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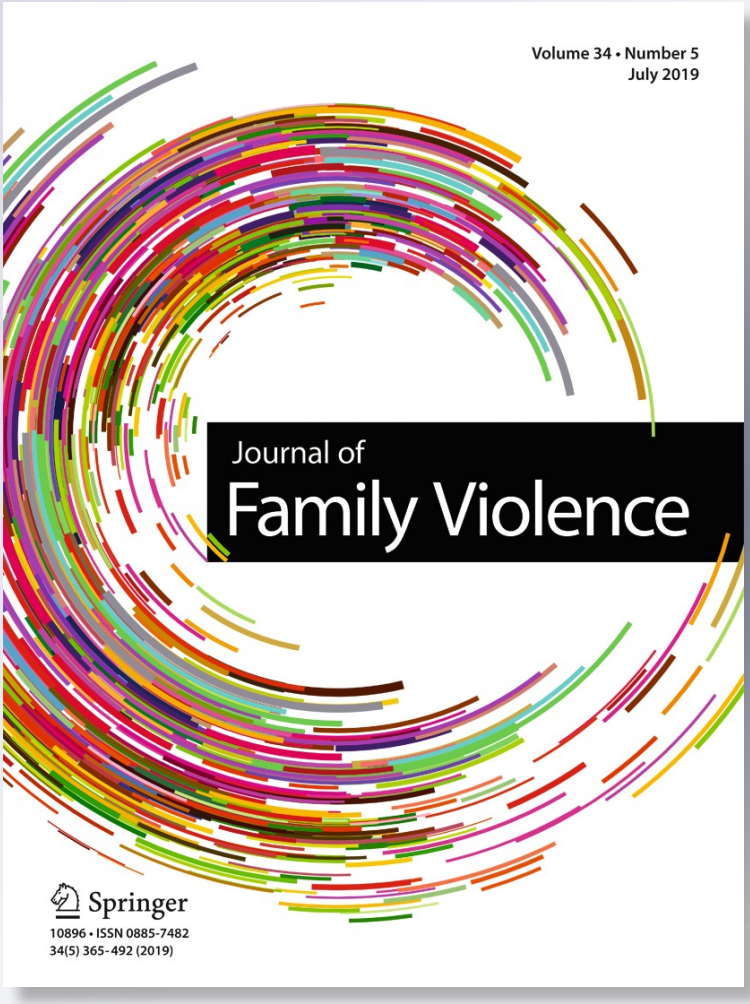

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

What Do Adolescents Believe About Performing and Accepting Intimate Partner Violence Behaviors? A Reasoned Action Approach

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Abstract
Intimate partner violence against adolescent girls is of increasing political and social concern. This paper presents formative research on the reasoned action approach (RAA) to the prediction of boys' perpetration and girls' acceptance of four psychologically abusive behaviors. Our objectives were: (1) to identify the behavioral and normative modal beliefs behind males' performance and girls' acceptance of the behaviors and (2) to explore the relationship between attitudes, perceived social norm, intention and behavior. A total of 479 adolescents between 14 and 18 years of age completed questionnaires on the performance (boys) or acceptance (girls) of a specific behavior. We used a grouping process to identify modal beliefs and carried out eight exploratory multiple regression analysis (one per behavior) to study attitude and social norm as predictors of intention and behavior. Positive and negative behavioral beliefs coexist in boys' and girls' minds, which can reflect an unclear positioning against abusive behaviors. Positive outcomes seem to be influenced by socialization processes and love myths. Peers can be a risk factor whereas parents are a protective factor against the performance and acceptance of these behaviors. Results showed significant relationships between the constructs in the sense specified by the model. Prevention programs could benefit by: managing participants' individual behavior, intervening separately with boys and girls, overcoming adolescents' confusion regarding these behaviors, and targeting parents as a means of discouraging their performance and acceptance. The RAA appears a useful tool for explaining and predicting the performance and acceptance of abusive behaviors.

Keywords Prevention · Adolescence · Psychological abuse · Intimate partner violence · Reasoned action approach · Beliefs · Elicitation study · Evidence-based

Why Focus on Intimate Partner Violence Against Adolescent Girls?

The European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA 2014) has warned that one in three women and girls have suffered psychological abuse from a partner since the age of 15, and one in five has suffered physical and/or sexual violence. This issue costs the European Union approximately 109,000 million euros a year (European Institute for Gender Equality 2014). In Spain, political and social concern about intimate partner violence (IPV) against adolescent girls is increasing. In the space of a year, the number of adolescent girls with a protection order or precautionary measures increased by 14.8% (INE 2018). Experiencing IPV in the adolescent stage increases the likelihood of experiencing it in adulthood (Reed et al. 2011). Primary prevention is thus of the utmost importance in preventing revictimization in adulthood and reducing its consequences on all family members (López-Soler et al. 2017).

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What Do we Know About Prevention Programs?

Today, young people tend to conceptualize IPV as explicit forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence which are firmly rejected by young Spaniards (Government Delegation for

Gender Violence, [GDGV] 2015); in other words, there has been an attitudinal change towards explicit forms of IPV, which has been the aim of numerous prevention programs (*see* Casas 2013). However, such change has not led to a reduction in the prevalence of the issue (Bosch et al. 2008; INE 2018). Reviews on the efficacy of prevention programs point out that, to date, some have been moderately effective at producing cognitive changes (i.e. on sexist attitudes or justification of violence) both immediately and at follow-up (*see* De la Rue et al. 2017; Shorey et al. 2008) but have not produced sustained behavioral changes, which is why experts recommend targeting individual behavioral changes (De la Rue et al. 2017). In addition, Vagi et al. (2013) highlight the fact that practitioners have been targeting correlates of dating violence instead of causal factors. These findings suggest that prevention programs may benefit by intervening on the determinants of abusive behaviors to produce behavioral changes. Furthermore, experts point out that the reason why programs do not produce sustained behavioral changes could be due to the lack of a theoretical basis on the functional mechanisms that explain aggressive behaviors (Shorey et al. 2008). For a better understanding of the performance of IPV, the WHO (2010) recommends the use of evidence-based behavioral models to identify the underlying mechanisms that are behind it. The reasoned action approach (RAA: Fishbein and Ajzen 2010) is a well-established framework supported by evidence of the predictive capacity of its constructs for a wide range of behaviors (Armitage and Conner 2001). Thus, in this study we applied the formative stage of the RAA (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010) to boys' performance and girls' acceptance of normalized abusive behavior. More specifically, this study aimed: 1) to identify adolescent boys' behavioral and normative beliefs in performing each one of the behaviors under study and those of girls in accepting them (elicitation study); and 2) to explore the applicability of the model to the prediction of the performance and acceptance of each behavior. The final purpose was to advance in the design of prevention programs aimed at producing behavioral changes.

Theoretical Framework

The RAA includes constructs such as attitudes and beliefs which have been studied in the IPV context (Flood and Pease 2009) and perceived social norms, which is gaining strength (Reed et al. 2011; Taylor et al. 2015). This model analyzes people's beliefs, attitudes and perceived norms towards themselves performing (or accepting) specific behaviors. The RAA states that behavior can be predicted through a person's intention to perform it, and this is in turn predicted through the person's attitude, perceived social norm and perceived control towards performing the behavior (Fig. 1). Attitude refers to people's positive or negative general appraisal of their performing the behavior. Perceived social norm is the person's perception that important others support their performing the behavior (prescriptive norm) or perform the behavior themselves (descriptive norm). Perceived control refers to the degree to which people perceive control over their performing the behavior. This last construct widens the model's predictive capacity only when behaviors are not under complete volitional control. These constructs are each determined in turn by the behavioral, normative and control beliefs that people hold on the performance of the behaviors. Behavioral beliefs refer to the anticipated positive and negative outcomes of performing the behavior, whereas normative beliefs refer to important persons that approve of their performing the behavior (prescriptive beliefs) or that perform the behavior themselves (descriptive beliefs). Control beliefs refer to concrete facilitators and inhibitors of performing the behavior. According to the RAA, factors such as personality traits, gender or culture can influence behaviors through the configuration of beliefs and their relevance to the people who hold them. For instance, adherence to the culture of honor and gendered honor codes that are related to IPV are more present in Spain and South American countries in comparison to northern European countries (Rodríguez 2011). In this context, both cultural variables may influence those boys' and girls' beliefs that are behind their performance and acceptance of abusive behaviors.

The RAA (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010) assumes people can hold a wide range of beliefs on a question, but that only those quickly accessible are explanatory factors of behaviors. To identify these beliefs in a population (modal beliefs), the RAA requires an elicitation study. Furthermore, the model entails testing its applicability in the specific context (in this case, IPV against adolescent girls). Both tasks make up the formative research, the first step in applying this theory. To the best of our knowledge, no study has been carried out on the prediction of boys' performance and girls' acceptance of abusive behaviors. Only two have applied the RAA in the context of dating violence (Flysher et al. 2007; Kernsmith and Tolman 2011) but neither identified the modal salient beliefs (elicitation study). Once the beliefs are identified and the applicability of the model has been tested, the second phase of research consists of conducting a prospective study.

Selection of Behavioral Targets

A valid selection and precise definition of the behaviors to predict is vital in the RAA: "It is therefore of utmost importance that the behavior under consideration be clearly identified and properly operationalized" (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010, p.20). Psychological abuse is the most prevalent form of IPV against adolescent girls (Barter et al. 2009; GDGV 2015). In a previous Delphi study, we identified the 10 most relevant psychologically abusive behaviors for prevention aims in the adolescent stage (Nardi-Rodríguez et al. 2019, manuscript submitted for publication). In this paper we will focus on two controlling (C1 and C2) and two devaluing behaviors (D1 and D2): (1) checking and controlling girls'

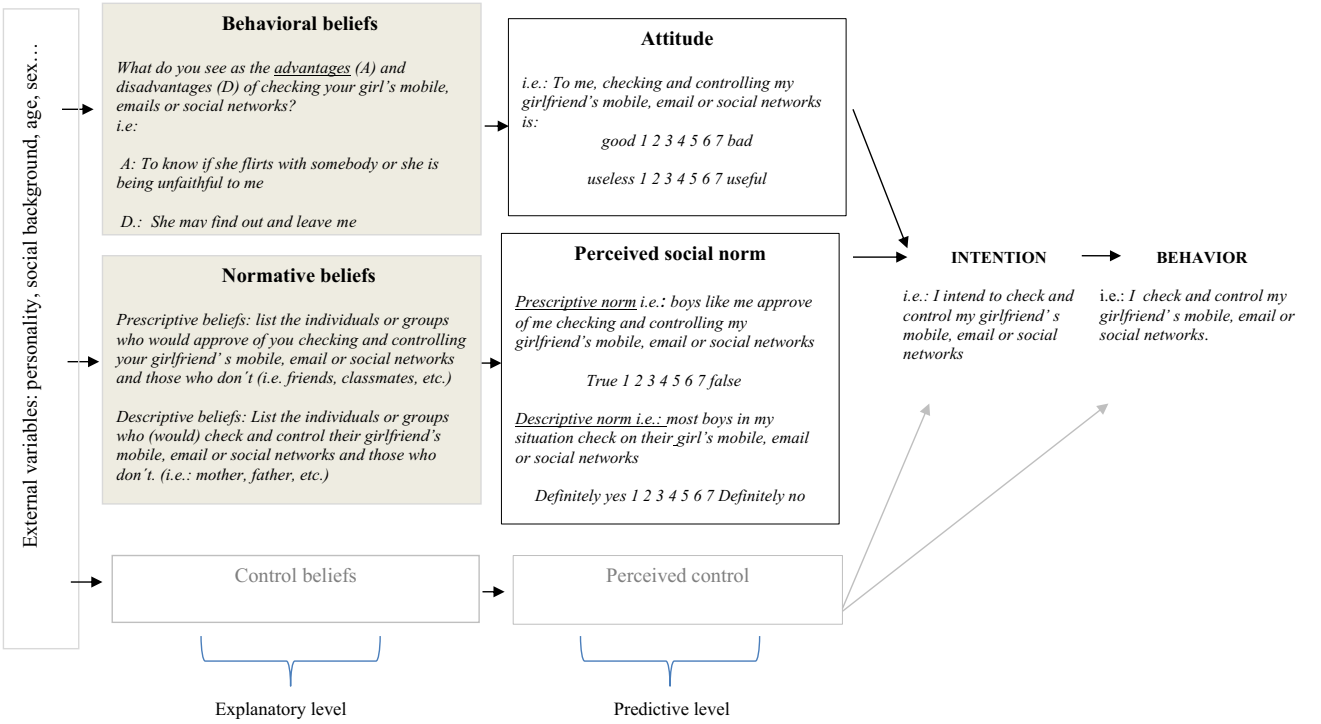

Fig. 1 Schematic illustrating the reasoned action approach. In bold, variables analyzed in the study and examples of their measurement

mobiles or emails or social networks (C1), (2) telling her he can't live without her, so she doesn't leave him, not even for a week to go on vacation, camping or on an excursion (C2), (3) ignoring her or punishing her with silence, without giving a reason (D1), and (4) comparing her with other girls and making her feel uncomfortable and humiliated (D2). The reason for selecting these is that the incidence average of experiencing controlling (i.e. monitoring girls' movements) and devaluing abuse (i.e. being ignored) by girls from 16 to 19 years old, is much higher (25%) than the incidence rate experienced by women of all ages (9.6%) (GDGV 2015). Studies reveal that young people present a high tolerance to this type of behavior as well as difficulties in associating them with IPV against women (Barter et al. 2009; Luzón et al. 2011). This is critical since controlling and devaluing strategies are considered as the first to appear in an abusive relationship and as a means to prepare the ground for other abusive or violent behaviors (Luzón et al. 2011). In other words, they prepare the ground for coercive control, a pattern of physical and non-physical abuse tactics aimed at intentionally dominating and controlling their partner's daily life (Hlavaty and Haselschwerdt 2019). Pence and Paymar's (1986) Power and Control Wheel includes a continuum of specific behaviors such as controlling and devaluing behaviors that form pervasive patterns of coercive control (Lehmann and Pillai 2012). Given the RAA's previously mentioned premise, and as the above-mentioned behaviors are under a person's volitional control, we will not consider perceived control over performing and accepting the behaviors.

Our research questions regarding these four behaviors were: (1) what are the behavioral and normative beliefs behind boys' performance and girls' acceptance of these behaviors? and (2) is the RAA applicable in the IPV against adolescent girls' context?

We hypothesize that: (1) given the power distribution in partner relationships, boys will perceive advantages in performing the coercive behaviors and girls will perceive fewer advantages in accepting them; (2) given that friends and family are socialized in a patriarchal culture, they will act as influential agents for adolescents to reproduce asymmetric roles within relationships, and; (3) given the relevance of the constructs included in the RAA for the study of IPV against women, the model will be applicable in the IPV against adolescent girls' context.

Method

Participants

A total of 479 heterosexual adolescents participated in the study, 212 boys (44.3%) and 267 girls (55.7%) aged between 14 and 18 years ($M = 15.45$, $SD = 1.10$). We discarded the questionnaires of those who stated they were homosexual or bisexual ($n = 27$). Given the high levels of male IPV against adolescent girls in Spain, this work only refers to violence in heterosexual couples. A total of 119 participants answered to C1 (54 boys and 65 girls), 123 to C2 (53 girls and 70 boys), 120 to D1 (53 boys and 67 girls) and 117 to D2 (52 boys and 65 girls). Participants were drawn from three Spanish public schools and two state-approved private schools from Alicante city with different cultural and economic backgrounds: from a low-income

multicultural population (mostly Spanish, Arabic, gypsies and east European) to a high-income population (mostly Spanish and to a lesser extent north European). Of the total, 170 were studying baccalaureate (35.5%), 293 compulsory secondary education (61.2%) and 13 vocational education and training courses (3.3%). Of the entire sample, 93.9% stated they had seen an awareness campaign, 60% had attended a prevention program or an awareness-raising talk and 28% had witnessed IPV against women. A total of 138 were currently in a relationship (62.3% of girls and 37.7% of boys).

For the elicitation study, Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) suggest an average of 30 people per homogenous group and behavior. In this research, for each one of the abusive/coercive behaviors analyzed, we had more than twice the required number of participants for the two groups under consideration: boys and girls.

Measures

Each questionnaire was focused on a single behavior. Therefore, we designed four questionnaires for boys, each one related to the performance of a specific abusive behavior and four questionnaires for girls, each one related to the acceptance of a specific abusive behavior. In all eight questionnaires, the items and questions were identical. The only changes were in the behavior under assessment, while the perspective varied according to sex (boys: performance of the behavior and girls: acceptance of the behavior). Below, we give examples of the measures taken in the questionnaire regarding the performance of the coercive behavior C1. All questionnaires included a short story to contextualize the behaviors as both subtle and abusive within the framework of a relationship. Coercive control can adopt subtle forms which are initially less imposing than the explicit forms, but still as harmful in terms of consequences (Lehmann and Pillai 2012) since it guides victims into a spiral that leads them progressively to tolerate higher levels of abuse. The questionnaires had two parts, the first with the questions related to the elicitation study and the second with the measure of the RAA constructs.

Part One: Elicitation Study (objective 1)

Based on the authors' instructions (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010), we designed four open-answer questions to identify the beliefs behind boys' performance and girls' acceptance of the behaviors. They were told to write down the ideas that immediately came to mind to ensure only accessible beliefs.

Behavioral Beliefs We asked, 'what do you see as the advantages of checking your girl's mobile, emails or social networks?' and 'what do you see as the disadvantages of checking your girl's mobile, emails or social networks?'

Normative Beliefs We asked them to list individuals or groups that would approve of them checking their girl's mobile, emails or social networks and those that would not (injunctive norm) and to list individuals or groups that performed the behavior and those who did not (descriptive norm) (*see* Fig. 1).

Part Two: Direct Measures of the Major Constructs (Objective 2)

All items were answered on a 7-point bipolar scale (see Annex 1). The wording depended on the content of the items. Each construct was assessed with the average scores of the items used to measure them.

Behavioral Intention We used four items to assess the intention to perform the behavior. For instance, 'I will check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks' or 'I intend to check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks'. Higher scores indicated a stronger intention to perform it (or to accept it in the girls' case).

Attitudes Towards the Behavior The scale was composed of 12 pairs of bipolar adjectives (e.g. checking my girl's mobile, emails or social networks is: bad/good, unnecessary/necessary, useless/useful, harmful/beneficial, romantic/ non-romantic or pleasant/unpleasant). The adjectives were selected by consensus by three authors of this paper based on two criteria: the well-known influence of love myths that make difficult the identification of warning signs (Lucero et al. 2014) and the RAA suggestions. The final list was subjected to the criteria of an IPV expert who gave the green light to the adjectives selected for measuring attitudinal aspects of performing/accepting the behaviors. The expert is a renowned researcher for her work in the field, having participated in several projects funded by public institutions, which focused on sexual harassment, romantic love myths and IPV, and on intervention programs for perpetrators of domestic violence. Higher scores pointed to a favorable attitude to perpetrate (boys) or to accept (girls) the behavior.

Perceived Social Norm We employed six items: three assessed injunctive norms (e.g. 'most people important to me think I should check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks') and three descriptive norms (e.g. 'most boys like me check on their girl's mobile …'). We obtained a perceived social norm average and a prescriptive and descriptive norm average. Higher scores pointed to a higher perceived social pressure to perform the behavior (or to accept it in the girls' case).

Behavior These questions were only answered by participants who were currently in a relationship or had been previously. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), past behavior can be a good predictor of future behavior, which is why they suggest this measure in the formative stage, in order to make a first approximation to the construct relationship with intention. We employed two items to assess whether boys had performed the

behavior in the past 3 months: 'Have you checked on your girl's mobile, emails or social networks?' and 'How often have you checked on your girl's mobile, emails or social networks?' Higher scores meant higher performance of the behavior (or acceptance in the girls' case).

Finally, we asked for sociodemographic (sex and age) and other data such as sexual orientation, whether respondents currently had a partner or had had one in the past, or had ever attended a prevention program or watched an awareness campaign.

Procedure

After randomizing the 46 Alicante secondary school centers listed on the Valencian Autonomous Region website, we arranged a meeting with the principals of the first five schools that displayed interest in the study, since they were sufficient to reach the sample needed for the formative research. We explained the project and procedure, highlighting its compliance with the ethical criteria of the university ethics committee and the Helsinki statement. A consent report from the adolescents' legal guardians was a requisite for participation. Questionnaires were self-administered during a one-hour class to all the adolescents present that day and they were randomly assigned to participants according to their sex in order to obtain data regarding the different coercive behaviors from the same class.

Content Analysis for Identification of Salient Modal Beliefs (Elicitation Study)

For each behavior and sex, we carried out a content and frequency analysis for behavioral and normative salient beliefs. The steps followed were:

1. Adolescents' answers were transcribed verbatim to a database.
2. Salient beliefs were grouped by two authors of the paper according to the similarity of their content. The frequency with which they were mentioned was calculated. The other two authors independently reviewed the grouped beliefs. Discrepancies were solved by consensus.
3. Each author labeled each group of salient beliefs with an item or phrase that represented the beliefs. We respected adolescents' language and the grammatical formulation of valence most frequently used in the group (that is, if expressed in positive or negative terms). This was independently performed by the four authors who finally combined the results in order to reach a consensus on the formulation of the items.
4. We selected the salient modal beliefs that would be included in the final questionnaire. To consider a salient belief as modal, it had to be mentioned by at least 25% of the sample (frequency criterion). In the case of boys, for a belief to be labeled as modal, it required to be mentioned by at least 13 adolescents for all four behaviors. In the case of girls, for C1, D1 and D2, the same belief had to be mentioned by at least 16 adolescent girls, and for C2, by at least 17 adolescent girls.

Statistical Analysis

We employed the SPSS version 22 for all analysis. The rate of missing data on variables did not reach the 1%. The procedure we followed played an essential part in this. Questionnaires were divided into 3 parts and returned separately in 3 steps (step 1: questions related to elicitation study; step 2: questions related to major construct measures; and step3: questions related to sociodemographic and other data). This procedure allowed us to check for missing data. For instance, while participants were filling in the third part of the questionnaire, researchers (two per class) had time to check for any missing data in the second part and to ask participants to answer the relevant question(s). Only two cases were eliminated from the analysis because at least one part of the questionnaire was not completed. Regarding the analysis, we first conducted an item analysis by studying the floor effect and ceiling effect (percentage of response below 5% and above 95% 'in some response categories') and to analyze the discriminating validity and internal consistency of the scales designed for all eight questionnaires. In addition, we studied the correlations between the items of the scales evaluating the different constructs with the total score for each of the scales and analyzed the relations between constructs (Pearson's correlation). All participants (both in a relationship or not in a relationship) answered regarding their intention to perform/accept an abusive behavior (those not in a relationship had to imagine themselves in one). Lastly, we carried out eight exploratory multiple regression analyses (for the performance and acceptance of each four behaviors) with attitude and social norm as predictors of intention and intention as predictor of behavior. To test this last relation, we only used data from those participants who were currently in a relationship or had been in one previously.

Results of the item analysis and reliability of the scales can be found in Annex 2 (Tables 6, 7, 8, 9) and those regarding the descriptive analysis of the constructs (behavior, intention, attitude and social norm) can be found in Table 1.

Results

Elicitation Study (Objective 1): To Identify Adolescent Behavioral and Normative Beliefs

C1: To Check and Control a Girl's Mobile or Emails or Social Networks to Find out About Her and What She is Doing

Boys' Behavioral Beliefs The beliefs mean reported by each boy was 4.54 ($SD = 1.74$; ranging from 1 to 9; $Mdn = 5$;

Table 1 Descriptive analysis of the reasoned action approach constructs

	Intention		Behavior[a]		Attitude		Social Norm	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Boys								
C1	2.48	1.37	2.54	1.72	2.78	1.07	3.15	1.17
C2	2.15	1.01	2.16	1.36	3.41	1.13	3.05	0.97
D1	2.05	1.07	2.11	1.20	2.28	1.21	2.78	1.04
D2	1.76	0.93	1.95	1.46	2.38	1.15	3.06	1.15
Girls								
C1	2.05	1.27	2.22	1.47	2.75	1.78	2.81	1.06
C2	2.13	1.06	1.86	1.41	3.20	1.27	2.55	0.94
D1	1.75	0.87	1.94	1.19	1.85	0.87	2.15	0.83
D2	1.70	0.86	1.74	1.16	1.88	0.88	2.60	0.84

C1: Checking and controlling girls' mobiles or emails or social networks; C2: Telling her he can't live without her, so she doesn't leave him, not even for a week to go on vacation, camping or on an excursion; D1: Ignoring her or punishing her with silence, without giving the reason, D2: Ignoring her or punishing her with silence, without giving the reason;
[a] This variable was calculated with responses of boys and girls who currently had a partner or had one before (Controlling behavior 1: boys $n = 40$, girls $n = 46$; Controlling behavior 2: boys $n = 39$, girls $n = 48$; Devaluing behavior 1: boys $n = 38$, girls $n = 48$; Devaluing behavior 2: boys $n = 43$, girls $n = 46$)

Mode = 5). Of the 11 groups of similar beliefs, five achieved the criterion as modal beliefs ($n = 13$) and one advantage was added since the frequency with which it was reported was close to the criterion ($n = 12$) and distant from the frequency of the next group of beliefs ($n = 6$). The most commonly mentioned were two advantages which were followed by four disadvantages. These advantages were: 'To know what she is doing, where she is and who she is speaking with' ($n = 52$) and 'To know if she flirts with somebody or she is being unfaithful to me' ($n = 42$) (Table 2).

Boys' Normative Beliefs The average number of injunctive beliefs informed by a boy was 3.7 ($SD = 1.68$; ranging from 1 to 7; $Mdn = 4$; $Mode = 4$) and for descriptive beliefs 4.58 ($SD = 2.13$; ranging from 1 to 11; $Mdn = 4$; $Mode = 4$). Among the eight groups of injunctive and descriptive beliefs, five injunctive and six descriptive groups complied with the frequency criterion ($n = 13$) as modal beliefs. Most of the boys (36 for and 30 against) believed that their male friends would support their carrying out the behavior. Their parents (six for and 35 against) and other family members (six for and 16 against) mainly appear as persons that would recommend the contrary. Regarding descriptive beliefs, their male friends (43 for and 27 against) and classmates or team-mates (16 for and eight against) mainly appeared as perpetrators of the behavior. Their parents (eight for and 34 against) and family members (eight for and 18 against) are the most mentioned as non-perpetrators (Table 3).

Girls' Behavioral Beliefs The beliefs mean reported by a girl was 4.99 ($SD = 1.84$; ranging from 1 to 8; $Mdn = 5$; $Mode = 3$). Of the 19 groups of similar beliefs, eight achieved the criterion for consideration as modal beliefs ($n = 16$). The most frequently mentioned was an advantage of accepting the behavior: 'He would trust me' ($n = 47$). Another perceived advantage of accepting having the mobile or social networks checked was that: 'He would get jealous' ($n = 18$). Six disadvantages were reported (Table 2).

Girls' Normative Beliefs The average number of injunctive beliefs informed by a girl was 4.84 ($SD = 1.80$; ranging from 1 to 9; $Mdn = 5$; $Mode = 4$) and for descriptive beliefs 4.02 ($SD = 1.26$; ranging from 1 to 6; $Mdn = 4$; $Mode = 4$). Six of the 12 groups of injunctive beliefs and six of the eight groups of descriptive beliefs fulfilled the frequency criterion ($n = 16$) as modal beliefs. For most of the girls more people would not support them accepting the behavior than those that would. Their female friends (for 21 and 49 against) and their parents (for five and 57 against) were the prescriptive models most frequently mentioned by girls. Regarding descriptive beliefs, girls perceived that most of their classmates accepted the behavior (for 15 and nine against). As non-acceptors, girls mentioned most of their female friends (for 30 and 43 against) and parents (for eight and 43 against) (Table 3).

C2: To Tell your Girlfriend you can't Live Without Her, so She Doesn't Leave you, not even for a week to go on Vacation, Camping or on an Excursion

Boys' Behavioral Beliefs The beliefs mean reported by each boy was 3.96 ($SD = 1.42$; ranging from 1 to 6; $Mdn = 4$; $Mode = 3$). Seven similar beliefs of the 11 groups, achieved the criterion for consideration as modal beliefs ($n = 13$). Three were advantages and four disadvantages. The advantage most frequently mentioned was 'She will realize that she is important to me, that I worry about her and love her' ($n = 31$), 'We would spend more time together' ($n = 21$) and 'Know what she does and make sure she won't run away with another guy' ($n = 12$) (Table 2).

Boys' Normative Beliefs The average number of injunctive beliefs informed by each boy was 4.43 ($SD = 1.56$; ranging from 1 to 8; $Mdn = 4$; $Mode = 5$) and for descriptive beliefs 4.34 ($SD = 1.87$; ranging from 1 to 11; $Mdn = 4$; $Mode = 4$). Six out of eight groups of injunctive beliefs and five out of eight groups of descriptive beliefs accomplished the frequency criterion ($n = 13$) as modal beliefs. Most of the boys considered that two important persons would support them carrying out the behavior: their female friends (for 13 and eight against) and their classmates (for nine and four against). Their parents were mostly named as non-supporters of the behavior (eight for and 30 against). Regarding descriptive

Table 2 Boys and girls behavioral beliefs for controlling behaviors

C1: Checking and controlling girls' mobiles or emails or social networks			
Boys ($n = 6/11$)[a]	*n*	Girls ($n = 8/19$)[a]	*n*
To know what she is doing, where she is and who she is speaking with	52	**He would trust me**	47
To know if she flirts with somebody or she is being unfaithful to me	42	He would control me and I would feel harassed	38
She may think I don't rely on her	30	I wouldn't have freedom nor private life	35
She may get angry at me and have more arguments	22	We would have more arguments and relationship would worsen	26
She may think I am a very controlling person and feel harassed	18	**He would know more about me and my friendship**	22
She may find out and leave me	12	**I would feel he is interested on me and worries about me**	18
		He would get jealous	18
		He may misunderstand a commentary or publication, and think things that aren't	16
C2: Telling her he can't live without her, so she doesn't leave him, not even for a week to go on vacation, camping or on an excursion			
Boys ($n = 7/11$)	*n*	Girls ($n = 6/16$)	*n*
She may think I am tiring and a controller and feel harassed.	48	**I would spend more time with him**	51
She will realize that she is important to me, that I worry about her and love her	31	Miss new experiences	51
She may get angry at me and leave me	26	I would give him power over me and let him decide what I can do	46
We would spend more time together	21	I wouldn't have time for myself, my family and friends	27
She may think I don't rely on her	14	**I would feel that he loves me, wants to be with me and doesn't want to lose me**	20
Know what she does and make sure she won't run away with another guy	12	**Prove to him that I love him and prevent him from having a bad time**	17
She may think I am a romantic	12	I may get angry at him	16

Bold = advantages of performing/accepting the behavior; [a] Amount selected/identified

beliefs, their male friends (34 for and 28 against) and classmates (13 for and 10 against) mainly appeared as perpetrators of the behavior. Their parents (13 for and 29 against), brothers and sisters (eight for and 16 against), and other family members (five for and 19 against) were the most often mentioned as non-perpetrators (Table 3).

Girls' Behavioral Beliefs The beliefs mean reported by a girl was 5.26 ($SD = 2.14$; ranging from 1 to 10; $Mdn = 5$; $Mode = 5$). Six of the 16 groups of similar beliefs complied with the criterion for consideration as modal beliefs ($n = 17$) and one disadvantage was added since the frequency with which it was reported was close to the criterion ($n = 16$) and distant from the next group of beliefs ($n = 10$). Three were advantages of accepting the behavior and four disadvantages. The advantage most frequently described was 'I would spend more time with him' ($n = 51$), 'I would feel that he loves me, wants to be with me and doesn't want to lose me' ($n = 20$) and 'Prove to him that I love him and prevent him from having a bad time' ($n = 17$) (Table 2).

Girls' Normative Beliefs The average number of injunctive beliefs reported by a girl was 4.95 ($SD = 1.83$; ranging from 1 to 9; $Mdn = 5$; $Mode = 4$) and for descriptive beliefs 4.43 ($SD = 1.51$; ranging from 1 to 7; $Mdn = 5$; $Mode = 5$). Five out of 10 groups of injunctive beliefs and five out of seven groups of descriptive beliefs complied with the frequency criterion ($n = 17$) as modal beliefs. Most of the girls considered that they had more people that would not support them accepting the behavior or did not accept it themselves. Their female friends (27 for and 46 against) and parents (six for and 54 against) were the most frequently mentioned as injunctive models and descriptive models (34 for and 41 against, and 23 for and 43 against, respectively) (Table 3).

D1: To Ignore her or Punish her with Silence, Without Giving the Reason

Boys' Behavioral Beliefs The beliefs mean reported by each boy was 4.12 ($SD = 1.83$; ranging from 1 to 10; $Mdn = 4$; $Mode = 5$). Six of the 16 groups of similar beliefs achieved the criterion for considering them modal beliefs ($n = 13$) and one advantage and disadvantage were added since the frequency with which they were mentioned was close to the criterion ($n = 12$) and distant from the next group of beliefs ($n = 6$). Three of them are advantages of performing the behavior and five disadvantages. The advantage most frequently mentioned was 'she pays more attention to me and focuses on me' ($n = 17$), followed by 'she realizes that she did something wrong that bothered me, and changes' ($n = 15$), and 'so she learns who is in charge in the relationship' ($n = 12$) (Table 4).

Table 3 Boys and girls normative beliefs

	C1		C2		D1		D2	
	Injunctive belief *n* (f/a)[a]	Descriptive belief *n* (f/a)[a]	Injunctive belief *n* (f/a)[a]	Descriptive belief *n* (f/a)[a]	Injunctive belief *n* (f/a)[a]	Descriptive belief *n* (f/a)[a]	Injunctive belief *n* (f/a)[a]	Descriptive belief *n* (f/a)[a]
BOYS								
My male friends	**66 (36/30)**	**70 (43/27)**	63 (29/34)	**62 (34/28)**	**63 (33/30)**	62 (30/32)	65 (28/32)	59 (29/30)
My father and/or mother	41 (6/35)	42 (8/34)	38 (8/30)	42 (13/29)	35 (6/29)	34 (8/26)	34 (6/28)	39 (5/34)
Other family members[b]	22 (6/16)	26 (8/18)	27 (9/18)	24 (5/19)	29 (5/24)	26 (8/18)	29 (3/23)	30 (5/25)
My brother(s) and/or sister(s)	25 (5/20)	**13 (7/6)**	19 (5/14)	24 (8/16)	21 (4/17)	17 (2/15)	17 (2/15)	19 (8/11)
My class mates or team mates	20 (8/12)	**24 (16/8)**	**13 (9/4)**	**23 (13/10)**	**25 (13/12)**	**25 (15/10)**	16 (7/9)	**25 (15/10)**
My female friends	–	13 (3/10)	**21 (13/8)**	–	18 (6/12)	13 (4/9)	12 (4/8)	15 (4/11)
GIRLS								
My female friends	70 (21/49)	73 (30/43)	73 (27/46)	75 (34/41)	69 (13/56)	72 (29/43)	71 (21/50)	72 (24/48)
My father and/or mother.	62 (5/57)	51 (8/43)	60 (6/54)	66 (23/43)	54 (8/46)	48 (10/38)	49 (3/46)	50 (7/43)
My male friends	36 (9/27)	26 (13/13)	47 (12/35)	25 (10/15)	43 (12/31)	37 (15/22)	33 (10/23)	23 (9/14)
My brother(s) and/or sister(s)	31 (3/28)	19 (5/14)	25 (5/20)	22 (8/14)	29 (1/28)	23 (4/19)	34 (3/31)	20 (5/15)
Other family members[b]	30 (3/27)	25 (6/19)	51 (10/41)	41 (18/23)	42 (3/39)	30 (11/19)	46 (8/38)	30 (10/20)
My class mates or team mates	17 (5/12)	**24 (15/9)**	–	–	–	**21 (11/10)**	–	**22 (15/7)**
My boyfriend's friends	–	–	–	–	**15 (14/1)**	–	–	–

C1: Checking and controlling girls' mobiles or emails or social networks; C2: Telling her he can't live without her, so she doesn't leave him, not even for a week to go on vacation, camping or on an excursion, D1: Ignoring her or punishing her with silence, without giving the reason, D2: Ignoring her or punishing her with silence, without giving the reason; [a] number of persons in a group who are in favor (f) and against (a) the behavior (prescriptive beliefs) or who perform (f) and do not perform (a) the behavior (boys' descriptive beliefs) or accept (f) or do not accept (a) the behavior (girls´ descriptive beliefs); [b] cousins, grandfathers and uncles; **Bold** = models mentioned mostly as supporters of the performance and acceptance of the behavior and models who are performers or acceptors of the behavior; – = referents not mentioned

Boys' Normative Beliefs The average number of injunctive beliefs reported by each boy was 4.15 (*SD* = 1.32; ranging from 1 to 7; *Mdn* = 4; *Mode* = 4) and for descriptive beliefs 4.22 (*SD* = 1.37; ranging from 1 to 6; *Mdn* = 4; *Mode* = 4). Six out of seven groups of injunctive and six out of eight descriptive beliefs complied with the frequency criterion for considering them modal beliefs (*n* = 13). Most of the boys considered that two important groups (their male friends and classmates and team-mates) would support them carrying out the behavior. Their male friends were the most commonly mentioned as supporters of the behavior (33 for and 30 against). Their parents (six for and 29 against) and other family members (five for and 24 against) mainly appeared as people that would advise the contrary. Regarding descriptive beliefs, only boys' classmates appeared as perpetrators of the behavior (for 15 against 10). Their male friends appeared most frequently as non-perpetrators (*n* = 32) although perpetrators were nearly as frequent (*n* = 30). Their parents (for eight and against 26) and family members (for eight and against 18) were the most commonly mentioned as non-perpetrators, after their male friends (Table 3).

Girls' Behavioral Beliefs The behavioral beliefs mean reported by a girl was 4.48 (*SD* = 2.53; ranging from 1 to 11; *Mdn* = 4; *Mode* = 2). Of 12 groups of beliefs with similar content, seven accomplished the criterion for considering them modal beliefs (*n* = 16). Four were disadvantages and three were advantages. Among the latter, the most frequently mentioned was 'so I realize that I did something wrong that bothered him, and I can correct it' *(n = 25)* followed by 'I would realize that he doesn't value me and consider whether it's worth staying in the relationship' (*n* = 23) and 'not overwhelming him, let his anger pass and avoid arguing' (*n* = 22) (Table 4).

Girls' Normative Beliefs The average number of injunctive beliefs reported by a girl was 4.56 (*SD* = 1.44; ranging from 1 to 8; *Mdn* = 4; *Mode* = 4) and for descriptive beliefs 4.56 (*SD* = 1.67; ranging from 1 to 8; *Mdn* = 4; *Mode* = 4). Five injunctive beliefs accomplished the frequency criterion (*n* = 16) for modal beliefs and one was close enough (*n* = 15) to be included in the final questionnaire. Their female friends (13 for and 56 against), parents (eight for and 46 against) and male friends (12 for and 31 against) were the most frequently mentioned as non-supporters of accepting the behavior. Only their boyfriend's friends appeared as supporters of the behavior (14 for and one against). Regarding descriptive beliefs, their female friends (29 for and 43 against) and parents (10 for and 38 against) appeared as the most frequent important people that do not or would not accept the behavior and their classmates as those who do (11 for and 10 against) (Table 3).

D2: To Compare your Girlfriend with Other Girls Although you know it could make her feel Uncomfortable and Humiliated

Boys' Behavioral Beliefs The beliefs mean reported by each boy was 3.76 (*SD* = 1.54; ranging from 1 to 7; *Mdn* = 4;

Table 4 Boys and girls behavioral beliefs for devaluing behaviors

D1: *Ignoring her or punishing her with silence, without giving the reason*			
Boys ($n = 8/16$)[a]	*n*	Girls ($n = 7/13$)[a]	*n*
Relationship can worsen or break up	32	We may distance ourselves and the relationship would end.	42
She may get angry at me	23	**So I realize that I did something wrong, that bothered him and I can correct it**	25
She pays more attention to me and focuses on me	17	I would realize that he doesn't value me and consider whether it's worth staying in the relationship	23
She realizes that she did something wrong, that bothered me, and changes	15	**Not overwhelming him, let his anger pass and avoid arguing**	22
I would have a hard time	16	I would look weak and he would think he could do what he wants	20
She may think I don't love her anymore and she would have a hard time	13	Overthink because I don't know what is wrong with him and it would upset me	19
So she learns who is in charge in the relationship	12	There would be no communication and the problem could not be resolved	16
She stops talking to me as well	12		
D2: *Comparing her with other girls and making her feel uncomfortable and humiliated*			
Boys ($n = 5/10$)	*n*	Girls ($n = 6/8$)	*n*
She would change those things I don't like	33	I would feel bad, inferior and insecure	75
She would get angry at me	33	**Know what he likes in general terms, what he doesn't like of me and change it**	43
She would feel bad, inferior and insecure	24	**Don't get angry at each other and fight for our relationship**	28
She could leave me	18	Realize that he likes other girls more than me and feel jealous	19
She could think she doesn't like me and I don't love her anymore	14	Realize how he is and doubt about continuing with the relationship	19
		I give him power and control over me.	18

[a] Amount selected/identified; **bold** = advantages of performing/accepting the behavior

Mode = 3). Five of the 10 groups of similar beliefs satisfied the criterion for consideration as modal beliefs ($n = 13$). Only one was an advantage and four were disadvantages. The advantage most frequently described was 'She would change those things I don't like' ($n = 33$) (Table 4).

Boys' Normative Beliefs The average number of injunctive beliefs reported by a boy was 4.22 ($SD = 1.32$; ranging from 1 to 7; *Mdn* = 4; *Mode* = 5) and for descriptive beliefs 4.97 ($SD = 1.43$; ranging from 1 to 6; *Mdn* = 4; *Mode* = 3). Six out of 8 groups of injunctive and descriptive beliefs complied with the frequency criterion ($n = 13$) as modal beliefs. Most of the boys considered that more people would not support their carrying out the behavior than those that would, and their male friends were the most frequently reported as non-supporters (28 for and 32 against) followed by parents (six for and 28 against). Regarding descriptive beliefs, only their classmates appeared as perpetrators of the behavior (15 for and 10 against). Their parents were the most mentioned as non-perpetrators (five for and 34 against) followed by their friends (29 for and 30 against) (Table 3).

Girls' Behavioral Beliefs The beliefs mean reported by a girl was 4.39 ($SD = 1.45$; ranging from 1 to 7; *Mdn* = 4; *Mode* = 4). Six of the eight groups of similar beliefs satisfied the criterion for consideration as modal beliefs ($n = 16$). Two were advantages and four disadvantages. The advantage most frequently described was 'Know what he likes in general terms, what he doesn't like about me and change it' ($n = 43$), followed by 'Don't get angry at each other and fight for our relationship' ($n = 28$) (Table 4).

Girls' Normative Beliefs The average number of injunctive beliefs reported by a girl was 4.97 ($SD = 1.94$; ranging from 2 to 10; *Mdn* = 5; *Mode* = 4) and for descriptive beliefs 4.08 ($SD = 1.58$; ranging from 1 to 8; *Mdn* = 4; *Mode* = 4). Five out of 10 groups of injunctive beliefs and six out of seven groups of descriptive beliefs complied with the frequency criterion ($n = 16$) as modal beliefs. Most of the girls considered that they had more people that would not support them accepting the behavior than those that would. Their female friends were the most commonly mentioned as non-supporters of accepting the behavior (21 for and 50 against) followed by parents (three for and 46 against). Their classmates or team-mates were perceived as the only people that accepted the behavior. Their female friends (24 for and against 48) and parents (seven for and against 43) did not accept the behavior themselves (Table 3).

Measurement and Relationships Between Major Constructs (Objective 2): To Explore the Applicability of the Model

In the case of the boys, the intention accounted for between 30% (D2) and 59% (C1) of the explained variance of the

behaviors. Attitude and perceived social norm accounted for between 30% (D2) and 56% (C1) of the explained variance of the intention. In all cases, constructs were significant predictors, except for attitude towards performing the behavior D2 which was not a significant predictor of intention (Table 5). For girls, the intention accounted for between 26% (D1) and 54% (D2) of the explained variance of the behaviors. Attitude and perceived social norm accounted for between 30% (D2) and 70% (C1) of the explained variance of the intention. In all cases, constructs were significant predictors (Table 5).

Discussion

In this study we focus on behaviors that can be considered subtle forms of coercive control, a perilous form of abuse and manipulation with harmful consequences for victims (Lehmann and Pillai 2012). In general terms, boys' and girls' intentions of performing and accepting the behaviors were low, as were their performance and acceptance in the past. However, we worked with very young participants with little or no relationship experience, among whom there were some boys that already performed these behaviors and some girls that accepted them. Previous studies with a larger sample of adolescents and young people with experience of being in a relationship confirmed higher prevalence of similar and more intensive forms of emotional abuse when dating (Barter et al. 2009; GDGV 2015). Thus, those without relationship experience are not free from the risk of exerting or suffering abuse at a later date. In fact, Arriaga et al. (2016) point out that being in a romantic relationship can raise people's tolerance threshold to aggressive behaviors.

Regarding the explanatory beliefs of performing and accepting the behaviors identified in the elicitation study, and more specifically, regarding the behavioral beliefs, we should highlight the fact that both positive and negative outcomes coexist to a similar extent in the minds of both adolescent boys and girls, which is contrary to our hypotheses. This finding suggests they do not have a clear positioning on the behaviors since they expect good and bad consequences. Taking into account cognitive dissonance theories as a framework for interpreting this result, the presence of positive and negative behavioral beliefs is a risk: in an abusive relationship, people justify behaviors in order to preserve internal consistency and the relationship (Arriaga et al. 2016). Therefore, in a relationship, adolescents' positive behavioral beliefs could tip the balance towards them performing and accepting the behaviors.

Table 5 Regression analysis of boys' and girls' behavior

		BOYS					GIRLS				
Criterion	Predictors	*M (SD)*	R^2	*F*	*df*	β	*M (SD)*	R^2	*F*	*df*	β
C1		2.54 (1.72)	.46	33.11 (.000)	1, 38		2.22 (1.47)	.48	41.36 (.000)	1, 44	
	Intention [a]	2.56 (1.40)				.68 (.000)	2.20 (1.37)				.70 (.000)
Intention		2.48 (1.37)	.56	32.77 (.000)	2, 50		2.05 (1.27)	.70	74.60 (.000)	2, 62	
	Attitude	2.79 (1.09)				.41 (.000)	2.48 (1.11)				.54 (.000)
	Social norm[b]	3.31 (1.25)				.47 (.000)	2.81 (1.06)				.46 (.000)
C2		2.16 (1.36)	.59	54.00 (.000)	1, 37		1.86 (1.41)	.32	21.57 (.000)	1, 46	
	Intention[a]	2.13 (1.06)				.77 (.000)	2.11 (1.09)				.56 (.000)
Intention		2.15 (1.01)	.45	20.92 (.000)	2, 51		2.13 (1.06)	.47	30.18 (.000)	2, 67	
	Attitude	3.41 (1.13)				.37 (.002)	3.20 (1.28)				.47 (.000)
	Social norm[b]	3.05 (0.97)				.42 (.001)	2.67 (0.90)				.43 (.000)
D1		2.11 (1.20)	.38	22.52 (.000)	1, 36		1.94 (1.19)	.26	16.47 (.000)	1, 46	
	Intention[a]					.62 (.000)	1.74 (0.93)				.51 (.000)
Intention		2.05 (1.07)	.48	23.16 (.000)	2, 50		1.75 (0.87)	.43	24.34 (.000)	2, 64	
	Attitude	2.28 (1.22)				.40 (.000)	1.85 (0.88)				.47 (.000)
	Social norm[b]	2.83 (1.05)				.47(.000)	2.24 (0.89)				.35 (.001)
D2		1.95 (1.46)	.30	17.58 (.000)	1, 41		1.74 (1.16)	.54	51.94 (.000)	1, 44	
	Intention[a]	1.83 (0.97)				.55 (.000)	1.70 (0.96)				.73 (.000)
Intention		1.76 (0.93)	.30	10.54 (.000)	2, 49		1.70 (0.86)	.30	13.74 (.000)	2, 62	
	Attitude	2.38 (1.15)				.12 (.345)	1.88 (0.88)				.32 (.005)
	Social norm[b]	3.06 (1.15)				.50 (.000)	2.76 (0.90)		41.36 (.000)		.36 (.002)

[a] This analysis was performed with responses of boys and girls who currently had a partner or had one before (C1: $n_{boys} = 40$, $n_{girls} = 46$; C2: $n_{boys} = 39$, $n_{girls} = 48$; D1: $n_{boys} = 38$, $n_{girls} = 48$; D2: $n_{boys} = 43$, $n_{girls} = 46$); [b] Social norm average was the average of all items (prescriptive and descriptive)

The elicitation study also revealed the complementary nature of the perceived positive outcomes of performing and accepting the behaviors of males and females respectively, which together with the influence of love myths and socialization processes in the configuration of these beliefs, may facilitate the occurrence of the behaviors in a relationship. For instance, regarding the complementariness of beliefs, boys perceive that checking their girlfriend's mobile or social networks is a good way to ensure that their girlfriend is being faithful, and girls will accept it to prove they are. The matching of the beliefs can reinforce the behaviors, until the habit becomes overwhelming. On the other hand, love myths seem to facilitate girls' acceptance, especially of the controlling behaviors which are understood as proofs of love or an opportunity to make a boy feel jealous. Love myths and jealousy (understood as a positive sign) have been identified as a risk factor of IPV that especially affect women and girls (Bosch et al. 2008). Finally, gender traits and roles seem to affect the configuration of boys' and girls' beliefs and their complementariness, especially regarding the devaluing behaviors. For example, girls accept the behaviors in order to fight for the relationship, to satisfy boys' tastes, to prevent boys from having a hard time, and to make boys more reliant. By contrast, boys perform the behaviors to find out whether their girlfriends flirt with anyone, to encourage girls to pay them more attention, to show who is in charge in the relationship or to make girls change those things that they do not like about them. Girls' positive behavioral outcomes are in general terms more affective, linked to the responsibility of making the relationship work and taking care of others (Galliher et al. 2004) whereas boys' beliefs are more instrumental and aimed at controlling the girl in order to achieve personal benefits (Lagarde 2000). A mixed-method study showed how adolescent boys and girls still hold masculinity and femininity ideologies which work in tandem in reproducing inequitable gender relationships (Tolman et al. 2016).

The beliefs identified also seem to reflect internal mechanisms that could be behind subtle coercive control. On the one hand, exerting coercive control implies expectations of compliance which are reflected in those beliefs that, for instance, express boys' expectations of changes in girls or the desire that girls be aware of the lower status they occupy in the relationship. These expectations give rise to the use of coercive power as a resource that will be selected by an agent after assessing the costs and benefits of using it (Raven 2008). In line with this idea, the RAA's authors state that only if a person's perceived positive outcomes outweigh the negative ones, will they have a better attitude towards performing the behavior and thus a greater intention to perform it. Thus, boys' positive behavioral beliefs might be some of the reasons for opting for coercive power. Also, exerting coercive control implies using forms of persuasion and control which are reflected in those beliefs that express love, concern or wanting to be together and that could be used by boys when their girlfriends question their behaviors (Lehmann and Pillai 2012). On the other hand, according to Dutton and Goodman (2005), coercive control implies processes (e. g. tactics) and outcomes (compliance or resistance) that are important to identify for practitioners and researchers. In this sense, boys may activate girls' positive behavioral beliefs of accepting the behaviors by using the forms of persuasion mentioned above (process), which is a way of increasing the chances of compliance and decreasing the chances of resistance (outcomes). For this to happen, girls' resistance to influence must be low because of personal factors such as having feelings towards the agent of influence (Raven 2008), which matches with the findings of Arriaga et al. (2016) that suggest that being in a relationship raises peoples tolerance threshold to aggressive behaviors. Also, girls' perceived rewards (e.g. to feel more loved) could be behind the acceptance of the coercive behaviors (Dutton and Goodman 2005). Overall, the beliefs identified seem clearly to set out the path to more intensive forms of coercive control.

Regarding normative beliefs, friends and parents appear as the most important prescriptive and descriptive referents in all behaviors, although in different ways. Boys are surrounded by almost as many peer supporters and performers (friends and classmates) as non-supporters and non-performers. Therefore, as has been shown in other studies (Taylor et al. 2015), peers seem to be a possible risk factor for boys. For girls, their social environment does not seem as "toxic", since most have more friends that would not prescribe the acceptance of the behaviors and that do not accept them than friends that do. However, it should be noted that the number of female friends that would support or accept the behaviors is not negligible. Only classmates appear as negative referents that accept three of the behaviors. It is possible that in an abusive relationship these referents acquire major relevance. More research is needed to clarify the influence of social norms in girls' acceptance of the behaviors.

By contrast, and contrary to our hypotheses, parents act as a protective factor for boys and girls in all four behaviors. As indicated in a macro survey (GDGV (Government Delegation for Gender based Violence) 2015), this points to a generational change in tolerance towards these behaviors in Spain. Thus, it could be interesting for schools to encourage parents to address abusive behaviors with their children and to explain the disadvantages of performing and accepting these behaviors.

Regarding the applicability of the RAA to the prediction of the performance and acceptance of the behaviors, the results of the multiple regression analysis suggest that the model is adequate as hypothesized. Its constructs are significant predictors of intention and behavior and accounted for percentages of explained variance in both cases higher than in other studies

reviewed in the Armitage and Conner's meta-analysis (2001). In this first approach, social norms seem a more important predictor of boys' intentions to perform the behaviors whereas for girls, attitudes seem to weigh more, except for the acceptance of the devaluing behavior 2. If these results are confirmed in further prospective studies, prevention programs should work separately with boys and girls, and target specific behaviors instead of IPV as a whole. To the best of our knowledge, at least in Spain, prevention programs are applied to boys and girls together, intervening with both on the same variables (see Casas 2013).

Limitations of the Study

Firstly, since we focused on a school population, the results cannot be extrapolated to adolescents that do not attend school, but at least in Spain, this latter group is extremely small. Secondly, it is necessary to carry out a prospective study with a larger sample (second phase of our research) to: (1) identify the constructs' predictive power, (2) obtain larger data of young people all currently in a relationship, overcoming the temporal constraints of recollecting data regarding the performance/acceptance of the behaviors from different time frames (current against past relationship), and (3) obtain normative data with which to compare the results obtained in the different measures. Thirdly, testing the scales and the study hypothesis in the same study can be problematic. However, we followed the RAA authors' recommendation, and in our case, the scales showed good reliability. Fourthly, the social desirability effect might have affected the answers of the participants who may have under-reported the intention to perform and accept the behaviors, and their performance and acceptance in the past. Therefore, the relationship between constructs may be stronger than those found. Fifthly, the results are limited to heterosexual couples and to IPV against girls and cannot be extrapolated to homosexual couples or to female to male aggressions. Also, the analysis of beliefs according to participants' background is pending.

Research and Practical Implications

The applicability of the RAA has been corroborated in the context of predicting IPV against girls and has allowed us to identify the beliefs that explain the performance and acceptance of the behaviors, in other words, program intervention targets. The findings also point to several factors to be considered in the design of prevention programs: (1) Intervention should be conducted separately with boys and girls since the behavioral beliefs concerning boys' performance and girls' acceptance of the abusive behaviors are different, (2) it is important to overcome the confusion that adolescents have regarding these behaviors (since they perceive opposite outcomes and referents) by enhancing the relevance of the negative consequences and positive referents, (3) by increasing the relevance of the negative outcomes of performing and accepting coercive behaviors and decreasing the relevance of positive ones, we may disrupt the processes that are behind subtle coercive controlling behaviors and reduce their use and chances to evolve into more explicit coercive control, and (4) prevention programs should target parents to promote their assistance in the discouragement of these behaviors.

Future lines of research should test the relationship between constructs with a larger sample in order to identify the behavioral determinants of prospectively performing and accepting these behaviors, and analyze the weight or relevance of each of the beliefs in the prediction of the performance and acceptance of the behaviors. This would help to improve the efficiency of prevention programs and awareness campaigns by targeting only the main predictors of behaviors and key beliefs.

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Annex 1. Sample Questionnaire

Attitude scale

To me, checking my girl's mobile, emails or social networks is:

Item 1	Romantic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Non- romantic
Item 2	Unnecessary	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Necessary
Item 3	Funny	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Boring
Item 4	Dry	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Tender
Item 5	Good	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Bad
Item 6	Useless	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Useful
Item 7	Beneficial	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Harmful
Item 8	Stressing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Relaxing
Item 9	Passionate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Cold
Item 10	Unpleasant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Pleasant
Item 11	Intelligent	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Stupid
Item 12	Oppressive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Protective

Perceived Social Norm Scale

- Prescriptive scale

Item 1: Most people that are important to me think I should check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks:

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Item 2: It is expected of me that I check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks:

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Item 3: Most people that are important to me support the fact that I check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks:

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

- Descriptive scale

Item 1: Most men check on their girl's mobile, emails or social networks:

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Item 2: Most boys in the same situation as me, check on their girl's mobile, emails or social networks:

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Item 3: Most boys like me check on their girl's mobile, emails or social networks:

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

- Intention scale

Item 1: I intend to check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks.

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Item2: I expect to check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks.

Definitely yes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Definitely no

Item 3: I will check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks.

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Item 4: I plan to check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks.

Absolutely false 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Absolutely true

Item 5: How frequently do you intend to check on my girl's mobile, emails or social networks:

Never 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Always

- Past behavior scale

Item 1: Have you checked on your girl's mobile, emails or social networks:

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Item 2: How often have you checked on your girl's mobile, emails or social networks.

Always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never

Annex 2. Descriptive of items and reliability of the scales

Table 6 Descriptive and internal consistency analysis of boys' and girls' scales for controlling behavior 1

	BOYS				GIRLS			
	M	*SD*	*r I-T*	α	*M*	*SD*	*r I-T*	α
Attitude	2.78	1.07		.88	2.75	1.78		.92
Item1	2.12	1.50	.46	.91	2.15	1.50	.54	.91
Item 2	2.48	2.57	.63	.90	1.85	1.27	.81	.90
Item 3	2.94	1.34	.46	.91	2.63	1.58	.56	.91
Item 4	2.42	1.34	.46	.90	2.98	1.39	.59	.91
Item 5	2.62	1.65	.72	.90	2.65	1.52	.78	.90
Item 6	3.40	2.01	.54	.90	2.17	1.56	.71	.91
Item 7	2.81	1.60	.69	.89	2.34	1.46	.68	.91
Item 8	2.79	1.41	.39	.91	1.98	1.24	.75	.91
Item 9	2.96	1.52	.73	.91	3.17	1.43	.66	.91
Item 10	2.50	1.30	.76	.90	2.28	1.38	.78	.90
Item 11	3.40	2.07	.65	.90	2.42	1.59	.72	.91
Item 12	2.75	1.87	.67	.91	3.18	2.10	.57	.92
Social norm	3.15	1.17		.81	2.81	1.06		.75
Injunctive								
Item 1	2.31	1.32	.59	.70	1.68	1.30	.39	.74
Item 2	2.30	1.56	.42	.64	2.20	1.60	.46	.73
Item 3	2.22	1.53	.44	.73	1.94	1.37	.45	.73
Descriptive								
Item 1	4.50	1.77	.66	.55	3.38	1.70	.50	.72
Item 2	4.41	2.02	.64	.62	4.22	1.65	.60	.69
Item 3	4.17	2.11	.72	.60	3.49	1.79	.55	.70
Intention	2.48	1.37		.89	2.05	1.27		.93
Item 1	3.12	1.74	.65	.84	1.94	1.29	.81	.92
Item 2	2.44	1.65	.81	.79	1.92	1.31	.84	.91
Item 3	2.29	1.64	.83	.81	1.95	1.44	.85	.91
Item 4	2.31	1.65	.63	.79	2.09	1.44	.78	.93
Item 5	2.23	1.42	.75	.77	2.20	1.53	.85	.91
Past Behavior [a]	2.54	1.72		.91	2.22	1.47		.89
Item 1	2.75	1.93	–	–	2.78	2.03	–	–
Item 2	2.33	1.65	–	–	2.72	1.70	–	–

r I-T = Correlation item-total corrected; [a] = This variable was calculated with responses of boys and girls who currently had a partner or had one before (boys $n = 40$ and girls $n = 46$)

Table 7 Descriptive and internal consistency analysis of boys' and girls' scales for controlling behavior 2

	BOYS				GIRLS			
	M	*SD*	*r I-T*	α	*M*	*SD*	*r I-T*	α
Attitude	3.41	1.13		.89	3.20	1.27		.94
Item1	3.62	1.74	.46	.88	3.43	1.87	.65	.93
Item 2	2.66	1.55	.74	.88	2.57	1.53	.59	.93
Item 3	3.49	1.54	.46	.89	3.23	1.47	.66	.93
Item 4	4.40	1.71	.64	.88	4.04	2.00	.80	.93
Item 5	3.30	1.70	.67	.87	3.31	1.75	.85	.93
Item 6	3.11	1.56	.66	.89	2.71	1.51	.78	.93
Item 7	3.26	1.63	.74	.88	3.13	1.62	.77	.93
Item 8	3.47	1.58	.68	.88	2.41	1.18	.55	.94
Item 9	4.11	1.70	.68	.88	4.17	1.59	.77	.93
Item 10	3.47	1.50	.56	.87	3.34	1.63	.84	.93
Item 11	2.94	1.68	.68	.88	2.89	1.52	.79	.93
Item 12	3.36	2.07	.56	.88	3.27	1.93	.66	.93
Social norm	3.05	0.97		.64	2.55	0.94		.56
Injunctive								
Item 1	2.60	1.37	**.15**	.66	1.88	1.30	**.20**	.56
Item 2	2.75	1.76	.47	.57	2.42	1.69	.36	.49
Item 3	2.47	1.43	.44	.59	1.87	1.46	**.16**	.57
Descriptive								
Item 1	3.25	1.55	.50	.56	3.00	1.74	.29	.52
Item 2	3.66	1.50	.43	.56	3.67	1.74	.49	.42
Item 3	3.36	1.72	.34	.61	3.25	1.74	.27	.51
Intention	2.15	1.01		.82	2.13	1.06		.81
Item 1	2.57	1.31	.49	.82	2.46	1.51	.45	.82
Item 2	2.31	1.50	.67	.77	2.09	1.54	.65	.75
Item 3	1.91	1.23	.58	.80	1.83	1.19	.67	.76
Item 4	1.91	1.33	.77	.74	2.00	1.31	.67	.75
Item 5	2.09	1.18	.60	.79	2.30	1.42	.58	.78
Past Behavior [a]	2.16	1.36		.59	1.86	1.41		.79
Item 1	2.36	1.72	–	–	1.79	1.45	–	–
Item 2	1.97	1.49	–	–	1.94	1.64	–	–

r I-T = Correlation item-total corrected; [a] This variable was calculated with responses of boys and girls who currently had a partner or had one before (boys $n = 39$ and girls $n = 48$);**bold** = results were not significant

Table 8 Descriptive and internal consistency analysis of boys' and girls' scales for devaluing behavior 1

	BOYS				GIRLS			
	M	*SD*	*r I-T*	α	*M*	*SD*	*r I-T*	α
Attitude	2.28	1.21		.91	1.85	0.87		.89
Item1	1.46	0.99	.68	.91	1.51	1.17	.62	.88
Item 2	2.23	1.65	.60	.90	1.81	1.43	.70	.88
Item 3	2.81	2.00	.56	.91	2.24	1.46	.66	.88
Item 4	1.90	1.41	.70	.90	1.78	1.27	.61	.88
Item 5	2.38	1.85	.76	.90	1.81	1.34	.63	.88
Item 6	2.38	1.83	.72	.90	1.78	1.30	.63	.88
Item 7	2.27	1.52	.86	.89	1.96	1.31	.61	.88
Item 8	2.35	1.46	.43	.91	1.85	1.17	.48	.89
Item 9	2.08	1.48	.65	.91	1.87	1.21	.57	.88
Item 10	1.77	1.07	.79	.90	1.63	1.08	.45	.89
Item 11	2.19	1.64	.82	.90	1.60	1.11	.74	.88
Item 12	2.83	1.85	.61	.91	2.45	1.55	.56	.89
Social norm	2.78	1.04		.69	2.15	0.83		.66
Injunctive								
Item 1	1.87	1.21	.21	.70	1.46	1.06	.19	.67
Item 2	2.02	1.53	.46	.64	1.99	1.46	.19	.68
Item 3	2.21	1.62	.14	.73	1.72	1.20	.27	.65
Descriptive								
Item 1	3.89	2.01	.66	.55	2.55	1.61	.46	.59
Item 2	3.96	1.85	.50	.62	3.03	1.67	.58	.53
Item 3	3.08	1.75	.55	.60	2.72	1.68	.62	.51
Intention	2.05	1.07		.83	1.75	0.87		.80
Item	2.08	1.59	.53	.84	1.97	1.31	.37	.84
Item 2	2.08	1.49	.65	.79	1.60	1.04	.57	.77
Item 3	1.83	1.13	.59	.81	1.57	1.06	.74	.72
Item 4	1.85	1.28	.68	.79	1.78	1.33	.73	.72
Item 5	2.31	1.30	.76	.77	1.85	1.00	.61	.76
Past Behaviour [a]	2.11	1.20		.67	1.94	1.19		.89
Item 1	2.03	1.55	–	–	1.71	1.41	–	–
Item 2	2.05	1.46	–	–	1.96	1.25	–	–

r I-T = Correlation item-total corrected; [a] This variable was calculated with responses of boys and girls who currently had a partner or had one before (boys $n = 38$ and girls $n = 48$)

Table 9 Descriptive and internal consistency analysis of boys' and girls' scales for devaluing behavior 2

	BOYS				GIRLS			
	M	*SD*	*r I-T*	α	*M*	*SD*	*r I-T*	α
Attitude	2.38	1.15		.94	1.88	0.88		.91
Item1	3.43	1.87	.65	.93	1.47	0.87	.67	.90
Item 2	2.57	1.53	.59	.93	1.59	0.08	.70	.90
Item 3	3.23	1.47	.66	.93	2.41	1.48	.60	.91
Item 4	4.04	2.00	.80	.93	2.16	1.47	.62	.91
Item 5	3.31	1.75	.85	.93	1.86	1.00	.77	.90
Item 6	2.71	1.51	.78	.93	2.06	1.52	.64	.91
Item 7	3.13	1.62	.77	.93	2.05	1.43	.70	.90
Item 8	2.41	1.18	.55	.94	1.69	0.99	.61	.91
Item 9	4.17	1.59	.77	.93	2.13	1.26	.67	.90
Item 10	3.34	1.63	.84	.93	1.64	0.88	.76	.90
Item 11	2.89	1.52	.79	.93	1.81	1.13	.69	.90
Item 12	3.27	1.93	.66	.93	2.08	1.26	.64	.90
Social norm	3.06	1.15		.56	2.60	0.84		.68
Injunctive								
Item 1	1.88	1.30	**.20**	.56	1.48	0.92	**.18**	.70
Item 2	2.42	1.69	.36	.49	1.92	1.43	.34	.66
Item 3	1.87	1.46	**.16**	.57	1.71	1.05	.25	.68
Descriptive								
Item 1	3.00	1.74	.29	.52	3.83	1.72	.51	.60
Item 2	3.67	1.74	.49	.42	4.02	1.58	.57	.58
Item 3	3.25	1.74	.27	.51	3.62	1.73	.58	.57
Intention	1.76	0.93		.81	1.70	0.86		.79
Item 1	2.46	1.51	.45	.82	1.85	1.30	.44	.80
Item 2	2.09	1.54	.65	.75	1.66	1.07	.68	.72
Item 3	1.83	1.19	.67	.76	1.66	1.17	.65	.72
Item 4	2.00	1.31	.67	.75	1.55	1.18	.45	.79
Item 5	2.30	1.42	.58	.78	1.75	1.06	.68	.72
Past Behavior[a]	1.95	1.46		.79	1.74	1.16		.84
Item 1	1.79	1.45	–	–	1.72	1.32	–	–
Item 2	1.94	1.64	–	–	1.76	1.15	–	–

r I-T = Correlation item-total corrected; [a] This variable was calculated with responses of boys and girls who currently had a partner or had one before (boys $n = 43$ and girls $n = 46$); **bold** = results were not significant

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