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Stalking Perpetration in Adolescents in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence

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ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence can occur as a form of stalking behaviour, which is considered a pattern of repeated and unwanted behaviours towards another individual. A cross-sectional study was conducted with 498 participants from Portugal, aged between 12–21 years. Findings support that adolescent stalking perpetrators exhibited psychopathic traits, psychopathology, aggression, and childhood trauma. Results showed that anxiety partially mediates the association between childhood trauma and stalking perpetration. These findings provide a better understanding of stalking in adolescence, which allows professionals to have a more comprehensive approach when considering intervention programs. Limitations and future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Stalking; adolescence; childhood trauma; intimate partner violence; anxiety

Intimate partner violence (IPV) can consist of physical acts of violence, psychological/emotional abuse that occurs in an intimate relationship between people of all genders (Bailey & Beal, 2021; Brady & Nobles, 2017). Stalking is a known element in IPV and is among the various types of interpersonal violence that can occur in teen dating relationships or former intimate partnership (e.g., Bailey & Beal, 2021; Flowers et al., 2020). Stalking can be defined as a pattern of behaviors that involves persistent harassment and acts of invasion directed at another individual (Borges & Dell’aglio, 2019; Owens, 2015). These behaviors include following individuals, going to their home or workplace, sending them letters, vandalizing their property/loitering, and harassing them over the phone and social media (Borges & Dell’aglio, 2019).

Despite the occurrence of stalking in adolescence, at high levels as suggested by research (e.g., Roberts et al., 2016), studies tend to focus on the adult population. Few studies assessed stalking in youth developmental stage, existing notable differences (e.g., behavioral patterns, risk factors, and psychosocial development) in stalking behaviors among adults and adolescents (Borges & Dell’aglio, 2019; Purcell et al., 2009; Roberts et al., 2016). Understanding stalking predictors can contribute to the prevention of other types of interpersonal violence and stalking itself as an intentional behavior (Purcell et al., 2009).

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This lack of attention given to adolescent stalking is noteworthy given the decisive phase in which this behavior occurs in the psychosocial development of the perpetrator missing the opportunity to intervene in an initial age, which can prevent other types of interpersonal violence (Purcell et al., 2009). Research into stalking has been focused, essentially, on identifying risk factors for physical violence (McEwan et al., 2016) such as, sex, history of threats, violence against the victim, criminal history of stalking, psychopathology, substance abuse, mental disorders, and separation from the victim (Brooks et al., 2021; Melton, 2007; Nijdam-Jones et al., 2018; Norris et al., 2011; Paterline, 2020; Rai et al., 2020; Wheatley et al., 2020). Studies also shows that childhood trauma increases the chances of an individual developing interpersonal conflicts and engaging in violent behaviors and stalking (Ménard & Pincus, 2012; Widom & Maxfield, 2001; Widom et al., 2006) with few studies examining the effects of childhood experiences on stalking specifically (Ménard & Pincus, 2012). Thus, individuals that have experienced childhood trauma can develop anxiety as a consequence, and that increases the chances of that individual engaging in stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2008; Marazziti et al., 2015; Ménard & Pincus, 2012; Wheatley et al., 2020).

The theoretical framework of the General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002) can further explain stalking perpetration, as GAM has been used to find significant insights on IPV cyclical perpetration (Chester & DeWall, 2018). According to this model, the interaction between situational (e.g., childhood trauma) and personal factors (i.e., anxiety) may lead individuals, in a specific context, to perpetrate aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Also, the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) has been used to explain the psychopathological predisposition for stalking (MacKenzie et al., 2008; Tassy & Winstead, 2014), hypothesizing that it is a behavioral demonstration of attachment pathology (Marazziti et al., 2015; Meloy, 2007). According to this theory, stalkers have an insecure, preoccupied attachment style, which leads them to being in a constant anxious state (Wheatley et al., 2020). This may lead to dramatic emotional displays, enhanced proximity, or pursuit behavior (i.e., stalking) to maintain a relationship (MacKenzie et al., 2008; Marazziti et al., 2015; Ménard & Pincus, 2012).

Taking into account the previous literature, the present study aimed to investigate stalking in a sample of adolescents in the context of IPV. To this end, the following specific objectives were defined: a) compare perpetrators of IPV with and without stalking behaviors; b) identify risk factors for stalking; and c) assess whether anxiety acts as a mediator in the relationship between childhood trauma and stalking.

Methods

Participants

The present study collected data from the Interpersonal Violence Prevention Program (PREVINT; www.prevint.pt), a validated psychological intervention program aimed to raise awareness among adolescents about violence in interpersonal relationships and their functioning dynamics (Barroso et al., 2018, 2020). Initially, the sample consisted of 3448 adolescents, of which 1663 were male (48.2%) and 1785 female (51.8%), aged between 11 and 21 years old, from the 5th to the 12th of several schools from Portugal. From those participants, 498 adolescents (32.1% male and 67.9% female; $M = 15.6$, $SD = 1.68$) self-

reported engagement in IPV. Regarding stalking perpetration, 249 participants self-reported engagement in stalking and 249 non-engagement.

Measures

Sociodemographic questionnaire

A sociodemographic questionnaire was used to gather personal and sociodemographic data of the participants of the study. This instrument was composed of questions regarding socio-demographic information (i.e., sex, age, school, and school year), characteristics of pursuit (i.e., target and frequency of pursuit) and family-related questions (i.e., parental marital status).

Stalking

To assess the stalking perpetration, the following item of the Interpersonal Violence Inventory (IVI; Barroso et al., [in press](#)) was used: *'Persecution/Spy/Follow persistently (for example, spying on an ex-boyfriend/girlfriend to know what he/she was doing, whether on the street or on the internet).'* Answers were rated 1 = "yes" or 0 = "no".

Youth psychopathic traits inventory

The Youth Psychopathic Traits Inventory-Short Version (YPI-S), developed by van Baardewijk et al. (2008) and adapted to the Portuguese population by Pechorro et al. (2015), was used to assess the presence of psychopathic traits in adolescents. It consists of 18 items and each item is scored on an ordinal 4-point *Likert* scale ranging from "Does not apply at all" to "Applies very well" with higher scores reflecting an increased presence of the characteristics associated, namely, psychopathic traits. This instrument has a three-factor structure, namely interpersonal ($\alpha = .77$), affective ($\alpha = .70$), and behavioral ($\alpha = .57$) dimensions. Cronbach's α was .77 on the full scale.

Brief symptom inventory

The presence of psychopathological symptoms was measured through the Brief Symptom Inventory 18 (BSI-18), which is the reduced version of the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) and Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90) developed by Derogatis (2001) and was adapted to the Portuguese population by Nazaré et al. (2017). It is evaluated on a 5-point *Likert* scale (from "not at all" to "extremely"). This inventory has three subscales with Cronbach's α was .82 on the anxiety subscale, .84 on the depression subscale, and .39 on the somatization subscale. The total scale presented a Cronbach's α of .92.

Buss-Perry aggression questionnaire

Aggression was assessed using the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire-Short Form (BPAQ; Buss & Perry, 1992). This questionnaire was adapted to the Portuguese population by Pechorro et al. (2016) and consists of a self-report instrument of 12 items that assess aggression, allowing the understanding of how aggressive a person is, and how their aggressiveness manifests itself. It consists of four factors: physical aggression (3 items), verbal aggression (3 items), hostility (3 items), and anger (3 items). The items are evaluated on a 5-point *Likert* scale ranging from 0 ("never") to 4 ("always"). In the present study,

Cronbach's α was .87 on the full scale, .79 on the physical aggression subscale, .79 on the verbal aggression subscale, .83 on the hostility subscale, and .73 on the anger subscale.

Childhood trauma questionnaire

Childhood trauma was assessed using the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form (CTQ-SF). This self-report instrument was developed by Bernstein et al. (2003) and adapted to the Portuguese population by Dias et al. (2013). It consists of 28 items that evaluate the exposure to situations of child abuse (Dias et al., 2013). The items are distributed by five subscales, namely, emotional neglect, emotional abuse, physical neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Responses are measured on a 5-point *Likert* scale ranging from 1 ("never true") to 5 ("very often true;" Dias et al., 2013). Each subscale contains five items, and an additional three items are intended to measure any tendency to minimize or deny the abuse. In the present study, Cronbach's α was .83 on the full scale, .86 on the emotional neglect subscale, .83 on the emotional abuse subscale, .57 on the physical neglect subscale, .86 on the physical abuse subscale, and .90 on the sexual abuse subscale.

Procedures

As mentioned, this research is part of the Interpersonal Violence Prevention Program (PREVINT), an original psychological intervention program designed to prevent the development and expression of aggression in adolescence. The research protocol was approved by University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro Ethics Committee. Written consent was collected from participants' parents/legal guardians. The data was collected during regular classes through computer-assisted self-reports on school computers or smartphones (when authorized). Participants responded to an internet-based survey hosted on a secure institutional server, being informed about the nature of the study, the voluntary character of participation, and that their answers were anonymous and confidential.

Statistical analyses

This study is quantitative and cross-sectional. Statistical analyses were conducted using the version 26 of the *Statistical Package for the Social Science* (SPSS) program. Missing data and outliers were excluded from the database. To determine which statistical procedures to use, tests of normality were performed, rejecting the normality of the data. Then, homoscedasticity was tested (Pallant, 2005), being confirmed, which allowed to justify the normality and homogeneity of the data, as well as the support for the use of parametric tests. Also, since the sample has a total value of subjects greater than 30, it is considered a sample with enough for the distribution of the sample mean to be considered normal (Marôco, 2007). Then, the sociodemographic characteristics of individuals who perpetrate IPV with stalking and no stalking behaviors were analyzed. After that, the categorization of the instruments and the construction of the dimensions of each one were carried out. The consistency of the instruments was performed through Cronbach's α and the descriptive analysis of the data. If an instrument had an $\alpha \geq .70$ it was considered to have an adequate reliability, then if the value of α was below .70, the dimension was removed from analysis (Maroco & Garcia-Marques, 2006). To explore the differences between stalking perpetrators and non-perpetrators, a series of independent *t-tests* were calculated and analyzed to identify

significant differences between groups regarding psychopathic traits, psychopathology, childhood trauma, and aggression. Afterwards, the effect size (Cohen's d) of each dimension was calculated to measure the effect size of the group means. Pearson and Spearman Correlation Coefficient were calculated to analyze the intensity and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. The magnitude of the effect of Pearson's r was considered $r = .10$ as small effect, $r = .30$ as medium effect, and $r = .50$ as large effect (Field, 2018). Since stalking perpetration is considered a dichotomic variable (answers are categorized as "yes" and "no"), Spearman's r was calculated. Mediation analyses were conducted using the Model 4 of the PROCESS macro for IBM SPSS to test the mediating effect of anxiety on the relationship between childhood trauma and stalking. The PROCESS macro uses coefficients to test the indirect effects and reports of bootstrap confidence intervals (CIs) to determine whether the effects in Model 4 are significant, based on 5000 random samples (Hayes, 2018). An effect is regarded as significant if the CIs do not include zero. One advantage of the bootstrap method is that it does not require the normal distribution assumption and thus provides a more powerful test than traditional methods based on formulas with a normality assumption (Hayes, 2018).

Results

Descriptive statistics

The final sample consisted of 498 ($n = 160$ boys, $n = 338$ girls) participants who completed the questionnaires, with ages between 12 and 21 years ($M = 15.6$, $SD = 1.68$). About 249 adolescents reported no involvement in stalking ($M = 15.71$, $SD = 1.65$; 67.9% females) and 249 self-reported engaging in stalking ($M = 15.49$, $SD = 1.69$; 67.9% females). The stalking perpetrators were mainly 15 years (23.7%), 16 years (21.7%), and 17 years (18.1%), corresponding to the ninth (20.5%), tenth (19.3%), and twelfth (20.1%) grade. Most of self-reported stalking perpetrators were children of single parents, divorced or equivalent (23.7%). Regarding adolescents who engaged in stalking behavior, they pursued, mostly, their romantic partner (71.5%), followed by a friend (9.2%), friend and romantic partner (6%), and a school colleague (4%); adolescent stalkers self-reported to pursue their victims a few times (44.2%), some-times (24.1%), and one time (22.5%).

Preliminary results

An independent samples t -test was conducted to determine whether there were differences in the instruments used between adolescents who engaged in stalking and those who did not (see Table 1). For YPI-S, BSI-18, BPAQ, and CTQ-SF results show that there were significant differences in each subscale, where perpetrators had higher scores than non-perpetrators, except for the subscales of affective, emotional neglect, and sexual abuse.

Correlations between YPI-S, BSI-18, BPAQ, CTQ-SF, and stalking perpetration

Pearson and Spearman correlations for the study variables are reported in Table 2. Results show that stalking perpetration was positively and significantly correlated to the interpersonal

Table 1. Stalking perpetration group differences for YPI-S, BSI-18, BPAQ, and CTQ-SF.

Variables	Stalking perpetration		CI 95%	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	No (<i>n</i> = 249) <i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>	Yes (<i>n</i> = 249) <i>M</i> ± <i>SD</i>				
YPI-S						
Total	36.43 ± 6.97	39.25 ± 7.60	[−4.11, −1.54]	−4.32	<.001	0.39
Interpersonal	11.03 ± 3.44	12.49 ± 3.86	[−2.10, −0.81]	−4.45	<.001	0.40
Affective	11.06 ± 3.54	11.26 ± 3.51	[−0.81, 0.43]	−0.61	.543	0.06
BSI-18						
Total	21.46 ± 11.65	27.51 ± 12.98	[−8.22, −3.88]	−5.48	<.001	0.49
Depression	9 ± 5.23	11.27 ± 5.40	[−2.33, −0.74]	−4.76	<.001	0.43
Anxiety	6.92 ± 4.60	9.49 ± 5.11	[−3.20, −1.33]	−5.89	<.001	0.53
BPAQ						
Total	13.67 ± 9.14	17.49 ± 9.16	[−5.43, −2–21]	−4.66	<.001	0.42
Physical aggression	1.91 ± 2.58	2.54 ± 2.79	[−1.10, −0.16]	−2.62	.009	0.23
Verbal aggression	3.18 ± 2.69	4.03 ± 2.99	[−1.35, −0.35]	−3.32	.001	0.30
Hostility	4.29 ± 3.40	5.68 ± 3.35	[−1.99, −0.80]	−4.63	<.001	0.41
Anger	4.29 ± 2.95	5.24 ± 3.08	[−1.48, −0.42]	−3.51	<.001	0.32
CTQ-SF						
Total	47.65 ± 11.53	50.90 ± 12.73	[−5.40, −1.12]	−2.99	.003	0.27
Emotional abuse	8.15 ± 3.91	9.58 ± 4.52	[−2.17, −0.69]	−3.78	<.001	0.34
Physical abuse	6.20 ± 2.71	6.91 ± 3.60	[−1.40, 0.46]	−2.48	.014	0.22
Emotional neglect	10.31 ± 5.30	10.78 ± 5.26	[−0.74, 0.19]	−0.99	.321	0.09
Sexual abuse	5.82 ± 2.51	6.10 ± 2.76	[−1.27, −0.15]	−1.16	.248	0.11

Note: *N* = 498. YPI-S = Youth Psychopathic Traits Inventory-Short; BSI-18 = Brief Symptom Inventory of 18 items; BPAQ = Buss – Perry Aggression Questionnaire-Short Form; CTQ-SF = Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form.

dimension of psychopathic traits, anxiety, depression, physical aggression, verbal aggression, hostility, anger, emotional abuse, and physical abuse. It was also possible to find that experiences of childhood trauma were positively and significantly correlated to psychopathology.

Mediation analysis

The estimated indirect effects showed that anxiety (Indirect effect = .05, 95% CI [.03, .07]) acted as a partial mediator in the relationship between emotional abuse and stalking perpetration. Physical abuse and stalking perpetration were also partially mediated by anxiety (Indirect effect = .03, 95% CI [.02, .06]). The relationship between childhood trauma and stalking perpetration was also partially mediated by anxiety (Indirect effect = .01, 95% CI [.01, .02]; see Figure 1).

Discussion

Stalking involves a pattern of persistent pursuit and intrusive behavior directed by one individual toward another (Purcell et al., 2010). Even though stalking is present in adolescence, most of the research is based on studies with adult samples (Borges & Dell’aglio, 2019). Taking this into consideration, the present study aimed to explore stalking in a sample of adolescents with self-reported perpetration of intimate partner violence (IPV) from Portugal, more specifically, individuals who perpetrate stalking and those who do not, identify risk factors (i.e., psychopathic traits, psychopathology, aggression, and childhood trauma), and explore the mediating effect of anxiety on the relationship between childhood trauma and stalking.

Table 2. Pearson and Spearman correlations between variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
^a YPI-S																	
1. Total	–																
2. Interpersonal	.79**	–															
3. Affective	.74**	.37**	–														
^a BSI-18																	
4. Total				–													
5. Depression				.89**	–												
6. Anxiety				.93**	.72**	–											
^a BPAQ																	
7. Total							–										
8. Physical aggression							.69**	–									
9. Verbal aggression							.82**	.59**	–								
10. Hostility							.77**	.23**	.46**	–							
11. Anger							.82**	.41**	.52**	.58**	–						
^a CTQ-SF																	
12. Total												–					
13. Emotional abuse												.77**	–				
14. Emotional neglect												.65**	.35**	–			
15. Sexual abuse												.71**	.45**	.22**	–		
16. Physical abuse												.80**	.60**	.28**	.61**	–	
^b 17. Stalking/perpetration												.18**	.19**	.05	.07	.12**	–

Note: N = 498; YPI-S = Youth Psychopathic Traits Inventory-Short; BSI-18 = Brief Symptom Inventory of 18 items; BPAQ = Buss – Perry Aggression Questionnaire-Short Form; CTQ-SF = Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form.

^aCategory using Pearson's r; ^bCategory using Spearman's r.

*p < .05; **p < .01.

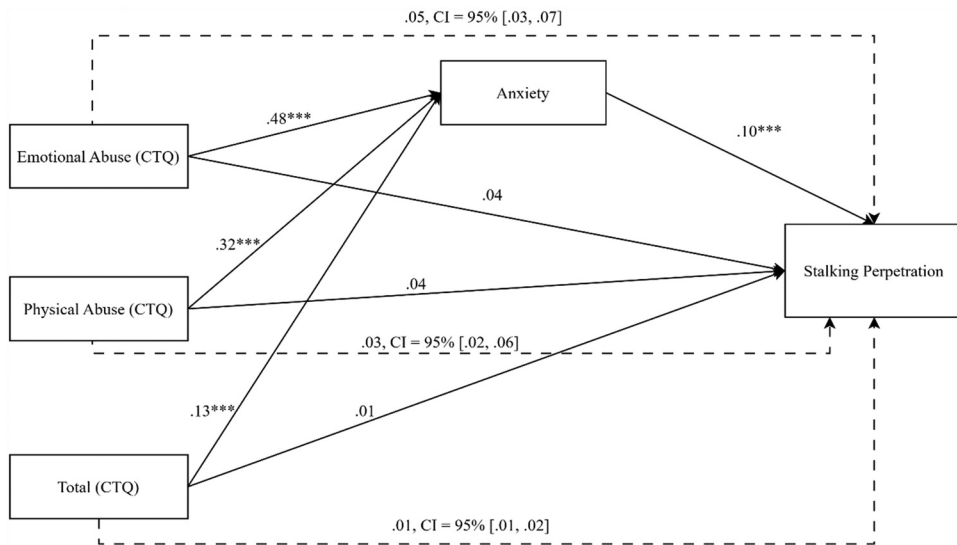


Figure 1. Path analysis model of the relationship between childhood trauma and stalking perpetration mediated by anxiety. Note. Solid lines indicate direct effect of the relationship between variables; dotted lines indicate the indirect effect between variables; Values are indicated above the respective relationship between variables. *** $p < .001$.

The results indicated that female adolescents (67.9%) self-reported higher levels of engagement in stalking than male adolescents (32.1%). This finding is surprising given that sex is one of the most consensual risk factors for stalking, with most stalkers being male (Brooks et al., 2021; Purcell et al., 2010; Rai et al., 2020). However, this may be due to this study sample being mainly constituted by female adolescents and the measure used for assessing sexting behavior, which only compromised one generalized item with no specific definition of the behavior itself (e.g., McEwan et al., 2021). Furthermore, when mentioning stalking behavior, it is important to take into consideration the overlook by law enforcement in female-perpetrated stalking (Brooks et al., 2021); as most studies and reports are focused on male-to-female stalking behavior instead of the perspective on female-to-male (e.g., Thompson et al., 2010).

Regarding age, stalking was more prevalent among the ages of 15 (23.7%), 16 (21.7%), and 17 (18.1%), corresponding to the ninth (20.5%), tenth (19.3%), and twelfth (20.1%) grade. Effectively, adolescence is a developmental period when there is an increase in the need for individuality and autonomy to form one's own identity (Graupman, 2020). Since adolescents spend most of their time online, some misuse of technology can happen, which contributes to the invasive communication as a form of harassment that happens in this age range (Borges & Dell'aglio, 2019; Fisher et al., 2014).

Results show that self-reported stalking perpetrators have higher levels of psychopathic traits when compared to non-perpetrators. This finding is consistent with previous research that shows that stalkers have higher scores on psychopathy and psychopathy lifestyle facet when compared to other perpetrators (e.g., Cunha et al., 2022). However, research about the relationship between psychopathy and stalking is still scarce and inconsistent, since some studies suggest that stalking perpetrators have high results in psychopathic traits (Cunha

et al., 2022; Massar et al., 2017); while other studies report that is very unlikely that psychopaths will engage in stalking behaviors, since psychopathic stalkers seem to have motivations to gain control and interpersonal dominance over another, rather than the underlying emotional attachment of a relationship (Ogloff et al., 2021; Storey et al., 2009).

This study results are in line with previous studies that suggest that stalking perpetrators have high results in psychopathology (i.e., depression and anxiety). Previous studies have found that stalkers often have mental health problems that can precipitate the engagement in stalking (Cunha et al., 2022; Meloy & Boyd, 2003). However, Nijdam-Jones et al. (2018) study found that mental disorders are not as prevalent as historically presumed. Most research on stalker psychopathology has been conducted using samples from forensic and/or psychiatric settings, which can lead to a higher prevalence of psychopathology when compared to the one found in community samples (Nijdam-Jones et al., 2018). Therefore, the role of psychopathology in stalking continues to be a gap in the existing stalking literature (Parkhill et al., 2022). Regarding aggression, it was found to be positively related to stalking. These findings corroborate previous research that shows that anger is a predictor of unwanted pursuit behavior (e.g., Tassy & Winstead, 2014) and that stalkers express their anger through the perpetration of psychological abuse and the need to control the victim (Dye & Davis, 2003).

According to the obtained results, stalking perpetrators have higher results in the dimensions of emotional abuse and physical abuse than non-perpetrators. Childhood trauma, specifically childhood emotional abuse (Graupman, 2020) and physical abuse (Maas et al., 2008) is related to an increased risk of a multitude of psychosocial difficulties for adolescents, including externalizing behaviors, such as stalking (Ménard & Pincus, 2012; Mumford et al., 2019). Having an abusive environment, i.e., an unpredictable relationship with attachment figures and the experience of violence within the considered circle of trust for the child can lead them to be in a constant anxious state (e.g., MacKenzie et al., 2008; Tassy & Winstead, 2014), where children may learn violent or abusive ways of interacting with the world from their parents and then recapitulate these same behaviors in their interactions with others. Thus, individuals with traumatic childhoods may be more likely to stalk others because they learned to relate to others abusively and intrusively (Ménard & Pincus, 2012).

Through the analysis of the mediation effect on the relationship between childhood trauma and stalking perpetration, it was found that anxiety is partially accounted for that association. Empirical evidence shows that stalkers are more likely to have an insecure attachment style in comparison to the general population and this preoccupied attachment style is often rooted in experiencing inconsistent caregiver support (MacKenzie et al., 2008). According to some authors (e.g., MacKenzie et al., 2008; Ménard & Pincus, 2012; Wheatley et al., 2020), stalkers that have an insecure, preoccupied attachment style are in a constant anxious state and are more afraid of abandonment, which leads them to use pursuit behavior to maintain a relationship. Taking these aspects into consideration, the theoretical framework of the General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson & Bushman, 2002) can further explain this behavior. According to this model, the interaction between situational and personal factors may lead individuals to perpetuate aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Therefore, individuals that have experienced childhood trauma can develop anxiety consequently and that increases the chances of an individual engaging in stalking behaviors (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). These findings are important for

professionals, as they allow them to have a more comprehensive perspective regarding risk factors for stalking, helping practitioners to know what to consider when intervening with individuals who perpetrate stalking or when developing intervention programs for stalkers.

Limitations and future research

The present study has some limitations. The first limitation is related to data collection, since the data was collected using self-report instruments, which allows participants to omit important data, in this sense using a multi-method design may be relevant in the replication of future studies. Secondly, due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, other methods (e.g., longitudinal) to collect data should be employed, allowing a more complete process. Thirdly, stalking was measured only by one item, not allowing to differentiate the severity of stalking behaviors, neither was the social desirability bias taken into account, which could also be related to the results obtained. Future studies should use more complete measures of stalking assessment, therefore, allowing the discrimination of different types of stalking behaviors according to their severity. Also, since this study could not differentiate the severity of stalking behaviors, it was not possible to discriminate risk factors according to stalking severity which can be pertinent for future research, such as the study of the possibility of overlapping victim-aggressors of IPV and/or stalking becoming intimate partner aggressors and/or stalkers. The sample is not representative of all adolescents who perpetrate IPV and who display stalking behaviors, which cannot be generalized as a representative of IPV perpetrators.

Conclusion

Previous scientific research has indicated that this study is one of the first to examine the mediating effect of anxiety on the relationship between childhood trauma and the perpetration of stalking. Stalking perpetration was found to be positively and significantly related to psychopathic traits, psychopathology, childhood trauma, and aggression, when compared to non-perpetrators. These conclusions add to the body of research on adolescent stalking, which may be helpful for the elaboration of interventions to address stalking perpetration. Regarding the practical implications of this study, it is relevant to create psycho-educational programs that focus on stalking behavior in interpersonal relationships between adolescents and also the development of programs that approach the prevention and early identification of violence and abusive behaviors between intimate partners. Theoretical implication of the present study suggests that stalking is a phenomenon that is present in adolescence and that deserves more attention and research, since this behavior occurs in a crucial phase of the psychosocial development of the perpetrator. Ignoring youth stalking is missing the opportunity to intervene in an initial stage, which can diminish stalking recidivism and stop the evolution of other types of interpersonal violence.

Disclosure statement

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