

RESEARCH ARTICLE/ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

Examining the relationship between addiction and jealousy in romantic relationships: An evaluation in terms of behavioral jealousy

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Abstract

Addiction in romantic relationships, which is a chronic problem that harms oneself, one's partner, and the relationship, refers to the partner's desire for excessive closeness determined by the intense need for the other. It is known that such dependent relationships are related to jealousy, as there are factors such as lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem and internal insecurity. The aim of this study is to examine the cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions of addiction and jealousy in relationships. It was aimed to evaluate the behavioral dimension of jealousy in terms of partner violence. The study was started after receiving ethics committee approval numbered 2024/03 dated 07.03.2024 from Istanbul Aydın University Social and Humanities Ethics Commission. It was conducted with 334 female and 183 male volunteer participants reached by convenience sampling. The measurement tools used in the study are the Sociodemographic Data Form, the Addiction in Romantic Relationships Scale and the Multidimensional Jealousy Scale. Pearson Correlation analysis, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and Independent Groups T Test were performed using SPSS 27.0.1.0 Edition (31-Dec-2037). In line with the study findings, it was determined that addiction in romantic relationships was associated with all dimensions of jealousy, but with behavioral jealousy at the highest level. The results of the study reveal that perceptions of inadequacy of personal resources, such as insufficient education and economic level, can increase the feeling of jealousy. However, it appears that increased addiction indicators such as obsession and dedication towards the partner are determined by the behavioral aspect of jealousy. Therefore, the study results indicate that in order to protect both partners in a romantic relationship, it may be useful to focus on what they do with this feeling rather than their feelings of jealousy. Based on this, it can be stated that strengthening individual resources should be preferred to direct interventions against the feeling of jealousy.

Keywords: Romantic Relationship, Addiction, Jealousy, Behavioral Jealousy

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Addiction

The Turkish Language Association defines the concept of addiction as “dependent on the will, power or help of another, lacking freedom or autonomy, dependent”, “excessively dependent on someone or something, materially or spiritually” (TDK, 2022). In the process, with the influence of behavioral studies on addiction, the category of “non-substance-related disorder” was added to the concept of “substance-related disorders”. DSM-5 only addressed gambling addiction in this category (APA, 2013), and in the following years, studies on which of these can be diagnosed as a mental disorder continue with studies indicating that some types of behavior can also be addictive (Güleç, 2023). However, love addiction is not classified as a mental disorder or behavioral addiction in the DSM-5.

1.2. Romantic Relationship Addiction

Love is considered a behavioral addiction (Earp et al. 2017). Addiction in romantic relationships negatively affects the person’s life. The person cannot get out of the negative relationship and gets lost in a cycle, and their partner is like an addicted substance. It is characterized by continuing unhealthy and painful relationships, suffering in the absence of the lover, and making the relationship the center of life (Atlam et al., 2023).

Relationship addiction, which is characterized by the tendency to constantly need the approval of the partner in the relationship, to try to stay in the relationship under all circumstances, and to define one’s own identity through the relationship, can limit the ability of the person to say no to negative attitudes and behaviors encountered in the relationship or cause an increase in controlling and restrictive attitudes towards the partner. At the same time, this situation, which is also preventive in terms of creating healthy boundaries, can bring the individual who exhibits addiction in the romantic relationship closer to the positions of the abuser and/or the abused in the relationship (Faraji & Demir, 2023).

Rusnakova (2014), while defining relationship addiction, defined it as the excessive dependence

of a person on another person due to the fear of losing the person on whom he/she is dependent, ignoring his/her own needs, and also stated that in this type of relationship, the dependent party feels intense guilt, holding himself/herself responsible for any negativity that may occur in the relationship.

Griffiths (1996) mentioned the common characteristics of relationship addiction with substance-related addiction types. These six criteria explained by the Behavioral Components Model are: Salience (focus), Psychological change, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Repetition. Of these, tolerance is defined as the need to increase the intensity and frequency of behavior, while conflict is defined as the situation of restricting and intervening in all life activities of the partner outside the relationship. Withdrawal, on the other hand, refers to symptoms such as restlessness that occur when the relationship decreases and/or is interrupted, similar to substance-related addictions. Romantic jealousy can be evaluated as a result of these components, which show similar characteristics to behavioral addiction. In a study conducted on romantic relationship addiction in the context of the components of addiction, it was stated that some neurochemical changes occurring in the reward center of the brain affect the emotional states and behaviors of individuals (Çolakkadıoğlu et al., 2023).

1.3. Romantic Jealousy

Romantic jealousy is a negative reaction to a real or perceived threat that causes the end or damage of a relationship that is important (Kayrak et al., 2023). Romantic jealousy is a feeling experienced with a person who has an emotional bond and is mostly encountered between spouses (Tortamış, 2014). Jealousy involves the person’s commitment to their partner and arises from the partner’s interest in someone else (Oğul & Karaaziz, 2023). One of the most common problems in dual relationships is romantic jealousy (Curun & Çapkin, 2014). In order to classify jealousy as positive or negative, the reactions given to jealousy are important.

1.4. Cognitive, Emotional and Behavioral Jealousy

Cognitive, emotional and physical reactions in jealousy are more difficult to control than external elements (Pines, 1998). While the behavioral dimension of jealousy is the cause of partner violence in some people (Carson and Cupach, 2000), it has been stated in many studies that jealousy is one of the most common causes of murder in femicides (Çiftçi and Açıık, 2022). Reactions given in jealousy are; 'aggression', which includes behaviors such as throwing objects and threatening; 'withdrawal', which includes behaviors such as showing less love, communicating non-verbally and caring about other people; and 'relational compensation attempts', which includes behaviors such as trying to be perfect and showing more attention (Fleischmann, Spitzberg and Roesch, 2005; Cited in: Kayrak et al., 2023). In a content analysis study conducted on the reasons for violent incidents and murders in Turkey reported in the press, reasons such as honor, jealousy, cheating and insisting on divorce come to the fore. In the same study, the most common reason given by the arrested perpetrators for the murders of women was "jealousy" (Aslan and Kırıskan 2022). It is claimed that honor killings are usually committed due to excessive jealousy and anger (İnci, 2013). However, especially in women, an increase in the level of addiction on the partner can result in an increase in the level of violence experienced (Yavuzer and Kılıçarslan, 2024).

The aim of this study is to examine the relation-

ship between addiction and jealousy in romantic relationships and to evaluate the behavioral dimension of jealousy in terms of partner violence.

1.5. Hypotheses

H1. Jealousy in romantic relationships is predicted by addiction

H2. Addiction in romantic relationships is associated with behavioral jealousy.

2. METHOD

The study is a relational screening type and the sample selection was made by convenience sampling method. For this purpose, a total of 517 people were reached. The Socio-demographic Information Form prepared by the researchers and the Romantic Relationship Addiction Scale and the Multidimensional Jealousy Scale were applied to the adult sample group whose ages were between 18-45 ($M= 26.74\pm 5.64$).

2.1. Data Collecting Tools

2.1.1. Sociodemographic Data Form

The sociodemographic data form was created by the researchers and includes questions aimed at determining the gender, age, education level and perceived income level of the participants.

2.1.2. Addiction in Romantic Relationships Scale

It was developed by Atlam et al. (2023) to determine the level of addiction in romantic relationships. Measured Features: Love addiction, Rela-

Table 1. Distribution of Demographic Information of Participants

		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	334	64.6
	Male	183	35.4
Perceived Income Level	Low	92	17.8
	Moderate	359	69.4
	High	66	12.8
Educational Status	Bachelor Degree	396	76.6
	Postgraduate	121	23.4
	Total	517	100.0

tionship addiction, Romantic Relationships. The scale consists of a 3-factor 13-item structure. The factor structures of the scale were determined as dedication (6, 7, 8, 9, 10), Withdrawal (1, 2, 11, 12, 13) and obsession (3, 4, 5). As the score obtained from the scale increases, relationship addiction increases. The scale had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha= .87).

2.1.3. Multidimensional Jealousy Scale

Developed by Pfeiffer and Wong (1989), the scale aims to measure cognitive, emotional and behavioral reactions that occur in the event of jealousy. The scale is a 7-step Likert-type scale. Both a total score and a score for each subscale can be obtained from the scale. An increase in the total score and each subscale means that the total jeal-

ousy or the jealousy score measured by the subscale increases. As a result of the factor analysis study conducted for the original scale, three factors were determined. The first factor explained 33.1% of the variance, the second 13.6% and the third 11.7%. The factors were named as cognitive jealousy, behavioral jealousy and emotional jealousy. Each factor has 8 items. In the reliability study, the reliability of the subscales was found to be between .80 and .90. It was adapted to Turkish culture by Karakurt (2001).

2.2. Process

The study was initiated by obtaining approval for use from the individuals who developed and/or adapted the relevant measurement tools into Turkish. The data collection phase was ini-

Table 2. Analysis of Descriptive Statistics and Kurtosis, Skewness, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients of the Addiction in Romantic Relationships Scale and the Multidimensional Jealousy Scale

	<i>n</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	(<i>a</i>)
Addiction in Romantic Relationships Scale	517	13	49	27.28	7.09	0.01	0.51	
dedication	517	5	20	10.25	2.96	-0.03	0.40	0.70
Withdrawal	517	5	20	10.28	3.35	0.18	0.72	0.77
Obsession	517	3	12	6.75	2.24	-0.72	0.21	0.71
Multidimensional Jealousy Scale	517	37	143	77.02	19.92	0.55	0.89	0.94
Emotional Jealousy	517	20	49	39.92	6.54	-0.18	-0.62	0.75
Behavioral Jealousy	517	8	56	20.31	9.49	0.39	0.92	0.85
Cognitive Jealousy	517	8	50	16.79	10.80	0.75	1.30	0.93

Table 3. The Relationship Between Addiction and Jealousy in Romantic Relationships

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1- <u>Addiction in Romantic Relationships</u>	1							
1.a. Dedication	.80**	1						
1.b. Withdrawl	.88**	.51**	1					
1.c. Obsession	.79**	.44**	.62**	1				
2- <u>Multidimensional Jealousy</u>	.45**	.32**	.37**	.47**	1			
2.a. Emotional Jealousy	.37**	.21**	.32**	.42**	.44**	1		
2.b. Behavioral Jealousy	.40**	.25**	.36**	.42**	.85**	.19**	1	
2.c. Cognitive Jealousy	.26**	.24**	.17**	.24**	.83**	0.03	.58**	1

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ Name of the test applied: Pearson Correlation Test

tiated after obtaining the ethics committee approval numbered 2024/03 dated 07.03.2024 from the Istanbul Aydin University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee. The data were sent to the participants via online platforms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) with surveys prepared via Google Forms. The survey form begins with obtaining the voluntary consent of the participants. Personal information such as the participants' names and surnames were not obtained. The informed consent form states that the participant information will not be shared with anyone other than the researchers and that they can withdraw from the study at any time, and the researcher's e-mail address is also shared for participants' possible questions. Filling out the surveys takes an average of 10-12 minutes.

2.2.1. Data Analysis

In this study, statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 27.0.1.0 Edition (31-Dec-2037) software. First, the reliability level of the scales was evaluated with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and these values were found to be above 0.60 (Kılıç, 2016). Then, various analyses were performed to examine the normal distribution properties of the scales in detail. During this evaluation process, it was determined that the kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the scales met the reference values between -2 and +2 suggested by HahsVaughn and Lomax (2020). The level and direction of the relationship between the scales were examined using the Pearson Correlation method, and Independent Groups t-test and ANOVA tests were applied to understand

Table 4. Findings on Addiction Predicting Jealousy in Romantic Relationships

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
	42.16	3.10		13.59	<.001***	36.06	48.25
Dedication	0.75	0.31	0.11	2.45	0.015*	0.15	1.36
Withdrawal	0.51	0.31	0.09	1.66	0.098	-0.09	1.12
Obsession	3.24	0.44	0.36	7.31	<.001***	2.37	4.11
<i>R</i> =.49 <i>R</i> ² =.23 <i>F</i> (3,513)=53.39 <i>p</i> <.001***							

****p*<.001, ***p*<.01, **p*<.05; Note, CI: Confidence Interval

Table 5. Comparison of Addiction and Jealousy Levels in Romantic Relationships by Gender

	Female(n=334)		Male(n=183)		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>			
<u>Addiction in Romantic Relationships</u>	26.45	6.96	28.80	7.10	-3.65	515	<.001***
Dedication	9.84	2.97	10.99	2.80	-4.29	515	<.001***
Withdrawal	10.06	3.15	10.68	3.66	-1.93	330.249	0.055
Obsession	6.54	2.18	7.13	2.31	-2.86	515	0.004**
<u>Multidimensional Jealousy</u>	77.37	19.25	76.37	21.13	0.55	515	0.583
Emotional Jealousy	40.01	6.51	39.76	6.62	0.42	515	0.675
Behavioral Jealousy	20.51	8.90	19.94	10.50	0.62	325.739	0.535
Cognitive Jealousy	16.85	10.65	16.67	11.10	0.19	515	0.851

****p*<.001, ***p*<.01, **p*<.05 Test Used: Independent Samples T-Test

the differences of the scales according to demographic variables. Multiple Linear Regression was preferred for predictive analysis. All these statistical analyses were performed at a 95% confidence interval and based on a p value of 0.05 significance level.

3. RESULTS

When the results of the findings are examined, 334 (64.6%) of the participants are female, 183 (35.4%) are male. 92 (17.8%) of them report having low income, 359 (69.4%) of them report having medium income, and 66 (12.8%) of them report having high income. 396 (76.6%) of the participants have undergraduate education, and 121 (23.4%) of them have postgraduate education. The ages of the participants are between 18-45, and the average age is 26.74 ± 5.64 .

When the results of the findings were examined, low and moderate positive correlations were found between the total score of Multidimensional Jealousy and all jealousy sub-dimensions (Emotional, Behavioral and Cognitive Jealousy) and the Addiction in Romantic Relationships variables. When the relationship between addiction and jealousy sub-dimensions in romantic relationships was examined; low and moderate positive correlations were found with emotional jealousy, behavioral jealousy and cognitive jealousy.

Low and moderate positive correlations were found between the Multidimensional Jealousy sub-dimensions and the Dedication variables. A moderate positive correlation was found between the addiction sub-dimensions, dedication and jealousy.

Low and moderate positive correlations were found between the total score of Multidimensional Jealousy and Withdrawal, and all jealousy sub-dimensions (Emotional, Behavioral and Cognitive Jealousy) and Withdrawal variables.

Low and moderate positive correlations were found between the total score of Multidimensional Jealousy and the jealousy sub-dimensions Emotional, Behavioral and Cognitive Jealousy and Obsession variables.

When the results of the regression table are examined, it is seen that the independent variable of Withdrawal in the regression model does not have a significant predictive effect on jealousy. In addition, the variables of dedication and obsession predict jealousy. The R² value is .23, and it is seen that the predictors explain 23% of the variance in the outcome variable. As a result of the findings, it is shown that dedication positively predicts jealousy and obsession positively predicts jealousy.

When the results of the given findings were

Table 6. Comparison of Addiction and Multidimensional Jealousy Levels in Romantic Relationships According to Perceived Income Level

	Perceived Income Level						F(2,514)	p	Post-Hoc
	Low ¹ (n=92)		Moderate ² (n=359)		High ³ (n=66)				
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD			
Addiction in Romantic Relationships	27.88	7.02	26.94	7.00	28.30	7.62	1.44	0.238	-
Dedication	10.28	2.67	10.11	3.01	10.95	3.01	2.30	0.101	-
Withdrawal	10.82	3.65	10.13	3.25	10.33	3.41	1.54	0.215	-
Obsession	6.78	2.34	6.70	2.19	7.02	2.40	0.57	0.565	-
Multidimensional Jealousy	77.51	21.24	76.83	19.57	77.36	20.25	0.05	0.947	-
Emotional Jealousy	41.27	6.20	39.89	6.63	38.20	6.18	4.31	0.014	1>3
Behavioral Jealousy	19.40	9.40	20.20	9.33	22.17	10.33	1.71	0.181	-
Cognitive Jealousy	16.84	11.08	16.74	10.63	17.00	11.50	0.02	0.982	-

examined, no significant difference was found between the groups compared when the Withdrawal sub-dimension of the Addiction Scale and the Emotional Jealousy, Behavioral Jealousy, Cognitive Jealousy sub-dimensions of the Multidimensional Jealousy Scale were examined according to gender ($p>.05$).

When the scores obtained from the Romantic Relationship Addiction, Dedication subscales, and the Obsession subscale were examined according to gender, a significant difference was found between the compared groups. When the average scores obtained from the scales were evaluated, it was observed that men's scores were higher than women's.

When the results of the given findings were examined, when the Romantic Relationship Addiction Scale, Dedication, Withdrawal, Obsession, Multidimensional Jealousy Scale, Behavioral Jealousy, Cognitive Jealousy sub-dimension were examined according to income level, no significant difference was found between the compared groups ($p>.05$).

When the scores obtained from the Emotional Jealousy subscale were examined according to income level, a significant difference was found between the compared groups. When the results of Tukey's findings were considered, participants with low income levels received significantly higher scores than those with high income levels.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Discussion

The basic hypothesis of this study is that jealousy in romantic relationships is predicted by addiction, and the hypothesis was confirmed. In this study, it was determined that addiction in relationships is associated with all dimensions of jealousy, but at the highest level with behavioral jealousy. In similar studies, it was reported that dependent and borderline personality disorders, in which the addiction factor is at the center, are associated with jealousy and that high levels of relational addiction and jealousy are seen in individuals with borderline personality traits (Faraji and Güler, 2021; Eren, 2023).

Like other aspects of human experience, jealousy can range in expression and intensity from an adaptive response to a potentially dangerous psychopathological symptom (Costa et al., 2023). Conroy-Beam et al. (2015) determined that jealousy increases addiction in a relationship and that emotional jealousy, one of the components of jealousy, serves to protect investment in the relationship. According to the results of the current study, dedication and obsession, which are components of addiction in relationships, predict jealousy. As dedication increases, the partner's self-sacrifice and investment in the relationship increase. Sucrese et al. (2023) state that emotional jealousy is an adaptive mechanism aimed at eliminating any threat that the partner's resources and investments will be diverted. Accordingly, it is thought that increased dedication in the relationship, resulting in higher jealousy, serves as a strategy to prevent the loss of investments.

Increased jealousy in romantic relationships can also lead to violent jealousy behaviors (Kyeogombe et al., 2022). The results of this study revealed that when jealousy moves from an emotional level to a behavioral one, it is accompanied by dependent characteristics towards the partner. Similarly, Yüzügülen (2016) reported that the increase in behavioral jealousy is seen together with an increase in relational addiction. In parallel with this, it has been determined that when relational addiction and behavioral jealousy increase, behaviors aimed at controlling the partner and aggressive attitudes also increase (Emod et al., 2023).

Increased addiction indicators such as obsession and dedication towards the partner determine the behavioral aspect of jealousy (Kellet and Stockton, 2023). Perhaps one of the most prominent manifestations of obsession towards the partner today is obsessive following behaviors towards social media, and it is known that these behaviors increase the feeling of jealousy (Martínez-León, et al., 2023). The increase in the obsessive component of jealousy carries jealousy to a pathological level. In cases of obsessive jealousy, individuals make repeated accusations that their partner is sexually unfaithful, with minimal or no evidence, and often put forward

ordinary events or interactions to confirm the accusations (Batinic et al., 2013). In the same study, it was also stated that these compulsive questionings caused by the feeling of jealousy stem from obsessions that emerge in the form of repetitive images of their partner being unfaithful and engaging in sexual acts with others. Individuals with obsessive jealousy state that these images are quite detailed and long-lasting, as if they were watching a movie (Batinic et al., 2013). However, it is reported that as the obsessive component of jealousy increases, the individual will become more interested not only in the current relationship status of their partner but also in their past relationship and sexual experiences (Kellett and Stockton, 2023). It is known that violence in a relationship is basically aimed at controlling or dominating the partner physically, sexually or psychologically (Wekerle and Wolfe, 1999). Therefore, it is thought that an increase in obsession and jealousy, which are one of the dimensions of addiction on the partner, may lead to an increase in violent behaviors along with an increase in the need to dominate and control.

Romantic jealousy has a protective effect on the relationship when it is at low levels, while increases in jealousy levels have been associated with increases in relationship quality, relationship satisfaction, and partner violence (Pichon et al., 2020; Buller et al., 2023). A recent global meta-analysis study identified three main mechanisms involved in the transformation of romantic jealousy into intimate partner violence; (1) perceived masculinity as threatened, (2) perceived femininity as threatened, and (3) patriarchal beliefs. The results of the study indicate that social norms regarding gender play an important role in partner violence. When the results were evaluated in terms of gender, it was determined that men reported more jealousy and exhibited higher levels of dedication and obsession (Pichon et al., 2020).

The findings of Ariyo et al. (2023) in the Nigerian sample are similar to the findings of this study, and it is seen that men report higher levels of jealousy than women, and this situation is explained by cultural characteristics. Buller et al. (2023) state that jealousy in men tends to turn

into intimate partner violence with increased control. In the qualitative analysis conducted in the same study, it was stated that most of the male participants presented jealousy within the framework of a love discourse, and the three triggers of male jealousy leading to intimate partner violence were stated as: (1) community gossip, which acts as a mechanism of community control over women's actions and sexuality; (2) women's participation in the workforce; and (3) women's refusal to have sex. In their study conducted in Tanzania by Aloyce et al. (2022), it is stated that jealousy in men often results in partner violence. The triggers of jealousy can be suspicion or confirmed infidelity, as well as a decrease in the attention provided by the partner and the failure to accept the superiority of the man.

Malik and Arif (2012) state that low income level is one of the main sources that feeds the feeling of jealousy. The study findings show that the level of emotional jealousy is significantly higher in individuals who perceive their income level as low than in those who perceive their income level as high. In the study conducted by Balaydın et al. (2020) with pregnant women, it was determined that those who reported a low income level had higher general jealousy levels. While Bulut and Topkaya (2019) determined that the income level is related to cognitive jealousy, Çapkın (2012) stated that the income level is related to behavioral jealousy. Bulut and Topkaya's sample generally covers a more mature age group (mean age 31) than the sample of this study, and the vast majority of individuals are seen to be married. In this respect, it is thought that the difference between the studies is related to Bulut and Topkaya's (2019) sample having reached a maturity level that can handle jealousy more cognitively. Although it is generally stated in the literature that there is a relationship between a decrease in income level and jealousy, the findings regarding which type of jealousy this relationship is specifically related to are contradictory. It is thought that the current contradiction can be explained by the finding of Zang and Wang (2021) that individuals' unemployment and fluctuations in income levels increase jealousy.

5. CONCLUSION

It is seen that the behavioral dimension of jealousy, which is associated with partner violence and addiction in romantic and relationships are concepts that need to be studied in terms of preventing domestic violence and femicide. In this direction, we believe that studies to be conducted with variables predicting the behavioral jealousy dimension will contribute to studies on preventing partner violence and femicide, which is the end point of partner violence.

Considering the relationship between income level and emotional jealousy, it becomes clear that socioeconomic interventions aimed at increasing income level are important for establishing healthier relationships.

In this study, while the relationship between romantic addiction and jealousy was evaluated empirically, the connection between the current relationship and violent behaviors in romantic relationships was evaluated theoretically, which constitutes the limitation of the study.

Since it is known that difficulties in emotion regulation play a role in the relationship between emotion and behavior, especially behavior that is uncontrolled and may lead to negative consequences, it is recommended that future researchers include difficulty in emotion regulation as a variable in the evaluation and conduct qualitative studies in order to evaluate violent behaviors in romantic relationships in more detail.

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