking: A systematic review of preventive and protective effects.
Martin Killias, Giulia Mugellini, Giang Ly Isenring and Lorenz Biberstein

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TITLE OF THE REVIEW

Interventions to protect adults and adolescents from stalking: A systematic review of preventive and protective effects.

BACKGROUND

Stalking as a frequent experience
This systematic review will take stock of research on the effects of interventions against stalking or obsessional harassment experienced by adolescents and adults.

Stalking is a frequent experience among teenagers and adults that can take many forms. It has been described as the “crime of the nineties” (Davies, 1996:6). The results of some large-scale population surveys on stalking have indicated that its prevalence is substantial. For example, the European Violence Against Women Survey (2014) showed that, on average, 18% of female respondents have experienced stalking since the age of 15 across 28 European countries (European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights, 2014: 26). Similarly, the results of the International Violence against Women Survey (Johnson et al., 2008) have identified high rates of victimized women through a wide array of countries.

The definition of stalking
All types of stalking have in common a unilateral contact of usually one perpetrator with one victim. Such contacts start with repetitive attempts to enter into contact with the victim (harassment) and often escalate to threats that may cause anxiety to the victim. The repetition of threatening behaviour is an essential characteristic of stalking and is often included in the definition.

On the basis of the definitions of the Council of Europe, Goldsworthy (2014) and McEwan & al. (2012), and additional definitions that can be found under http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/stalking/pages/welcome.aspx, we shall consider stalking as a repeatedly intentional intrusion by one person into the life of another in a manner that causes anxiety and fear for his/her safety. The purpose of the stalker may be intimidation, revenge or harassment; his/her modus operandi may be threats, controlling behaviour or unwanted contacts by any form of communication. Bullying and stalking may be hard to distinguish, particularly if it is occurring through cyber communication. However, bullying often is committed by a group of offenders, whereas stalking typically involves one offender and one victim. In our review, we shall look at physical and psychological means to intrude into another person’s life. This will include, eventually, threats through electronic channels, but not exclusively, and even not as a priority. We presume that often stalking occurs simultaneously through several channels and that it may not be appropriate to treat one form in isolation from related phenomena.

The interventions
For the purposes of our systematic review, small nuances in legal definitions are of limited importance. We shall look out for studies that have assessed the effects of interventions against stalking in general. Such initiatives may have tried to draw societal awareness on problems caused to victims of such behaviours, or provided appropriate treatment to stalkers, or aimed at protecting victims against repetitive (future) acts of stalking, enabling them to stop the chain of events. Our review will not cover the effects of new laws making stalking an offence or increasing penalties provided for stalkers. Therefore, the precise legal definition of stalking (provided there is any specific legislation) does not really matter for our review. As Smeenk and Malsch (2005: 5) suggest, interventions should, prior to and beyond criminalization, focus on civil law, self-protective
behaviors or the treatment of perpetrators. Such interventions have been implemented in many countries (Sherican et al. 2003; Cupach and Spitzberg 2000). In order to take these experiences into account, an international systematic review seems warranted. For the time being, there is no comprehensive review on the evidence concerning anti-stalking interventions, and particularly on how these effects vary according to the type of stalking behaviour, the type of offender and the timing of the intervention (Dutton and Winstead, 2011; Goldsworthy, 2014: 185).

The relevance to policy and practice
The proposed systematic review will help to develop policies against stalking and improve interventions designed to assist victims and treat perpetrators.

The objective of this review
The objective of this review is to assess the effects of interventions designed to protect adolescents and adults from stalking. The review will indicate whether the effects of interventions vary by type of intervention, type of stalking or geographic area.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this systematic review is to meta-analyse effects found in published and unpublished studies on anti-stalking interventions designed to protect adolescents and adults.

EXISTING REVIEWS

A preliminary literature search has identified three systematic reviews previously published under the Campbell network and one title registered on cyber abuse, violence by intimate partner, dating violence and cyberbullying: (1) Mishna et al., 2009, Interventions for Children, Youth, and Parents to Prevent and Reduce Cyber Abuse; (2) Ramsay et al. 2009, Advocacy Interventions to Reduce or Eliminate Violence and Promote the Physical and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Women Who Experience Intimate Partner Abuse: A Systematic Review; (3) Fellmeth et al., 2013, Educational and Skills-Based Interventions for Preventing Relationship and Dating Violence in Adolescents and Young Adults: A Systematic Review; 4) Fong and al., 2015, Anti-Cyberbullying Interventions for Reducing Cyber victimization in Youth: A Systematic Review.

Fong et al.’s review covers only cyber bullying among youth. These scholars intend to update Mishna et al.’s review (2009) on interventions designed to prevent cyber abuse among children and youth. Fellmeth et al. look into violence among adolescents and young adult dating partners. In sum, the existing reviews either cover cyberstalking among youth or issues related to stalking among former intimate partners. So far, no systematic review has addressed interventions on stalking beyond domestic violence and cyber bullying among youth. Our systematic review will cover anti-stalking interventions among men and women, adolescents and adults without such pre-defined limitations.

Considering that two of the existing reviews have been published in 2009, many more recent primary studies that have been located through our preliminary literature search have not been included in any systematic review so far.
This systematic review will cover interventions implemented to address stalking behaviours or obsessional harassment against adolescents and adults. In particular, it will focus on non-legislative interventions, in order to study their effects on stalking. We shall classify anti-stalking interventions into two main categories: 1) those targeted at victims and 2) those targeted at perpetrators.

Among interventions targeted at victims, we shall include strategies based on the protection and assistance of victims provided either by governmental or non-governmental services. Examples include media campaigns (De Fazio et al. 2015), assistance schemes (anti-stalking hotlines, centres of assistance for victims), police protection and promotion of self-protective behaviours. Among interventions targeted at perpetrators, we shall identify strategies based on treatment of offenders at several levels (see McKenzie et al., 2011). Examples include civil law, psychological and/or medical (psychiatric) treatments, socio-educational programs, consultation and follow-up sessions, etc.

Any relevant information on interventions, such as the timing, intensity, type, effect size and context will be collected.

The review includes anti-stalking interventions targeted at both adolescents (older than 12 years) and adults, both males and females across high, middle and low-income countries.

The main outcome variable will be, whether or not interventions reduce or stop exposure to stalking among adult or adolescent victims.

This systematic review aims at providing quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of non-legislative anti-stalking interventions focused on both adolescents and adults. The review will focus on published or unpublished primary studies available in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Vietnamese.

To be eligible for inclusion in this review, studies must quantitatively assess the effects of interventions on the level of stalking. The included studies have to measure quantitatively the outcomes, either as a dichotomous, ordinal or scaled variable.

To be eligible for inclusion, studies should ideally use randomised controlled trials (RCT’s), or quasi-experimental methods. Studies on the effects of legislative interventions (e.g. new anti-stalking laws) or interventions designed exclusively for younger children will not be included in our review.

We add here short summaries of a few possibly eligible studies. All four include certain aspects of stalking only, but are listed here because of their methodological quality. The RCT study by Glass et al. (2015) tested a safety smartphone App to respond to dating violence among college women. The quasi-experiment by Vogt and Greef (2010), although focused on domestic violence, included stalking in a more general sense. Chibnall et al. (2006) and Crombie and Trinner (2003) both reported the results of high-quality evaluations on raising Internet safety knowledge. Such interventions may be relevant to prevent stalking also among adults.
References


REVIEW AUTHORS

Lead review author: The lead author is the person who develops and co-ordinates the review team, discusses and assigns roles for individual members of the review team, liaises with the editorial base and takes responsibility for the on-going updates of the review.

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**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Content: Martin Killias and Lorenz Biberstein.

Martin Killias has a strong experience in the measurement and evaluation of violence, including violence against women and stalking. He participated in the development of the *International Violence against Women Survey* (2002-2006) and he coordinated several surveys on domestic violence in Switzerland (2012). In addition, he is on the board of the journal on the *Psychology of Violence* and he published several researches on this issue. Among others: *Violence experienced by women in Switzerland over their lifespan. Results of the International Violence against Women Survey (IVAWS)*, Bern Stämpfli 2005, 158 + VI pp (with Mathieu Simonin, Jacqueline de Puy); “*Etude cantonale de victimisation suite à des violences conjugales ou familiales*” (with Simone Walser and Lorenz Biberstein), in: Bourgoz, David, Florence Merenda, Cecile Delhumeau-Cartier, Simone Walser, Lorenz Biberstein & Martin Killias, *La violence domestique en chiffres*, 2012. Office cantonal de la statistique (OCSTAT) Geneve.


Giang Ly Isenring and Giulia Mugellini are co-authors of a ongoing systematic review on “Administrative Reforms in the Public Sector and their Impact on the level of Corruption: A Systematic Review” (with Martin Killias).

- **Statistical analysis:** Giulia Mugellini, Giang Ly Isenring and Lorenz Biberstein have statistical expertise and have developed several projects on the measurement of crime and victimization.

- **Information retrieval:** Giang Ly Isenring, Giulia Mugellini and Lorenz Biberstein have relevant expertise through their involvement in an ongoing systematic review.

**FUNDING**

**Internal funding:**

Support for this study will be provided by the University of St. Gallen and Killias Research & Consulting (KRC).

**External funding:**

The Federal Department of Equality between Women and Men – Domestic Violence Section (Swiss Confederation) has opened a bid for funding.

**POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

None of the authors has any conflicts of interest in the outcome of the review. If funded by the Swiss Government, the reviewers will be entirely independent in their conclusions.
PRELIMINARY TIMEFRAME

- Date you plan to submit a draft protocol: February 2016
- Date you plan to submit a draft review: August 2016

Deadlines will be tight given the requirements of the Swiss Government’s funding plan.

AUTHOR DECLARATION

Authors’ responsibilities
By completing this form, you accept responsibility for preparing, maintaining, and updating the review in accordance with Campbell Collaboration policy. The Coordinating Group will provide as much support as possible to assist with the preparation of the review.

A draft protocol must be submitted to the Coordinating Group within one year of title acceptance. If drafts are not submitted before the agreed deadlines, or if we are unable to contact you for an extended period, the Coordinating Group has the right to de-register the title or transfer the title to alternative authors. The Coordinating Group also has the right to de-register or transfer the title if it does not meet the standards of the Coordinating Group and/or the Campbell Collaboration.

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