

Personality, Jealousy, and Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

There is little research examining the relationship between personality and jealousy in the desire for a romantic relationship. Previous research has examined how the Big Five personalities of extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism create and construct relationships (Asselmann, & Specht, 2020). The current study examines how extraversion and neuroticism affects the desire for a relationship with jealousy being a mediator and if it increases the desire. We found that jealousy explained the relationship between neuroticism and the desire for a romantic relationship. These findings help us to understand what can increase or decrease the desire for a romantic relationship in people. However, jealousy did not explain the relationship between extraversion and the desire for a romantic relationship. Future research should look to provide participants with a list of profiles that include different personalities to see which personality is the most attractive to the general population.

Keywords: Extraversion, neuroticism, jealousy, romantic relationships, desire

Personality, Jealousy, and Romantic Relationships

“Surrounded by the flames of jealousy, the jealous one winds up, like the scorpion, turning the poisoned sting against himself.” – Friedrich Nietzsche.

Jealousy can cause relationships to suffer leading to the relationship ending or worse leading to homicide. Jealousy is the result of a real or perceived danger of losing the romantic partner they have or are pursuing (De Cristofaro et al., 2023). It has often been seen as the person who experiences jealousy to have insecurity, self-doubt, and lacks self-confidence. A person often wants a social relationship since it is a basic need of humans and leads to a higher well-being, better health, and longevity (Asselmann, & Specht, 2020). Often the social relationship chosen is a romantic relationship. Depending on the person's personality it can lead to how they select, create, and construct their romantic relationships (Asselmann, & Specht, 2020). It has been studied preciously how the Big Five personalities which are neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness can impact jealousy (Richter et al., 2022). However, it remains unknown whether the person's personality and jealousy impacts the desire for a relationship. Most studies look at attachment styles, mindfulness, personality, and jealousy separately impact the desire for relationships. The purpose of this study is to examine how extraversion and neuroticism relate to the desire for relationships when jealousy is involved in a mediating role.

Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Jealousy in Romantic Relationships

Research tends to examine jealousy as one construct, but it is more accurately conceptualized as three subtypes (De Cristofaro et al., 2023). There is cognitive jealousy which is thoughts and suspicions that a person may have, emotional jealousy which is having negative feelings toward a relationship, and behavioral jealousy which is when actions are taken to protect a relationship (De Cristofaro et al., 2023). People who have mindfulness and higher self-esteem can lead to lower levels of romantic jealousy (De Cristofaro et al., 2023). Mindfulness is important because that means a person is aware of their experiences and accepts them. Self-

esteem is also important due to jealousy happening because of the person wanting to preserve their self-esteem. Both mindfulness and self-esteem can affect cognitive and behavioral jealousy negatively but not affect emotional jealousy (De Cristofaro et al.,2023). Regarding relationships, mindful people are seen to be more satisfied in relationships due to lower levels of cognitive and behavioral jealousy (De Cristofaro et al., 2023). There is little to no research that has been done to study the different types of jealousy regarding a desire for a relationship. Through our research, we want to examine if jealousy can lower the desire for a relationship for a person.

Romantic Relationship Events and the Big Five Personality Traits

Personality can influence thinking and behavior in romantic relationships. The Big Five personalities are extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. These personality traits lead to how a person will select, create, and construct their relationships (Asselmann, & Specht, 2020). In one study, less agreeable individuals were more likely to move in with a partner, get married, separate, and get a divorce because they end up less satisfied in the relationship. Openness was found to change during the first year of the relationship events and had less neuroticism in the following years. Gender also played a role with women and men having differences in how they deal with relationship changes and challenges (Asselmann, & Specht, 2020). There is little to no research on how different types of jealousy and the Big Five personality traits impact important romantic relationship events throughout life. Our research examines how the Big Five personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism impact the desire for a relationship for a person and if those who are more extroverted tend to desire a relationship more.

Jealousy and the Big Five Personality Traits

The Big Five have been known to play a role in romantic relationship satisfaction with low neuroticism being the biggest predictor of high relationship satisfaction (Richter et al., 2022). Neuroticism has been shown to relate to jealousy as well with people who have higher levels of

neuroticism having more levels of jealousy. However, the other Big Five traits do not seem to affect jealousy in the little research that has been done on both jealousy and the Big Five traits (Richter et al., 2022). More studies have been done on adult attachment and the effects it has on romantic relationships. The Big Five personality traits and attachment are seen as predictors of jealousy with gender, relationship status, and infidelity as the moderators (Richter et al., 2022). A positive correlation was found with jealousy and neuroticism with the other Big Five traits being small and negative (Richter et al., 2022). Neuroticism was also found to be correlated negatively with the desire to be close to another person and positively with anxiety they may experience. Higher levels of jealousy were predicted with low levels of agreeableness and attachment styles dealing with dependence and anxiety (Richter et al., 2022). Few studies examine the types of jealousy with the Big Five to determine if it affects the desire for a relationship. The studies would have to be longitudinal to study the long-term effects on a relationship as well. Our study examines how neuroticism affects the desire for a relationship with jealousy being a mediator and if it decreases the desire.

Method

The current study utilized a correlational design to measure the relationship between personality, jealousy levels, and the desire for a relationship. We hypothesized that extraverts are more likely to desire a relationship and it increases with jealousy. Higher levels of neuroticism will lead to a higher level of emotional jealousy, and higher levels of emotional jealousy will lead to a lower for a relationship. We also hypothesized the relation of the Big Five personality traits will be increased with jealousy leading to a higher desire for a relationship.

Participants

We recruited a convenience sample of university student participants ($N = 121$) via the Sona system at a mid-sized southwestern university. Participants who completed the study received one research credit applied to the course of their choosing. The research design did not necessitate criteria for participant inclusion or exclusion.

The mean age of our sample was 20.2 years ($SD = 3.17$ years). The sample consisted of 93 women (76.9%), 25 men (20.7%), and 3 nonbinary/third gender (2.5%) participants. Most participants were Caucasian ($n = 55$; 45.5%) followed by Hispanic ($n = 50$; 41.3%), Black ($n = 10$; 8.3%), Asian ($n = 4$; 3.3%), Native American/Alaskan Native ($n = 1$; 0.8%), and Other ($n = 1$; 0.8%).

Big Five Personality Measure

The Big Five personality scale (BFI-10) measures the participants personality regarding extraversion, openness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness (Rammstedt & John, 2007). Participants responded to a 5-item scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly) indicating to what extent they feel the trait to pertain to their personality. For example, items will include “I see myself as someone who is reserved” and “I see myself as someone who is generally trusting.”

Multidimensional Jealousy Measure

The multidimensional jealousy scale measures the participants cognitive, behavioral, and emotional jealousy levels (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989). Participants will respond to 7 items on a scale from 1 (never/very pleased) to 7 (all the time/very upset) indicating to what extent they feel jealousy based on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. For example, items include “I suspect that X may be attracted to someone else” and “I question X about his or her whereabouts.”

Relationships Measure

The Relationship scales questionnaire measures the participants desire for a romantic relationship (Siegert, Ward, & Hudson, 1995). Participants will respond to 5 items on a scale from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (always like me) indicating to what extent they desire in a relationship. For example, items include “I find it easy to get emotionally close to others” and “I worry about being alone.”

Demographics Measure

Lastly after answering the scales above, participants indicated their gender, age, race, sexual orientation, relationship status, and religious affiliations. Responses for gender items included *male*, *female*, and *nonbinary*. Then they were asked to input their age in number only. Responses for race included *Caucasian*, *black*, *Hispanic*, *American Indian/Alaskan Native*, *Asian*, *Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander*, and *other*. Participants that answered other could specify their race in an open text box. Participants would then indicate their sexual orientation which included *Heterosexual*, *Homosexual*, *bisexual*, *other*, and *prefer not to say*. Participants that answered other could specify their race in an open text box. Participants would then answer their relationship status which included *single*, *in a relationship*, *married*, and *other*. Participants that answered other could specify their race in an open text box. Finally, participants were to answer what their religious affiliation which included *Christian*, *Jewish*, *Muslim*, *Buddhist*, *Hindu*, *other*, and *none*. Participants that answered other could specify their race in an open text box.

Procedure

Participants used the Sona system to enroll in an online study titled "Personality, Jealousy, and Romantic Relationships." Once enrolled, the participants clicked on a link to the study and agreed to an informed consent document. Upon agreeing to proceed, the participant will respond to the measure/manipulation of BFI-10 personality, presence of jealousy measure, and desire for romantic relationships. Finally, the participant will respond to the demographic questionnaire. Participants will then read a debriefing statement and returned to the Sona system to receive their research credit.

Results

The Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation approach was used to test these four linear regression models. The mean for extraversion scores was 2.91/7 with a standard deviation of 1.08. The mean of neuroticism is 2.83/7 with a standard deviation of 1.33. The mean of jealousy scores was 3.18/7 with a standard deviation of 0.642. The desire for a relationship scores had a mean of 2.95 and a standard deviation of 0.454. Below, we detail the results of our analysis with

extraversion as the predictor variable (Figure 1) and neuroticism as the predictor variable (Figure 2). We also report the results of a supplemental analysis examining the relationship between extraversion and behavioral jealousy, specifically.

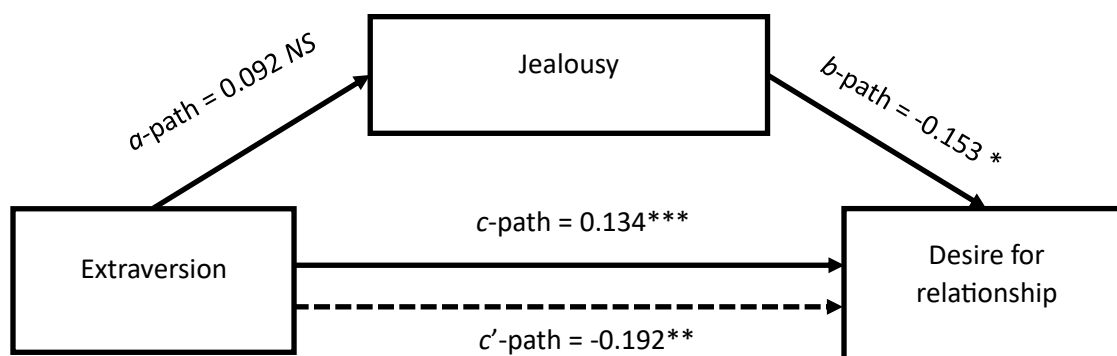
Extraversion

Results of model 1 supported the first hypothesis that extraversion was positively associated with desire for a relationship (c-path). A one-unit increase in extraversion was associated with a 0.134-unit increase in the desire for a romantic relationship ($b = 0.134, p < .001$).

Results of model 2 did not support the second hypothesis that extraversion would be negatively associated with jealousy (a-path). A one-unit increase in extraversion was associated with a 0.0921-unit increase in jealousy, and this relationship did not reach statistical significance ($b = 0.0921, p = .09$).

Results of model 3 supported the third hypothesis that jealousy would be negatively associated with desire for a relationship (b-path). A one-unit increase in jealousy was associated with a 0.153-unit decrease in the desire for a relationship ($b = -0.153, p = .017$).

Results of model 4 did not support the fourth hypothesis that jealousy would explain the relationship between extraversion and the desire for a relationship. Findings did not support the fourth hypothesis because after controlling for jealousy, the direct effect of extraversion on desire for a relationship remained significant ($p < .01$). Together, extraversion and jealousy explained 17.4% of the variance (R^2) in the desire for a relationship.

Figure 1 – Extraversion Model**Neuroticism**

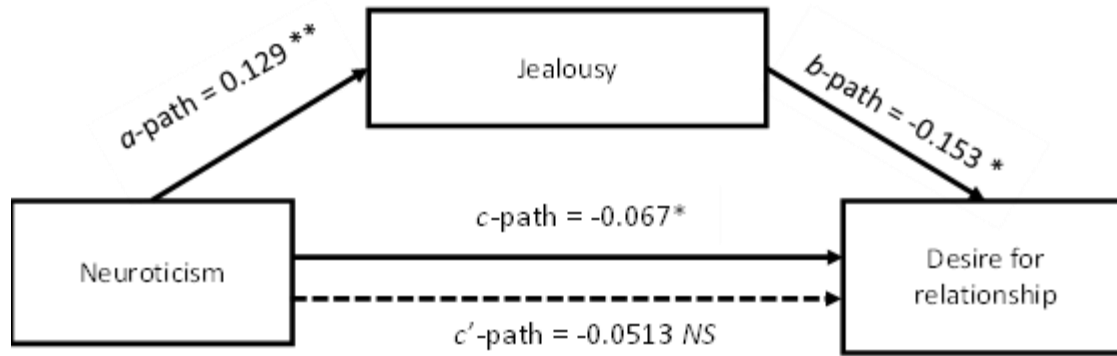
Results of model 1 supported the first hypothesis that neuroticism would be negatively associated with desire for a relationship (c-path). A one-unit increase in neuroticism was associated with a 0.0674-unit decrease in the desire for a romantic relationship ($b = -0.0674$, $p = .03$).

Results of model 2 supported the second hypothesis that neuroticism would be positively associated with jealousy (a-path). A one-unit increase in neuroticism was associated with a 0.129-unit increase in jealousy ($b = 0.129$, $p = .003$).

Results of model 3 supported the third hypothesis that jealousy would be negatively associated with desire for a relationship (b-path). A one-unit increase in jealousy was associated with a 0.153-unit decrease in the desire for a relationship ($b = -0.153$, $p = .017$).

Results of model 4 supported the fourth hypothesis that jealousy would explain the relationship between neuroticism and the desire for a romantic relationship. Findings supported the fourth hypothesis because after controlling for jealousy, the direct effect of neuroticism on the desire for a relationship became nonsignificant ($p > .05$). Together, neuroticism and jealousy explained 6.76% of the variance (R^2) in the desire for a relationship.

Figure 2 – Neuroticism Model



Supplementary Analysis

We ran an additional correlation to examine if extraversion increases behavioral jealousy and found it to be marginally significant. A one-unit increase in extraversion was associated with a 0.139-unit increase in behavioral jealousy ($b = 0.139$, $p > 0.056$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study examines how extraversion and neuroticism affects the desire for a relationship with jealousy being a mediator and if it increases the desire. We did find that jealousy explained the relationship between neuroticism and the desire for a romantic relationship. Extraverts and lower neuroticism were more likely to desire a romantic relationship. We also found that neuroticism is more likely to lead to higher levels of jealousy, and that jealousy would lower the desire for a relationship. Jealousy did not explain the relationship between extraversion and the desire for a romantic relationship. Extraversion did not lead to a higher level of jealousy where not supported by the results. These implications show how neuroticism and extraversion can impact a romantic relationship.

The study shows how jealousy explained the relationship between neuroticism and the desire for a romantic relationship. Previous research has found neuroticism to be correlated negatively with the desire to be close to another person (Richter et al., 2022). Researchers and practitioners could reduce jealousy among those high in neuroticism to help facilitate their relationship outcomes by being mindful and increasing your self-esteem. Moreover, previous

research has found that mindfulness and a higher self-esteem can lower levels of romantic jealousy (De Cristofaro et al., 2023).

This study shows how neuroticism and extraversion can impact the desire for a relationship with jealousy as the mediator. Although jealousy did not explain the relationship between extraversion and the desire for a relationship. This can also be explained by prior research showing no relationship between extraversion and jealousy (Richter et al., 2022). Our research replicated previous findings of extraversion not leading to a higher level of jealousy (Richter et al., 2022).

In the supplementary analysis examining if extraversion increases behavioral jealousy, it was found to be marginally significant which expands on previous research looking at mindfulness and self-esteem with behavioral jealousy (De Cristofaro et al., 2023).

The present finding can be used to be direct reflections of the general population's desire for a romantic relationship with personality and jealousy can be used in a variety of ways. A psychologist can use this to help explain the desire for a relationship, counsel those in relationships or looking for one, and can use it to explain how a personality can impact the level of jealousy a person has. Civilians can use these findings to help them find who would have a higher desire for a relationship based on their personality. These findings could also help them know how the personality of a person can contribute to the relationship they have. It can also be used to see if they would be willing to have a short or long-term relationship.

Limitations

In our study, the Big Five personality scale (BFI-10) measure was found to be unreliable leading to only using one question for neuroticism and both questions for extraversion. Previous studies have found it reliable leading to our study not studying all the big five personalities which are extraversion, openness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness. It would have been best to use a full scale for the BFI-10 to get the most accurate results. We were not

confident that the one item used for neuroticism and the two items used for extraversion provided accurate results due to lack of time, but it does help to support prior research done.

In our study, we had participants from a mid-sized southwestern university due to the easy access to survey them. University student populations are younger, more educated, and disproportionately female compared to the population at large. However, research in this domain indicated that college students provide similar responses as community members (Bornstein et al., 2017). The race of our participants lacked diversity and mostly included Caucasians and Hispanics which could contribute to different results with other races because of their culture. However, the results would be representative of places where Caucasians and Hispanics are more common. The respondents could have also responded in socially desired responses due to the culture they are from. However, this research could be used to be representative of places with similar cultures. Jealousy has been found to contribute to romantic relationships in previous research leading to it being a common finding. However, not much research has looked at both personality and jealousy together and how it correlates with the desire for a relationship.

Future Directions

Future research should look to provide participants with a list of profiles that include different personalities and see which personality is the most attractive to the general population. It should also ask how they would react in situations where it can lead to jealousy to see if the personality a person has can lead to more jealousy. Future research should also look to use a more reliable scale for the Big Five Personalities or only test for one personality at a time. Future research could also look to see if the jealousy types which are cognitive, behavioral, and emotional could influence the desire for a relationship. Further research should see if the desire a person has for a relationship can impact the length of the relationship. Furthermore, research should look to examine attachment styles, mindfulness, and attractiveness as a mediator to see if it can impact the desire for a romantic relationship.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study examines how extraversion and neuroticism affect the desire for a relationship with jealousy being a mediator and if it increases the desire. We found that jealousy explained the relationship between neuroticism and the desire for a romantic relationship. Psychologists would be able to use this study to help further understand the desire for a relationship and what increases it. The general population can use this study to help find who desires a relationship based on their personality. Our findings should help further research on personality, jealousy, and the desire for a relationship so that we can predict outcomes for people to better understand relationships.

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