

Summary

Romantic Relationships in the Shadow of Dependent Personality: Examining the Role of Dependent Personality Traits on Romantic Jealousy and Manipulation

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Individuals with dependent personality traits believe that others are more competent than themselves, that they are inadequate and helpless, and that they cannot sustain their lives without the attention and care they receive from others (Bornstein, 1998; Kozak, 2019). In this regard, maintaining romantic relationships and staying within the relationship becomes a highly important goal for individuals with dependent personality traits (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). It is known that these individuals, due to their anxieties about abandonment and their needs for attention, support, and approval, are often the accommodating party in romantic relationships, display passive and submissive behaviors toward their partners, and resort to various dysfunctional behaviors such as seeking approval/reassurance (Altun, 2021; Bornstein, 1995; Brauer & Reinecke, 2015; Joiner, 2000).

Manipulation in human relationships is multidimensional and may consist of different behavioral patterns such as distorting reality, imposing emotional pressure, inducing guilt, playing the victim role, or aggression and humiliation (Buss, 1992; Buss et al., 1987). Although it is emphasized that individuals with dependent personality traits use passive strategies in relationships, it is noted that these individuals may have high tendencies to display manipulative behaviors, including exhibiting aggressive attitudes in the face of any relationship threat (Bornstein, 2012; Disney, 2013; Murphy et al., 1994).

Romantic jealousy emerges in the presence of any imaginary or real other that may pose a threat to the relationship (Hart & Legerstee, 2013; Parker & Wampler, 2003). Romantic jealousy is classified as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral jealousy in the multidimensional

approach (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989). The limited number of studies examining the relationship between dependent personality traits and jealousy in romantic relationships reveal that dependent personality pattern significantly predicts romantic jealousy (Eren, 2023; Perles et al., 2016).

In the present study, it is aimed to examine the relationships among dependent personality traits, manipulation in romantic relationships, and romantic jealousy. No empirical study examining the relationship between manipulation in romantic relationships and dependent personality traits has been found in the literature. Although dependent personality traits are mostly examined through female samples (Barzega et al., 2001; Öztunç et al., 2015; Paggeot & Huprich, 2018), taking gender differences into account is important. In this context, the current study also examined whether dependent personality traits, manipulative behaviors, and romantic jealousy differ according to gender. In line with these aims, the hypotheses of the study are as follows: Dependent personality traits are expected to predict manipulative behaviors in romantic relationships and romantic jealousy. Dependent personality traits, manipulation in romantic relationships, and romantic jealousy levels are expected to show significant differences between genders.

Method

Power analysis was conducted using G*Power (version 3.1) program to determine the required sample size. Based on the calculation with medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), 95% confidence level ($\alpha = .05$), and 95% sta-

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tistical power criteria, it was determined that at least 107 participants were needed for the regression model. The sample of the study consisted of 308 participants between the ages of 18-50 ($M = 30.55$, $SD = 6.90$), who had been in a romantic relationship for at least 3 months and had no neurological and/or psychiatric disorder. Of the participants, 223 (72.4%) were female and 85 (27.6%) were male.

The Demographic Information Form was used to evaluate participants' information regarding age, gender, educational status, income level, place of residence, psychiatric/neurological diagnosis status, and romantic relationships (romantic relationship status, type, and duration).

The Personality Belief Questionnaire Short Turkish Form-Dependent Personality Subscale (PBQ-STF, Butler et al., 2007) was used to measure dependent personality traits. The Manipulation in Human Relations Scale (MHRS, Yılmaz, 2018) was used to measure emotional manipulation. The scale has 5 subdimensions: strategy, victim selection, self-concealment, aggressive manipulation, and emotional manipulation. The Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS, Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989) was used to measure cognitive, emotional, and behavioral jealousy.

Approval was obtained from the Başkent University Ethics Committee for this research (Ethics committee approval code: 17162298.600-277). Following ethical approval, the forms were prepared on an online platform and the study link was shared through social media and other communication channels. Volunteer participants completed the Demographic Information Form and three scales in random order; the data collection process took approximately 15 minutes.

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 29 software. Following univariate and multivariate normality analyses, data from 15 participants deemed inappropriate were removed. After demographic analyses, relationships between variables were examined through correlation analysis, and gender differences were examined through independent samples t-test. Finally, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the predictive effects of dependent personality traits and gender on manipulation in romantic relationships and romantic jealousy.

Results

The findings of Pearson Correlation Analysis indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between dependent personality traits and all subdimensions of manipulation ($p < .001$). Additionally, while significant positive relationships were found between

dependent personality traits and the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of jealousy ($p < .001$), no significant relationship was found with emotional jealousy. The results of independent samples t-test analysis conducted to examine whether dependent personality traits, manipulation in romantic relationships, and romantic jealousy variables differ between genders showed that men's cognitive jealousy levels ($M = 16.23$, $SD = 11.06$) were significantly higher compared to women ($M = 14.63$, $SD = 9.53$), $t(306) = -1.26$, $p = .044$. Additionally, men's victim selection manipulation levels ($M = 16.48$, $SD = 5.28$) were found to be significantly higher compared to women ($M = 14.95$, $SD = 4.31$), $t(306) = -2.61$, $p = .035$.

In hierarchical regression analyses for manipulation, gender (being male) explained 2% of variance in victim selection manipulation, with dependent personality traits adding 12% in the second step. Both were significant predictors in the final model ($R^2 = .12$). Gender did not predict other manipulation types, but dependent personality traits significantly predicted all manipulation variables, explaining 16% of total manipulation variance, 20% of emotional manipulation, 10% of self-concealment, 9% each of aggressive manipulation and strategy. For romantic jealousy, gender did not predict any jealousy dimensions in the first step. Dependent personality traits explained 16% of total jealousy variance and 21% of behavioral jealousy. For cognitive jealousy, both gender (being male) and dependent personality traits were significant predictors, with the final model explaining 10% of variance.

Discussion

The results reveal that dependent personality traits do not differ between genders; however, male participants showed higher victim selection manipulation and cognitive jealousy levels. Gender (being male) predicted victim selection manipulation and cognitive jealousy, while dependent personality traits predicted all manipulation types and cognitive and behavioral jealousy. The gender imbalance in our sample necessitates careful interpretation. Contrary to prevalent literature, no significant gender difference emerged in dependent personality traits. This may be explained by men expressing these traits covertly through manipulative behaviors due to patriarchal structures and social roles. Higher cognitive jealousy in men may relate to fear of partner loss and evolutionary fidelity tendencies (Buss et al., 1992; Hromatko et al., 2019).

This is the first known study examining the relationship between dependent personality traits and manipulation. The findings demonstrate that dependent personality significantly predicts all manipulation ty-

pes, showing this pattern extends beyond passive and submissive characteristics to include manipulative strategies in relational contexts. Literature indicates individuals with dependent personality exhibit dysfunctional behaviors due to fears of partner loss and approval deficiency (Altun, 2021; Bornstein, 2012; Brauer & Reinecke, 2015). These individuals may use manipulation to maintain relationships and protect emotional security. Additionally, dependent personality traits significantly predicted cognitive and behavioral jealousy, consistent with intense relationship maintenance efforts and suggesting perceived threats trigger active monitoring and controlling behaviors.

Main limitations include gender imbalance, cross-sectional design, and self-report measures. Future research should employ balanced samples, longitudinal designs, and diverse data collection methods. These findings illuminate how dependent personality traits influence relational dynamics, demonstrating that needs for love and approval may manifest through manipulative or jealous behaviors.