Malevolent Monitoring:
Dark Triad Traits, Cyber Dating Abuse and the Instrumental Role of Self-Control

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Cyber dating abuse (CDA):

The use of digital technology to control and monitor a romantic partner’s behaviours and/or to make hurtful comments to them (Zweig et al., 2014)

CDA has been linked to various intra- and interpersonal factors, such as the Dark Triad personality traits
Dark Triad traits

Three personality traits that share a common core of callousness, selfishness and manipulative tendencies (Jones & Figueredo, 2013):

Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy
Personality traits as ‘causes of the causes’

Personality traits are rarely direct causes of behaviour. Human behaviour can often be explained by an interplay between personality and other personal and situational factors.

Personality traits as causes of the causes of deviant behaviour

→ This is the main premise of Situational Action Theory.
Study aim is to test this hypothesis for Cyber Dating Abuse.
Methods

Survey (Qualtrics) among citizens of Ghent, Belgium

$n = 1587$ citizens

$n = 1144$ in a romantic relationship

51.3% female, $M_{age} = 47.7$ years
Findings

41.7\% of respondents engaged in CDA behaviours at least once in the past 12 months
Findings
Findings

Machiavellianism

Narcissism

Psychopathy

Poor personal morals ($R^2 = .34$)

Poor self-control ability ($R^2 = .35$)
Findings

χ² (304) = 1190.14, p < .001
RMSEA = .05
CFI = .86
TLI = .84
SRMR = .06

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Key findings

1) The effect of the three Dark Triad traits on CDA can be explained through low ability to exert self-control.

2) The effect of the three Dark Triad traits on CDA was not explained by poor personal morals → why not?

3) Findings demonstrate applicability of theory integration across disciplines.
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Cyber dating abuse [CDA]: The use of digital technology to control and monitor a romantic partner’s behaviours and/or to make hurtful comments to them

CDA has been linked to inter- and intrapersonal factors, such as the Dark Triad personality traits (DT): Machiavellianism, Psychopathy & Narcissism

We propose a theoretical integration between DT and Situational Action Theory (SAT). SAT studies deviant behaviour as the result of an interaction between personal morals and poor self-control ability. Here, personality traits such as DT are seen as ‘causes of the causes’

We tested our model among a sample of n = 1144 people in a romantic relationship (51.3% female, M_age = 47.7 years), using a survey study design

Self-controlability is identified as an instrumental factor in explaining CDA, providing a promising starting point for future research. Also, our findings demonstrated the suitability of integrating human behaviour theories across disciplines
AU REVOIR!