

**THE PREVALENCE OF INTERNET CRIMES ON WOMEN  
STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this project paper is my original work and has not been submitted to any other University.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Wanjku Gitonga

This project paper has been submitted with my approval as a University supervisor.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Dr. W. Onyango-Ouma

## **DEDICATION**

To my late Dad, Gitonga. Gone a bit too soon. Memories of you inspire me to steer high and nudges to make the world a better place.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ICT</b>	-	Information Communication Technology
<b>CCK</b>	-	Communication Commission of Kenya
<b>CIA</b>	-	Central Intelligence Agency
<b>USAID</b>	-	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WHOA</b>	-	Working to Halt Online Abuse Website
<b>UN</b>	-	United Nations
<b>CBPS</b>	-	College of Biological and Physical Sciences
<b>CHS</b>	-	College of Health Sciences
<b>CEES</b>	-	College of Education and External Studies
<b>CAE</b>	-	College of Architecture and Engineering
<b>CHSS</b>	-	College of Humanities and Social Sciences
<b>CAVS</b>	-	College of Agriculture and Veterinary Studies

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study assesses the prevalence of Internet crimes and identifies the major forms of Internet crimes affecting women students in the University of Nairobi. The study was inspired by the upsurge of Internet technology and ease of access to this technology which often does not take into consideration the safety of users especially the vulnerable ones. The main objective of the study was to determine the prevalence of Internet crimes among undergraduate women students in the University of Nairobi. The study was conducted in the University of Nairobi which has an undergraduate population of 52,000 students, including 14,871 women students. The research used both probability and non probability sampling methods to select the 201 study participants. Relevant data was collected using the survey method. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the quantitative data into frequencies and percentages with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) while qualitative data was analyzed manually and categorized into the emerging themes.

Findings indicated Internet crimes are prevalent, the most common forms being online harassment with 77.6% prevalence and Internet stalking with 76.1% prevalence. It was found that Internet crimes are affecting women emotionally and psychologically consequently reducing women's use of the Internet as an empowerment resource. Women students who have access to Internet and make use of it are faced with oppression and attacks in the form of Internet crimes, which makes it difficult for them to optimally utilize the benefits of the Internet. Regardless of Internet's importance, there is danger that women may reduce or unfortunately stop using the resource in a bid to protect themselves. This may discourage and de-motivate those who have not started using Internet and further marginalize women.

The study concludes that Internet is a double edged sword because it empowers as much as it predisposes users to risks especially those with limited knowledge on safety. The study asserts that Internet is an enormous empowerment tool but the level of empowerment is determined by the knowledge and information on how to connect to the Internet safely to avoid falling victim to people who prey on the innocent.

It is recommended that women should continue utilizing Internet resource for their social, political and economic well being. Internet crimes should not hinder Internet usage and should not discourage women from access to Internet as it just marginalizes them further. Overall, women should be sensitized on the dangers posed by Internet, the risky online activities and how to safely navigate technology resources without increasing risk of abuse and discrimination in order to contribute freely, effectively and equitably to social, economic, political and culture development.

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

Use of the Internet continues to influence both positively and negatively, the social, economic, cultural, and political aspects of every society. While the Internet has provided secure tools and spaces where women can enjoy their freedom of expression, information and privacy of communication, the same benefits of anonymity and privacy also extend to those who employ Information Communication Technology (ICT) for criminal activities and use the Internet to commit violence against women. Internet crime is a criminal activity committed online and can be divided into 3 major categories, crime against the person, crime against property, crime against government (Duggal 2002). The focus of this research is Internet crime against the person and in particular against the woman.

Internet crime against the person includes transmission of child pornography, online harassment and Internet stalking. The latter two are of special interest to the woman and therefore the focus of this research. The anonymity of the Internet provides a safe haven for perpetrators by hiding their identity. Online harassment perpetrated can be sexual, racial or religious. The consequence of online harassment is the violation of privacy which the Internet grants to a woman.

Internet stalking is a crime of repeated pursuit utilizing electronic communications to do any or all of the following behaviours on two or more occasions: contacting someone after being asked to stop, annoying or tormenting someone, making unwanted sexual advances towards someone, and communicating threats of physical violence against someone (Wykes 2007a).

Online harassment can be divided into direct and indirect harassment. Direct harassment includes: threats, bullying, or intimidating messages sent directly to the victim via e-mail or other Internet communication mediums, and/or the use of technological means to interfere with a victim's use of the Internet. Indirect harassment includes, but is not limited to: spreading rumours about the victim in various Internet discussion forums, subscribing the victim to unwanted online services, posting information about the victim in online dating or sex services, or sending messages to others in the victim's name, or posting of nude pictures of real women with or without their consent (Harvey 2003).

Internet stalking can be seen as an element of online harassment, which has the additional factor of pursuit via electronic means. The distinction between harassment and Internet stalking is that Internet stalking is characterized by pursuit and fear (Harvey 2003). Generally, online harassment becomes Internet stalking when repeated unwanted communications, whether direct or indirect, takes place over a period of time, via one or more mediums of Internet or electronic communications. The messages themselves must be unwanted, and the content can be, but is not limited to threatening, sexually harassing, emotionally harassing or bullying, or general misinformation which causes fright.

The explosive growth in Internet use, as well as other forms of electronic communications, with 59 million Internet users worldwide, 4 million of them Kenyans (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (2009) has brought with it an equal explosion in the misuse of these new forms of communication, including the crimes of online harassment and Internet stalking. These crimes directly impact on individual victims, creating fear for personal safety and security, anxiety for the future and a loss of quality of life, uncertainty and unpredictability, as the uncontrolled acts intrude upon the lives of victims making the re-establishment of a normal life difficult (Yah 2006). At the same time, familiarity with the Internet and a sense of distance created by electronic communications causes society believe that such communications are not dangerous, hence they are easily ignore. The use of mobile phones and Internet to stalk, abuse, traffic, intimidate and humiliate women is palpable in developing countries including Kenya.

Most women who have access to Internet in Kenya are not aware of the dangers lacking in the Internet. There is also lack of specific Internet security legislation (United States Agency for International Development, Kenya (USAID-Kenya) (2007) which makes it even more difficult to punish those who use ICT tools to harass women. With increased access to Internet, it has become necessary to estimate the prevalence of Internet crime among women, forms of Internet crimes affecting women, their online activities that are putting them at more risk of being Internet crime victims, document how women are affected and how they are reacting to Internet crimes.

This research attempts to create awareness of Internet crime on women by estimating the prevalence of Internet crime among women, looking at the forms of Internet crimes affecting women, documenting online behavior that are risk factor to being attacked online and how women are affected by Internet crime.

The research also seeks to identify measures women employ to use the Internet safely, how this is affecting their empowerment and documents their knowledge level on safety on the Internet. Due to the global nature of information networks, there is ever-growing vulnerability to online harassment and Internet stalking especially directed towards women.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The emergence of ICT has provided an unrivalled opportunity for women to exploit their capabilities to improve their quality of life as well as to contribute to the welfare of the society. Internet has also become a social and communication tool with e-mails being an efficient communication tool. Kenyans have ease of Internet access through mobile phones, with 22 million mobile subscribers (Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) (2011). Internet offers new possibilities for networking and for participative democracy but feminists are failing to challenge the use of the Internet for furthering more dangerous and discriminatory agendas, including Internet crime committed against women and the proliferation of pornography (Scott et al. 2001). Many youths are engaging socially through common social network like facebook, twitter, msn, my space and are actually addicted to these Internet social activities, making them vulnerable to Internet crimes.

Women are more vulnerable than men as statistics show that more than 73% of women and 27% of men are stalked online. (Working to Halt Online Abuse (WHOA) (2010), and that online harassment and Internet stalking can lead to stalking in the real world (Tjaden and Thoennes 1998).

There is need to document the prevalence of Internet crimes among women, forms of Internet crime especially affecting women, determine how these Internet crimes are affecting women and explore the online activities that put women to risk of online attacks with a view of creating awareness amongst women on dangers of the Internet and safety precaution when utilizing Internet. This will determine the women's knowledge on safely navigating technology resources without increasing risk of abuse for a safer web space. It will be a milestone in the endeavor to enable women to communicate more freely and effectively in their contribution to social, economic, political and cultural development.

The assumption is that while ICT has contributed immensely to addressing gender inequalities through movements and communities against issues that were once deemed private, such as domestic violence and sex trafficking, they have also exacerbated existing structures of inequality. Internet has blurred the line between private and public enabling Internet criminals to access and misuse private information to target women. The offenders harass women, and as a result continue to reinforce existing structures of inequality. Women contribute to social, economic, political and cultural development by utilizing the online resources and freedom but this is limited due to fear of online harassment and Internet stalking. Internet crime threatens to take away the safe and secure web space and deny women the ability to exploit ICT for their empowerment and development due to safety concerns.

The study will seek to address the following questions:

1. What is the prevalence of Internet crimes amongst women?
2. What are the forms of Internet crimes affecting women?

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

To investigate the prevalence of Internet crimes on women undergraduate students in the University of Nairobi.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To determine the prevalence of Internet crimes on women.
2. To examine the different forms of Internet crimes experienced by women

### **1.4 Justification of the Study**

Increased Internet access is making technology an important resource for women. However, if not understood and used strategically, technology may increase their danger. Women are directly affected by Internet crimes and their access to use of the Internet inhibited. Women have been harassed and stalked online. In certain cases, women communication online is hampered as they are forced to use their meagre resources to mitigate Internet crime on them as opposed to development. Most of the previous research efforts have focused on the crime against the child, against property and against government. This project puts the woman at the centre of the study.

Those engaging in Internet crime harass and violate women. They affect and indeed inhibit the use of Internet by women which perpetuates inequality. The research will estimate the prevalence of Internet crimes among women; investigate online harassment and Internet stalking as Internet crimes on women, identify the online activities that act as risk factors for being attacked and how these crimes are affecting women. It will also explore how women are violated by these crimes in person. It will propose for education of women and provision of safety measures that address threat to increased use of the Internet. This study will raise awareness of Internet threats. It will provide the much needed empirical data as a basis of raising awareness. It is also meant to arouse the interest of academia, especially in Kenya, to do further research in this area that seems not to attract much research.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

As anticipated at the proposal development stage, this study experiences several limitations in relation to scope, sensitivity of the subject matter as well as availability of locally based literature. The issue under study was sensitive and it borders on private matters that are rarely discussed in public and this presented a challenge in terms of data collection and exploration of the issue. It was quite a challenge getting information from respondents who felt that it was too invasive of their privacy.

The other challenge was on the scope both geographically and in terms of the interactive technologies used by women students. The sample was drawn from a single local university in Nairobi, further limiting the generalizability to post-secondary women student populations and women at large. Therefore, the results should be approached with some caution, with an eye for their utility as it covers smaller areas. The study will limit itself to University of Nairobi despite the country wide growth of Internet and related technology which if it were to be explored it would be quite taxing.

The other limitation was growth of ICT in the country and the fact that not many studies have been done in this respect. It was therefore difficult to compare available data as well as have literature reviewed based on local literature. There was limited local literature on the subject and therefore the study has largely relied on foreign literature. Therefore, the literature review has a significant foreign content.

By this study focusing on University Students from a leading public University, it relied on the fact that the Internet access is 100% to all women as this research results confirm. But this may not be the case with other universities that are less developed or just coming up. Further it's not the case with all the Kenyan women in the Society. The situation elsewhere is that Internet remains inaccessible to the women, hindering their full and equal participation in the information technology revolution. There is a possibility that while the social, economic and political action is taking place in the Internet, most women still don't have access to the Internet.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

Literature review will seek to bring out the existing body of knowledge relevant to Internet crime and women, critique the work and identify gaps. These gaps motivate the study to advance the body of knowledge on Internet crime and women. The exponential growth of the Internet has corresponded with the diffusion of criminal behaviour within this environment. New forms of crime are supported by the unique characteristics of the Internet environment, whilst offline crimes are also paralleled on the Internet. Williams (2006) highlights the extensive opportunity for offending on the Internet, stating that one end of the spectrum we see organized criminals taking advantage of new technologies and networks to facilitate their illegalities, while at the other extreme the empowered small agent is able to commit crimes that were previously beyond their means. To get deep insight in this area, the literature review sheds light on the features of perpetrators of Internet crime, the victims of Internet crime, and the environmental features that foster the commission of the crime and, finally the strategy and measures women are taking to address the vice.

#### 2.2 Internet and Women

Scott et al. (2001) three-fold assessment of the impact of the Internet on the lives of women provides a useful framework for the assessment of Internet and women. First, the 'webbed utopia' thesis argues that electronic networks offer women new possibilities for networking and for participative democracy and parallels can be found here within areas of Internet feminism. Whilst evidence does suggest that the Internet can be used to promote feminist principles, and there is a strong feminist presence on the Internet, the primary concern is that in doing so, utopian feminists are failing to challenge the use of the Internet to furthering more dangerous and discriminatory agendas, including Internet crime committed against women and the proliferation of pornography.

Second, the 'flamed out' thesis takes a dystrophic view of the Internet as a realm for pornography, violence, harassment and stalking. Whilst evidence suggests that these incidents are pervasive on the Internet, Scott et al (2001:12) argues that this narrative "can be counter-productive for feminists;

if Internet is so dangerous, women might as well come to believe that their daughters would be safer spending their time somewhere else” thus further problematising exclusion from participation on the Internet and hampering attempts to secure equal participation.

The final version, ‘locked into locality’, is characterized by the idea that “while the social, economic and political action is taking place in a distant public space, most women are still shut away at home” (Scott et al. 2001:12) and while the Internet comes to be defined as the new public sphere it remains inaccessible to women. Linked to the struggle by Victorian feminists for access to literature and print, millennium women too must struggle for equal access to technologies that would allow them full and equal participation in the information technology revolution. It is essentially a story characterized by access and the barriers preventing equal access for women.

This research will favour the ‘webbed utopia’ and ‘flamed out’, and analyze the dangers of the Internet on women that have been overlooked and affecting the optimal Internet usage on the small minority who have access. Elm and Sunden (2007) have observed that Internet feminism<sup>1</sup> has grown out of an emergent use of digital media and new communication technologies. These technologies have been ascribed with both promises and threats, with the potential of simultaneous empowerment and suppression. They offer the means to open up communicative spaces and communities, to engage in play politics and to access information and create networks. But they also have the ability to exclude non-users and divide the world into the ‘information rich’ and the ‘information poor’, as well as multiply and sometimes reinforce different forms of oppression, sexism, racism and homophobia (Elm and Sunden 2007).

The danger posed on the Internet to women, which is a central concern of this research, outlines the characteristics of the Internet, including the easy manipulation of identities. Yar (2006) observes that Internet renders women vulnerable to an array of potentially predatory others, who have women within instantaneous reach, unconstrained by the normal barriers of physical distance.

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<sup>1</sup>A feminist community, philosophy and set of practices concerned with feminist interactions with and acts on the Internet. They are concerned with expressing and developing feminism in the context of online interactions and online art.

Internet crime on women, including Internet stalking, e-mail harassment and using Internet to publish obscene information to exploit or embarrass women is taking alarming proportions. “Studies have shown that about 60 per cent of all websites have sexual content. 25 per cent of them solicit their visitors. Nearly 13 per cent of surfers go to these sites voluntarily, the rest are lured pictorially. Estimated revenue of \$ 1 billion is generated annually” (Adam 2002:39). The increasing popularity of chat rooms and vulnerability of personal data to criminal access makes women and children soft targets for a range of Internet crimes. In India, 45% of Internet crimes target women (Duggal 2002).

A University of Maryland study found Internet users with female pseudonyms were 25% more likely to be harassed online (Greer 2007). As Spender (1995:8) observes, “For every feminist issue in the real world, the same issues apply in the Internet world” including the online harassment of women.

## **2.3 Forms of Internet Crime**

### **2.3.1 Online Harassment**

The Internet crime on women, and the serious effect of this harassment, requires a re-conceptualization of the ways in which online harassment is understood. The lack of direct physical harm, which has characterized the online harassment of women, has been invoked to minimize its seriousness which confounds Internet crime. The spatially ambiguous online environment has allowed the perpetration of crime to occur at a distance with no contact occurring between offender and victim. Whilst temporally, a fraudulent transaction can take place over thousands of miles in milliseconds and a harasser can subject their victim to derisory discourse at great distance in real time (Williams 2006).

Online harassment includes and is not limited to the below crimes:

#### **2.3.1.1 Pornography**

This is in the category of content related offences. Few would deny that the Internet has become, perhaps in realization of Scott et al. (2001) ‘flamed out’ thesis, a tool for the production, storage and dissemination of sexually violent and explicit images of women and children. Women are violated on the Internet, female bodies being the major sexual images on pornographic websites.

As Adam (2002:133) observes, “we may begin to think in terms of bodily invasions of privacy, where bodies are watched, looked at or subject to surveillance or indeed where bodies are actually violated and the violations watched on-line”. In reference to online pornography, the opportunities provided by the Internet are for the efficient trade in the virtual and real bodies of women.

It is the indirect nature of online harassment that constitutes its uniqueness. Wall (2005:84) notes on Internet pornography, “such activities do not require direct physical expression, the victim nevertheless will feel the violence of the act”. Sexual harassment and sexual violence replicate this distinction and there is a symbolic framework of meanings in which women are only their sexualized bodies, and being such they are open to use and abuse. The act of sexual harassment locates women in her body; she had forgotten she has one, but the act makes her simply a body” (Smart 1995).

#### **2.3.1.2 Women Trafficking**

The Internet has become the latest place for promoting the global trafficking and sexual exploitation of women. This global communication network is being used to promote and engage in the buying and selling of women and children. Agents offer catalogs of mail order brides, with girls as young as 13. Commercial sex tours are advertised. Men exchange information on where to find prostitutes and describe how they can be used. After their trips men write reports on how much they paid for women and children and write pornographic descriptions of what they did to those they bought (Hughes 1997).

#### **2.3.1.3 Morphing**

Morphing is editing the original picture by unauthorized user or fake identity. Women’s pictures are downloaded by fake users and again re-posted/uploaded on different websites by creating fake profiles after editing it.

Many morphed photographs place the victim’s face on another, usually nude body. Online harassment which includes posting intimate information or pictures on the Internet is on the rise. The violating information haunts the victim forever as this information cannot be erased because Internet information is transitory, difficult to stop, retract or erase because it is likely to be stored in countless computers.

### **2.3.1.1 Flaming**

Spender (1995) addresses a specific form of harassment via text, known as flaming<sup>2</sup>, and argues: What some of these men do online, what they put on their screens and on those of the women students have to be seen to be believed. It appears to be “sexual terrorism”, designed to drive women away from the centre of power. Williams (2006) examination of what he terms ‘derisory textual performances’ explores a number of forms of harassment which are predominantly directed towards women online, including sexual harassment.

### **2.3.1.5 E-Mail Harassment**

This includes blackmailing, threatening, bullying, and even cheating via email. E-harassments are similar to the letter harassment but creates problem quite often when posted from fake identities.

### **2.3.1.6 Internet Defamation**

Internet defamation including libel and defamation is another common crime against women on the Internet. This occurs when defamation takes place with the help of computers and/or the Internet. For example, someone publishes defamatory matter about someone on a website or sends e-mails containing defamatory information to all of that person's friends.

### **2.3.2 Internet Stalking**

Internet Stalking is online harassment that is repetitive and causes fear of personal safety. Spitzberg and Hoobler (2002) separate Internet stalking into a comprehensive list of behaviors, escalating in seriousness. Separating the complex concept of Internet stalking into a range of individual behaviors makes assessing its occurrence easier to understand. (Full list attached as appendix 2). Below is a summary of a few behaviours: sending pornographic/obscene images or messages, sending sexually harassing messages, sending threatening pictures or images, pretending to be someone she or he is not, sabotaging your private reputation, obtaining private information without permission, altering your electronic identity or persona, taking over your electronic identity or persona, directing others to you in threatening ways, meeting first online and then harming you.

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<sup>2</sup>Flaming is defined as the act of posting or sending offensive messages over the Internet. These messages, called "flames" may be posted within online discussion forums or newsgroups, or sent via e-mail or instant messaging programs. The most common area where flaming takes place is online discussion forums, which are also called bulletin boards.

Internet stalking is relatively new in online environment, which is characterized by spatial ambiguity and anonymity. The motives behind Internet stalking have been divided into four reasons, for sexual harassment, obsession for love, revenge and hate and for ego and power trips (Bocij 2004). Internet stalking is an area, which despite an evident gender disparity, has not been addressed from a gendered perspective. Whilst several arguments exist on the online/offline distinction, few exist which explicitly draw on distinct gender disparities. Doing so requires, initially, a brief examination of the much older crime of stalking and the gendered nature of this crime. Jewkes (2002) links online stalking to offline stalking and draws similarities in both victim and offender characteristics and offender motivations. Both offences, however, produce fear and concern in the victims, who are primarily female (Bocij 2004).

Joseph (2002) draws attention to the link between online and offline stalking arguing that they share several important characteristics including the desire by the offender to assert control over the victim. She also draws attention to the common existence of a prior offline relationship between the offender and the victim and the significant gender disparity evident in both forms.

Spitzberg and Hoobler (2002) advocate the idea that Internet stalking is an extension or variant of offline stalking, locating their argument parallel to an assessment of offline stalking and arguing that given the opportunity to pursue their prey in the convenient, highly adaptable, and relatively anonymous realm of Internet, pursuers indulge themselves in the new technological opportunities for intrusion. Wykes (2007b) argues that Internet stalking is not necessarily a new crime, but acted out in a new place, where the boundaries between the virtual and actual blur. This continuity, a key example of which is the evident gender disparity. Differentiation between online and offline stalking neglects two vital continuities between offline and online stalking, the predominance of women as victims, and the predominance of males as offenders (WHOA 2010).

One explanation put forward for the gender disparity in online harassment is the gender differences in computer mediated communication (Ellison, 2001). The Internet is, first and foremost, a discursive environment (Ellison and Akdeniz 1998). Ellison (2001) states that men tend to be more adversarial in their online interactions and use intimidation tactics to dominate and control online discussion.

An examination of the individual effects of Internet stalking outlined by Ashcroft (2001) highlights the seriousness of the offence and as Wall (2007:84) argues, “Although such activities do not require a direct physical expression, the victim nevertheless will feel the violence of the act and may bear long-term psychological scars as a consequence”. Stalking is, after all, a detached crime and whose escalation may involve physical contact even if, it is primarily carried out at a distance.

Adam (2002) notes that Internet stalking has yet to receive systematic analysis against an appropriate theoretical framework which includes gender as central construct, the necessity of which is facilitated by the disparate harassment of women online. The perception that online and offline stalking are not related to physicality can be challenged by broadening the understanding of what a link with the body entails. It is imperative when understanding harassment in relation to the body, that this understanding goes beyond direct physical contact to include bodily invasions of privacy, where bodies are watched, looked at or subject to surveillance or indeed where bodies are actually violated and the violations are watched online (Adam 2002).

Therefore, direct physical contact may not be a necessary prerequisite for the harassment. Despite the disparate harassment of women online and the nature of this offending, few theorists (Adam, 2002; Ellison, 2001) have addressed Internet stalking as a gendered form of offending.

Internet stalking is a gendered form of offending and it links to the body this entails. This is supported by Sarkio (2009) theory whereby embodiment and gender are viewed as concurrent concepts. Adam (2002) argues that an analysis of Internet stalking should begin with an examination of online harassment and classifies Internet stalking as an extreme form of online harassment in line with the establishment of a gendered assessment of Internet stalking. The systematic analysis of Internet stalking against a theoretical framework which adopts gender as the central construct is prioritized by Adam (2002) who argues that such a framework should include an understanding of the psychology of the crime, a broader understanding of Internet crime and also a feminist analysis of Internet stalking in relation to privacy. In response to these requirements, Adam (2002) is particularly concerned with an assessment of stalking and the manifestation of gendered issues this crime presents.

### **2.3.3 How does Internet Crime Affect Women?**

It is estimated that 95% of aggressive behavior, harassment, abusive language and denigrating images in online spaces are aimed at women and come from partners or former male partners (UN 2006). In addition, many ICT tools such as spyware, wireless technology, and webcams are used to perpetrate online violence against women. Lee (1998) points out that women groups and individuals have reported cases of e-mail harassment, flaming, Internet stalking, online prostitution and pornography. Despite this alarming reality, Internet crimes seem absent from the agenda of feminist movements.

According to Wall (2007), the increasing availability of and ease of access to personal information online, especially through popular social networks such as facebook, also facilitate incidences of online harassment, with minority and marginalized groups often at the receiving end. Further, while both men and women are affected by Internet stalking, a survey by WHOA (2010) of the characteristics of 'victims' finds that amongst users from the ages of 18-32, victims are predominantly female.

The 2006 UN Secretary General report on in-depth study on all forms of violence against women recognized the new forms of violence against women that have developed with the advent of the new Information and Communication Technology. The report calls on member states to acknowledge this evolving nature of violence against women and respond to new forms as they are recognized. With increasing access to ICT, the cases of Internet crime on women and girls are also increasing. However, the statistics on this issue are very uneven if not sketchy. Most of the existing laws and policies on ICT do not cover Internet crimes on women therefore provide segregated data (USAID-Kenya 2007).

Internet crime can take a variety of forms, such as threatening or sexual messages delivered via e-mail, instant messaging services, or posts in chatrooms. Victims may view harassing communications to be nothing more than a nuisance, although some may feel physical or emotional stress and fear as a consequence. The messages may also be a precursor to more serious forms of harassment, most notably Internet stalking (Bocij 2004). Estimates of online harassment and Internet stalking appear to be on the rise, particularly among young people and college students due in part to frequent Internet use among this population (Finn 2004).

Smart (1995) is highly critical of the way in which harassment reduces women to bodies and the way in which the female body is rendered problematic in legal discourse.

Harassment, according to Smart (1995:120), is “premised upon the idea of acts performed on the female body. The man’s body is his instrument, the woman is her body”. The concepts from Smart (1995) is challenging, whilst still relevant in relation to offline harassment, could be regarded as equally applicable to explaining online harassment. Internet crimes also have emotional costs for victims, particularly through online harassment that leads victims to feel fear or distress much like real-world stalking and harassment Bocij (2004).

#### **2.3.4 Coping Mechanisms**

Many Internet service providers offer tools that filter or block communications from specific individuals. A key component of addressing the Internet crime is education and empowerment: Women should be given clear direction about how to protect themselves against perpetrators. There is need to empower women to effectively exploit ICT resources while protecting themselves from criminals. There is need for an approach, which would involve, raising awareness and capacity building on information security amongst the priority strategies of addressing Internet crime from a social perspective.

Women who are being continually harassed change their e-mail address losing important contacts. Internet crimes are cheap to commit, difficult to detect and often hard to locate in jurisdictional terms, given the geographical indeterminacy of the Internet (Brenner 2000). Many women with excitement of the Internet have their eyes too blurred to notice the dangers lurking. Internet service providers have been advising Internet users to stay away from social networks as much as possible as a social strategy against Internet crime. This is discouraging marginalized groups, who are vulnerable to Internet crime from Internet activities participation and there is a risk that this approach will further widen the digital gap.

There should be a strategy devised, not to protect women from online harassment and Internet stalking but empowering them to protect themselves. Internet crime is avoidable and women, once identified as a suitable target, are unable to influence the course of events. Greater awareness and education on Internet safety is necessary to provide Internet users and especially women with the awareness and the tools for preventing harassment. Recent research by WHOA (2010) outlines the most common methods of contact between victims and offenders. The five most common methods of contact were email, instant messaging, message boards, websites and chat. As Internet technology evolves, however, new technological devices and forms of social networking example facebook, provide new opportunities for offending.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

This study will be guided by the lifestyle exposure theory. Lifestyle exposure theory was proposed by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson in 1979 (Miller 2006). Lifestyle exposure theory is considered an opportunity theory (Felson 2002). This means that it attributes crime to criminal opportunities that exist as part of everyday life. At the very least, criminal opportunity is considered a necessary condition for a crime to take place. Simply put, without an opportunity for a crime to occur, one will not happen.

Lifestyle exposure theory focuses on the circumstances under which such opportunities are created. The lifestyle exposure perspective focuses on individual level risk factors (Felson 2002). Lifestyle exposure theory purports that certain lifestyles expose individuals to risk of harassment, for example, exposure to an offender, thus creating an opportunity for a crime to occur (Hindelang et al. 1978). Cohen and Felson (1979) considered criminal opportunity in terms of its component parts. The authors maintained that three elements are required for a crime to occur: a suitable target, a motivated offender, and an absence of capable guardianship. Lifestyle exposure theory suggests that harassment is most likely when individuals are placed in high risk situations, are in close proximity to motivated offenders, appear to be attractive targets to criminals, and lack a capable guardianship (Cohen and Felson 1979).

### **2.4.1 Relevance of the Theory to the Study**

The elements of lifestyle exposure theory hold true for Internet crime considering that those who spend a great deal of time chatting with others online may also develop intense emotional connections to another, despite the physical distance separating them (Bocij 2004). Individuals, especially women, may increase their chances of coming into contact with potential harassers by being interested in computers and regularly using computer-mediated communications such as chat rooms or social networking sites to connect online with others (Finn 2004). These social websites allow individuals to share pictures and personal information, exposing their potential as targets to would be harassers (Patchin and Hinduja 2007). The possible anonymity afforded by virtual environments may increase the likelihood that an individual will harass his or her friends while online without fear of reprisal (Furnell 2002). The motives behind online harassment have been divided into four reasons, namely, sexual harassment, obsession for love, revenge and hate, ego and power trips (Bocij 2004).

The gendered nature of online communications may affect the risk levels of harassment. Research suggests that online communications are masculine in nature, which complicates the process of communicating. Exchanges between users online may take an aggressive adversarial tone where individuals attempt to dominate one another through linguistic conflict (Herring 1999). This masculine exchange is different from female communication patterns that utilize polite communications and gendered language that lead women to be identified hence ignored, criticized, or harassed by men Internet users (Taylor et al. 2006).

For example, women who are interested in technology often report a high degree of sexual harassment or hostility from others online (Taylor et al. 2006). Thus, gender affects who is targeted for online harassment. Knowledge of computer systems may also play a role in target attractiveness, but a skilled computer user may be better prepared to deal with threats on-line.

The role of guardianship, both physical and social, for Internet crime is clear. For example, do women have knowledge to safely navigate technology resources to communicate and access information without increasing their risk of being harassed online? A range of computer programs example; anti-virus programs and firewalls have been designed to act as physical guardians to decrease the threat of system intrusions by viruses and malicious software, yet they are not meant to deal with threatening communications. Ownership and regular updating of protective software may reduce the likelihood of harassment because the individual is more cognizant of threats and risky behaviors online. This underlines the need for awareness and education for women.

A combination of measures of routine computer use, including time spent interacting with others online and an individual's knowledge of computers determines individual risk levels of being harassed while online. Gendered communication patterns may make women more likely to experience sexual harassment or hostile treatment (Taylor et al. 2006).

Research on the computer hacker subculture found that females are more likely to be harassed because of their gender (Taylor et al. 2006). There is need for gender to be included in the important discussion on the applicability of lifestyle routine theory to Internet crime, especially online harassment.

Women are more likely to be victimized because of being viewed as attractive targets, not because of computer related behavior and or precautions. Women with strong computer skills may also be more likely to be victimized, possibly as a consequence of the gendered nature of Internet space and differences in communication patterns that may lead women to be easily identified online and perceived as suitable targets for harassment (Taylor et al. 2006).

## **2.5 Assumptions**

1. Women students are victims of Internet crimes.
2. Internet stalking and online harassment are the main forms of crimes women face online.

## **2.6 Definition of Terms**

**Internet crime** in this report means any activity on the Internet that offends human sensibilities leading to violation of privacy of communication, democracy and freedom of expression that the Internet grants to a woman. Online harassment and Internet stalking constitutes Internet crime.

**Online harassment** means behavior in which an individual, group of individuals or organization, uses Information and Communications Technology to annoy and or torment one or more women emotionally, psychologically or physically.

**Internet stalking** means experiencing any one or many forms of online harassment, on two or more occasions, which must cause fear of harm to a woman. Stolen Identity qualifies to be stalking without causing fear or being repetitive.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research design, target population, the sample design and sampling methods, the sources of data, the data collection instruments, as well as the data analysis and presentation techniques that were employed to conduct this research.

#### **3.2 Research Site**

The research was conducted in the University of Nairobi. This is a leading public institution of higher learning in Kenya located in the capital city, Nairobi. It has six campuses within Nairobi namely College of Biological and Physical Sciences (CBPS), College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), College of Health Sciences (CHS), College of Education and External Studies (CEES), College of Agriculture and Veterinary Studies (CAVS) and College of Architecture and Engineering (CAE). The student population which consists of male and female students is 52,000. There is no restriction to the age of students. There are two categories of students, self sponsored students and government sponsored students. The University offers both undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

All the colleges are connected to high speed fibre network, which allows for fast Internet connectivity. Student connects to Internet through cyber café, modem, mobile phones Internet, data points in the university hostels, computer laboratories and in the libraries. Three of the campuses have wireless Internet connection where students can connect to the Internet on their laptops, wireless enabled desktops and phones from the hostels while within the campus area. All the students possess basic skills on how to utilize Internet as they are taught during registration to assist them in online registration. There is an Internet policy to deter Internet users using the University Internet from accessing pornographic material. The filtering is on words that insinuate pornography. For example: nude, porn, sluts. Student can post anything on the Internet since the restriction is on download only; no other Internet services are blocked including social networks. Students accessing Internet from other Internet service providers, for example mobile phones Internet, cyber café and modems, even while within the University compound, are not bound by the Internet policy.

### 3.3 Research Design

The study employs cross-sectional descriptive design where both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected and analyzed. Questionnaires were administered to the respondents. The purpose was to get information on Internet crime. 201 questionnaires were administered proportionally per college guided by the students' ratios. Explanatory research sought life stories identified through purposive sampling as an indication of the existing Internet crimes. Participant responses were analyzed to explore evidence on women being victims of Internet crimes, the forms of Internet crime they experience and how they are affected. An important aspect that this study determines is whether at anytime during a victim's harassment that one feared for their safety.

### 3.4 Study Population

This refers to the population of the subject under study. This research focused on women undergraduate students in the University of Nairobi. The total number of undergraduate women students in the University of Nairobi is 14,871. The table below shows the number of women students per college who constitutes the study population. The information was collected from the College registrars in the respective colleges.

**Table 3.1 Distribution of Female Student Population by College**

<b>College</b>	<b>Female Students</b>
College of Biological and Physical Sciences	913
College of Architecture and Engineering	665
College of Health Sciences	1341
College of Education and External Studies	2460
College of Agriculture and Veterinary Studies	579
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	8913
<b>Total</b>	<b>14871</b>

The student age vary from 18 years – 58years. 73% of the undergraduate students stay in students' hostels while the rest either stay at home with parents or make their own accommodation arrangements. There are two categories of students, government sponsored and self sponsored students. All students have access to the Internet and they are trained on basic ICT skills. All the students have the minimum skills to enable them access Internet and utilize Internet resources.

The government sponsored undergraduate students reside in the University hostels. Majority of the students are within the campus areas during the day and when on session including the self sponsored students.

### 3.5 Sample Population

Yamane (1967:886) provides a simplified formula to calculate sample sizes. This is the formula used to calculate the sample sizes:

$$n = N / \{ 1 + N (e^2) \}$$

Where:

n: Sample Size N: Population

e: Precision Level - 7% (Cochran, 1963; and Israel, 1992).

Using the formula

$$n = N / \{ 1 + N (e^2) \}$$

$$\text{Sample Size} = 14871 / \{ 1 + 14871 (0.072) \}$$

$$\text{Sample Size} = 201$$

**Table 3.2 Sample Size Distribution**

College	Female Students	Sample Size
College of Biological and Physical Sciences	913	12
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	8913	120
College of Health Sciences	1341	18
College of Education and External Studies	2460	33
College of Agriculture and Veterinary Studies	579	8
College of Architecture and Engineering	665	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,871</b>	<b>201</b>

Table 3.2 shows that with a population of 14,871 from all the six colleges the sample size was established to be 201 taking a precision level of 7%. Israel (1992) shows that samples obtained from a precision level of  $\pm 10\%$  provides adequate representation of the population.

### 3.6 Sampling Procedure

Probabilistic stratified random sampling strategy was adopted. Each college was taken to be a stratum. The number of questionnaires administered per college depended on the number of women students per college. The ratio of the women students per college was used to determine the number of questionnaires administered per college.

120 questionnaires were administered to CHSS, 12 to CBPS, 33 to CEES, 8 to CAVS, 18 to CHS and 9 to CAE. The women students administered with the questionnaire in each college were every tenth woman student passing at an identified point near the library.

Each respondent administered with a questionnaire and answered yes to the question “have you been harassed online?” was asked if they would like to share their experience. Those who agreed were requested to write a narrative on their experience, what exactly happened, their feelings and the impact the harassment had on them. The first narrative given by a respondent per college who has experienced online harassment or stalking and was willing to give a narrative of the incident was recorded as a life story to be analyzed in this study.

### **3.7 Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.7.1 Survey Technique**

The study adopted the survey research method for data collection. Questionnaires were administered by interviewer to all the 201 students, filled and checked for completeness. Partially complete questionnaires were replaced with new ones that were redistributed to other women students, as per the college ratios and randomly in order to eliminate missing data issues.

The questions were designed to elicit answers pertinent to the prevalence, forms and effects of Internet crimes on women. The questionnaire contained questions on demographics, Internet access, online behavior, online social networks, information provision online, online harassment and stalking. The length of time it took to complete the survey varied from respondent to respondent but on average it took 10-15 minutes. The questionnaire was pretested before being administered.

Pretesting involved administering the questionnaire to 10 respondents who were selected randomly from a group of postgraduate students who were not eligible for inclusion in the final sample. Adjustments were made after the pre-test based on the feedback. There were some questions that the majority of the students did not fill and such questions were revised and a pretested again.

### **3.7.2 Life Stories**

Life stories were acquired from the students who reported to have been harassed and were willing to share their experiences. Each respondent who filled the questionnaire and answered yes to the question “have you been harassed online?” was asked if they would like to share their experience. Those who agreed were requested to write a narrative on their experience, what exactly happened, their feelings and the impact the harassment had on them.

### **3.8 Data Processing and Analysis**

The research purpose and the research questions guide the process of analyzing the data. Qualitative data obtained through life stories and from open ended questions on the questionnaire, was analyzed manually, a coding system was developed and the data was categorized into the emerging themes. This is presented in the form of verbatim quotes and explained in the light of literature reviewed. Quantitative data is analyzed using the statistical package of social scientist (SPSS). The results of the data analysis are presented in frequency tables and figures.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

According to Babbie (1998) ethics is associated with morality and deals with matters of right or wrong. Since the subjects are human, I adhered to the code of ethics so as not to injure the respondents. For purposes of estimating the prevalence and forms of Internet crimes among women students in University of Nairobi and its effect on using Internet to pursue the empowerment course, it was important to collect supporting data from the victims as prove, so that awareness creating and measures to curb Internet crimes are devised and implemented or solution can be found that alleviate Internet crime.

All information collected was understood as private and confidential information and this paper protects the identities of the real person. Where a name is used to have the flow of the story, the names have been changed to protect the identity of the real person.

Before collection of the information, the students were notified why we need the information and for what purpose the information is needed for. I made it clear that this information was not be used in future for other purposes without notify and gaining consent from the students.

General information from questionnaires was anonymous. This was used for sampling, to get representative data for all the women students at the University of Nairobi.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings on the prevalence of Internet crimes, forms and effect of Internet crimes on undergraduate women students in the University of Nairobi. It also explores online activities that increase risk of Internet crimes on women. The demographic information of the respondents who participated in the study is presented first. The findings are presented following the research questions as stated in chapter one. Each research question is dealt with considering different questionnaire items and life stories narratives.

#### **4.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographic characteristics have long been identified as consistent correlates of a variety of forms of Internet crimes (e.g., Cohen et al., 1981; Hindelang et al., 1978). Therefore, demographic characteristics such as age and relationship status are considered in current estimates of the prevalence of Internet crimes on members of the sample. The sample consisted of 201 undergraduate women students at the University of Nairobi. The sample had the following characteristics:

##### **4.2.1 Age of Respondents**

The study was interested in knowing the ages of the respondents to determine prevalence of online harassment and Internet stalking by age across forms of Internet crime. Data obtained from the field regarding the ages of the women students are analyzed and presented. 96.5% (194) of the students were aged between 18 – 30 years, 2.5% (5) aged 31-40 and 1% (2) aged 41 and over. The mean age of the sample was 23 years. Respondents who are under 30 years age group experienced 42.1% online harassment while those that are 30 years and over age group experienced 38.6%.

##### **4.2.2 Marital Status of the Respondents**

This was deemed important for this study to find any correlation of marital status and Internet crimes. Relationship status is presented as single, married (including living with someone), divorced, separated and widowed.

94% (189) of the respondents were single, 10% (10) married; the remainder of respondents were separated 0.5% (1) or divorced 0.5% (1). Those who were married, including having a constant boyfriend and living with someone were victims of Internet crimes 63.2%, while those who were single, divorced, separated, widowed being victims 36.8%. 50% (5) of the married students declared that they had first interacted with their husbands online.

#### 4.2.3 Residence

Data on residence information from the study participants was sought with respect to where students lived while on session. 81.1% (163) of the students were living in University hostels, 10.9% (22) lived at home of a parent, guardian or relative and 8% (8) in rented accommodation off campus.

The percentage of student who had Internet access in room of residence is presented in Table 4.1 below. Access to Internet in room of residence was 95% for those living in University hostels, 86% for those living at home, 88% for those living in rented accommodation. On average, 94% (189) of the respondents were found to enjoy Internet access from the comfort of their room regardless of their place of residence.

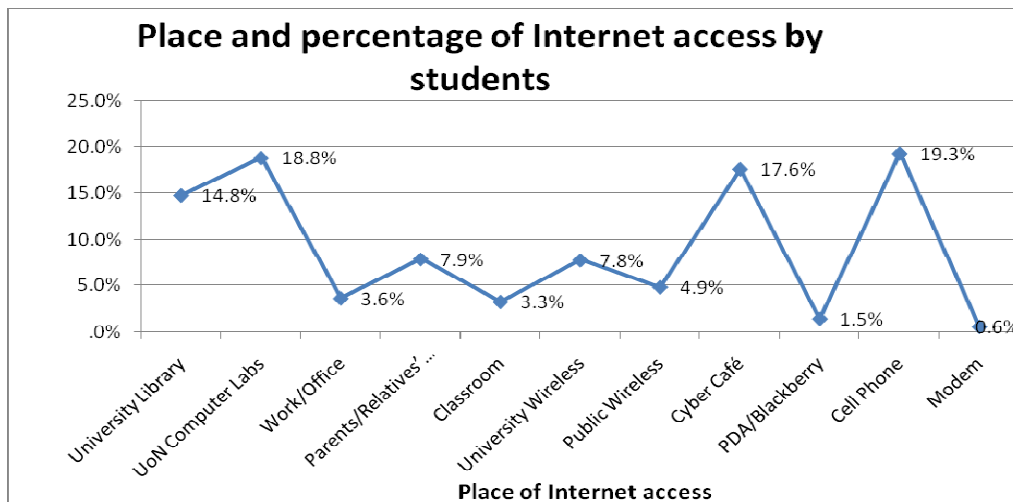
**Table 4.1 Internet Availability In Place of Residence**

<b>Student Residence</b>	<b>Access to Internet in room</b>	<b>No Access to Internet in room</b>
University Hostel	95% (156)	5% (7)
Home	86% (19)	14% (3)
Rented Accommodation	88% (14)	12% (2)

#### 4.2.4 Internet Access and Usage

Data was sought to determine the availability of Internet. All the respondents reported to have access to the Internet at the following places; University Library, University Computer Laboratories, Work/Office, Parents/Relatives' Home, Classroom, University Wireless, Public Wireless, Cyber Café, PDA/Blackberry, Cell Phone, modem. Figure 4.1 show that the respondents had Internet access.

**Figure 4.1 Percentage of Internet access**



To determine what students did most on the Internet, data on reasons for Internet use was collected and results shown on Table 4.2. Majority of the respondents reported to use Internet for social communication, with chatrooms, email, social networking sites, instant messaging, and blogs taking the highest percentage while both studies and work accounted for 29.4% of total Internet usage.

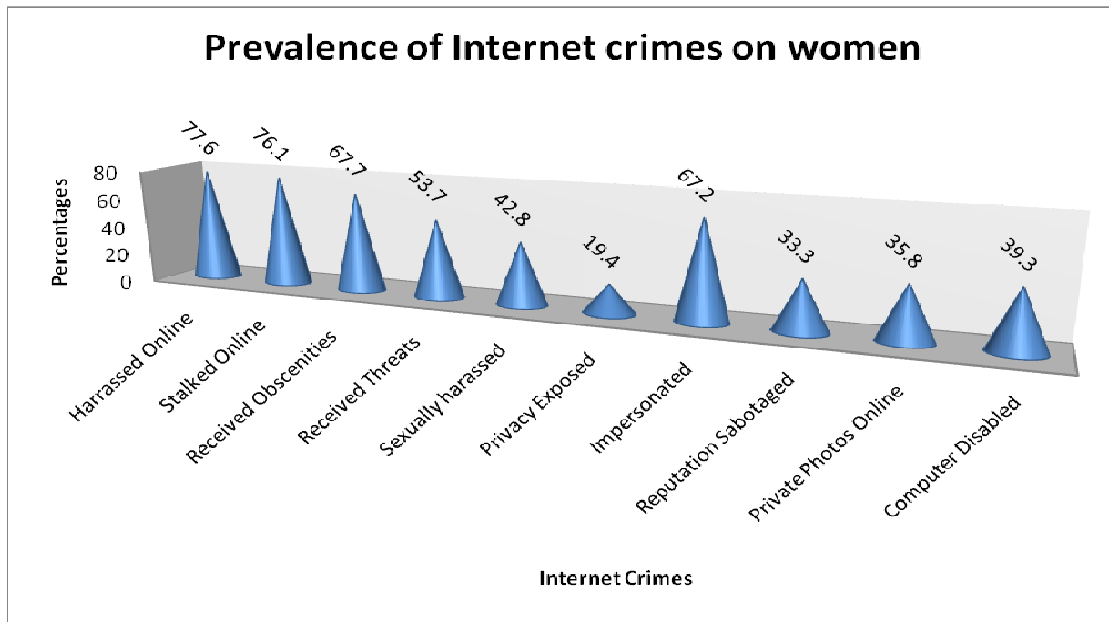
**Table 4.2 Reason for Internet Use**

What do you use Internet for?	Number of respondents using Internet Service	Percentage
Chat rooms	45	9.2%
Email	111	22.8%
Social Networking sites (such as Facebook)	143	29.4%
Instant messaging	32	6.6%
Study/Work	143	29.4%
Other	13	2.7%
Total		100.0%

### 4.3 Prevalence of Internet Crimes on Women Students

The lifetime prevalence of Internet crimes on members of the sample was measured as the percentage by which the women students reported to have fallen victim of online harassment and/or Internet stalking.

**Figure 4.2 Prevalence of Internet Crimes against Women**



Internet crimes were found to be prevalent amongst women students with online harassment being 77.6% (156) prevalent and Internet stalking being 76.1% (153) prevalent. The respondents were asked how they were harassed online and majority reported that they were victims of online harassment and Internet stalking leading to annoyance that tormented them emotionally, psychologically or physically. This is evidenced by one respondent's account of her online experience and feeling:

*“My boyfriend took nude photos of me. When we broke up, he kept threatening me that he would post the photos online but I thought it was a joke, and did not think it would have any serious effects on me. He posted nine nude photos of me which clearly showed my face on facebook and tagged all my friends. I think my friends tagged other people and within a day, everybody in campus had seen the photos. Everywhere I went, I felt that people turned to stare at me. Even some lecturers mentioned it in class. I locked myself in my hostel and felt like committing suicide. I did not leave my room for two weeks. My aunt visited me one day and told me she had seen my nude photos on several Internet websites. All these photos had a caption of my name .She counseled me; I explained to her what happened. She was understanding that she took me through all the websites she had seen the photos. I was in shock how the photos had spread like bush fire. I did not want my parents to learn of it from strangers and I had to act fast and tell them. It was very difficult approaching and explaining the embarrassing events to them.*

*Now I stand haunted, am thinking of changing my names. Because in whatever new community I join, after sometimes I notice knowing glances of what they may have seen. Three years later am now recovering, have done my best to change my outlook but this will forever haunt me. I have tried to write to the website managers of the sites my pictures feature to encourage them to delete, but it seems like it is part of their business, as its only two of the fifty three websites that am aware of have honoured my delete request. If I knew I would have agreed to everything my ex-boyfriend wanted to have such a situation alleviated. But it is too late. I now don't engage in any activity that may give me publicity because eventually it ends up being negative publicity.*

*I know I was nicknamed porn star and I pray to God that these things don't one day get above me, for me to commit suicide, as sometimes I feel it's the only sure solution. If I cannot take those photos away, then I can go away. Everything sometimes seems to be so meaningless especially when I have to face my parents. I have gone counseling but it does not help much. I don't browse the Internet anymore and I have developed technology phobia. I will also never relate with a man. Sometimes I wonder there is nothing that can be done to my ex for having spoilt my life. Where can I turn to avenge him for what he caused me and for the extreme infringement of privacy?" (23 years old, 3<sup>rd</sup> year student)*

#### **4.3.1 Online Harassment**

The concept of online harassment was operationalized using eight of the survey questions asking respondents if when using Internet someone sent pornographic or obscene images/messages, sent threatening written messages suggesting harm to you, your family/friends or property, sent you sexually harassing or threatening messages or pictures, exposed private information to others, pretended to be someone he/she is not, sabotaged reputation by spreading false rumors, sent other people's personal photos on the Internet without approval, attempted to disable your computer by sending a virus or spamming.

Each of the forms of online harassment were measured as (0 = No, 1 = Yes), representing whether or not the respondent had ever experienced any form of online harassment. Online harassment measure was coded as (0 = Never experienced online harassment, 1 = experienced at least one type of online harassment).

For instance, if a respondent indicated they had been the recipient of only having their private photos posted online, they would be assigned a value of 1; likewise, someone who had experienced all types of harassment would also be assigned a value of 1 and only those respondents who did not experience any of forms of harassment were assigned a score of 0.

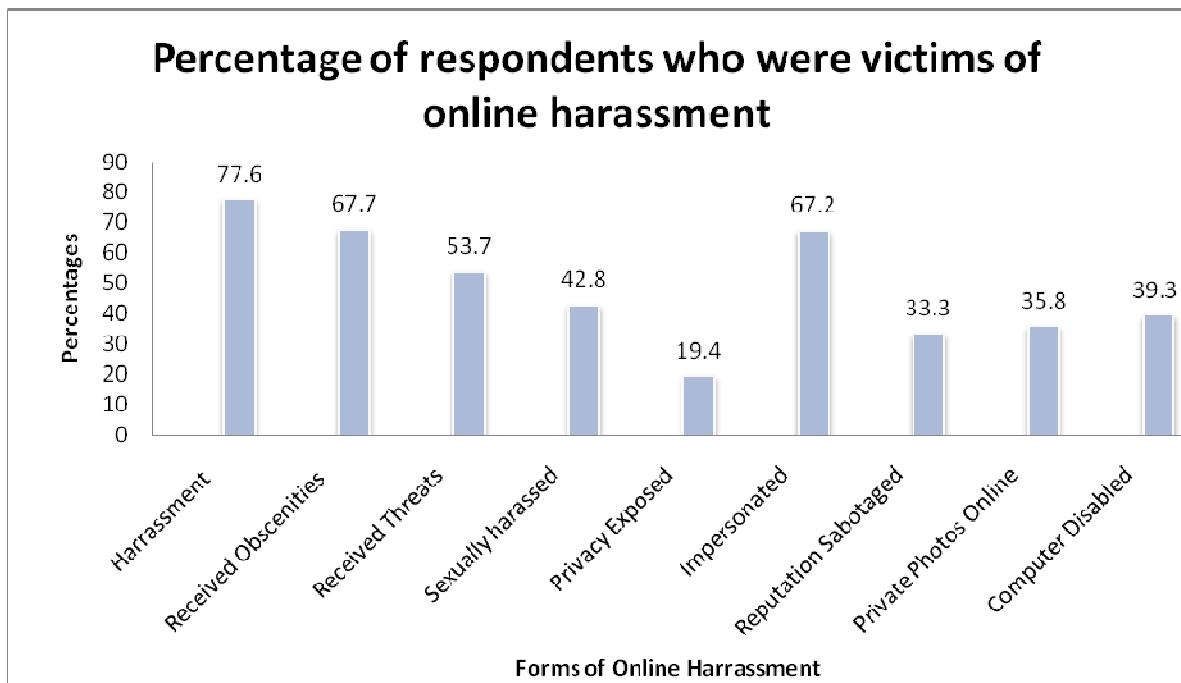
Figure 4.2 above illustrates the lifetime prevalence of Internet crime across the online delinquencies. Among sampled members, 77.6% (156) of the respondents admitted to have felt harassed by activities online. A student's narration of online experience depicts the level of torment and psychological torture that online delinquencies cause:

*“Someone popped up in yahoo chat and said hi when I was online. We chatted casually for some time at first then we got to be regular chat friends. We exchanged phone numbers and I revealed a lot of information on where I stay and what I do. He told me he was staying in Mombasa. After some times, he made sexual advances to me and I told him that I have a boyfriend. That is when he started spamming me with sexual messages and I asked him to stop. He now even SMS me on my phone. I conduct some business in college using the phone and it has been difficult to discard the phone number because I fear losing my lifeline as the business is what that provides for my survival in college. I am now depressed as the guy is telling me that he can catch me in person and even kill me. If he is so hypnotized, it's possible for him to get me as I had told him all about me. This has stressed me. I don't want to tell my boyfriend because he is so jealous and I fear his reaction if he notes that I speak with other men online especially that we also first met online. I had sent him a few photos of me in some seductive poses so if I told my boyfriend he will never believe that it was innocent. Now I stand threatened and I fear this guy could do anything. Of late he is mailing me pictures of nude girls without heads, I think I should report to the police but I fear the police will not understand and will put the blame on me. This is affecting my studies and I wonder if someone can help. I have decided not to read his emails but what do I do with the phone? Somebody help!” (25 years old, 4rd year student)*

The following are the varied forms of online harassment that were reported: 45.3% (91) of the respondents reported that someone had opened online accounts using their photos, names and personal details or a person known to them, impersonating them. 35.8% (72) reported that their reputation had been attacked, that is having their photos posted without their permission or have lies spread about them to others via use of electronic means.

67.7% (136) of the respondents reported that when using Internet someone has sent them pornographic or obscene images or messages, 53.7% (108) received threatening written messages suggesting harm to them, their family/friends or property, 42.8% (86) received sexually harassing or threatening messages or pictures, 53.2% (107) of the respondents reported that people online had made sexual advances towards them. 19.4% (39) had their private information exposed to others, 33.3% (67) had their reputation sabotaged through false rumors about them spread via Internet while 39.3% (79) reported that someone attempted to disable their computer by sending a virus or spamming them. Statistics of what was hypothesized to be harassment gave an online harassment percentage of 78.5%.

**Figure 4.3 Prevalence of Online Harassment amongst University Women**



### 4.3.2 Internet Stalking

Findings show that 76.1% (153) of the study participants have been stalked online. The measure of Internet stalking was if one experienced online harassment and whether at any one time a person's harassing online activity caused them to fear for personal safety and if the crime was repetitive.

The prevalence of Internet stalking is evidenced by what one of the respondents narrated:

*"I have blocked her from my social accounts but she makes anonymous accounts and checks my updates. I think she even poses with a name of one of my friends online because I have removed all the names of the people I don't know but she still gets all my updates. She says that my posts are controversial and immoral. I fear her stalking habits and the repercussion they would have on my life that I have accepted to stand sabotaged and blackmailed. I am feeling I should have more rights of expression especially as a law student who is aspiring to represent people of all walks of life. She is violating my privacy." (20 years old 2<sup>nd</sup> year student)*

The output to the measure of online harassment was compared with values of fear and escalation of the crime to give a measure of Internet stalking. Impersonation, such as having one's identity assumed online, was taken as a form of Internet stalking without subjecting it to the dichotomies of fear and repetition.

Table 4.3, shows the percentages on yes response from the respondents while asked whether they were harassed online, whether the harassment caused fear of personal safety and whether the harassment was repetitive, questions that are key metrics on Internet stalking.

**Table 4.3 Internet Stalking amongst Women**

	Number of women	Percentage
Experienced Internet stalking	153	76.1
Not experienced Internet stalking	48	23.9

77.6% (156) of the respondents admitted to have felt harassed by activities online. 50% (100) of the respondents expressed fear of their online information being used to harass them by people they had been in a relationship with. 75.6% (152) reported that at one time in their life, a person's online action had made them to fear for their personal safety. Repetition was recorded through 45.3% (91) of the respondents who reported to have been contacted after they asked the person to stop and 52.2% (105) of respondents reported to have been harassed and that the harassment had escalated.

76.1% (153) of the respondents were found to be victims of Internet stalking which comprised the cumulative forms of online harassments that were repetitive and caused an individual to fear for personal safety. 50% (100) of the respondents expressed fear of their online information being used to harass them by people they had been in a relationship with. 75.6% (152) reported that at one time in their life, a person's online action had made them to fear for their personal safety. 45.3% (91) of the respondents reported to have been contacted after they asked the person to stop. 52.2% (105) of respondents reported to have been harassed and that the harassment had escalated.

#### **4.3.2 Internet Crime Perpetrator by Gender**

44.2% (89) of the respondents reported to have been harassed by fellow women online, 2.7% (86) reported that those who harassed them online were men while 12.9% (26) of the respondents did not know the gender of the perpetrator.

#### **4.4 Forms of Internet Crimes Experienced by Women Students**

Responding to the question on online delinquencies experienced, study participants reported online harassment and Internet stalking as the forms of Internet crimes. The study measure on forms of online harassment was if when using Internet someone sent pornographic or obscene images or messages, sent threatening written messages suggesting harm to you, your family/friends or property, sent you sexually harassing or threatening messages or pictures, exposed private information to others, pretended to be someone he/she is not, sabotaged reputation by spreading false rumors, sent other-people's personal photos on the Internet without approval, attempted to disable your computer by sending a virus or spamming.

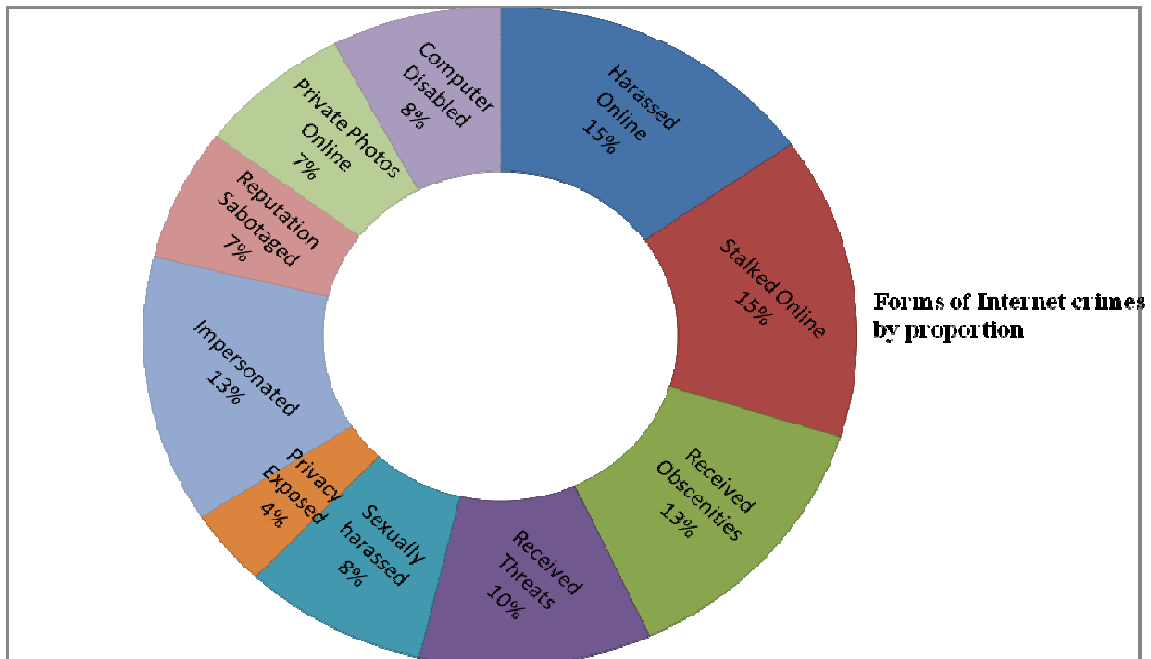
An open question on other Internet crimes that may have been overlooked in at design stage, 'Give any other Internet crime that is not included in the list above in the space provided below' gave the following as forms of Internet crimes against the women:

Sexual harassment, spamming, threats, bullying, blackmail, sabotage, stalking, intimidating messages, spreading rumors, subscribing victims to unwanted websites and online services, posting information about victim in online dating and sex services, impersonating, sending pornography, nude pictures posted online, morphing photos, posting pictures online without the owner's approval, emotional harassment and general misinformation.

The forms listed by respondents were found to have been fully incorporated in the postulated survey questions to measure forms of Internet crimes which were 'have been harassed online, stalked online, received obscenities, received threats online, sexually harassed, privacy exposed, impersonated, reputation sabotaged, private photos posted online without their approval and computer disabled'. The Internet crimes where the online harassment was repetitive and caused fear pointed to Internet stalking.

The results on forms of Internet crime by proportions were as below leading to the conclusion that Internet stalking and online harassment are the major forms of Internet crimes.

**Figure 4.4 Forms of Internet Crimes by Proportion**



#### **4.5 Effects of Internet Crimes on Women**

73.1% (147) of the respondents admitted that the harassment had negatively affected them as evidenced by the following respondent's experience:

*'Someone created a fake account of me on facebook and a fake email. They would update the information as if it was me updating. They had my personal information also like my phone numbers and my legitimate emails as alternate which they also put on this fake profile. They have subscribed me to porn services and online dating accounts that I started receiving strange obscene phone calls and emails. I felt so much distressed by the impersonation, violation and defamation. They were my competitors or their supporters as I was vying for a post as the secretary of AMSUN. The most annoying is that they scanned my posters' photo and put it on a nude ugly body of a grandmother and put it as the wall picture on the fake profile. That wall is full of abuses, annoyances that it is affecting me as person, I cannot sleep and I cannot ignore it. I got to be the laughing stalk of the college. I have reported to facebook who block the account but the person keeps recreating a similar account with small variations of my name. I have decided to give up and never contest for any seat. Too much annoyance I wonder whether it is worth the position I am contesting for.'* (24 years old, 3<sup>rd</sup> year student)

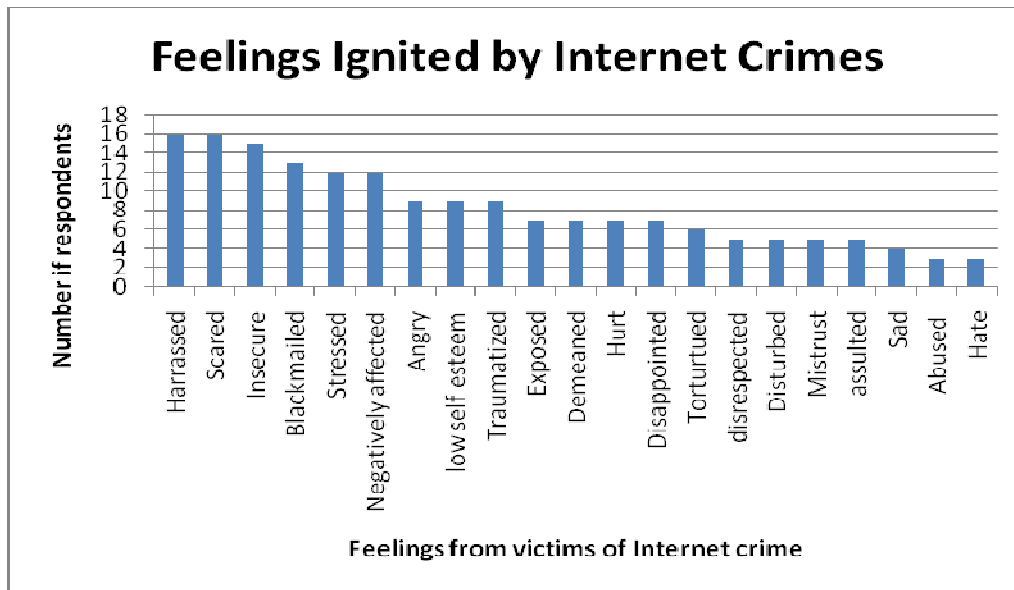
Women reported that Internet crimes annoyed and or tormented them emotionally, psychologically or physically as evidenced by the respondent's experience,

*"Someone hacked into my account and they sent obscene messages to my friend's wall to date. It is very tormenting, embarrassing and depressing for me owing that some people on my friends list are my aunties and uncles and my mother's friends who may not understand what happens or I may never have the chance of explaining what happened to them. I felt this interfered with my reputation and spoilt my name. It's so hurting, disturbing and I feel that it has lowered my self esteem. I won't use Internet again."* (19 years old, Arts student).

These were online delinquencies that offended their human sensibilities hence qualify to be Internet crimes.

Women who reported to have been victims of various forms of Internet crimes which had affected them described how they were affected by the Internet crimes using the terms and magnitude shown in the diagram below:

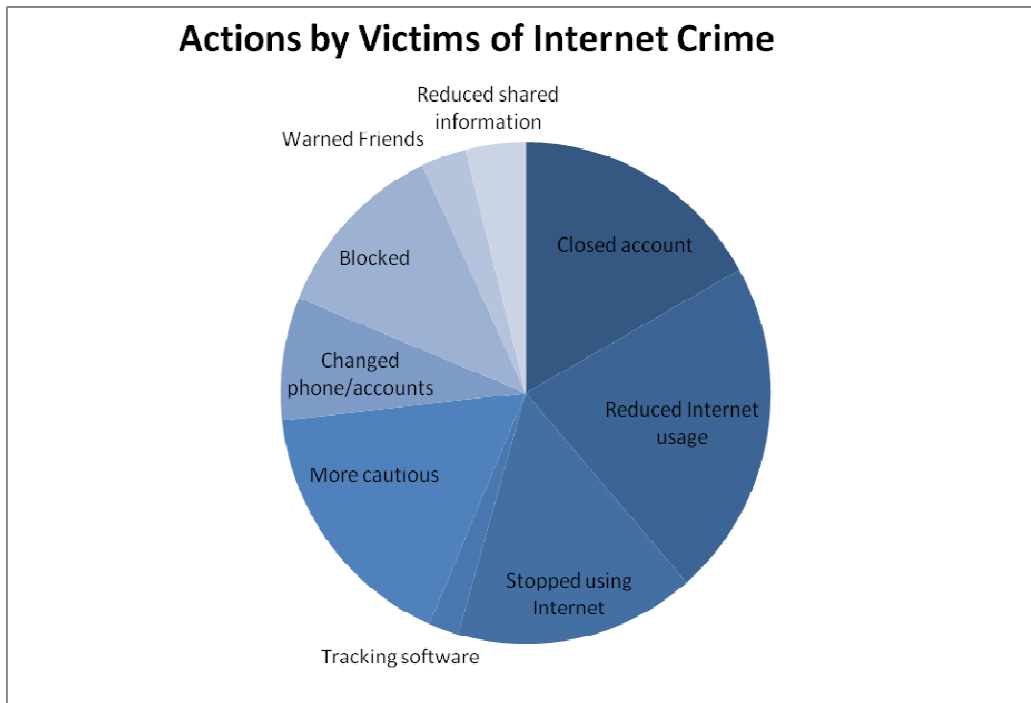
**Figure 4.5 Feelings Expressed by Victims of Internet Crimes**



20% of the respondents reported to have been attacked by people they first met online. Most of them were verbal abuse, but there were more severe physical attacks where three women reported to have been physically injured by persons they first met online and later established physical contact.

One lady confessed that she was raped by a person she first met online and established a relationship, the other was slapped in a similar circumstance and the third said she was locked up a room for days then released. She did not know what the man’s motive was. 48.8% (98) of the women had been threatened with physical harm by a person they first interacted with online. 38.8% (78) of the respondents reported to have flirted online with the intention of hooking up, which results to physical offline relationship from online contacts, making online contact just not virtual but real. 32.8% (66) of the respondents admitted to have hooked up with people they met online with 10 respondents reporting that the people they met online are their current husbands. 53.2% (107) of the respondents had met people in person who they first met online. The women reported to have reacted as shown below, following the attacks.

**Figure 4.6 Measures Taken by Victims against Internet Crime**



#### **4.6 Risk Factors for Internet Crime**

It was hypothesized that a number of online activities may make individuals more likely to be victim of Internet crime. The results indicate that this is the case, with a number of online activities increasing risks of being a victim of Internet crime. The risks factors were analyzed in four broad categories, namely risk exposure, online guardianship, online proximity, target attractiveness.

##### **4.6.1 Online Exposure**

The concept of online exposure was operationalized using six of the survey questions asking respondents about how much time they spent online and what online activities they participate in (i.e., social networks, blogs) that might reveal information about them. These measures of online exposure include: how many social networks/blogs the respondent has, how many times a week the respondent updates the information on their social network/blog, how many hours a day the respondent spends on their social network/blog, how many photos the respondent has posted on their social network/blog.

16.4% (33) of students update their profile 25 or more times in a week and only 1% (2) who reported not to update their personal profile at all, on average, each student has posted 115 personal photos with the highest respondent having 2000 personal photos on their profile. 14.9% (30) of the respondents reported to have spent more than 20 hours per week on social networks and blog, 14.4% (29) spent 10-20 hours, 25.9% (52) spent 5-10 hours and 44.8% (90) spent 15 hours. No respondent reported to have spent less than an hour on social network blog. On inquiry of what students use Internet for, only 29.4% of the total Internet use time was used for study, the rest was used for social activities such as chatting, social networks, blogs and instant messaging.

**Table 4.4 Distribution of Harassment by the Number of Social Accounts Opened**

		Number of social accounts you have opened		Total
		1 – 14	15 or More	
Have you been harassed online.	Yes	135	21	156
	No	39	6	45
Total		174	27	201

#### **4.6.2 Online Guardianship**

In the current study, online guardianship was measured by asking respondents if they used online profile trackers designed to monitor who is viewing their information, and by asking if they have their online social network accounts set to limited or private access for purposes of restricting who viewed the students' information posted on their online profiles. 68.2% (137) of the students had their accounts set to private meaning that only persons accepted as friends can view the online information, while 31.8% (64) of the students' information can be viewed by everyone on the Internet. 30.3% (61) of the respondents used a profile tracker to keep track of who is viewing their profile and what information they are viewing. 56.7% (114) of the respondents had taken steps to protect themselves ranging from blocking contacts, privacy settings.

**Table 4.5 Online Harassment by Privacy Settings and Use of Profile Trackers**

		<b>No privacy settings</b>	<b>Account set to private</b>	
Have you been harassed online?	Yes	108	48	156
	No	29	16	45
	Total	137	64	201
		<b>No profile tracker</b>	<b>Profile tracker used</b>	
	Yes	51	105	156
	No	10	35	45
	Total	61	140	201

#### **4.6.3 Online Proximity**

This study set to find out whether the respondent has ever added someone as friend on their online social network whom they didn't know. Most of the respondents had numerous friends in their social network accounts, majority of who are strangers. The average number of online friends is 652 with the respondent with the highest number of online friends being 6000. 42.3% (85) reported to have been harassed by strangers while 57.7% (116) of the respondents had been in a previous relationship with the harasser.

#### **4.6.4 Target Attractiveness**

This study utilizes nine indicators of target attractiveness based on the type of information respondents may have posted/provided on their online profiles (i.e., online social network, blog) including: their full name, their relationship status, their sexual orientation, their email address, address for other social network/blog sites, interests and/or activities, photos, and videos. The results are shown on Table 4.6 below.

**Table 4.6 List of Information Posted on Female Students' Online Profile and Percentages**

Information Online	Number of Women Students	Percentage
First Name	105	6.6%
Full Name	104	6.6%
Nickname	77	4.9%
Birth Date	152	9.6%
Relationship Status	133	8.4%
Sexual Orientation	52	3.3%
Home Town	117	7.4%
School address	26	1.6%
Home Address	25	1.6%
Job Title	29	1.8%
Work Name	11	.7%
Work Address	6	.4%
Email Address	140	8.8%
Home Phone Number	9	.6%
Cell Phone Number	60	3.8%
School Name	88	5.6%
Academic Course	82	5.2%
Clubs/Organizations	24	1.5%
Interests/Activities	122	7.7%
Photos	146	9.2%
Videos	26	1.6%
Top Friends	44	2.8%
Address for Other Social Network/Blog Sites	6	.4%
Other	1	.1%
Total		100.0%

The above table shows the information reported to have been provided online by the respondents. A narrative by one of the study participants, demonstrates how information provided online could make one an attractive and reachable target:

*“My current boyfriend first saw me online and requested to be added. I added him to my facebook account even if by then it was just another stranger. I add everybody who seems nice or who request to be added as a friend. We met outside our hostel one day, and then we met in a club. When we became friends he came to reveal that when he saw me online, he liked me. He looked at my profile and discovered that we were in same university. He recorded my details, my phone number, email, the course I was taking and the clubs and organizations I was in. This guy stalked me without my knowledge until I noticed him as a frequenter outside our hostel that used to say hallo. I would receive messages on my phone from a secret admirer. When we sat together in CU one day, our friendship picked. But he came to tell me it was not coincidental as he waited for me to get in, sit then he joined me. He revealed he used to come watch me swim at YMCA because I used to update my profile that am in YMCA swimming. I like the guy and am looking forward to marry him after college but I thought how dangerous it is to give information that can lead people to track you from online to real life. I freak all the time when I think of what could have happened if he was a person of ill motive. I have since erased all the personal information on my face book and I make sure that all what I put is general information.”(20 years Old, Arts Student)*

**Table 4.7 Online Proximity Variables by Harassment Prevalence.**

		Have you been harassed online?		Total
		Yes	No	
Information Online		78	27	105
	Full Name	74	30	104
	Relationship Status	113	20	133
	Sexual Orientation	42	10	52
	Email Address	113	27	140
	Interests/Activities	95	27	122
	Photos	119	27	146
	Address for Other Social Network/Blog Sites	4	2	6
Total		155	46	201

#### **4.7 Summary on Findings**

The mean age of the respondents is 23 years. The respondents enjoy 90% Internet access in their rooms regardless of where they live, home with parents or relatives, hostels, or rented accommodation. Most of the respondents, 94% (189), were single. The married respondents experienced higher, 64%, Internet stalking and online harassment percentages than the single respondents who experienced only 36% of the harassment. Unlike what was postulated, most of the female student respondents were harassed more by women, 44.2% (89), than the male who were 42.7% (86), 12.9% (26) were not aware of the gender of the harasser. Majority of the respondents reported to use Internet for social communication, with chatrooms, email, social networking sites, instant messaging, and blogs taking the highest percentage while studies and work accounted for only 29.4% of total Internet usage. Internet Crimes were found to be prevalent with 77.6% for online harassment and 76.1% for Internet stalking. 73.1% (147) of the respondents admitted that the harassment had disturbed and negatively affected them. Internet stalking and online harassment are the major forms of Internet crimes. Other forms of Internet crime were identified as received obscenities, received threats online, sexually harassed, privacy exposed, impersonated, reputation sabotaged, private photos posted online without their approval and computer disabled. All these other forms were found to annoy and or torment women and hence amounted to online harassment making online harassment and Internet stalking the two major forms of Internet crime.

Women reported that Internet crimes annoyed and or tormented them emotionally, psychologically. They stopped using Internet after the harassment, reduced their use of Internet, blocked accounts from harassers and exercised more caution on the Internet, changed phones/accounts and online identities. On risk factors for Internet crime, some online activities were found to put individuals at more risk of Internet crime than others; those who have many social online accounts, update the accounts frequently especially with controversial topics, is online most of the time, does not set their account to limited to restrict who views the information, adds strangers to friend list, and has posted personal information (their full name, their relationship status, their sexual orientation, their email address, address for other social network/blog sites, interests and/or activities, photos, and videos) on their profile are most at risk for becoming Internet crime victims.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

A number of findings warrant discussion regarding the prevalence of Internet crimes on women and forms of Internet crimes. This chapter will discuss the prevalence of Internet crimes, forms of Internet crimes experienced by women, effects of Internet crime on women and risk factors that increase susceptibility to Internet crime on women based on the findings in the previous chapter. It will give conclusions derived from the study, make recommendations including suggestions for further studies.

#### **5.2 Prevalence of Internet Crimes on Women Students**

To answer the first research question, Internet crimes are prevalent amongst women students with the most common forms being online harassment 77.6% and Internet stalking 76.1%. These are percentages by which the women students reported to have fallen victim of Internet crimes, one or more online delinquencies.

This study focused only on women students, but from previous research outcomes, women are more likely to be victims of Internet crime than are males, regardless of relationship status (Tjaden & Thoennes., 1998, SPLITZBERG & HOBBLER., 2002). They all conclude that gender stands out as a predictor of Internet crime. Specifically, being female is a positive predictor of unwanted contact, harassment, sexual advances, and online stalking.

The study shows that majority of women use Internet for social purposes which made them more susceptible to be victims of Internet crimes than those using Internet for study and official purposes. Majority of the respondents reported to use Internet for social communication, with chatrooms, email, social networking sites, instant messaging, and blogs taking the highest percentage while studies and work accounted for only 29.4% of total Internet usage.

Convenience of Internet access was gauged as the study relies on online access. Information on availability of the Internet, ease of Internet access and what the respondents uses the Internet for, indicates that all the respondents had 100% access to Internet, making the study on the Nairobi University women students valid.

Student residence information was sought so as to relate where the study participants resided with Internet connection availability in places of residence. 94% (189) of the respondents were found to enjoy Internet access from the comfort of their room, validating the study.

Women are victims of Internet crimes and dangers of Internet on women have been overlooked and affecting the optimal usage of this important resource. Yah (2006) observes that Internet renders women vulnerable to an array of potentially predatory others, who have women within instantaneous reach, unconstrained by the normal barriers of physical distance.

A University of Maryland study found Internet users with female pseudonyms were 25% more likely to be harassed online (Greer 2007). As Spender (1995:8) observes, "For every feminist issue in the real world, the same issues apply in the Internet world" including the online harassment of women.

Out of all the respondents, 77.6% (156) were victims of Internet crime; they had been stalked and harassed online. Women reported to have been harassed online and stalked online. The other forms of Internet crime; received obscenities, received threats online, sexually harassed, privacy exposed, impersonated, reputation sabotaged, private photos posted online without their approval and computer disabled; were broadly described as online harassment as finding shows they all made women to feel harassed. Where online harassment caused fear of personal safety and was repetitive it amounted to Internet stalking. Women reported that these crimes annoyed and or tormented them emotionally, psychologically or physically as evidenced by the respondent's experiences. These were online delinquencies that offended their human sensibilities hence qualify to be Internet crimes.

The prevalence of Internet crimes is evident but is absent from the agenda of feminist movement. WHOA (2010) of the characteristics of victims finds that amongst users from the ages of 18-32 victims are predominantly female. This study shows that respondents who are under 30 years' age group experienced slightly more overall harassment than did those in the 30 years and over age group (42.1% compared to 38.6%). This can be attributed to those being below 30 years using Internet more extensively than those above 30 years. Majority of the study participants were between 18 – 30 years which is the normal University study age.

The Internet crimes are discussed below in two broad categories:

### **5.2.1 Online Harassment**

Prevalence of online harassment was estimated to be 77.6%. A survey question asking directly, 'have you been harassed online?' was intended to find out if there is a discrepancy in what the women considered as harassment and what was hypothesized to be harassment.

Statistics of what was hypothesized to be harassment gave an online harassment prevalence of 87.6% (176) while the response from the respondent gave 77.6% (156). The discrepancy of 10% shows that there were some online delinquencies that were postulated to be harassing but the respondent did not actually feel harassed by them. For example, 53.2% (107) of the respondents received sexually harassing advances, messages or pictures, 42.8% (86) of the respondents reported that people online had made sexual advances towards them depicting that some of them did not consider the sexual advances as harassing. For purposes of reporting, 77.6% (156) was used as this is what the respondents considered to be actually harassing.

### **5.2.2 Internet Stalking**

Prevalence of Internet stalking was estimated to be 76.1% (153). Internet stalking means experiencing any one or many forms of online harassment (shown on Figure 4.4), on two or more occasions, which must cause fear of harm to an individual. Impersonation is qualitatively different from the other forms of Internet stalking as it is not necessarily a crime of repeated pursuit and does not have to cause fear to qualify for Internet stalking. In previous research (Bocij, 2003) has suggested that impersonation, such as having one's identity assumed online, is a form of Internet stalking. The UN REPORT 2006 estimated that aggressive behavior, harassment, abusive language and denigrating images in online spaces are aimed at women and come from partners or former male partners.

Also Spender assumes it is only men who perpetrate Internet crime; Spender (1995) addresses a specific form of harassment via text, known as flaming, and argues: What some of these men do online, what they put on their screens and on those of the women students have to be seen to be believed. It appears to be sexual terrorism, designed to drive women away from the centre of power but this study reverses the notion.

From the findings, the perpetrators of Internet crimes are not necessarily men. Women were found to perpetrate the crime on fellow women more than men. This was a contrast to the study postulations of men being the major perpetrators of Internet crime against women.

The pattern that emerges from the data is that 44.2% (89) of perpetrators of Internet crime were women, 42.7% (86) were men while 12.9% (26) of the respondents did not know the gender of the perpetrator. Those who are married are victimized more often than are people who are single. Nearly 44% of those in a relationship have been harassed or stalked online, compared to 36.8% of those who are single, widowed, divorced or separated, which may indicate that dating partners, their relatives or acquaintances may be responsible for a portion of the stalking.

### **5.3 Forms of Internet Crimes Experienced by Women Students**

According to Duggal (2002), Internet crime is a criminal activity committed online and can be divided into 3 major categories, crime against the person, crime against property, crime against government (Duggal 2002). This research focused on Internet crime against the person, specifically the women. For purposes of this research, Internet crimes are online delinquencies that affect the person and specifically those affecting the woman. Internet crimes affecting the person are child pornography, online harassment and Internet stalking. Those that specifically affect women are online harassment and Internet stalking.

Findings show that, in terms of percentage of occurrence, online harassment and Internet stalking are the major forms of Internet crimes that affect women. When respondents who were victims of all forms of online delinquencies were asked whether they were harassed online, all the other online delinquencies; receiving obscenities, online threats, online sexual harassment, privacy exposure, online impersonation, sabotage of reputation, private photos posted online without consent and disabling computer; all were found to amount to online harassment. This led to the conclusion that, all these other forms of Internet crime amounted to online harassment in general and where these crimes cause fear and are repetitive they amount to Internet stalking.

All online delinquencies fell under online harassment; being Internet crime that offend women sensibilities (annoy and or torment one or more women emotionally, psychologically or physically) while Internet stalking is an element of online harassment, which has the additional factor of pursuit via electronic means that also causes fear of personal safety.

#### **5.4 Effects of Internet Crimes on Women Students**

Scott et al (2001:12) argues that women would be safer spending their time somewhere else, if Internet is so dangerous further problematising exclusion from participation on the Internet and hampering attempts to secure equal participation.

Internet crimes have negative effect on women. They affect how women continue to utilize Internet resources after they or their acquaintances have fallen victim of Internet crimes. As a result of Internet crime women reported to have been annoyed and tormented emotionally, psychologically and physically. This trauma impacted on their life and consequently to their degree of Internet use.

An indication of how Internet crime can affect life is evidenced by a student who gave her experience stating that the online harassment is threatening to affect her business which is her source of livelihood in school, it could threaten her social relationship, her life is threatened, its affecting her studies and activities due to stress, and has already impacted on her use of the Internet.

Finding shows that majority of women who fell victim to Internet crimes minimized using Internet or stopped using Internet altogether. Women should not avoid exploiting the Internet for communication and access for information, including all online interactions as this discourages an already vulnerable group from participation further marginalizing them and widening the digital gap. Women should be in the forefront in utilizing Internet resource for their social, political and economic well being.

Other women victims of Internet crime reported to have changed online identities which disorientated and consequently lead to minimizing Internet usage through loss of contact or became more cautious when using Internet which as a result interfered with and decreased their online communication and online access of information.

Their reaction to Internet crime impacted negatively on use of Internet as a key resource toward seeking the empowerment course whose consequences are further marginalization. The consequences of the women reaction after being Internet crime victims further marginalizes, promotes discrimination and further widens the digital gap as explained below:

Decreasing the frequency of Internet use or completely stopping the use of Internet makes women not benefit from Internet resource as an important information reservoir with tools and spaces where women can freely enjoy the freedom of expression and privacy of communication and address gender inequalities through movements and communities against issues retrogressive to women.

Blocking email accounts and social networks makes the women to lose important contacts and important information channels and also the information reservoir that the email is.

Changing Internet identity makes important people or people with crucial information not get the women's contact when required. A lady reported that a former supervisor informed her that he was looking for her contacts, for vacation job placement but missed her contacts. She had changed all her communication channels owing online harassment.

Some women stop to follow a worthy cause to distract online attention and reduce personal distress. A student who gave their life story narrated that she stopped contesting for a secretary of a student organization post following the abuse, defamation, annoyances, slander that was happening on her perpetually hacked social network profile. She could not cope with the online slander, so she stepped down owing the online annoyances. This shows that online harassment could also influence the placement of women in leadership positions further marginalizing them.

Many may trivialize online harassment and stalking but from the finding of this research, online contacts were found to have translated to physical online contact. Therefore, apart from the injury to human sensibilities, online contact can also translate to physical harm.

Familiarity with the Internet, having Internet at the comfort of your room with closed doors, creates a sense of distance that causes women to assume that such communication is not dangerous and hence they cannot be attacked. But the reality, as seen in the findings, is that online contacts at times end up in offline contacts which may lead to actual physical harm or harassing virtual interactions that cause emotional and psychological trauma. The victim feels the violence of the online acts and bears long term physical and psychological scars as a consequence. The research shows results of rape, abduction and physical beating from people who were first mere online contacts.

When offenders use online resources against women, they further dangerous and more discriminatory agenda. But Internet crime should not hinder Internet usage and should not discourage women from access to Internet as it just marginalizes them further. Women end up using the meager financial resources that could be used for their development to mitigate this crime, and seek assistance, e.g. counseling after falling victims which would otherwise have been used for their development.

## **5.5 Risk Factors for Internet Crime**

To understand what exposes individuals to risk, it is important to consider online exposure, safety, attractiveness and proximity. Findings indicate that the number of online social networks an individual owns, the number of daily updates to those networks, the contents of the updates, allowing strangers to access personal information online (e.g., adding strangers as friends to social networking sites), lack of use online privacy settings (i.e., limited/private settings), adding personal exposing information on the profile are significant predictors of online stalking/harassment.

### **5.5.1 Online Exposure**

Online exposure is associated with increases in Internet crime. From the findings, the victim's number of social networks and the number of daily updates to these networks both provided more opportunities for being a victim of Internet crimes. For instance, someone who provided information and daily updates on multiple online social networks reached a larger audience than someone who only maintains and updates a single online network account.

The chat facility in social networks increased risk of harassment and stalking. Chat is a real time communication application used with computers or wireless devices (e.g., mobile phones) that allows users to send text back and forth. The ease and immediacy of communication allowed by chat makes various online delinquencies a relatively simple task for those who target women. Social networks also allow to monitor whether their victims are online or not, which can facilitate the online pursuit. This may be the reason that use of social networks is significant and positive predictor of online harassment and Internet stalking.

The number of social networking accounts that a respondent has opened was identified to be a positive predictor of Internet crime, increasing the odds of unwanted contact and all types of online delinquency.

Likewise, the number of times a day an individual updates their online social networking website was positively related to prevalence of Internet crime one experiences. The number of hours per day spent engaging in online networking is positively associated with online harassment and Internet stalking. Further, the number of photos posted on one's online social network is positively associated with Internet crimes especially of morphing and stalking.

### **5.5.2 Online Guardianship**

The idea that precaution discourages Internet crime can be adapted for use in online environments Ashcroft (2001). Security features on computers (e.g., presence of firewalls, anti-virus software), do not protect against repeated contact or pursuit behaviors (i.e., they are designed to protect against malicious software), and not routine online activities.

The physical aspect of guardianship was determined by whether the respondent has their online social network/blog account set to private or limited access, and whether they use or have used a profile tracker that keeps track of who views their account. Lifestyle/routine activity theory postulates that all else equal, more guarded or protected targets are less likely to be victimized, and that the presence of guardians reduces criminal opportunities and discourages offenders from taking advantage of opportunities. Out of the two online guardianship variables, only use of a limited account setting is significantly related to Internet crime decline.

Respondent using a profile tracker reported higher harassment than those not using a profile tracker depicting that either it does not protect victims from Internet crime or most may have installed a tracker after being victims as many respondents were reactive not proactive in guarding themselves. Most reported to have used measures to protect themselves after they had been harassed online or one of their acquaintances had fallen victim of the same. Odds of Internet crime increase with profile tracker settings.

These findings are contrary to expectations, since these programs are designed to allow users to keep track of who is viewing their information, and take measures to limit access of potential offenders if problems develop. 30.3% (61) of the respondents used a profile tracker to keep track of who is viewing their profile and what information they are viewing, while 69.7% (140) of the respondents did not, meaning they are not aware of who access their information, their frequency of access in order to identify any risky trends.

### **5.5.3 Online Proximity**

Adding strangers as friends to online profiles brings potentially motivated offenders into online contact with the vulnerable women. As Bocij (2004) has pointed out, victims and offenders need not necessarily converge in physical space. There are a number of crimes in which victims and offenders come together through the Internet. The number of friends a respondent has online was positively related to contact, being a victim of Internet crime. The adding of a stranger indicates whether the respondent allows people they do not know access to their personal profile pages (e.g., social networks) online, increases risks of Internet crime.

As indicated in a student's narrative, if a potential stalker is online browsing profiles on Facebook (or some other online social network) and comes across a profile picture of someone he/she finds attractive, they can send a request to that person to be added as one of their online friends. If the target agrees to this, that potential stalker can now view, access, or download anything that the victim has posted on their online profile. This enables the stalker to see what that person is writing about (e.g., what they are going to do that day), potentially what their contact information is (if the victim has that information listed online), what their interests are, their relationship status, as well as other information that would be useful in pursuing and becoming more attached to the victim.

Online proximity to motivated offenders was found to increase likelihood of Internet crime occurrence. While a possible victim may have information posted online about themselves online (target attractiveness), the stalker cannot view or make use of this information unless the victim has granted them access. Not granting unwanted parties as friends can also be considered a form of self-guardianship.

Adding strangers as friends to one's online social networks was positively established to increase the levels of Internet crime. 42.3% (83) reported to have been harassed by strangers while 57.7% (116) of the respondents had been in a previous relationship with the harasser.

### **5.5.4 Target Attractiveness**

According to Cohen et al. (1981: 508), online attractiveness "is the material or symbolic desirability of persons or property targets to potential offenders."

Any online information that facilitates the pursuit of the women (e.g., email addresses, phone numbers) or discloses details about the potential victim (e.g., sexual orientation, photos) may make the target more attractive, at least to stranger stalkers.

From the findings of this study, online target attractiveness was associated with Internet crimes. Individuals who provided more personally identifying information were harassed more meaning it made it easier for Internet stalkers to contact victims as they got to be more attractive targets. The information reported to have been provided by the respondents on the Internet, which could be misused is massive (Listed on table 4.6).

In summary, the key question that emerges is: who is victimized online and why? Based on the results presented, there are certain demographic groups who are disproportionately victims of Internet crime, and there are certain online activities that put individuals at risk of being victims; Those who have many social online accounts, update the accounts frequently especially with controversial topics, is online most of the time, does not set their account to limited to restrict who views the information, adds strangers to friend list, and has posted personal information (their full name, their relationship status, their sexual orientation, their email address, address for other social network/blog sites, interests and/or activities, photos, and videos) on their profile are most at risk for becoming Internet crime victims.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

Internet crimes are prevalent amongst women, with women experiencing one or more forms of online pursuit; majorly online harassment 77.6% and Internet stalking 76.1% in a short amount of time. This suggests that, like the growth of technologies that facilitate the crime, online harassment and Internet stalking is likely to increase, particularly among young people and especially women.

If the results presented in this study are representative of the Internet stalking and online harassment and the effects it has on University women students and women generally, then it is clear that online harassment and Internet stalking is a problem that needs to be addressed, both administratively by universities and legally by law makers.

Women also need to be aware of online activities that put them to more risk of victimization, avoid them and be more cautious when navigating Internet resource for their development.

Internet provides secure tools and spaces where women enjoy their freedom of expression, get information, have privacy of communication and contribute in addressing gender inequalities through movements and communities against issues that were once deemed private, such as domestic violence and sex trafficking.

The study sought information on availability of the Internet, ease of Internet access and what the respondents use the Internet space for to validate the study as it relies on what takes place in cyberspace only. From the results we can conclude that most of the respondents use Internet mostly for social purposes. This makes them more susceptible to Internet crimes.

Internet offers new possibilities for networking and for participative democracy but it's also being used by oppressors with selfish motives of sexual harassment, hate, obsession for love, revenge, unhealthy competition, boosting ego, power trip including desire to exert control over the victim to furthering dangerous and discriminatory agendas, which includes Internet crime committed against women.

Familiarity with the Internet; having Internet at the comfort of your room with closed doors, creates a sense of distance that makes women to assume that such communication is not dangerous. But the reality is that online contacts at times end up in offline contacts which may lead to actual physical harm or harassing virtual interactions that cause emotional and psychological trauma. The victim feels the violence of the online acts and bears long term psychological scars as a consequence.

Laws of Kenya have not covered Internet stalking and online harassment as a crime (United States Agency for International Development, Kenya (USAID-Kenya) (2007) and findings revealed that there are no adequate institutional policies and clear channels to report the crimes and seek assistance. As examined in this study, online harassment and Internet stalking have harmful consequences, with negative psychological and emotional responses in victims.

University policies governing online harassment and Internet stalking are either inadequate or do not exist, and considering the harmful effects of Internet crimes on women evident from this study, and the daily growth of technologies and networks that facilitate the crime, this is an issue that may soon be difficult for universities and government to ignore.

For all of these reasons, more work is needed in measuring, responding to, and understanding the consequences of Internet crimes especially on women. Only then can Internet crime laws and university policies address the issue based on empirical evidence. Internet crime should not hinder women's Internet usage and should not discourage women from access to Internet as it just marginalizes them and widens the digital gap further.

Women then should be sensitized on the dangers lurking in the Internet, the risky online activities to avoid and how to safely navigate technology resources to communicate and access information without increasing risk of online abused and discrimination in order to contribute freely, effectively and equitably to social, economic, political and cultural development.

There is urgent need for campaigns to raising awareness on dangers lurking on the Internet to encourage guardianship proactively, civic education that include clear direction on how to protect themselves against online perpetrators, vigorous capacity building to let women know how and what to do in order to use Internet and still stay safe including how to approach issues with more caution. Women should not be protected by being told not to use the Internet; instead they should be empowered to protect themselves if the situation of the marginalized being on the receiving end is to be defeated. Further, women should be empowered and facilitated by the government and institutions with structures of reporting, policies and laws that enable to utilize Internet resource fully.

## **5.7 Recommendations**

### **5.7.1 Women Using Online Resources**

- Increase the effort required by the harasser to successfully commit the crime. The students should
  - Control who has access to their personal information online (not to avail email address or other contact information to strangers; change online identity if necessary)
  - Limit online exposure (minimize the number of social networks information posted on online profile; limit the number of daily updates to online social networks)
  - Limit their online proximity to motivated offenders (avoid allowing strangers access to online social networks and access to other personal websites).

- Increase the risk for offender. If unwanted contact occurs through email, blogs, websites, text messages, message boards or online social networks, report the behaviors to web administrators or service providers and through the set government or university channels if any.
- Minimize the exposure of one's personal information online (avoid posting personal information like interests, relationship details online)
  - Do not post contact information (e.g., phone numbers, email addresses online)
  - Keep personal information vague if participation in online communities requires disclosing information
  - Deflect unwanted attempts at communication (e.g., enable spam filters on incoming messages; block communications from unwanted parties).
- Reducing provocations can be accomplished by not escalating interactions (avoid intentional agitation or threat to potential online harassers when unwanted communications are received).
  - Avoid reciprocating when contacted unless it is to inform the harasser to cease communications, and by ensuring that the harasser is not intentionally provoked through name-calling or sending an unintended message (e.g., that the victim may be romantically interested).
- Make it clear to the harasser that the repeated contacts or pursuit behaviors are unwanted and unacceptable, and by avoiding risky environments (stay out of online environments that could make one a target e.g., chat rooms oriented around sex)

### **5.7.2 Government, University Management, Social Media Owners**

- The University should make it a priority to sensitize students on online harassment and stalking, develop a code of conduct for Internet resources use and create reporting and counseling channels of those who may fall prey to Internet misuse.
- The government should increase the risks of offenders by:
  - Making the regulatory body, (Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK), being the decision maker who sets the agenda for Internet providers and companies with websites), capacitated to regulate website contents and activities and monitor and block those who misuse the Internet.
  - Passing an Internet crime bill to deal with crime which should include procedures to train personnel from prosecution to judiciary. Also formation of a unit, Internet crime Unit with capacity to effectively deal with Internet crime.

- Web administrators of the social sites should introduce lines of reporting on misuse of their websites, and manage the reports effectively by promptly warning those misusing to stop and subsequently blocking users who misuse the facility even after warning.

They above three stakeholders should not fail in their supervision and protection responsibilities. They should collectively;

- Make it easier to report problem behaviors online like unwanted contacts/pursuit by providing an online portal to do so and act on the reports promptly.
- Ensure that electronic communications are not anonymous controlling problem users.
- Improve surveillance of online environments by monitoring misuse.
- They all should make Internet crime prevention a priority and provide a code of conduct to site users.

### **5.7.3 Areas of Further Research.**

- i. A review of online harassment and Internet stalking literature indicated an evident gender disparity in statistics. There is no comprehensive gendered assessment of Internet stalking and online harassment. The lack of critical academic scholarship, especially that which examines this gender disparity, prioritizes the need for a gendered assessment of this offence and calls for research in this area.
- ii. The sample used in the current study was drawn from a single public university in Kenya. In the future it would be beneficial to expand to other universities and other populations to better understand the Internet stalking and online harassment and the effect it has college students.
- iii. The data presented in the current study represent a single point in time, and ideally longitudinal data is desirable in establishing causal relationships. Therefore, succeeding studies in Internet stalking and online harassment would benefit from obtaining longitudinal data.
- iv. Finally, it would be interesting to carry out a similar study on a target male population, as research has shown that boys too, albeit minimally, are also targets of Internet crime.

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7. How many hours per week do you use the Internet?  
 1-5 hours      5-10 hours      10-20 hours      20+ hours
8. What do you use the Internet for most often? (Please select two)
- |  |                          |                     |                          |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Chat rooms                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Instant messaging   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Email                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Study/Work          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Networking sites (such as Facebook) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other, please state |                          |
9. What is the most frequent method you use to communicate with your family/friends?
- o In Person                      o Over the Phone                      o Online                      o Other
10. What percentage of your friends would you estimate frequently use some type of online communication?
- Example: Instant Messenger, Facebook, twitter, emails 0 – 100 (increments of 5)
11. What percentage of your friends would you estimate that you talk to online, in an average week?
- Example: Instant Messenger, Social Networks, etc.) 0 – 100 (increments of 5)
12. How many friends would you estimate you have in total on all your online social network/blog account(s)?
13. How many photos would you estimate that you have on your social network/blog account?
14. Do you have your social network/blog account set to private or limited access?
15. Have you ever used or tried to use a profile tracker that keeps track of who views your account? Example: My priority friends    o Yes                      o No
16. Which of the following do you include on your social network/blog account(s)? (Please Check All That Apply)
- |                                     |  |   |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> First Name | <input type="checkbox"/> Full Name           | <input type="checkbox"/> Nickname           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Birth Date | <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship Status | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home Town  | <input type="checkbox"/> School Address      |   |

- Home Address       Job Title               Work Name               Work Address
- Interests/Activities    Photos                       Videos                       Top Friends
- Email Address           Home Phone Number       Cell Phone Number
- School Name             Academic Course           Clubs/Organizations
- Address for Other Social Network/Blog sites       Other, please specify

17. In an average week, how many times do you update the information on your social network/blog account(s)?  0 – 24       25 or More

18. Has anyone ever contacted you or attempted to contact you on more than one occasion online after you asked/told them to stop? Give Details.

19. Have you ever flirted with a friend or acquaintance, or someone you don't know with the intention or hope of pursuing a romantic or sexual relationship, including just hooking up? Give Details

20. How afraid are you that someone you had/have an intimate relationship with, friend, acquaintance, stranger will use the information on your social network/blog to harass, threaten you or stalk you? Explain

21. Have you ever hooked up (or had brief sexual encounter) with someone you met online? Give Details.

22. Has anyone ever opened an account pretending to be you or your acquaintance online without your permission?

23. Have you ever met someone in person that you first met on online?

24. Has anyone ever made sexual advances toward you on more than one occasion online?

25. How many social network/blog accounts have you opened, even if you don't use them regularly?  1 – 14       15 or More

26. Have you been harassed online? Describe fully how the harassment began.

27. Was the person who you felt harassed you male or female?

28. Has anyone ever spoken to you in a violent manner or threatened to physically harm you on more than one occasion online?
29. What did you think was happening and why did you think it was happening?
30. Did you have any relationship or contact with the harasser, online or offline, before the harassment began? **Yes No** If not, how do you think the perpetrator got your details? Explain your answer.
31. Do you know why you are being harassed by this person or persons? Please explain this in as much detail as possible.
32. Type of first known interaction with harasser (email, mailing list, twitter, my space, yahoo messenger, facebook, msn, Skype, chat rooms, telephone, other)
33. Has the harassment escalated since it began? For instance, have the communications become more frequent, or has the content of those communications become more overtly threatening or defamatory?
34. Did that person's actions cause you to fear for your personal safety?
35. Have you been threatened with physical offline harm? Example: violence, kidnapping, rape, death. If yes, how were these particular threats communicated to you?
36. Has your reputation been attacked, e.g. have photos of you posted without your permission, have lies been spread about you to others? **Yes No**
37. Have you sent any communication to the harasser yourself, or made statements about the harasser in a public place? **Yes No**
- If yes, please describe. Give type of communication e.g. any email messages, chat exchanges, messages directed to or about the harasser etc.
- Who did you share this information with?
38. Have you taken any steps to protect yourself?
39. Do you think this is different from any criminal phenomenon in the physical world?

40. What measures do you think should be put in place to protect you? (social or report, to curb Internet crime?)

41. When using Internet has someone:(answer yes or no)

- i. Sent you pornographic or obscene images or messages
- ii. Sent you threatening written messages suggesting harm to you, your family/friends or property.
- iii. Sent you sexually harassing or threatening messages or pictures.
- iv. Exposed private information about you to others.
- v. Pretended to be someone he/she is not
- vi. Sabotaged your reputation by spreading false rumors about you
- vii. Sent photos of you on the Internet without your approval
- viii. Attempted to disable your computer by sending a virus or spamming

42. What level of Internet user are you? Choose one from below.

- i. Consumer - You can check your email, surf the web and chat, but that's about it. You browse on your phone.
- ii. Power User - You can also install and configure different programs so that they work with your Internet access.
- iii. Expert - You can accurately trace email and messages to their origin, get registration information for domains and find out who owns IP addresses.
- iv. Guru - You are a sysadmin, or you train other to be advanced users. You know all about firewalls, proxies, anonymizers, daemons.

43. How would you say the harassment affected you? (your feelings)

44. Could you explain the impact? (e.g. stopped using Internet).

***If you been harassed and you would like to share, please write about your experience; what exactly happened, your feelings and the impact it had on you. It's regretted that this had to happen to you.***

Thank you for your cooperation

## APPENDIX 2

### List of Behaviours Constituting Internet Stalking

Spitzberg and Hoobler (2002) separate Internet stalking into a comprehensive list of behaviors, escalating in seriousness. Separating the complex concept of Internet stalking into a range of individual behaviors makes assessing its occurrence easier to understand for both researcher and participant.

1. Sending token of affection: (e.g. poetry, songs, electronic greeting cards, praise, etc.)
2. Sending exaggerated messages of affection: (e.g. expressions of affections implying a more intimate relationship than you actually have, etc.)
3. Sending excessively disclosive messages: (e.g. inappropriately giving private information about his/her life, body, family, hobbies, sexual experiences, etc.)
4. Sending excessively 'needy' or demanding messages: (e.g. pressuring to see you, assertively requesting you go out on date, arguing with you to give him/her 'another chance', etc.)
5. Sending pornographic/obscene images or messages: (e.g. photographs or cartoons of nude people, or people or animals engaging in sexual acts, etc.)
6. Sending threatening written messages: (e.g. suggesting harming you, your property, family, friends, etc.)
7. Sending sexually harassing messages: (e.g. describing hypothetical sexual acts between you, making sexually demeaning remarks, etc.)
8. Sending threatening pictures or images: (e.g. images of actual or implied mutilation, blood, dismemberment, property destruction, weapons, etc.)
9. Exposing private information about you to others: (e.g. sending mail out to others regarding your secrets, embarrassing information, unlisted numbers, etc.)
10. Pretending to be someone she or he wasn't: (e.g. falsely representing him or herself as a different person or gender, claiming a false identity, status or position, pretending to be you, etc.)
11. 'Sabotaging' your private reputation: (e.g. spreading rumors about you, your relationships or activities to friends, family, partner, etc.)

12. 'Sabotaging' your work/school reputation: (e.g. spreading rumors about you, your relationships or activities in organizational networks, electronic bulletin boards, etc.)
13. Attempting to disable your computer (e.g. downloading a virus, sending too many messages for your system to handle, etc.)
14. Obtaining private information without permission: (e.g. covertly entering your computer files, voicemail, or the files of co-workers, friends, or family members, etc.)
15. Using your computer to get information on others: (e.g. stealing information about your friends, family, coworkers, etc.)
16. 'Bugging' your home, car or office: (e.g. planting a hidden listening or recording device, etc.)
17. Altering your electronic identity or persona: (e.g. breaking into your system and changing your signature, personal information, or how you portray yourself electronically, etc.)
18. Taking over your electronic identity or persona: (e.g. representing him or herself to others as you in chatrooms, bulletin boards, pornography or singles sites, etc.)
19. Directing others to you in threatening ways: (e.g. pretending to be you on chat lines and requesting risky sex acts, kidnapping fantasies, etc.)
20. Meeting you first online and then following you: (e.g. following you while driving, around campus or work, to or from the gym or social activities, etc.)
21. Meeting you first online and then intruding in your life: (e.g. showing up unexpectedly at work, front door, in parking lot, intruding in your conversations, etc.)
22. Meeting first online and then threatening you: (e.g. threatening to engage in sexual coercion, rape, physical restraint, or to harm him or herself, your possessions, pets, family, or friends)
23. Meeting first online and then harming you: (e.g. corresponding with you through an online dating service and then following, harassing, or otherwise stalking you)
24. First meeting you online and then stalking you: (e.g. corresponding through an online dating service or as acquaintances and then following, harassing, or otherwise stalking you)