



Catcalling victims' long-term psychological impacts: A qualitative study

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Abstract: Catcalling incidents are a form of street harassment that occurs in public spaces, conducted by strangers through verbal expressions and behavioral intentions with sexual nuances. This research investigates the psychological dynamics of catcalling events as women perceive them. A qualitative method involves a phenomenological approach and recruiting four participants using purposive sampling. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews, with thematic data analysis using the qualitative data management software NVivo 12. The trustworthiness strategy of the research includes reflexive journaling during the thematic analysis process and a participant-checking procedure. The findings show that catcalling incidents contribute to negative feelings and destructive self-perceptions. In the short term, the psychological impacts of catcalling include fear and worry, discomfort, anxiety, and increased alertness when facing unsafe situations, while the long-term impacts include feelings of guilt, criticism of one's body shape and appearance, and feeling ashamed of one's identity as a woman. The research argues that negative body images resulting from catcalling incidents contribute to the risk of low self-esteem.

Keywords: catcalling; psychological impacts; verbal harassment

Abstrak: Insiden *catcalling* merupakan salah satu bentuk pelecehan jalanan yang terjadi di ruang publik dan dilakukan oleh orang asing melalui ekspresi verbal dengan niat perilaku bernuansa seksual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dinamika psikologis peristiwa *catcalling* yang dirasakan oleh perempuan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis dan melibatkan empat partisipan dengan menggunakan *purposive sampling*. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara semi terstruktur dan analisis data tematik menggunakan software pengelolaan data kualitatif NVivo 12. Strategi keterpercayaan (*trustworthiness*) penelitian ini menerapkan penjurnalan reflektif pada proses analisis tematik dan prosedur pengecekan anggota partisipan sebagai prosedur teknik analisis data. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa insiden *catcalling* berkontribusi terhadap perasaan negatif dan persepsi diri yang destruktif. Dalam jangka pendek, dampak psikologis dari *catcalling* berupa rasa takut dan khawatir, ketidaknyamanan, cemas, serta meningkatnya kewaspadaan dan perasaan tidak aman, sedangkan dampak psikologis jangka panjang antara lain perasaan bersalah, kritik terhadap bentuk dan penampilan tubuh, serta perasaan malu terhadap identitas sebagai perempuan. Penelitian ini menyiratkan bahwa pandangan negatif terhadap tubuh akibat *catcalling* berkontribusi terhadap risiko menurunnya harga diri.

Kata Kunci: *catcalling*; dampak psikologis; kekerasan verbal

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Introduction

Sexual offense is a socio-legal concept which falls into three categories: archetypal sexual offense; minor sexual offense, and acts involving illicit sexual behavior. The characteristics of such acts are not always criminal, but are nevertheless considered to be immoral (D. Thornton, 2021). Sexual violence in the public sphere is one of the most dominant types of gender-based sexual violence in Indonesia. According to the National Commission on Violence Against Women of the Republic of Indonesia (2022), there were 3,045 such cases in Indonesia in 2021. Violence against women in the public sphere was also often experienced in the area where they lived, comprising 48.8% of cases. Furthermore, around 51,2% of cases reported that violence against women happened in public places, workplaces, places of residence or education, together with cases in the cyber domain (Komnas Perempuan, 2022). The annual report by Komnas Perempuan (2022) showed that there exist various forms of violence, ranging from sexual abuse, rape, sexual disclosure, and other forms related to sexual objectification.

Sexual violence in the public sphere (street harassment) is relatively common; one manifestation of which is verbal sexual harassment, also known as catcalling. The prevalence of street harassment is very high, and according to previous research almost every woman has experienced it at least once in their lifetime (Fileborn, 2013). In Indonesia, the risk is strengthened by the patriarchal culture and the habit of being friendly towards strangers. Perpetrators interpret catcalling as making new friends and opening conversations with strangers (Mayana et al., 2022). Furthermore, the element of harassment towards strangers is reflected in the various terms used, such as “darling”, “beautiful”, and “girl”, with several similar ones containing cultural elements, such as “*gek*” or calling for girl in Balinese society (Dewi, 2019).

Davis (1994) describes three fundamental characteristics of street harassment behaviour: the absence of an individual relationship between the perpetrator and the victim; behavioral intentions that are far-off from accepted norms, with admiring lead to on body parts; and elements of sexuality. On the other hand, the lack of agreement between researchers on the operational definition of catcalling events has led to different interpretations of catcalling intentions (di Gennaro & Ritschel, 2019). The issue of righteousness fairness is supported by Wesselmann and Kelly (2010), who state that verbal harassment of foreign women tends to be considered normal in anonymous or group situations. Bailey (2017) identified text and conversational forms used in catcalling events, in which greetings contained intimate flattery and other conversational moves to attract women’s attention. Therefore, catcalling events can be categorized as acts of verbal forced intimacy with inappropriate nuances.

The responses to street harassment or catcalling also vary, ranging from ignoring or shouting back at the perpetrator (Ahmed et al., 2021; Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014). In addition, avoiding eye contact or adjusting one’s physical posture as a defense mechanism are common and less risky than fight back against strangers (Farmer & Smock Jordan, 2017). In contrast to the external expression of a passive defense mechanism, the internal psychological response of catcalling victims is more significantly centred on criticism and self-blame (Farmer & Smock Jordan, 2017). Saunders et al. (2017) explain that gender role ideologies that justify the system also predict women’s tendency to become involved and blame themselves after catcalling experiences. Belief system attributes such as sexism, gender norms, the role of the media, and the objectification of women require the normalization of victim-blaming attitudes (Avezahra & Chusniyah, 2022).

Several cases show that social structure and patriarchal systems facilitate the prevalence of

catcalling behavior toward women in Asian countries. Asian solo female travelers can experience catcalling in the form of uncomfortable gazes and stalking from strangers (Yang et al., 2018). Furthermore, Dhillon and Bakaya (2014) reveal that street harassment is very common in India but that there is no clear consensus regarding the male perpetrators of street harassment. Holland et al. (2017) explain that women who dress openly tend to be targets for catcalling. However, this contrasts with a study by Ramadhania (2021), which explains that women who wear the hijab and covering clothes are also not free from being targets of catcalling in Indonesia. The social structure characteristics of people in Asian culture, which tend to internalize conventional and traditional sex role ideologies, add to the risk of negative correlations with self-esteem and self-blame (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020). However, other studies have demonstrated that women with high self-esteem and a tendency to criticize themselves have the potential to make negative attributions and blame themselves after experiencing harassment from strangers (Saunders et al., 2017).

Several studies have shown that women's psychological attributes influence their internal response to sexual objectification. Emotions of anger and disgust make women anticipate an active response; shame increases self-blame beliefs, but feelings of pride also produce a friendly response to the perpetrator (Shepherd, 2019). In line with Shepherd's research, body shame and trauma symptoms appeared significantly more frequently in women with experiences of sexual objectification in cases of rape or attempted rape (Miles-McLean et al., 2015). The implications of sexual objectification are not only related to the emergence of burdensome psychological attributes such as shame and guilt, but are also associated with high levels of self-objectification (Holland et al., 2017). Not only is this destructive, but sexual objectification has consequences for

psychological and social well-being that are complex and ambivalent.

Davis (1994) demonstrates that at least three main factors influence the psychology of female victims of catcalling: stereotypes of women, the domination of public spaces by men, and sexual objectification, which affects body image. Fileborn (2013) states that the psychological impact of street harassment on women consists of anxiety; fear or feeling threatened when walking alone in public spaces; feelings of shame and guilt; sleep disturbances; distrust of the surrounding environment; stress and depression; and lower self-confidence and self-concept.

Moreover, several studies show that street harassment has severe psychological impacts. DelGreco and Christensen (2020) revealed that it significantly correlates with psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression and sleep disorders. Other research has revealed that catcalling victims experience a more sensitive perception of sexual harassment, are often afraid, and feel insecure (Ali & Naz, 2016). Therefore, there have been conflicting responses to the phenomenon (Worke et al., 2021). Ahmed et al. (2021) explain that young women tend to experience feelings of insecurity and self-blame. Moreover, the psychological impact of catcalling or street harassment on women also includes negative perceptions of body image or self, and the belief that women are only seen as objects (Fisher et al., 2019; Flouli et al., 2022).

The threat of mental health risks from street harassment incidents has been reported in several previous studies, such as anxiety and depression, which mediate sleep quality (DelGreco & Christensen, 2020); negative self-assessment (Collaton et al., 2022); self-blaming behaviour; the level of severity of post-traumatic syndrome disorder (PTSD) (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020); together with long-term impacts such as feelings of anger, anxiety, and vulnerability to further

victimization (Thornton et al., 2023). In addition, research by DelGreco & Christensen (2020) and Carretta & Szymanski (2020) further investigated aspects of mental health risk, such as the potential for anxiety and depression, as mediated by feelings of shame and fear, self-blaming behavior, and compliance with feminine norms. Two studies report notes on theme investigations based on content analysis techniques on the online space TalkLife (Collaton et al., 2022) and the online blog on the 'Stop Street Harassment' site (Thornton et al., 2023). Experiences of stressful harassment, including catcalling that occurs at a young age, tend to be resolved through behavioral changes, such as avoiding walking alone, carrying self-defense tools such as pepper spray, modifying one's appearance and clothing choices, and seeking assistance from people around (Thornton et al., 2023). Several research reports suggest clinical interventions that can be conducted, such as therapy to reduce anxiety and depression (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020; DelGreco & Christensen, 2020), social interventions, discussion rooms and support groups, which are all empowering for the victims of street harassment incidents (Collaton et al., 2022).

Research discussion on catcalling dominantly centres on various disciplinary perspectives, such as catcalling as a compliment or insult in the communication and language sciences, sociological and cultural perspectives, and psychological perspectives. Previous studies have also investigated psychological impacts and identified emerging themes amongst women who experience catcalling.

The originality of our research is that it reveals the long-term psychological dynamics of women who experience catcalling by exploring Asian social norms from the participants' perspectives. It is essential to explore these with regard to the characteristics of social norms and their relationship to the mental health conditions of victims of

catcalling incidents. This approach is similar to that of Hardt et al. (2023), who argue that social elements such as gendered power, patriarchal norms, and socioeconomic status often silence the victims of sexual harassment and suggest how women should handle the incident to validate their experience. Hardt et al. (2023) reporting systematic review of sexual harassment in low- and middle-income countries discusses seven critical issues related to victims of sexual harassment in Asian and sub-Saharan countries: 1) ambiguity regarding sexual harassment; 2) sexual harassment as a result of gendered power dynamics; 3) factors that contribute to the experiencing or perpetrating of sexual harassment; 4) understanding and dealing with sexual harassment; 5) obstacles and facilitators to reporting, seeking help, and bystander intervention; 6) consequences of sexual harassment; and g) suggestions for preventing and addressing the phenomenon (Hardt et al., 2023). Therefore, mapping the psychological impact of catcalling incidents will provide an internal construction of how normalized catcalling behavior will risk reducing the mental health and well-being of victims, the majority of whom are by women.

Based on the background discussed above, this research aims to investigate the dynamics of female victims of catcalling incidents and how they interpret themselves after being involved in such situations. The research aims to help establish the concept of catcalling in terms of the context of the event, measures of behavioral intention, and text content, which potentially involves violations of social and ethical norms, as well as making recommendations for appropriate clinical interventions for victims of catcalling incidents.

Method

The research employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. This approach aims to describe the meaning of the life

experiences of the individuals involved. The phenomenological approach refers to Husserl (1983); it requires explanation of the personal experiences of those who live in a specific 'lifeworld', or *Lebenswelt*. This lifeworld encompasses all the sensory, emotional and cognitive events an individual perceives in a particular time and space (Massarik, 1983). While a lifeworld may exist subjectively on an individual level, multiple lifeworlds can be interconnected, resulting in one that is intersubjective, based on a shared sense of belonging to the same community (Salama & Chikudate, 2021). The focus of the research will be on interpreting and explaining in depth the experiences of individual women who have been victims of catcalling. The inclusion criteria for the research subjects were that they should 1) be female students in Malang City; 2) be in the age range of 18-25; and 3) have experienced incidents of catcalling or street harassment. The sampling method used the purposive sampling technique. The selection of participants was made purposely according to the criteria for research subjects at Universitas Negeri Malang. The participant recruitment process was conducted openly through posters containing an online form link in order to select participants who met the inclusion criteria. The process took place between February and March 2023, and resulted in four participants being selected. Qualitative research emphasizes an in-depth understanding of people's experiences, viewpoints, and driving forces. An extensive investigation of this nature requires active involvement with participants, thus favoring a small sample size. The consideration for determining the number of research participants referred to the complexity of sexual street harassment incident characteristics, which involves broad boundaries of harassment and variations in related experiences. A reduced sample size facilitates a more comprehensive analysis of individual cases and their contribution to theoretical understanding. The richness of data

and deep understanding of the individual catcalling experiences of the four participants was deemed sufficient to construct the pattern of psychological impacts.

The data collection technique used was in-depth semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide designed by the researcher. The guide aimed for exploration of the participants' backgrounds, such as family values and friendship culture; the catcalling incidents they had experienced; and their feelings and thoughts about these. The researchers ensured data saturation based on three procedures: the creation of a representative interview guideline regarding the catcalling phenomenon; redundancy of information through participant interviews; and a peer review between the researchers to identify potential gaps or areas needing further exploration.

The data analysis referred to Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis technique, which consists of three main stages: 1) generating initial codes. 2) grouping codes in a categorization and theme-naming process. 3) arranging the theme structure into a concept map

NVivo 12 qualitative data management software was employed to organize the coding and categorization results. In the first stage, the researchers identified certain phenomena in each participant's answers, and then followed a procedure for assigning labels or codes to meaningful responses based on the researcher's interpretation. The researchers also recorded interpretations during the coding process. In the second stage, the researchers organized and categorized the data by grouping codes with similar meanings and values. Furthermore, the researcher searched for themes for each code group by creating a word or phrase that accommodated the concept in each group. In the third stage, the researcher determined the central and marginal theme propositions and structured the findings into a concept map.

The trustworthiness principle used in the research referred to Nowell et al. (2017), which explains the trustworthiness strategy through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The strategy implemented in this research consisted of credibility and confirmability aspects. During the thematic analysis process, the researcher conducted reflexive journaling by recording initial interpretations. In addition, the researcher implemented a participant checking strategy to give the participants space to validate the researcher's interpretation and the consistency of meaning between short- and long-term psychological impacts.

The procedure for conforming to research ethics involved an explanation of the research to the participants; a request for approval for involvement in the research (informed consent); and an explanation regarding the briefing form, which contains information about the community and counseling services for participants affected by the research. Ethical clearance was given by the Airlangga University Faculty of Dental Medicine Health Research Ethical Clearance Commission, with certificate number 1007/HRECC.FODM/VIII/2023.

Results

The four interviewed participants revealed their experiences as victims of catcalling. Most of the forms of harassment were verbal and accompanied by expressions teasing the victims with greetings, whistling, advances with sexual nuances, and objectifying certain body parts of the women. One participant even experienced physical and sexual harassment, namely a vital body part (breast area) being suddenly touched by a stranger who was riding a motorbike slowly in a city park area. All the catcalling incidents experienced by the victims occurred in public spaces, in locations such as narrow streets, residential alleys, sidewalk areas used by street vendors, or places where groups of people hang

out. The situations in which catcalling occurs vary from busy to quiet places and from bright daylight to dim evenings. Catcalling is carried out by individuals or small groups of under ten people; incidents show that it takes places openly and is common amongst strangers towards women who are passing through their neighborhood environment. Each participant's catcalling experience is described in Table 1.

The interviews conducted with the four participants produced five main themes: peer and family values, which contributed to the normalization of catcalling event short-term psychological impact; long-term psychological impact; and self-reflection. These five themes explain the connection between women's psychological make-up and the meaning of the catcalling incidents they have experienced. The identification and categorization of the themes emerging from the procedures for the first two stages of the data analysis (initial coding and axial coding) are described in Table 2. In addition, the procedure for understanding the psychological dynamics behind the meaning of catcalling incidents (selective coding) is presented in concept form in Figure 1.

The research results show the complexity of the psychological dynamics of women who have experienced catcalling. In general, the flow of the concept consists of three phases. The first stage is that of the meaning of catcalling events experienced by the participants and the meaning related to the normalization of such events from the perspective of family and peers. Theme identification in the second phase refers to a short-term psychological response felt when a catcalling incident occurs. The researchers identified such responses of a physical and cognitive nature, such as increased heart rate, body shaking, and weakened brain ability to think. Moreover, affective responses also appear in the form of feelings of anxiety, fear, panic and increased alertness. This short-term psychological impact arises from catcalling events that occur suddenly,

for a short duration, and are perpetrated by unknown people. Therefore, the attitudes and dynamics in this phase refer to the participants'

tendency to try to save themselves from potential further threats through neglect and avoidance of strangers, and fast walking.

Table 1

Description of Catcalling Events

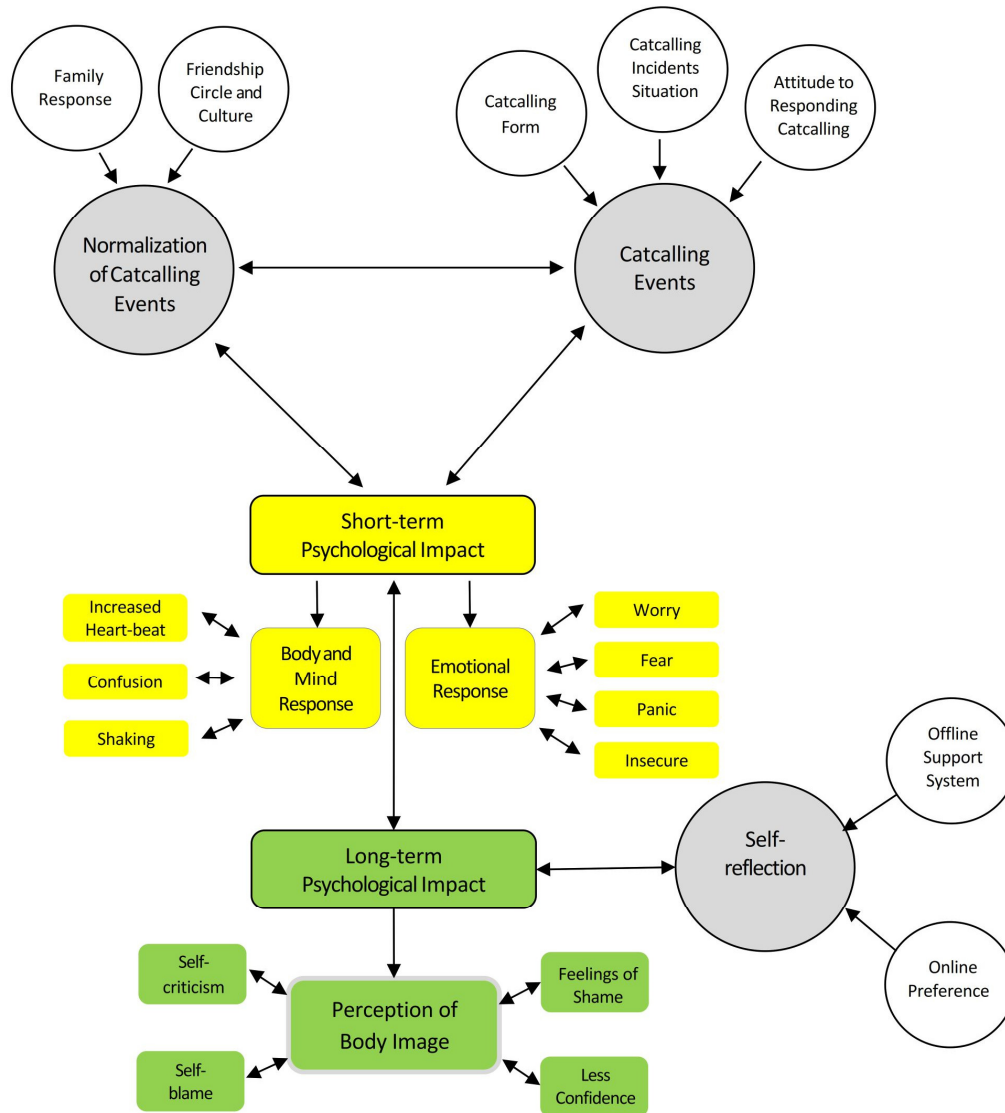
Participant	Gender	Age	Origin	Catcalling Event Description
Participant 1	Female	21	Samarinda, East Borneo	The catcalling incident experienced by Participant 1 was a sudden verbal attack by a stranger with words related to body shaming; she was called names, whistled at, propositioned, followed, and asked for a telephone number. Catcalling incidents were unavoidable when she moved around on foot in public locations such as highway sidewalks, alleys around her residence, and in quiet or dimly lit streets.
Participant 2	Female	22	Tangerang, Banten	Participant 2 often experiences catcalling in public spaces. The forms of abuse are in the form of whistling, insults and body shaming. She often experiences catcalling when walking alone in open hallways or on the street.
Participant 3	Female	22	Malang, East Java	The catcalling incidents experienced by Participant 3 have been verbal attacks from strangers, by calling them 'girl' or using body-shaming expressions. Moreover, Participant 3 has also experienced physical sexual harassment; for example, her chest being grabbed by the perpetrator of catcalling who was riding a motorbike on the road around the city park area.
Participant 4	Female	22	Malang, East Java	The catcalling incidents experienced by Participant 4 have taken the form of whistling, name calling, and even often sexually suggestive questions, which are not only "teasing" ones, but also ones that lead to the objectification of women's bodies.

Table 2

Theme and Category

Theme 1: Normalization of Catcalling Events	Theme 2: Catcalling Events	Theme 3: Short-term Psychological Impact	Theme 4: Long-term Psychological Impact	Theme 5: Self-Reflection
Category 1: Peer values regarding body objectification	Category 1: Catcalling form	Category 1: Body and mind response Sub-Category: Increased heart-beat, confusion, body- shaking,	Category 1: Perception of body image Sub-Category: Self-criticism, self- blame, feelings of shame, low confidence	Category 1: Online preference
Category 2: Peer relations and friendship culture	Category 2: Catcalling incident situations	Category 2: Emotional response Sub-Category: Worry, fear, panic, feelings of insecurity		Category 2: Offline support system
Category 3: Family background and values	Category 3: Attitude to responding to catcalling			

Figure 1
Psychological Dynamic of Women Experiencing Catcalling Events Concept



Finally, in the third phase, the researchers identified patterns of long-term psychological impact, which were reflected in the degradation of self-worth through negative perceptions of body image. This stage shows that female victims of catcalling then become more sensitive and auto-

critical of their body image; moreover, they blame themselves for their body shape that 'invited' the catcalling incident. The internal dynamics that position women as the source of the catcalling incident give rise to feelings of shame about their identity as a woman, so it is necessary to always be

aware of external reactions that may occur. The participants in this phase showed reduced self-confidence, linked to the limitation of self-expression to avoid potential catcalling incidents in their daily lives. The participants also demonstrated a process of self-reflection regarding the catcalling incident that happened to them through a procedure of accepting the incident and one of self-education, as compensatory mechanisms for excessive thoughts about body image. The self-reflection process is performed by sharing catcalling experiences with a circle of friends, and the participants also attempt to reach a comprehensive understanding of catcalling incidents by searching online communities. They concluded that their efforts to control their appearance still had the potential to invite incidents of catcalling by strangers in certain locations.

The implication of such incidents in relation to lower self-values in the form of negative perceptions of the body does not only originate from catcalling incidents. However, lower self-values can also be strengthened by combining family values and peer relations, which may consider catcalling incidents normal and non-threatening. In phase one, the normalization of catcalling behavior in the family was demonstrated through the parents' passive response to the participants' experiences. In addition, in the culture of peer friendship, catcalling behavior causes varying degrees of acceptance. Participant 1 indicated that some of her female colleagues saw catcalling behaviour as an expression of admiration and interest in women by the opposite sex. This perspective is reinforced by the experience of Participant 3, who believed saw that men's expressions of admiration through whistling and joking about women's bodies were a standard for recognizing beauty in their social community. Explanations of each theme and participant quotations are given in more detail in the following section.

Family Background and Peer Relations

The family plays a central role in forming the values held by the participants. All grew up in families with cultural and religious values as norms in living.

"Most of all, my parents strongly hold religious values, so sometimes I follow the religious values that they follow..." (W1.P2.10)

"Then my mother, my mother is the same because my family is Arabic, that is why my family background is a bit messy because my mother is from an Arab family, and then she has a husband who is not Arabic; that is how it is." (W1.P1.060)

The type of family response to catcalling is a normal and common occurrence. The family only advises that strangers' behavior must be watched out for and only emphasizes maintaining personal safety.

"Well, my family just told me that guys usually tease, so we must be more careful, too. The thing is, it is normal for guys to tease like that. That is why, in the end, my family emphasized that we just have to take good care of ourselves as a woman." (W1.P1.184)

On the other hand, considering the friendship environment, many people joke and say sexually suggestive things. In addition, sometimes there is physical activity, such as touching, nudging or teasing in other ways. In the environment around schools, some behavior is sexually suggestive.

"... However, I do not understand why my friends talk about women and sexuality so vulgarly; I finally understand the topic of women and sexuality from their conversation ... it was even more of a culture shock because the guys had such dirty mouths when they joked about girls' bodies like that." (W1.P1.096)

"Just kidding. My body has also been objectified and used as a joke. However, I did not realize it initially and felt that it was not funny. Then why do you have to fit a certain

body shape? For example, what happens if I do not have a flat butt?" (W1.P1.100)

Catcalling Events

The study participants had varying experiences of catcalling. The type and severity of incidents also varied, including whistling and name calling, and being stopped and forced to accompany the perpetrator, leading to sexual harassment. One participant experienced different types of catcalling between place of origin and current place of study in Malang. This can be seen from her statement about her catcalling experience in her place of origin.

"Well, in Kalimantan, we usually go for a walk, right? Then they take the car; sometimes they like to stop and ask, 'Where are you going, girl?' 'Don't you want to come with us?' (W1.P1.139)

In another example, one of the participants also talked about her experience of catcalling while she was at college:

"Hmm, in Malang, when I walk, and I keep getting called names and whistled at." (W1.P1.145)

There are many assumptions that catcalling is can be the beginning of an act that is greatly feared by many people, especially women, for whom catcalling can lead to something more serious, sexual harassment. This perspective is demonstrated the participants' experiences in this research, which show the severity of catcalling, and that it can lead to sexual harassment. The following are statements from one participant that show this paragraph.

"It is more like body shaming; it is like calling you "girls" like that. However, what hurts even more is body shaming. In the past, it was not just catcalling, but once someone touched my breasts. So, it is traumatizing. It is more like sexual harassment, like that." (W1.P3.085)

Catcalling often occurs in public spaces such as streets and parks, regardless of whether they are quiet or busy. Such spaces also have the

characteristics of a shared facility, which should create security and comfort, but have become scary, so people try to avoid them. Even catcalling perpetrators are flocking to such places, which is increasingly causing inconvenience to users of public spaces. A participant's statement shows the characteristics of catcalling events:

"Usually, when we are on the side of the road and there are guys, that is very common. Moreover, in the past, when I was at school, for example, walking alone in the hallway, sometimes I got a whistling from the boys." (W1.P2.23).

The various catcalling incidents the participants experienced caused them to feel uncomfortable. Their responses as victims of catcalling to the perpetrators also varied, ranging from pretending not to see them; quickening their walking pace; changing direction; or moving closer to the crowd. From the various victims' responses, most felt angry after the catcalling incident, but they also felt scared and could not do anything.

"I usually just pretend I do not know, keep walking faster or crossing the road. The problem is, if someone is on a motorbike or in a car, it is quite difficult to turn around, so I prefer to cross in a hurry so they do not follow again, even though I did not actually have a destination when I crossed over" (W1.P1.143)

When a catcalling incident happened to participants, they first felt shocked, so they remained silent momentarily and rarely asked for help from other people. Most catcalling incidents occur quickly and spontaneously, so the participants, as victims, felt that they did not have time to think about asking people around them for help. Moreover, they also felt uncomfortable about asking others for help.

"If you ask for help, you do not think about it, because it happened so quickly, so you do not think about it. You can just keep quiet like that, okay?" (W1.P3.113)

The participants' responses tended to be ones of silence and not taking any action, triggered by the lack of education about catcalling. They admitted that the type of catcalling they had experienced was a form of sexual violence and initially thought this was just a form of teasing and ordinary joking. The participant's family only warned him that they had to be careful when walking outside. The lack of insight into all aspects of catcalling means that the participants did not know how to deal with incidents they experienced.

"At first, I did not even know if it was called catcalling. So, I do not know when was the first time I was catcalled. I know that if it is like that, it is just being teased or joking around. I only found out that it was called catcalling when I was in middle or high school, so I found out it was wrong." (W1.P1.159)

Psychological Dynamics Related to Catcalling

Events: Short- and Long-term Impacts

In the psychological dynamics of catcalling victims, several emotions occur in their psychology, such as anxiety, worry, and even fear of passing certain places. Such anxiety and worry can be seen from the physical symptoms experienced by the victim, such as their hands turning cold or sweaty when they want to walk or take part in activities in places prone to catcalling. Victims also feel worry and discomfort because they think that catcalling is just the beginning, and that there is a high probability of something else happening that might be more serious. Therefore, some participants stated that they tried to minimize this by inviting friends to walk together with them.

"It is certain, so if I walk alone, I am nervous like that, you know, like I feel really scared; I am so worried that my hands are cold" (W1.P1.202)

"Yeah, I am really worried; especially if apart from catcallers, someone suddenly holds your hand on the street, then I feel worried" (W1.P4. 082)

"Of course. When going anywhere alone, I feel anxious; what happens if there is a catcaller

again, especially if I pass by the same place? I am afraid. I looked for another way, so I had to walk further so as not to pass a place where catcalling often occurs. So, it is further from home, and you do not go there again" (W1.P3.137)

Apart from anxiety and fear, victims of catcalling will feel embarrassed and question their bodies. They continually blame themselves and feel something is wrong with them. Three participants felt they were unworthy and failed to be women because they felt degraded through the catcalling they experienced.

"I feel more disgusted with myself, like what am I doing? Is my body shape really that weird? Is it like I am beautiful or not, my body shape is good or not? I used to feel like I was wrong. Until I feel disgusted with my body." (W1.P1.227)

"I am embarrassed; I feel like I am not worthy of being a woman; I feel like I am being looked down on." (W1.P3.163)

Victims of catcalling often experience feelings of threat and insecurity because of the many possibilities that catcalling could take place again. Therefore, the participants felt unsafe wherever they were.

"Oh yes, of course, yes. I feel like I am threatened, so it is not safe everywhere" (W1.P3.151)

Many women feel ashamed of themselves because they have failed to meet the significant social demands. From this feeling of failure, patriarchal culture makes women make mistakes and they are often blamed, even though they have done nothing wrong. Women are mostly blamed for their clothes, even though many who wear very closely covering clothes still become victims of catcalling and other sexual violence.

"Yes, it is like that; women are always blamed like that, and then there is the matter of clothes too. Even though women wear the veil, they still catcall us when we are alone" (W1.P3.189)

The level of self-confidence can fall drastically for women victims, who will always think that the source of the blame lies with them. They feel insecure because their body shape does not meet certain societal standards. Moreover, physical judgment is also one of the strongest reasons why catcalling and other verbal sexual violence can greatly impact the victim's self-confidence.

"My confidence seems to have dropped a lot, especially since I was called a flat butt, so I keep thinking about it. I am just wondering, is it that important to have a body shape like that? So I keep thinking, what is wrong with you if you do not have a good body like that?" (W1.P1.279)

Moreover, the fear and pressure can turn into negative stress, impacting the victim of catcalling. One participant admitted that she felt stressed because she hated the feeling of fear and pressure that never left her:

"Often. The problem is that I feel annoyed and bored; why should I be afraid of this? Why should I be afraid of that, like that, right? Because I was also really stressed because of the catcalling." (W1.P1.270)

The long-term impact of catcalling causes victims to feel traumatized and not dare to pass along a street filled with a group of men, so they have to look for another route that takes longer. The other most influential impact is on self-confidence. Victims spend considerable time thinking about their appearance and body shape after the catcalling has occurred because of their feeling of trauma.

"The perception is that catcalling events is something that is often taken for granted, even though it impacts victims. Then how does it affect self-confidence? Well, that is what happens. For example, if we get hit, we will think about our body and so on and like the appearance of our body, so it is embarrassing; it is like we are thinking about that, you know." (W1.P2.54)

Self-reflection

The participants received support from various parties. The type of support that was felt to restore their enthusiasm was in the form of verbal support, such as suggestions and words of motivation. Such support can help them help them restore their self-confidence and courage to get through the day.

"It is like giving advice, like do not walk alone, and wear decent clothes and do not be flashy, and do not go to quiet places." (W1.P3.201)

Moreover, the participants already know that catcalling is a disgraceful act that should not be committed. Through social media, they learn much about the latest issues and news that indicate that catcalling is a serious problem, even including violations of laws. Consequently, social media can become a source of education for the participants.

"Well, I finally found out about it on social media; it seems like it is a violation of the law or something like that. The point is, it is wrong." (W1.P1.180)

Discussion

The results show that the phenomenon of catcalling that affects women is not just the incidence of verbal harassment in public spaces. Behind it is the issue of the objectification of women's self-image, which is maintained and considered common by some in society. The findings give rise to a discussion of the elements of catcalling incidents and the long-term psychological impact on female victims.

Elements of Catcalling Events

The definition of catcalling is still being debated and no clear agreement has been reached between researchers. Moreover, interpretations vary between men who are the perpetrators of catcalling and women who are the victims. Walton and Pedersen (2022) revealed that the perpetrators intend to express admiration so that

the target of their catcalling feels flattered. Therefore, they consider themselves innocent regarding the behavior they display.

This research shows the limits of the definition of catcalling behavior by identifying themes related to catcalling incident locations situations, the forms of catcalling, and the reflexes shown by participants when experiencing such incidents.

Based on the research findings, five multi-dimensional elements of catcalling incidents were identified, with the following characteristics: occurring in a public space; perpetrated by strangers or unknown people; one-sided interaction with nuances of intimacy that cross the boundaries of privacy; the potential for further privacy violations such as stalking, coercion and threatening invitations; and internal psychological responses in the form of fear, anxiety and worry, which result in increased alertness for the victim.

The participants' responses to catcalling incidents also varied according to the level of threat experienced. Farmer and Jordan (2017) demonstrated that responses to catcalling can vary greatly, depending on the level of threat it poses to the individual. If the level of apparent risk is not so threatening, then an individual may react more aggressively. This research found that prior experience of catcalling makes a person know what response they should give. For example, when someone is invited to ride in the perpetrator's vehicle, they will deliberately cross the road so that the perpetrator no longer follows them, as sometimes it is quite difficult for the vehicle to turn around. Moreover, some victims also tend not to respond and neglect the surroundings if faced by catcalling (Farmer & Jordan, 2017).

Long-term Psychological Impact on Female Victims of Catcalling Incidents

This research found that the most prominent psychological dynamics were fear, anxiety, threat, and lower self-confidence. A study conducted by

O'Leary (2016) described the phases of a woman's emotional journey when she becomes a victim of catcalling: anger, feeling disturbed, embarrassment, and feeling uncomfortable, resulting in more intense feelings of anxiety. In this case, feelings of fear and shame dominate the psychological condition, caused by women's concerns about the views of the general public, which give rise to negative stigma towards oneself, and feelings of insecurity about being in public spaces. The socio-psychological implications of women who experience street harassment involve affection problems and social stigma, due to catcalling incidents that suddenly attract public attention (Ahmad et al., 2020). In line with Ahmad et al.'s research, DelGreco and Christensen (2020) state that anxiety and depression are independent mediators in linking street harassment incidents with sleep quality.

In addition, another psychological dynamic that stands out is women's feelings of guilt. In this case, the research revealed that the respondents felt guilty because they were women, not because of their appearance. They revealed that they felt guilty because they thought it was a consequence of being a woman and that society blamed them for this. This perspective is supported by the findings of several previous studies, such as that of Fisher et al. (2019), who revealed that women tend to be objectified and have a bad body image after catcalling incidents. This perspective can occur because women's self-esteem falls after catcalling. Moreover, research by Liong and Cheng (2019) also shows worsened body image and feelings of guilt in women who have experienced sexual violence, both verbal and non-verbal. Aleng (2020) also demonstrates that victims of catcalling will feel insecure more easily due to their body image and strong feelings of guilt, so they tend to separate themselves from the social environment. If explained through the objectification theory model of Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), women's internalized guilt can increase control

over their bodies and result in the significance of negative experiences such as body shame and anxiety about appearance.

Eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction are part of the mental health risks caused by women's self-objectification mechanisms (Calogero, 2012). Dissatisfaction and deep concern about their body are directly related to stress in women's moods. In an Asian cultural context, women in China report higher levels of weight control behaviors (leading to eating disorders) than men (Wang et al., 2018). Wang et al.'s research indicates that culture influences women's unrealistic ideal body image.

The formation of body image perceptions is closely related to an individual's self-esteem. Social comparison, parenting patterns, and the social environment can contribute to the perception of body image and level of self-esteem (Widasuari & Yudiarso, 2021). Catcalling experiences involve factors that contribute to dissatisfaction with body image, such as stigmatization and ridicule of an individual's appearance (Shahyad et al., 2015). The experience of catcalling can lead to reflection on self-assessment and questioning of one's self-image in the social environment. This evaluation process encourages individuals to think about the gap between the reality of their body and the ideal body image. This gap harms self-esteem and distorts visual perception (Szabó, 2015). Body image is a critical component of an individual's self-concept, and provides opportunities to achieve a healthier physical and mental state.

The longitudinal research report studies on adults in America and Germany shows that low self-image can be a risk factor for depressive symptoms in all types of symptoms, such as affective, cognitive, and somatic ones (Orth et al., 2009). In addition, research involving psychiatric outpatients in Singapore reported that body image dissatisfaction (BID) could cause high levels of psychological distress and eating disorders (Satghare et al., 2019).

The intervention function is needed to provide space for self-esteem to regrow. Self-esteem is an affectively-laden global self-evaluation, including a sense of competence and goodness. It is a buffer against anxiety, impacting emotional well-being and how individuals relate to other people and the world around them, and encouraging growth and the development of new capacities. Therefore, self-esteem is a fundamental aspect of the self-system which influences emotions, behavior and well-being (Pyszczynski & Kesebir, 2013). Catcalling incidents leave scars on an individual's self-concept and have a negative impact on body image perceptions. Interventions that focus on the vulnerabilities that arise as a result of catcalling events can be a strategic point to start psychological interventions aimed at preventing and reducing depression (Orth & Robins, 2013). Moreover, it is also important to consider interventions that involve family and peer support, as such people have a significant relationship with catcalling victims. Such support is an intervention strategy for strengthening self-esteem that can contribute to the creation of a healing environment in cases related to sexual harassment (Das, 2021). This notion is supported by previous research, which has found that the assessment reflected by people important to individuals greatly influences self-esteem and is an essential predictor of someone's psychological well-being (Meisenhelder, 1985).

Based on the discussion above, this research presents answers regarding doubts about the terminology of catcalling, namely the debate regarding the contrasting elements of admiration and harassment among researchers in sociology, psychology, communication, and legal studies (di Gennaro & Ritschel, 2019; McDonald, 2022). Violations of norms and ethics in catcalling incidents can be reviewed based on fulfilling the elements of offense in a catcalling incident and the psychological impact caused by incidents of verbal attacks on the street.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the experience of catcalling has destructive psychological implications, such as contributing to short- and long-term psychological impacts. Short-term impacts are reflected in physical and cognitive responses, such as increased heart rate, body shaking, and cognitive distortions experienced in sudden confusion. Furthermore, affective responses also appear in feelings of worry, anxiety, fear, panic, and increased alertness. However, catcalling incidents also have long-term psychological impacts, such as their contribution of individual meaning to negative perceptions of body image. Perceptions of dissatisfaction with one's body shape are reflected through self-blame, criticism of the body as a source of problems that invite catcalling incidents; lower self-confidence, and feelings of shame about one's identity as a woman. Although, in general catcalling incidents can be categorized as having a minor risk impact on the quality of mental health, the long-term

consequences of low self-esteem can be a severe concern that gives rise to other psychological problems such as dissatisfaction with oneself, increased self-criticism, and conditions of excessive anxiety or even depression. The psychological dynamic patterns identified in this research can contribute to strategies to develop effective counseling programs which respond to internal crises resulting from catcalling incidents.

The limitations of this research include the lack of information about the age of the participants when the catcalling incidents occurred, the limited types of sources of information, and the number of participants. Recommendations for future researchers are to combine primary and secondary data sources in order to review the depth of the psychological impact on the victims of catcalling incidents, and to design clinical interventions related to positive affirmation in order to reduce post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and social anxiety disorder (SAD).[]

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Author Contribution Statement

Mutia Husna Avezahra: Conceptualization; Formal Analysis; Funding Acquisition; Visualization; Writing Original Draft. **Aida Annisa Nur Kamila:** Conceptualization, Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology. **Nandyang Akhsanul Maulana:** Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation. **Vasiliki Kravvariti:** Writing, Review & Editing. **Mochammad Sa'id:** Methodology, Validation. **Rahmaditya Dewi Noorrizki:** Project Administration; Resources.

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