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Obsession and relationship satisfaction through the lens of jealousy and rumination

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ABSTRACT

The current cross-sectional study sought to determine whether the association between relationship obsessive-compulsive disorder (ROCD) symptoms and relationship satisfaction is mediated by 1) jealousy and 2) a ruminative thought style, or if it is a combination of the two. The findings revealed that the relationship between ROCD symptoms and relationship satisfaction is mediated by both jealousy and rumination. Further, the link between ROCD and jealousy is mediated by rumination while the mediating role of jealousy exists in the association between rumination and relationship satisfaction. These findings only apply to heterosexual relationships. The results and implications are discussed.

1. Introduction

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a disabling disorder characterized by the occurrence of unwanted and disturbing thoughts, images, or urges (i.e., obsessions) and/or by repetitive behaviors or mental acts (i.e., compulsions) that aim to diminish the distress induced by obsessions or to prevent feared events from occurring (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). One theme of OCD that has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years (e.g., Doron, Derby, & Szepeswol, 2014; Doron, Derby, Szepeswol, & Talmor, 2012b; Doron, Mizrahi, Szepeswol, & Derby, 2014) is that of relationship-centered obsessive-compulsive (ROCD) phenomena. ROCD has two main OC symptom types: relationship-focused and partner-focused symptoms (Doron, Derby, et al., 2012b; Doron, Derby, Szepeswol, & Talmor, 2012a). Relationship-focused OC symptoms include preoccupation, suspicion, and inactivating behaviors based on one's feelings towards a partner, the partner's feelings towards oneself, and the rightness of the relationship experience (Doron, Derby, et al., 2012b; Doron, Derby, & Szepeswol, 2014; Doron, Mizrahi, et al., 2014). Relationship-focused OC symptoms are considered in three dimensions: (1) love for the partner (feelings of skepticism about the love that one has for the partner), (2) relationship rightness (doubts about the relationship itself), and (3) being loved by the partner (doubts about the partner's love and

the perceived need to receive continuous feedback about love from the partner to feel secure in that love) (Doron, Derby, et al., 2012b). Partner-focused OC symptoms, on the other hand, are identified within the contexts of morality, sociability, emotional stability, competence, appearance, and intelligence (Doron, Derby, et al., 2012a). Namely, partner-focused OC indicates that one is suspicious of the partner's lack of these personality features (Doron, Derby, & Szepeswol, 2014).

Regarding the prevalence of ROCD symptoms, Doron, Derby, et al. (2012b) conducted a study with two nonclinical cohorts and reported that 6.7% of 333 participants in the first cohort and 8.9% of 203 participants in the second cohort rated 3 or above (on a 0–4 scale) on more than 33% of the 12 scale items. According to the APA (2013), OC personality disorder is one of the most prevalent disorders in the general population, with an estimated prevalence in the range of 2.1% to 7.9%. These statistics demonstrate that severe ROCD symptoms are as widespread in nonclinical populations as severe OCD symptoms. Therefore, carrying out research on OCD and ROCD phenomena in both clinical and non-clinical samples is worthy of consideration.

Prior studies on ROCD have demonstrated that there is a significant association between relationship dissatisfaction and ROCD symptoms. To illustrate, Doron, Mizrahi, et al. (2014) found that both partner and relationship-focused ROCD symptoms are related to poor intimate relationship satisfaction. Similarly, Doron, Derby, et al. (2012b)

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revealed that ROCD symptoms significantly predict relationship dissatisfaction. These symptoms are also linked to low self-esteem, negative affect, impaired sexual function, depression, anxiety, and stress (Doron, Derby, et al., 2012a, 2012b; Doron, Mizrahi, et al., 2014; Doron, Szep-senwol, Karp, & Gal, 2013). Taken together, these associations demonstrate how an individual's wellbeing may be adversely affected because of ROCD (Doron et al., 2013; Doron, Derby, et al., 2012b).

Recent studies have also focused on the relationship between general OCD symptoms and rumination, which is broadly defined as the inclination to repetitively and passively examine one's problems, concerns, and feelings of distress without any attempt to make positive changes (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Wahl, Ertle, Bohne, Zuroski, & Kordon, 2011). In fact, rumination and obsession share some similar cognitive processes such as repetitiveness, intrusiveness, and uncontrollability (Raines, Vidaurri, Portero, & Schmidt, 2017). However, obsessions are mostly intrusive and unwanted (APA, 2013) while rumination is a type of response to distress that involves repetitively focusing on the reasons and consequences of the symptoms (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008; Raines et al., 2017). Additionally, recent studies have demonstrated that ruminative thoughts are inversely related to relationship satisfaction (Calmes, 2008; Hou & Ng, 2014; Lewis, Millettich, Derlega, & Padilla, 2014). However, it seems that the effects of ruminative thoughts on ROCD symptoms are still undefined.

In intimate relationships, jealousy might be another potentially problematic factor. Feelings of jealousy are generated in response to a threat to, or the actual loss of, a valued (mostly sexual) relationship with another individual because of an actual or imagined rival for the partner's attention (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2007; Dijkstra, Barelds, & Groothof, 2010). Pfeiffer and Wong (1989) classified jealousy into three groups: a) emotional jealousy (a reaction to a perceived threat); cognitive jealousy (concerns about the partner's engagement in infidelity); and c) behavioral jealousy (monitoring behaviors). In this study, we considered jealousy in terms of Pfeiffer and Wong's (1989) classification.

Additionally, rumination has been reported as a factor in elucidating the link between romantic jealousy and relationship dissatisfaction (Elphinston, Feeney, Noller, Connor, & Fitzgerald, 2013). Similarly, Ötken (2015) reported that relationship satisfaction is negatively predicted by cognitive jealousy and rumination. Taken together, these findings all suggest that ruminative thoughts and jealousy are related to poor intimate relationship quality in general. These two variables are also linked to general OCD symptoms (APA, 2013). However, the role of a ruminative thought style and jealousy in ROCD is still unclear.

1.1. The current study

In this study, we aimed to reveal influential mechanisms related to the link between ROCD symptoms and relationship satisfaction through

rumination and jealousy. Ruminative thoughts represent the cognitive aspect while jealousy is taken into the model as a general term covering the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects. These hypotheses about mediation effects were revealed based on the cognitive behavioral therapy approach (Clark, 2007). From this theoretical standpoint, behavioral and emotional outcomes result from related cognitive bias and irrational beliefs, and not directly from facts or experience.

In light of the above discussion, by revealing the associations between ROCD symptoms and relationship dissatisfaction (Doron, Derby, et al., 2012b; Doron, Mizrahi, et al., 2014), rumination and low relationship satisfaction (Calmes, 2008; Hou & Ng, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014), rumination, jealousy, and relationship dissatisfaction (Elphinston et al., 2013; Ötken, 2015) and rumination, jealousy, and OCD (APA, 2013), we attempted to investigate the links among these concepts by combining them all into this study. Namely, based on previous research findings, we composed a theoretical hypothesis model (see Fig. 1). In this model, our goal was to determine whether the relationship between ROCD symptoms and relationship satisfaction is mediated by jealousy and ruminative thoughts. Additionally, we hypothesized that jealousy plays a mediator role in the relationship between rumination and relationship satisfaction and that the relationship between ROCD symptoms and jealousy is mediated by rumination. We utilized structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the hypothesis model presented in Fig. 1.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

The current study was designed as a correlational and cross-sectional study. Prior to the study, the necessary approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the participating institution, and the participants provided their consent. Participants filled out the survey form in a lab. Responding to the survey form took approximately 20 min.

In line with common practice in OCD studies, the sample utilized in this study consisted of non-clinical participants. The study was conducted in Turkey, and the sample consisted of 270 Turkish university students (161 female and 109 male). The average age of the participants was 21.6 ± 3.21 (ranging from 17 to 39 years old). The participants were in an ongoing relationship for at least 5 months. Of those, 248 (91.9%) defined their relationship as a "romantic/intimate relationship," and 22 participants (8.1%) were engaged at the time of the study. Additionally, the participants presented their relationship preference as "opposite sex." This was not an eligibility criterion, but all participants happened to have this preference.

Fig. 1. The proposed model.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Relationship Obsessive-Compulsive Inventory (ROCI)

The ROCI (Doron, Derby, et al., 2012b) is a self-report measure of obsessions and compulsions based on romantic relationships. The scale includes 14 items loaded on three relational dimensions: love for the partner, relationship rightness, and being loved by the partner. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*very much*). In addition to a total score, the three subscale scores can be calculated separately. The internal consistencies of this scale ranged from 0.65 to 0.88 in our sample.

2.2.2. Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS)

The MJS (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989) is a 24-item scale including three sub-scales to measure the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of jealousy. Respondents are asked to rate each item on 7-point Likert scales (cognitive and behavioral jealousy: (1) *never* to (7) *all the time*; emotional jealousy: (1) *very pleased* to (7) *very upset*). As the scores in the scale increase, the degree of jealousy also increases. In our sample, the internal consistencies of the scale varied between 0.84 and 0.92.

2.2.3. Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire (RTS)

The RTS (Brinker & Dozois, 2009) is a 20-item measure of a general ruminative thought style. Respondents rate each item on how well it describes them using a Likert-type scale from (1) *not at all like me* to (7) *very well*. An increase in scores indicates an increase in ruminative thoughts. In this study, the internal consistency of the entire scale was 0.88.

2.2.4. Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

The RAS (Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998) consists of 7 items assessing relationship satisfaction. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) *not much* to (5) *very much*. High scores on the scale represent high relationship satisfaction. The internal consistency was 0.91 in the original form of the scale, and it was 0.81 in our sample.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive findings

The skewness values for the observed variables ranged from 0.025 to 1.093, and the scores of the kurtosis values were between 0.022 and 0.831. These values demonstrate that there were no problems in terms of normal distribution assumptions.

The ROCI, jealousy, ruminative thoughts, and relationship satisfaction score distributions were considered, and these scores were compared to scale means ([possible minimum score of the scale + possible maximum score of the scale] / 2) and related research results (see Table 1).

When we compared the sample means to the scale means, we found that the emotional jealousy, ruminative thoughts, and relationship satisfaction scores were higher than the scale means. However, in the first validation study in the Turkish sample, Curun (2001) found that the relationship satisfaction scores ranged from 38.36 to 44.94. Similarly, Karakurt (2001) found that the mean score of emotional jealousy was 39.4. It was also reported that the mean scores of ruminative thoughts ranged from 96.28 to 103.59 (Cimsir, 2019). Considering these distributions, we may state that the scores are not far from the average scores.

3.2. Sex differences

The ROCI love for the partner subscale score was higher in men ($\bar{X}=5.63$, $SE = 0.29$) than in women ($\bar{X}=4.39$, $SE = 0.29$) ($t[268] = -2.76$; $p = .006$; $d = -0.34$). Additionally, men ($\bar{X}=21.85$, $SE = 0.90$) reported more cognitive jealousy than women ($\bar{X}=18.06$, $SE = 1.15$) (t

Table 1

Descriptive statistics - distributions.

Measures	Minimum	Maximum	Scale mean	Sample mean	SD
ROCI-Love for the partner	0,00	16,00	8.00	4,89	3,69
ROCI-Relationship rightness	0,00	16,00	8.00	6,45	3,97
ROCI-Being loved by the partner	0,00	16,00	8.00	4,93	4,20
MJS-Emotional jealousy	7,00	49,00	28.00	34,68	14,67
MJS-Behavioral jealousy	8,00	56,00	32.00	23,96	10,91
MJS-Cognitive jealousy	8,00	56,00	32.00	19,59	11,81
Ruminative Thoughts	28,00	139,00	83.50	87,34	24,25
Relationship Satisfaction	7,00	49,00	28.00	33,93	9,25

[268] = -2.62 ; $p = .009$; $d = -0.33$). No significant differences emerged between the sexes in other variables.

3.3. Correlations

Pearson's correlations (Table 2) show that age was negatively correlated with behavioral jealousy, cognitive jealousy, and ruminative thoughts; relationship length was negatively correlated to all subscales of the ROCI, and cognitive jealousy was positively correlated to relationship satisfaction. The number of previous relationships was positively related only to the love for the partner subscale of the ROCI.

3.4. Mediation analyses

3.4.1. Testing the measurement model

In the measurement, the total scores of the ROCI subscales were presented as an observed variable for the latent variable of ROCI symptoms while the total scores of the MJS subscales were determined to be the observed variable for the jealousy latent variable. For the rumination and relationship satisfaction latent variables, parcels were assigned proportionally to the number of items since the scales that measure variables were on a one-dimensional structure. The parceling method was performed by assigning scales to the parcels in accordance with the determined number of parcels, depending on the item-total correlation values. The parceling method has been suggested if there is a single total score in a measurement (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002) because SEM is performed based on confirmatory factor analysis, and the model needs to present the latent variables with the observed variables. Zero-order correlations, means, and standard deviations for 11 observed variables in the model are shown in Table 3.

The results demonstrated that the correctness of fit values were acceptable (χ^2/df [53.86/38] = 1.42; $p = .046$; $GF = 0.97$; $CFI = 0.99$; $TLI = 0.99$; $RMSEA = 0.039$; 90% confidence interval for $RMSEA = 0.006-0.062$). All factor loads related to the observed variables of all latent variables were high and statistically significant (standardized values ranged from 0.44 to 0.91, $p < .001$; see Table 4).

Furthermore, correlations among all latent variables in the hypothesis model were statistically significant (see Table 5).

3.4.2. Testing the structural models

The structural models were tested to determine whether the relationship between ROCI symptoms and relationship satisfaction was mediated by both jealousy and ruminative thoughts. We also aimed to test the two sub-models: (1) rumination is a mediator in the relationship between ROCI symptoms and relationship satisfaction and jealousy; and (2) the relationship between rumination and relationship

Table 2

Correlations among age, relationship length, number of previous relationships, and all variables.

	ROCI			Jealousy			Ruminative thoughts	Relationship satisfaction
	Love for the partner	Relationship rightness	Being loved by the partner	Emotional jealousy	Behavioral jealousy	Cognitive jealousy		
1.Age	−0.01	−0.05	−0.05	−0.05	−.17**	−.13*	−.12*	0.02
2.Relationship length	−.20**	−.19**	−.21**	−0.07	−0.06	−.13*	−0.06	.19**
3.Number of previous relationships	.12*	0.07	0.05	0.01	0.07	0.04	0.03	−0.10

* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$.**Table 3**

Correlations, means, and standard deviations among 11 observed variables.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Love for the partner	4.89	3.69	–									
2. Relationship rightness	6.45	3.97	.69**	–								
3. Being loved by the partner	4.93	4.20	.65**	.73**	–							
4. Emotional jealousy	34.68	14.67	.20**	.19**	.23**	–						
5. Behavioral jealousy	23.59	10.75	.36**	.32**	.44**	.28**	–					
6. Cognitive jealousy	19.59	11.81	.32**	.31**	.39**	.32**	.43**	–				
7. Ruminative thoughts parcel1	30.61	8.94	.40**	.43**	.40**	.20**	.30**	.32**	–			
8. Ruminative thoughts parcel2	30.93	8.98	.32**	.35**	.32**	.21**	.28**	.27**	.81**	–		
9. Ruminative thoughts parcel3	25.80	8.14	.31**	.36**	.36**	.17**	.31**	.30**	.78**	.79**	–	
10. Relationship satisfaction parcel1	18.30	5.47	−.31**	−.34**	−.30**	−.14*	−.19*	−.35**	−.14*	−0.11	−0.11	–
11. Relationship satisfaction parcel2	15.64	4.44	−.35**	−.36**	−.30**	−0.11	−.12*	−.32**	−.15*	−0.11	−0.07	.73**

Notes. N=270.

* $p < .05$.** $p < .01$, N = 270.**Table 4**

Factor loadings, standard errors, and t-values for the measurement model.

Measure and variable	Unstandardized factor loading	SE	T	Standardized factor loading
Relationship obsessions and compulsions				
Love for the partner	1.00			0.85
Relationship rightness	0.97	0.06	16.19*	0.87
Being loved by the partner	0.82	0.06	14.56*	0.79
Jealousy				
Behavioral jealousy	1.00			0.62
Cognitive jealousy	1.23	0.16	7.32*	0.70
Emotional jealousy	0.95	0.17	5.45*	0.43
Ruminative thoughts				
Parcel1	1.00			0.91
Parcel2	1.01	0.05	21.75*	0.91
Parcel3	0.88	0.04	20.33*	0.87
Relationship satisfaction				
Parcel1	1.00			0.87
Parcel2	0.79	0.09	9.04*	0.85

* $p < .001$.**Table 5**

Correlations among the latent variables for the measurement model.

Latent variables	1	2	3
1. Relationship obsessions and compulsions	–		
2. Jealousy	.64*	–	
3. Ruminative thoughts	.49*	.50*	–
4. Relationship satisfaction	−.46*	−.45*	−.16*

* $p < .01$.

satisfaction is mediated by jealousy.

In this phase, the partially mediated model given in Fig. 1 was tested. Goodness fit values were found to be close to a perfect fit: χ^2/df (53.86/38) = 1.42; $p = .046$; GF = 0.97; CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.039 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.006–0.062). In the model where the fully mediated relations were also tested (the path from ROC to relationship satisfaction was excluded from the model), the goodness of fit values were also found to be close to perfect: χ^2/df (62.40/39) = 1.60; $p = .010$; GF = 0.96; CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.047 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.023–0.068). The chi-square difference test (8.54, 1; $p < .01$) indicated that the exclusion of the path caused a significant deterioration in the model, and thus the path remains in the ultimate model which is given in Fig. 2.

The path coefficient from ROCD symptoms to relationship satisfaction was $\beta = -0.33$ ($p < .05$), and it was $\beta = -0.46$ ($p < .05$) when the effects of the mediator variables on relationship satisfaction were fixed at 0 (see Table 4). Including mediators into the model reduced this path coefficient, but it was still significant. Therefore, these results showed that the relationship between ROCD symptoms and relationship satisfaction was partially mediated by jealousy and ruminative thoughts.

Similarly, the path coefficient from ROCD symptoms to jealousy was $\beta = 0.52$ ($p < .05$), and it was $\beta = 0.64$ ($p < .05$) when the effects of ruminative thoughts about jealousy were fixed at 0 (see the measurement model results in Table 4). Adding the mediator into the model decreased this path coefficient, but it remained significant. Thus, the model results showed that the relationship between ROCD symptoms and jealousy was partially mediated by ruminative thoughts.

Finally, the path coefficient from ruminative thoughts to relationship satisfaction was $\beta = 0.17$ ($p < .05$), and this path coefficient was calculated as $\beta = 0.16$ ($p < .05$) when the effects of ruminative thoughts about jealousy were fixed at 0 (see Table 4). In contrast, adding the mediator to the model converted this path from negative to positive, and it remained significant. Changing the opposite sign of the path coefficient is a suppression effect (Shrout & Bolger, 2002), which led to the effects of ROCD symptoms and jealousy on relationship satisfaction. Comparing their correlation coefficients to relationship satisfaction, the

Fig. 2. The structural model.

* $p < .05$. Standardized parameter estimates.

lowest coefficient was derived from ruminative thoughts. Mediation analyses showed that the relationship between ruminative thoughts and relationship satisfaction was partially mediated by jealousy.

3.4.3. Significance of indirect effects

To find evidence supporting meditation, a bootstrapping analysis was performed, and the results are given in Table 6.

As can be seen in Table 6, the bootstrapping analysis indicated that all indirect effects in the model were significant. In conclusion, ROCD symptoms and ruminative thoughts explained 45% of the variance in jealousy, and ROCD symptoms explained 24% of the variance in ruminative thoughts. All predictor variables together explained 27% of the variance of relationship satisfaction.

4. Discussion

The current study extends earlier work on the link between ROCD symptoms and relationship satisfaction by including jealousy and rumination. The findings have demonstrated that ROCD symptoms increase jealousy and ruminative thoughts, and relationship satisfaction is inversely associated with ROCD symptoms, jealousy, and ruminative thoughts. Additionally, ruminative thoughts increase jealousy. In terms

of mediation, the relationship between ROCD symptoms and relationship satisfaction is mediated by jealousy and ruminative thoughts, ruminative thoughts mediate the relationship between ROCD symptoms and jealousy, and jealousy plays a mediator role in the relationship between ruminative thoughts and relationship satisfaction.

As noted above, we found a negative link between ROCD symptoms and relationship satisfaction, and this finding is consistent with previous research (e.g., Doron, Derby, et al., 2012b; Doron, Mizrahi, et al., 2014). However, since ROCD is a newly-attributed concept in literature no findings have emerged that reveal a relationship between ROCD symptoms, jealousy, and rumination. Instead, there has been research covering both OC symptoms and jealousy. To illustrate, individuals with OCD have been found to have significantly higher levels of jealousy in intimate relationships than those without OCD (Marazziti et al., 2003). Another study documented that obsessive distrust, which widely occurs with other ROCD symptoms, is associated with higher levels of cognitive and behavioral jealousy (Brandes, Stern, & Doron, 2020). Despite the lack of studies showing the association between ROCD symptoms and ruminative thinking styles, there are several studies in which the relationship between OCD symptoms and ruminative thinking styles is emphasized (Wahl et al., 2011). Obsessions and compulsions, which are not about relationships, are associated with both a ruminative way of thinking and jealousy. Since ROCD symptoms are significantly associated with OCD symptoms (Doron, Derby, Szepeswol, Nahaloni, & Moulding, 2016; Doron, Derby, et al., 2012b; Doron, Szepeswol, Derby, & Nahaloni, 2012; Doron, Talmor, Szepeswol, & Derby, 2012), our findings are consistent with the literature as we have demonstrated that ruminative thinking and jealousy are predicted by ROCD symptoms.

Previous research has reported a strong negative association between cognitive jealousy and relationship satisfaction (Andersen, Eloy, Guerrero, & Spitzberg, 1995;) and a positive association between emotional jealousy and relationship satisfaction (Dandurand & Lafontaine, 2014) while other research has yielded more mixed findings demonstrating a negative correlation between marital satisfaction and all jealousy types, including cognitive, emotional, behavioral jealousy (Guerrero & Eloy, 1992). Such findings led us to carry out an in-depth examination of the possible interacting components relating to jealousy, such as a

Table 6
Mediation bootstrap test results for ruminative thoughts and jealousy.

Path (predictor - predicted)	Mediator	Path coefficient (β)	%95 CI
ROCD symptoms – relationship satisfaction	Ruminative thoughts and jealousy	-.33* (-.46*)	[-0.507, -0.226]
ROCD symptoms – jealousy	Ruminative thoughts	.52* (.64*)	[0.033, 0.193]
Ruminative thoughts – relationship satisfaction	Jealousy	.17* (-.16*)	[-0.283, -0.038]

Note. Bootstrap is based on 1000 resamples (Hayes, 2009). β = Standardized coefficients.

* $p < .05$.

ruminative thought style and ROCD symptoms. In the context of romantic relationships, jealousy is likely to be problematic once individuals hold jealous thoughts along with ROCD symptoms and ruminative thoughts, which might result in diminished relationship satisfaction.

Recently, rumination has been combined with obsession as “obsessive rumination,” which serves as a cognitive process and is characterized by repetitiveness, intrusiveness, and difficulty in controlling the ruminative thoughts (Wahl et al., 2011). Similarly, the terms “obsession” and “jealousy” have been conceptualized as the integrated term “obsessional jealousy” which refers to “repetitive behaviors or mental acts in response to the infidelity concerns” (APA, 2013, p. 264). Taken together, ruminating people are likely to respond to jealousy in different ways from those who do not ruminate (Carson & Cupach, 2000), and jealousy can stimulate rumination (Andersen et al., 1995). In this case, expectedly, the ruminative thinking style is increased by jealousy (Elphinston et al., 2013; Ötken, 2015). Both studies also suggest that the relationship between jealousy and relationship satisfaction is mediated by a ruminative thinking style. To this end, our findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating inverse associations between jealousy, rumination, and relationship satisfaction (e.g., Andersen et al., 1995; Carson & Cupach, 2000; Dandurand & Lafontaine, 2014; Guerrero & Eloy, 1992). In summary, having jealous tendencies and ruminative thoughts can exacerbate an already distressing association between ROCD and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, jealousy and rumination can add another layer of complexity to an already distressed relationship.

In this study, the variance explained for ROCD is relatively low, at 27%. Not surprisingly, this finding indicates that there are potential predictors of ROCD, but these are not addressed in this study. In this regard, the primary variable can be adult attachment styles as these considerably influence intimate relationships. Additionally, the quality of the relationship between parents, which affects an individual's schemas regarding relationships, and the individual's personality traits can be effective in explaining ROCD symptoms.

As for the limitations of this study, it is worth mentioning that the study did not comprise clinical samples, and the scores of non-clinical samples were tested without regard to their previous intimate relationship experiences. Another limitation of this study is that the relationships included in this study were heterosexual. Additionally, although the utilization of SEM was a noteworthy strength of the present research, our design was correlational and cross-sectional, and thus any causal inferences cannot be derived from the findings. Finally, this study is limited to self-report data, and one of the subscales of the ROCI has a marginal internal consistency. Despite these limitations, this study provides recommendations for mental health professionals working with individuals experiencing ROCD symptoms, rumination, and romantic jealousy.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Nurseven Kılıç conceptualized the research questions, designed the studies, and wrote and edited the paper. Ahmet Altınok conceptualized the research questions, planned & conducted data analyses, and edited the paper.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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