Chapter 10
Cyberstalking:
Consequences and Coping Strategies to Improve Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Cyberstalking is one of the most widespread threats on digital platforms. It has included many forms of direct threats via email, online distribution of intimate photographs, seeking information about victims, harassment, and catfishing. The consequences of cyberstalking may lead to psychological problems such as mental health, distress, victim experiencing feelings of isolation, guilt, adverse effects on life activity. These psychological problems may further lead to reports of serious health issues such as anger, fear, suicidal ideation, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, there are many coping strategies such as avoidant coping, ignoring the perpetrator, confrontational coping, support seeking, and cognitive reframing. In spite of these methods, awareness of preventive measures of cyberstalking may further help to overcome mental stress. In this chapter, the authors have pointed out the various psychological issues due to cyberstalking and further discuss their solutions through preventing or automatic detection methods inspired by machine learning approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Virtual stalking is a new form of cybercrime due to the advancement of the virtual platform for social activities. As per the Statista (2021a) report published on August 17, 2021, India had more than 749 million internet users across the country in 2020. Most of the Internet users in India access the internet to visit social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Linkedin, Telegram, and many more. These sites have different types of content which are created by the users. These contents may include personal details, pictures, family videos, family relationships, private chats, and financial information. Cybercriminals have exploited this information to perform cybercriminal activities like stalking, bullying, and cyber fraud.

Cyberstalking is a social, psychological, and criminal issue that is liable for a fierce and criminal society, particularly among students and women of different organisations. Cyberstalking and cyberbullying are much similar content-wise and intent-wise, which utilise internet technology and similar approaches to follow or target someone in the web-based world. There is no universally accepted definition of cyberstalking. The word stalking means 'pursue stealthily,' which refers that "harass obviously." It is the use of the internet or other electronic means to stalk or harass a person. The utilisation of technology allows stalkers to harass their targets from any part of the world. Cyberstalking is nothing but online harassment, threatening the victim for sexual purposes or misusing them. Some scholars said that "Cyberstalking and Cyberbullying are often used interchangeably and involve using the internet to stalk or target someone in the online world," while some scholars explore that "Cyberstalking is a form of cyberbullying with many similarities. "Cyberstalking is the use of the internet or other electronic means to stalk or harass any individual, group, or organisation. Cyberstalking may also include monitoring, identity theft, threats, vandalism, doxing, blackmail, solicitation for sex, or gathering information that may be used to threaten or harass. Many scholars have defined cyberstalking as one of the most dangerous forms of cyber harassment. Cyberstalkers use online web media and other electronic devices with pre-plans and agendas to follow, undermine, and harass others, as shown in Figure 1.

Cyberstalking is a growing and tangled cybercrime that influences and intentions of individuals and groups (Baer M., 2020). Cyberstalking is intensely planned, repeated, and different advanced attacks and may occur on repeated occurrences (Truman J. L., 2010). There are various examples of cyberstalking, such as creating and sharing sexual images of the victim among their family and friends, hacking the victim's social media and email accounts, and transferring the victim's private data on social media (N. M. Zainudin et al., 2016). Savaging and flaring to somebody in the web-based network, making counterfeit profiles, tracking internet activities through tracking devices, making fake messages intended to shame victim, offering

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