

The role of secondary psychopathy and emotional dysregulation in forensic mental health service users' dual-harm

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1. Introduction

- Dual harm is when an individual engages in **both** self-harm and aggression
- This behaviour is especially prevalent amongst forensic mental health service users [1]
- There is a lack of literature about dual harm and we have limited understanding of why individuals engage in this behaviour
- Secondary psychopathy is a personality style linked to an antisocial and unstable lifestyle; emotional dysregulation is an impaired ability to regulate unwanted emotions
- Secondary psychopathy traits may increase an individual's risk of using dual harm to regulate unwanted emotions [2]

Aim: to identify the psychological mechanisms that may underlie dual harm in forensic mental health service users

Hypotheses:

- Secondary psychopathy will predict dual-harm thoughts and behaviours in forensic mental health service users
- Emotional dysregulation will play a positive role in this relationship

2. Methods

This research is an ongoing multi-method design study:

Longitudinal study

- **Participants:** 100 forensic mental health service users in England
- **Materials & Procedure:** Administered with questionnaires at 2 time-points, one month apart

Qualitative study

- **Participants:** 15 participants from the longitudinal study
- **Materials & Procedure:** Semi-structured interviews exploring how participants perceive their personality and emotions to contribute to dual harm. Participants will also be asked to draw their emotions

3. Analyses

Longitudinal study

- Multiple regression: whether secondary psychopathy and emotional dysregulation predict future dual harm thoughts/behaviour
- Mediation analysis: whether the relationship between secondary psychopathy and dual-harm is mediated by emotional dysregulation

Qualitative study

- Thematic analysis [3] used to analyse transcripts of interviews
- Polytextual thematic analysis [4] used to analyse drawings

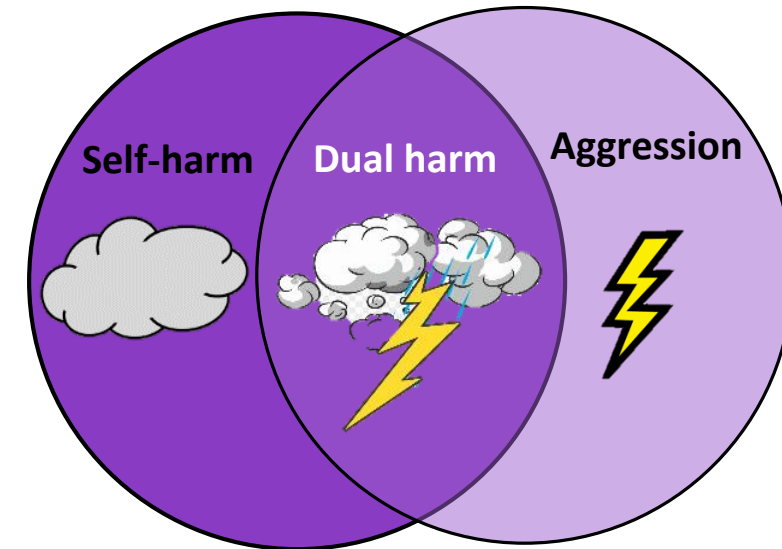
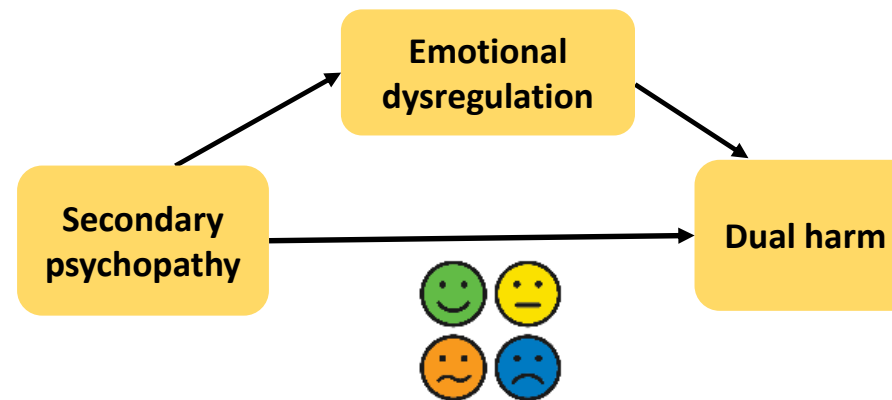
4. Key message & Implications

Research and practice should approach self-harm and aggression as a unified construct in those who dual harm and consider the distinct characteristics of these individuals

Implications:

- Findings may highlight psychological factors that should be further studied in the literature of dual harm
- By identifying evidence-based causal factors, findings may inform the development of strategies aiming to prevent and reduce dual harm in clinical and forensic settings

Emotional dysregulation predicted as a mediator



References

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3. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2014). What can "thematic analysis" offer health and wellbeing researchers?. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 9.
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