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CYBERSTALKING AS A FORM OF PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Violence in all of its manifestations has existed in society since ancient times. It comes in many forms and can have different consequences. Recently, the amount of discussions regarding psychological violence and stalking in particular has been increasing.

Stalking is unwanted and/or repeated surveillance by an individual or a group towards another person. Stalking behaviors are interrelated to harassment and intimidation and may include following the victim in person, monitoring them etc. Although stalking cases have been prevalent since a long time ago, with the widespread use of the Internet the amount of stalking, or rather cyberstalking cases has been rising rapidly over this decade. For example, in the US, 7.5 million people are stalked every year and approximately 1 in 6 women and 1 in 17 men have experienced stalking at some point in their lifetime. (CDC, 2015)

Even though both physical stalkers and cyberstalkers are driven by the same intention – to embarrass, harass, or threaten their victims, cyberstalkers rely on online technology to do it and use any bit of information online (social media, personal information found on the Internet etc.) to reach their goal. Cyberstalking could be considered more serious as it involves heinous intentions, ranging from false accusations and defamation to sexual harassment and even inciting harassment towards the victim. In most cases, physical and digital stalking can interconnect, which makes it even more threatening.

So, what should one do if they fell victim to a cyberstalker? Though it may be too late, they should make sure that any more personal information doesn't get in hands of a criminal by locking their personal accounts, reporting the stalker to the platform on which the harassment is taking place, using VPN services etc. But can the law help and protect them? As cyberstalking is a form of emotional assault, laws governing harassment and slander can be applied to electronic communications. However, this practice is often problematic because confrontations in cyberspace are different from real-life situations. While some countries apply older laws, others have enacted specific cyberstalking laws. These laws are relatively new and usually still have room for improvement. And, for example, in 2018 Australia's Parliament has passed a law which legislates the non-consensual sharing of intimate images online, which may take place when a person is being cyberstalked. Also, in the United States one that is being cyberstalked

can file a restraining order against the person that's stalking them online. Undoubtedly, any violence against a person, that has caused significant harm to them, their physical or mental health, and even more so if it caused death, is considered a serious crime.

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**PROJECT "CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES": POSITIVE
PRACTICE OF VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION**

Positive experience as for prevention of child abuse exists in many countries, in Asian ones in particular. For example, there is a project *Child Friendly Spaces* in Nepal. It is initiated and is successfully implemented by the organization Aawaaj which runs child care centers in certain regions of the country. Such centers provide assistance in the psychological, physical and emotional development of children from disadvantaged social classes.

In this space, children feel safe; they are well treated, and have the opportunity to share their problems. Every day children spend two hours here. The first hour is devoted to studying and completing school assignments, the second one - to games, getting to know culture and poetry, participating in quizzes and discussing personal hygiene, children's rights, violence and protection from abuse. The children are taught how to report violations. There are also joint discussions with parents and families about ways to strengthen moral stability, both in schools and at home.

The functioning of such spaces contributed to a better understanding by citizens of the precedents of violence. Parents and community members are aware of cases of sexual abuse and child exploitation, as well as crimes of sexual discrimination. The project *Child Friendly Spaces* contributed to the positive public attitude towards children, as well as the development of alert and support mechanisms in cases of community violence.

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