



Social Interest and Partner Violence in Romantic Relationships: The Mediating Role of Jealousy

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Abstract

This study has been conducted to analyse the mediating role of jealousy in the relationship between social interest and partner violence in romantic relationships. The research group consisted of 402 emerging adults who were reached by convenient sampling method, who had a romantic relationship and who were students of a state university in Turkey. The data were collected with “Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale, Intimate Partner Violence Attitude Scale- Revised form and Adlerian Social Interest Scale- Romantic Relationship Form. Mediation analysis showed that jealousy had a mediating role in the relationship between social interest and partner violence. Positive correlation was found between jealousy and partner violence, while social interest and jealousy and partner violence were found to be negatively correlated. As a result of Multivariate Hotelling T₂, the main effect of gender on social interest, partner violence and jealousy in romantic relationships scores were found to be significant. Men were found to have significantly higher jealousy and partner violence levels and lower social interest levels than women.

Keywords: Social interest; partner violence; jealousy; romantic relationship; emerging adult

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduce the problem

University years usually take place between the ages of 18 and 25, which corresponds to the time adolescence and adulthood, are called emerging adulthood and this is a period including both various opportunities and certain difficulties in fields related to work and love (Arnett, 2000). In this period, creating a stable life in areas such as career and starting

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a family is important and romantic relationships come to the forefront as a result of this (Arnett, 2015). Romantic relationships which cover a significant part of students' lives are associated with physical and mental development and they leave deep marks on individuals' lives. Jealousy, which is indispensable for romantic relationships, has been accepted as a very basic human emotion (Buss, 2000). Romantic jealousy, which is described as very strong and wearisome considering its effects on the lives of individuals (Aune & Comstock, 1991), is defined as the combination of complex thoughts, emotions and acts which threaten both individuals' self-esteem and the continuation or quality of the relationship (Guerrero, Trost, & Yoshimura, 2005; White, 1981). Romantic jealousy may be associated with the partner's perceiving someone with risk as a threat or with the threat of losing what they have and the possibility of the partner choosing someone better and the threat of losing reputation due to the existence of a real threat (Hansen, 1991; Nadler & Dotan, 1992).

The literature shows uncertainty about the determinants of romantic jealousy in a relationship. Behavioural characteristics of the partner, the individual's own characteristics of the dynamics of the relationship may be determinants in romantic jealousy (Elphinston, Feeney, Noller, Connor, & Fitzgeralds, 2013). Studies conducted in literature have reported romantic jealousy to be associated with insecure anxious attachment (Burchell & Ward, 2011; Costa, Sophia, Sanches, Tavares, & Zilberman, 2015; Miller, Denes, Diaz, & Buck, 2014; Retana & Sanchez, 2008), low self-esteem (DiBello, Rodriguez, Hadden, & Neighbors, 2015; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Stieger, Preyss, & Voracek, 2012), sexual orientation (Dijkstra, Barelds, & Groothof, 2013), the rival's characteristics (Massar & Buunk, 2016) and social network (Halpem, Katz, & Carril, 2017; Utz, Muscanell, & Khalid, 2015). In addition, while having been cheated on or left in previous relationships may be determinants in the emergence of jealousy (Bjorklund & Yunger, 2006; Mullen, 1995; Murphy, Vallacher, Shackelford, Tagler, 2010; Zengel, Edlund, & Sagarin, 2013), it seems that the presence of an individual's need to feel strength and desirability may trigger romantic jealousy (Blévis & Heal, 2009). Similar inconsistent findings also exist between romantic jealousy and gender. While romantic jealousy was not found to differ in terms of gender in some studies (Burchell & Ward, 2011; Güçlü, Şenormancı, Şenormancı, & Köktürk, 2017); some studies show that romantic jealousy differs in terms of the variable of gender (Buss, 2018; Buunk vd., 2011; Zandbergen & Brown, 2015). There are also studies which show that men may experience more jealousy with sexual infidelity, while women may experience more jealousy with emotional infidelity (Bendixen, Kennair, & Buss, 2015; Buss et al., 1999; Cramer, Abraham, Johnson, & Manning-Ryan, 2001).

Romantic jealousy may create a risk factor for partner violence by having a negative effect on the existing communication patterns among couples. This is because studies conducted have shown acute and chronic jealousy to be significantly associated with partner violence and aggression (Collibee & Furman, 2016; Echeburúa & Amor, 2016; Kar

& O'Leary, 2013) and that romantic jealousy is the factor that causes partner violence most (Adelman & Kil, 2007; Foshee, Bauman, Linder, Rice, & Wilcher, 2007; Lavoie, Robitaille, & Hebert, 2000; Sears, Byers, Whelan, Saint- Pierre, & The Dating Violence Research Team, 2006).

Partner violence encompasses various behavioural patterns which show an attempt for controlling, dominating or hurting a partner psychologically, physically or sexually (Lewis & Fremouw, 2001). Although risks for partner violence occur in childhood and adolescence (Fernández-González, Calvete, & Orue, 2017), it is generally seen frequently between the ages of 12 and 25 (Dikmen, Özaydın, & Yılmaz, 2018; Ehrensoft, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2004; Sjödin, Wallinius, Billstedt, Hofvanderb, & Nilsson, 2017).

The literature shows inconsistent findings in terms of the variable of gender. While victims of partner violence have been shown as mostly women in some studies (Coker, Smith, Bethea, Remsburg, & McKeown, 2000; Landfield, 2006; Marquart, Nannini, & Edward, 2007), few studies have shown that men are victims of partner violence more (Chen & White, 2004; Foshee, 1996; Williams, Ghandour, & Kub, 2008). There are also studies in literature which show that men and women are equally affected by partner violence (Foshee, 1996; Hammock & O'Heam, 2002; Holtzworth-Munroe, 2005; Howard & Wang, 2003; Miller & White, 2003).

Studies in literature show that determinants of partner violence among adolescents and adults are associated with drug use (Rhodes et al., 2009; Schneider, Burnette, Ilgen, & Timko, 2009), hostility (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015; Leen et al., 2013), depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Reingle, Jennings, Connell, Businelle, & Chartier, 2014). Studies have also shown that the most common factors for the motivation underlying the basis of partner violence were power/control, anger, communication difficult, jealousy and the wish to retaliate for both women and men (Elmqvist et al., 2016; Langhinrichsen-Rohling & McCullars & Misra, 2012; Leisring, 2013).

It can be seen that the aforementioned studies emphasize the risk factors of partner violence. It is thought that knowing the variables which mediate the emergence of partner violence during university years in which romantic relationships are important is important in terms of preventing partner violence. For example, early life experiences observed during the socialization process and modeled with partners in later romantic relationships (Chen & White, 2004; McCloskey & Lichter, 2003; Wolf & Foshee, 2003) suggest that social interest effects romantic jealousy and partner violence.

Social interest, a concept introduced by Adler, is a very important indicator of being healthy, in other words, being normal (Ansbacher, 1991) and it is defined as individuals' identifying with the whole society and with the whole, starting with the self (Adler, 2002). It is a very broad concept that includes the concepts of belonging, loyalty, friendship, kindness, empathy, sympathy, tolerance, unconditional acceptance and cooperation

(Bubenzer, Zarski, & Walter, 1991; Kalkan, 2009; Legget, Roberts-Pittman, Byczek, & Morse, 2012; Watts, 2012).

Studies on social interest in literature show inconsistent findings in terms of gender. While some studies show that social interest does not differ by gender (Tekin-Çatal & Kalkan, 2018), most report that social interest differs according to gender (Çelik, 2018; Greever, Tseng, & Friendland, 1973; Johnson, Smith & Nelson, 2003; Kalkan, 2010; Kaplan, 1991; Nyunt & Myint, 2020; Önal, 2019; Vural- Batık, Epli, Balcı-Çelik, & Çabuker-Doğru, 2020). Therefore, it is thought that including gender variable will make contributions to literature.

Social interest, which is an innate feature, begins to emerge first within parent and child relationship and later develops with the relationship of the child with friends (Sharf, 2014). Social interest plays an important role in work relationships, friendships and love relationships, which are called as “life tasks” by Adler (Ansbacher, 1991; Leak & Leak, 2006). The protective feature of social interest against alienation, meaninglessness and stress has been emphasized in the literature (Crandall, 1984; Leak & Williams, 1989). Studies have also emphasized the association between high social interest and individuals’ using active problem solving strategies more effectively (Ergüner-Tekinalp & Terzi, 2014; Kalkan, 2010; Soyer, 2004), low sexual abuse (Miranda & Fiorello, 2002) and having a nurturing style in romantic relationships (Tekin-Çatal & Kalkan, 2018). It is very important for individuals who put their social interests above their personal interests to show more effort to understand others’ perspectives and needs to prevent many problems by decreasing the emotions of hostility, threat and jealousy or to cope effectively with the problems that occur (Crandall, 1980, 1984). In the light of this information, high level of social interest may be a factor that reduces partner violence by reducing jealousy. It is thought that the effect of social interest on partner violence may occur through jealousy.

There is limited information in literature about the consequences of social interest in emerging adulthood romantic relationships and the variables which mediate this. For this reason, it seems that showing the mediating role of the experiences in romantic relationships between social interest and partner violence is important since it will be a guide especially for studies on the prevention of violence. For this reason, the present study aims to analyze the mediating role of jealousy in the relationship between social interest and partner violence in a sample of students attending university who are in the emerging adulthood period and who have romantic relationship.

1.2. Present study

In this study, the effect of the social interest of emerging adults on partner violence was examined. The study tested the mediating role of jealousy in the effect of social interest on

partner violence. Fig. 1 illustrates the proposed model. Based on the review of literature, it was posited the following hypotheses:

H₁: Social interest is negatively correlated with jealousy and partner violence, and also jealousy positively correlated with partner violence.

H₂: Jealousy mediates the relationship between the social interest and partner violence.

H₃: Social interest, partner violence and jealousy differ significantly according to gender.

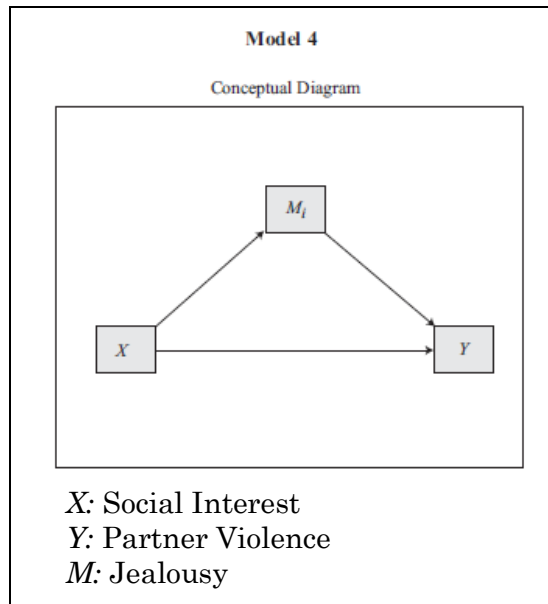


Figure 1. The proposed mediation model

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The research group consisted of 402 emerging adults who had a romantic relationship. The participants reached by convenient sampling method were attending a state university in Turkey. In this direction, considering the number of students studying at different faculties and classes were taken into account.

56% (n=225) of the participants were women, while 44% (n=177) were men. 25.6% of the students were in their first year, 25.9 % were in their second year, 24.1 % were in their third year and 24.4 % were in their fourth year. In addition, it was found that 29.4 % of the participants never had a romantic relationship before, while 30.1% had a romantic

relationship before and 40.5% had more than one relationship. The participants were between the ages of 18 and 25, with a mean age of 20.77 (Sd=1.59).

2.2. Measures

In the study, “Multidimensional Jealousy Scale, Attitudes toward Intimate Partner Violence in Dating Relationships-Revised Form, The Adlerian Social Interest Scale-Romantic Relationship Form and Personal Information Form were used to collect the data.

2.2.1. Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale (MDJS)

The scale developed by Pfeiffer and Wong (1989) was adapted into Turkish by Karakurt (2001). The scale is 7-Likert type and has 23 items. High scores show high level of jealousy. This 3-factor structure named “emotional jealousy, behavioural jealousy and cognitive jealousy” explains 61% of the total variance. Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .81 for emotional jealousy, as .80 for behavioural jealousy and as .84 for cognitive jealousy (Karakurt, 2001). In the present study, Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients were found as .89 for emotional jealousy, as .85 for behavioural jealousy and as .90 for cognitive jealousy.

2.2.2. Adlerian Social Interest Scale- Romantic Relationship Form (ASIS-RR)

The scale developed by Kalkan (2009) aims to measure the levels of social interest in romantic relationships. The scale is 5-Likert type and has 24 items. High scores reflect high level of social interest. The scale has one factor which explaining 34.1% of the variance. Test-retest reliability coefficient was found as .93 and Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .90 (Kalkan, 2009). Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found as .78 in the present study.

2.2.3. Personal Information Form

This form was prepared by the researchers and includes questions about socio-demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, year of study, place of residence) of the participants.

2.3. Procedure

Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of a state university gave ethical permission of the study. The scales were administered during class hours to participants.

The students were informed about the purpose and those who volunteered to participate were included in the study.

2.4. Data Analysis

The data with extreme values were determined with Mahalanobis distance. Four data with extreme values were excluded and the analyses were made on 402 data. To conduct multivariate analyses, multivariate normality assumptions were tested. Skewness and Kurtosis were administered to examine normality of distribution of data (see Table 1); all variables were found to be within the acceptable ranges (Kline, 2015). Next, scatter diagrams were examined and it was found that all of the scatters were ellipsis and close to ellipsis. Linear combinations of the variables were examined with residual plots and it was found that the values were collected around a linear axis. Box's M test showed that the variances of the groups were homogeneous (Box's $M = 65.60$, $p = .06$). These data showed that all the necessary assumptions were met in order to perform multivariate analyses.

In the analysis of data, first the descriptive statistics and bivariate Pearson correlations were calculated. Second, PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4, Hayes, 2017) was used to examine the mediating effect of jealousy. Non-standardized β coefficients, lower and upper limits were assessed in these analyses. All study continuous variables were standardized, and in order to determine whether the effects in PROCESS Model 4 were significant, the models used 5000 resamples through bootstrapping confidence intervals. Social interest was the independent variable (X), partner violence was the dependent variable (Y), jealousy was mediator ($M1$). Gender served as covariate. This method generated 95% confidence intervals of the indirect effects. The effect was considered significant when 95% CIs did not contain zero. Lastly, Multivariate Hotelling T^2 test was used to determine whether partner violence, social interest and jealousy differed significantly according to gender.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient values of the variables of social interest, partner violence and jealousy in romantic relationships are shown in Table 1. As expected, positive moderate association was calculated between jealousy and partner violence ($r = .42$, $p < .01$), while negative weak correlation was calculated between jealousy and social interest ($r = -.23$, $p < .01$), and negative moderate association was calculated

between partner violence and social interest ($r = -.34$, $p < .01$). Therefore Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	1	2	3
1. Social Interest	98.79	9.54	-.69	.83	($\alpha = .78$)	-.34*	-.23*
2. Partner Violence	38.34	7.28	.17	-.19		($\alpha = .60$)	.42*
3. Jealousy	87.53	19.14	.54	.38			($\alpha = .85$)

Note: N= 402; M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation; Numbers in parentheses denote Cronbach's α .

3.2. Mediating Role of Jealousy

A model was created based on the theoretical information in literature on partner violence. It was examined that jealousy mediated the relationship between social interest and partner violence in romantic relationships (Hypothesis 2). Model 4 of the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2017) which uses a bootstrap resampling process repeated 5000 times to generate a 95% bootstrap confidence interval was used to examine direct and indirect effects. In order to help the interpretation of the resulting coefficients, all variables were standardized. Gender was controlled for as covariate. Table 2 shows the results of parameters for the proposed model.

Table 2. *Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects for Mediation Model*

Total, Direct, Indirect Effects	β	BootSE	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Total Effect (Social Interest → Partner Violence)	-.21**	.03	-.28	-.14
Direct Effect (Social Interest → Partner Violence)	-.15**	.03	-.22	-.08
Indirect Effect (Social Interest → Jealousy → Partner Violence)	-.05*	.01	-.09	-.02
$R^2 = .29$, $F(3, 398) = 55.23$, $p = .000$				

Note: CI=Confidence Interval, LL= Lower Limit, UL= Upper Limit. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

Confirming Hypothesis 2, the study found a negative direct effect of social interest on partner violence ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = $[-.22, -.08]$). When the jealousy as a mediator was included in the analysis, it was found a significant indirect effect of social interest on partner violence via jealousy ($\beta = -.05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = $[-.09, -.02]$). Therefore, the mediating effect of jealousy posited in Hypothesis 2 was confirmed ($R^2 = .29$, $F_{(3, 398)} = 55.23$, $p < .001$). To summarize, results from the study showed that there was an indirect relationship between low social interest and high partner violence. This association was found to be partially mediated by higher levels of jealousy.

3.3. Multivariate Hotelling T^2

To determine whether social interest, partner violence and jealousy differed according to gender, Multivariate Hotelling T^2 was conducted (Hypothesis 3). According to the results (see Table 3), it was found that the main effect of gender on social interest, partner violence and jealousy was significant ($T^2 = .15$, $F_{(3, 398)} = 20.94$, $p < .001$). Partner violence, social interest and jealousy scores of emerging adults with romantic relationship were found to be significantly different between men and women. According to these results, men were found to have significantly higher partner violence and jealousy in romantic relationships levels than women, while they had significantly lower social interest levels in romantic relationships.

Table 3. Multivariate Hotelling T^2 test results of gender variable

Variable		N	M	Sd	Df	F	p
Jealousy	Women	225	85.19	17.81	1	7.75	.006
	Men	177	90.50	20.38			
Partner violence	Women	225	36.20	7.07	1	49.41	.000
	Men	177	41.06	6.62			
Social interest	Women	225	101.04	7.24	1	30.37	.000
	Men	177	95.93	11.23			
Hotelling T ² = .15, F _(3, 398) = 20.94, p= .000							

4. Discussion

The present study which examined the mediating effect of romantic jealousy in the relationship between social interest and partner violence found a significant relationship

between social interest and partner violence in the first analyses conducted. There are study results similar to this result of the study in literature (Çelik, 2018; Kalkan, 2010; Leak & Williams, 1990; Miranda & Fionello, 2002; Tekin-Çatal & Kalkan, 2018). In this context, individuals' having high social interest brings to mind that they will not resort to violence and abuse in their romantic relationships and will try to find out effective solutions to their problems. There are also results in literature which show that individuals with high social interest resort to effective methods to cope with problems in the face of life difficulties (Crandall, 1980, 1984; Ergüner-Tekinalp & Terzi, 2014; Kalkan, 2010; Soyer, 2004).

A significant relationship was found in the study between social interest and romantic jealousy. Literature review reported different results. However, Adler, who first introduced the concept of social interest, stated that jealousy was not a driving force of striving for superiority, as it is thought to be, but it could be associated with quarrelsomeness. It is also stated that feeling empathy for the emotions and worries of others will contribute to the development of social interest and contribute to overcoming these destructive emotions (Ausbacher & Ausbacher, 1964). Therefore, it can be said that high jealousy in romantic relationships can be much more affected by low social interest.

Another finding of the study is the presence of an association between jealousy and partner violence in romantic relationships. Literature review showed similar results to the results of the present study. In a study they determined the relational risk frameworks; Collibee and Furman (2016) studied the effects of acute and chronic jealousy on physical and psychological partner violence. It was found in their study that jealousy predicted partner violence significantly and preventing jealousy as relational risk factors would also prevent partner violence. There are also results in literature which show that partner violence is caused by romantic jealousy most (Adelman & Kil, 2007; Foshee et al., 2007; Lavoie et al., 2000; Sears et al., 2006). Similarly, the results of the present study support that the development of partner violence is associated with romantic jealousy.

Healthy romantic relationships occur on the basis of trust and equality. Both jealousy and the thoughts accompanying jealousy and the behaviors triggered by thoughts may create a risk for the individual's life. The fact that romantic jealousy is affirmed in traditional societies (for exp. a person who loves is also jealous) can normalize violent behaviors that occur due to jealousy most of the time. Therefore, in addition to decreasing the risk factors that may cause partner violence, discussing the protective factors may also be effective in preventing violence.

The present study shows that jealousy in romantic relationships has a “partial mediating” role in the relationship between social interest and partner violence. When the mediating role of jealousy in the relationship between social interest and partner violence was researched in literature, no studies were found. According to Adler, mature love is one of the individuals' characteristics who have high social interest level. He stated that these

individuals cared about the peace of their partners and enriching them and therefore they offered them freedom (Leak & Gardner, 1990). On the other hand, individuals whose social interest is not sufficiently developed are in a selfish effort for superiority (Stasio & Capron, 1998). Only individuals with social adaptation can easily solve the problems in love and marriage. Adler, who stated that the way to achieve this is “social interest”, emphasized that couples who approach problems together with the principle of full equality and having the same rights can cope with problems that occur (Adler, 2013). The positive effect of social interest in solving the basic problems in life successfully and enabling individuals to experience more satisfactory interpersonal relationships also contribute to the development of healthy romantic relationships (Leak & Williams, 1998). Mosak (1991) stated that individuals with high social interest had characteristics such as accepting their own and other people’s mistakes, trying to contribute to the well-being of the society, having high self-confidence and being open to cooperation. In this context, this result of the study is similar to other studies in literature. In other words, it can be said that social interest can reduce partner violence by reducing jealousy. On the other hand, the fact that jealousy is a normal emotion due to the nature of romantic relationships and the characteristics of social interest to act cooperatively in solving problems may have been effective in this result. Social interest, which acts as the best protection against feelings of inferiority which can also be associated with jealousy, can be a basic motivator for the efforts to be superior by acting with the concepts of courage and common-sense (Crandall, 1991). Therefore, social interest can improve self-confidence and control destructive emotions by encouraging individuals to be positive.

According to the last finding of the study, the main effect of gender on social interest, partner violence and jealousy in romantic relationships was found to significant. The finding that men have higher romantic jealousy levels is similar to the literature (Buss, 2018; Buunk et al., 2011; Zandbergen & Brown, 2015). A similar result was found in partner violence and partner violence levels of men were found to be higher. There are studies which have similar results with this finding of the study (Brooks-Russell, Foshee, Reyes, 2015; Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt & Kim 2012; Coker et al., 2000; Landfield, 2006; Marquart et al., 2007). Traditional social structure categorizes women and men in opposition to each other, and associate women with obedience and weakness and men with power and control. This positioning of women normalizes the jealousy and partner violence of men in the society. Therefore, the higher partner violence levels of men can be associated with traditional gender roles. Lastly, women were found to have higher social interest levels in the present study. This result is similar to results found in literature (Çelik, 2018; Grever et al., 1973; Johnson et al., 2003; Kalkan, 2010; Kaplan, 1991; Nyunt & Myint,

2020; Önal, 2019; Vural- Batık et al., 2020). The expectation of the society that women embrace the family and the relationship may have affected this result.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

As a conclusion, our results show the mediating role of jealousy in the relationship between social interest and partner violence. The present study has some limitations. Since the sample group consists of university students, generalizability of the results is limited. Therefore, it may be recommended to repeat the study on different sample groups in the similar age group.

It is thought that the results of the study provide significant contributions to literature. In order to prevent partner violence and jealousy in romantic relationships, it can be stated that all activities which improve social interest such as showing interest in the partner, empathizing, being in cooperation and contributing to partner's development (for exp., empathy skill, the skill of understanding emotions) will strengthen the relationship. It is also thought that the current study will support to understand partner violence that may possibly occur in romantic relationships during emerging adulthood, which has a significant part in individuals' lives, and creating studies to prevent partner violence. At the same time, when the effect of social interest in reducing romantic jealousy healthily and preventing partner violence is considered, developing programs to improve social interest will contribute to mental health.

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