Predictors of Courtship Stalking Behaviors in Male College Students

Eun Young Yoo¹, Seung A Lee², Sung Hee Lee³*

¹RN, Kyungpook National University Hospital, Daegu, S. Korea
²Doctoral Student, College of Nursing, Kyungpook National University, Daegu, S. Korea
³*Professor, College of Nursing, Kyungpook National University, Daegu, S. Korea
³*Corresponding Author : leesh@knu.ac.kr

Abstract. This study investigated factors predicting the courtship stalking behavior of male college students. Data were collected from 164 male college students who were described as men who wanted to date women who did not want to date them. Participants were from either a four-year university or a two-year college located in A-city, Korea. Courtship stalking behaviors were measured using Sinclair and Frieze's Courtship Stalking Behaviors Scale. The collected data were analyzed using a χ²-test, a Mann-Whitney U-test, and a binomial logistic regression. As male students’ dating frequency decreased, so did courtship stalking behaviors (Exp (B) = .093, p = .001). As male students’ attachment anxiety increased, so did courtship stalking behaviors (Exp (B) = 1.065, p = .046). Moreover, as male students’ experience with physical violence increased, so did courtship stalking behaviors (Exp (B) = 1.339, p = .019). Finally, if male college students have had childhood experience with physical violence and have high attachment anxiety, there is a need for the early detection and management of their relationship with the opposite sex.

Keywords: Attachment, College Students, Courtship, Stalking, Violence

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The increase of incidents and accidents that are due to stalking is an emerging social problem. Particularly, stalking-related problems are affecting normal people, and the
damage being caused is increasing. According to the Korea Women Hotline, a sexual violence relief center, 26% of stalking counseling cases involved normal people [1].

Moreover, according to Womenlink, there were 85 stalking-related counseling cases in 2014, which was an increase of 20 cases from the previous year [2]. Additionally, 21% of the reported cases involved violent crimes such as assault, attempted murder, confinement, or kidnapping [2].

Courtship stalking refers to one-sided courtship behaviors that involve liking or loving the subject [3]. It has been reported that 79% of the offenders of stalking behaviors are male [4], and the majority of these are undergraduate students [5]. Particularly, courtship stalking due to rejection accounted for 22% of the total stalking of Australian youths, and 86% of the offenders were male [6]. However, there has been no specific research on the courtship stalking behaviors of male students.

According to social learning theory, humans learn new behavior through direct experience or by imitating the observed behaviors of others. Particularly, the receptivity of others increases through behavioral observations. Consequently, the experience of family violence during childhood increases aggressiveness, as well as the possibility of using violence when dealing with relationship problems [7]. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the experience of violence during childhood and of observing violence between parents are predisposing factors of courtship stalking behaviors.

Hazan and Shaver [8] defined adult attachment as a stable tendency that involves efforts for proximity with a familiar person that includes physical and psychological stability, and an effort to maintain contact. Undergraduate students with high attachment anxiety obsessively focus on the date partner, who is the object of adult attachment. They are also highly likely to be physically violent with their partner due to unstable psychological change [9]. These facts support the theory that unstable adult attachment is an affecting factor of male undergraduate students’ courtship stalking behaviors.

South Korean research on stalking has been limited to causes and solutions regulating and legislation, the damage towards undergraduate students, and the victims’ experience. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the predictive factors of male undergraduate students’ courtship stalking behaviors. We suggest a need for the early detection and management of the stalkers’ relationship with the opposite sex. Moreover, we propose that our results be used as basic data for the development of a nursing intervention program.

1.2 Purpose

The Purpose of this study was to confirm the predictive factors of the courtship stalking behavior group.
2 Method

2.1 Study Design

This study was an example of narrative investigative research.

2.2 Participants and Procedure

The participants comprised 164 male students enrolled in a four-year university course in city D or in a two-year technical college. The potential low rates of return and omission of answers, which may be due to privacy concerns, the questionnaires were distributed to 350 male college students. Of these, 292 were returned; however, we excluded 110 of these when respondents claimed they had never been refused a date by a woman. Among the remaining 182 questionnaires, 18 that were insincerely answered were excluded. Therefore, 164 questionnaires were included for analysis.

2.3 Instruments

2.3.1 Childhood Trauma

Childhood trauma was measured with the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales, which was originally developed by Straus [10] and adapted by Kim [11]. This tool consisted of 14 questions that measured two subcategories: five questions about psychological violence and nine questions about physical violence. Each question was evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (none) to 5 (almost every day). The psychological violence score range was 5–15; the physical violence score range was 9–45. Higher scores represented more experience of childhood violence. Kim [11] reported internal consistencies of Cronbach's α=.86, .79, and .80 for the entire scale, the psychological domain, and the physical domain, respectively. In this study, we reported Cronbach's α=.85, .71, and .81, respectively.

The experience of observing violence between parents was measured using the Conflict Tactics Scale, originally developed by Straus [10] and adjusted by Kim [11]. This tool consisted of questions addressing mothers being violent towards fathers, and vice versa. This tool consisted of 10 questions: one question about observing psychological violence (condemned with insulting and reviling words) and nine questions about observing physical violence (e.g., strongly pushed, slapped, kicked, punched, etc.). Each question was evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (none) to 5 (almost every day). The psychological violence score range was 1–5; the physical violence score range was 9–45. Higher scores represented more experience observing
violence between parents. In Kim’s study [11], Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$. In this study, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$.

2.3.2 Adult Attachment

To measure adult attachment, Brennan’s [12] Experience in Close Relationship Revised was employed, which was translated by Hwang [13]. This tool consisted of 36 questions, which consisted of two subcategories: 18 about attachment avoidance and 18 about attachment anxiety.

Attachment avoidance was evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very much). Eight negative questions (i.e., 3, 15, 19, 25, 27, 29, 31, and 33) were coded in reverse. Attachment anxiety was evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very much). One negative question (22) was coded in reverse. The scores on both scales ranged from 18–90 with higher scores indicating greater levels of attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety, which indicated development that was less stable. Hwang [13] reported Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$ and .60 for attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, respectively. In this study, we reported Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$ and .69, respectively.

2.3.3 Courtship Stalking Behaviors

To measure courtship-stalking behaviors, the Courtship Stalking Behaviors scale designed by Sinclair and Frieze [14] and translated by Lee and Ko [15] was employed. This tool was developed to measure courtship behavior performed by college students to obtain love of the opposite sex when the counterpart shows a reaction of fear, anger, or a desire for revenge. When it was developed, it consisted of 52 questions comprising six subcategories: approach, monitoring, threatening, self-inflicted, verbal abuse, and mild attacks.

This study employed only 18 questions and three subcategories, which were reported to be more likely among South Korean college students than the other three: five questions about approach, eight questions about monitoring, and five questions about threatening.

Accordingly, for the questions about courtship stalking behaviors, this study scored the answer of "yes" as 1 point and "no" as 0 points; therefore, when the score was at least 2 points, participants were categorized into the courtship stalking behaviors group. The remaining participants were categorized as the non-courtship stalking behavior group. The Cronbach's $\alpha$ of this tool was $.78$ when it was developed and $.87$ in this study.

2.4 Ethical Approval

Data collection was performed using structured questionnaires that passed the review (IRB 2014-0075) of the institutional bioethics committee of the institution to which the researcher belongs.
2.5 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed with the IBM SPSS Statistics version 20.0 program. To determine the predictive factors of the participants’ courtship stalking behaviors, this study conducted a binomial logistics analysis.

3 Result

By the subcategories of the general characteristics of the subjects, when the number of dating experience was less than the subjects with at least 4 experiences of dating, the possibility of the courtship stalking behaviors was low (AOR:.09, 95% CI:.02-.40, p=.001). With more experiences of childhood physical violence, the possibility of male college students’ courtship stalking behaviors was higher (AOR:1.34, 95% CI:1.05-1.71, p=.019). As the attachment anxiety was higher, the possibility of male college students’ courtship stalking behaviors increased (AOR:1.07, 95% CI:1.00-1.13, p=.046).

Therefore, the number of dating experiences, experiences of childhood physical violence, and attachment anxiety of the male college students were found to be the factors predicting the courtship stalking behaviors (Table 5).

Table 1. Predictors of Courtship Stalking Behaviors in Male College students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Adjusted Odds Ratio</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion (Reference: No)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.15 (.64 3.13)</td>
<td>.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking frequency (Reference: ≥5 times per month)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>.24 (.03 2.02)</td>
<td>.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never drinks</td>
<td>.53 (.17 1.66)</td>
<td>.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than once</td>
<td>.48 (.18 1.26)</td>
<td>.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-4 times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binge Drinking (Reference: No)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.71 (.55 5.27)</td>
<td>.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating frequency (Reference: ≥4)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.09 (.02 .40)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>.99 (.43 2.24)</td>
<td>.976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood trauma</td>
<td>Emotional violence experience</td>
<td>.85 (.71 1.01)</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical violence</td>
<td>1.34 (1.05 1.71)</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
father violence witness: 1.00, 0.86, 1.16, 0.968
mother violence witness: 0.95, 0.79, 1.14, 0.597
attachment anxiety: 1.07, 1.00, 1.13, 0.046
attachment avoidance: 0.92, 0.85, 1.01, 0.088
constant: 2.21, 0.637

-2 Log likelihood: 193.71
\( \chi^2 (p) \): 33.54 (p < .001)
Cox & Snelle R^2: 0.185
Nagelkerke R^2: 0.247
Predicted group membership: 67.1%

4 Conclusion

This study determined predictive factors of male college students’ possibility of courtship stalking behaviors. It was found that a smaller number of dating experiences of male college students was linked to a lower possibility of courtship stalking behaviors. Moreover, with more experiences of childhood physical violence, the possibility of courtship stalking behaviors was higher. Lastly, with higher attachment anxiety, the possibility of courtship stalking behaviors was also higher.

The results of this study may be used to develop screening tools for the early detection and intervention of male college students’ courtship stalking behaviors, as well as to develop a program for the prevention of courtship stalking behaviors. In the future, repetitive research with random sampling of participants is needed in order to verify this study’s results.

References