

What are the characteristics of stalking reported to police by people under 18 between 2018 and 2022?

Investigating the nature of adolescent stalking being reported to police in relation to stalking behaviours and prevalence.

Key details

Lead institution	Cardiff University
Principal researcher(s)	Catrin O'Brien Catrin.Obrien2@south-wales.police.uk
Police region	Wales
Collaboration and partnership	This project is supported by the College bursary scheme .
Level of research	PhD
Project start date	September 2019
Date due for completion	August 2026

Research context

Aims and purpose

Stalking among adolescents is evident in the South Wales area but remains unexplored. This research proposes to explore adolescent stalking (AS) in three respects.

1. To identify child victims of AS.
2. To identify child perpetrators of AS.

3. The research will investigate how the police respond to such reports, including how the crimes are classified, the nature of the occurrence entry logs (OEL) and final outcomes.

This research will investigate the nature of AS being reported to police in relation to stalking behaviours and prevalence. This will also assist in identifying if any new behaviours or trends are arising in AS with regards to the nature of victimisation reported. The research will establish how the police are responding to it by analysing the text in OEL.

In order to respond to the lack of academic research on AS, this study will extract details about how this crime is experienced and perpetrated in South Wales and whether it is being dealt with adequately by police. Awareness of stalking behaviours among adolescents remains largely unknown based upon an assumption that it is not prevalent. Therefore, relevant agencies such as policing are ill equipped to deal with this problem. Without this, preventative measures cannot be implemented or support provided (Fisher and others, 2014).

Research questions

1. What stalking behaviours are reported to police and are there links to other crime types?
2. How has the reporting of stalking changed over time?
3. What proportion of stalking offences involved victims under the age of 18 and how has this changed over time?
4. What are the characteristics of stalking cases involving victims under 18?
5. What are the key characteristics that distinguish different types of stalking cases involving victims under 18 (stalking typology).

Research methodology

Research design

This study is based upon a descriptive case study design. According to Yin (2009), there are different types of case study. This study reflects a 'representative or typical case study', which aims to capture the context and realities associated with AS.

There will be approximately 200 to 250 police reports analysed over a four-year period between 2018 and 2022. This will involve the examination of the complexities involved in AS.

The study is focused on the community of South Wales and South Wales Police as a single organisation. The South Wales area and police records will be the focus for data collection. Due to AS being under researched, there is a potential for this research to reveal unique factors that arise ideographically (Bryman, 2016)

Research strategy

This study will deploy a mixed methods approach to the research. Mixed methods has gained recognition among social scientists with an increasing number of studies using this research method. Mixed methods research has been defined as the combination of elements of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, which historically have been viewed as opposing methods (Timmans and others, 2019). This includes factors such as the relevant data collection, viewpoints and analysis for both strands. Mixed method research broadens the extent of understanding the subject area (Johnson and others, 2007).

The first and second aims and first four research questions of this study will adopt a quantitative approach to the data gathered and statistical presentation. In that respect, AS and associated meanings will have an existence that is independent of social actors (Bryman 2016).

The methods used will relate to the natural sciences and the study of 'social reality and beyond' (Ibid). Therefore, utilising an objective and positivist approach to epistemology. The remainder of the study – namely research aim three and research question five – will consist of qualitative research in the analysis and interpretation of police documents, which falls into the search paradigm of 'constructionism'.

This relates to the interactions between victim and perpetrators and how AS will be shown to have manifested itself, together with police interactions and responses to the people involved and the outcomes of each police report. Subjective reality will form part of this interpretation and the epistemological position will be interpretivism.

This means that this focus of analysis with regards to the relevant aims and questions previously identified, will look to understand the 'social world' through examining the police documents and identifying how AS is experienced by children and police (Bryman, 2016).

Collectively, both epistemological positions will turn belief into knowledge, adding value to the subject and meaning in daily life (Sosa, 2017).