Deree · The American College of Greece · Psychology Department

Relational Entitlement and *Online Jealousy* in Emerging Adults: The Mediating Role of Social Media Use Intensity

Pinelopi Nikoleta Kolyda · **Konstantina Michail** · **Ioanna Michalopoulou** · Supervisor: Dr. Sissy Karakitsou

KEYWORDS: Relational Entitlement | Online Jealousy | Social Media Use Intensity | Emerging Adults | Mediation Analysis

1 BACKGROUND

Relational entitlement reflects one's sense of deservingness within romantic relationships, manifesting in two forms:

Inflated Entitlement (IE)
Excessive expectations, possessiveness, demands a partner prioritise one's needs. Linked to suspicious jealousy, controlling behaviour, and anxious attachment.

Restricted Entitlement (RE)
Self-suppression, feelings of undeservingness, reluctance to voice needs. Linked to avoidant patterns and emotional withdrawal.

Online Jealousy (OJ)
Romantic jealousy triggered specifically within social media environments.

Social Media Use Intensity (I-SMU)
Integration of social media platforms in an individual's daily life.

Social media platforms intensify relational threat cues through publicly visible partner interactions (likes, follows, comments) enabling surveillance behaviours correlated with jealousy and attachment insecurity. No prior study had examined whether entitlement predicts jealousy in digital contexts.

2 HYPOTHESES

This study examined associations between relational entitlement (IE/RE) and online jealousy (OJ) in emerging adults, and whether social media use intensity (I-SMU) mediates the IE → OJ link.

H1

IE will be positively associated with OJ. RE will show no or a negative association with OJ.

H2

I-SMU will mediate the IE → OJ association: higher IE predicts greater I-SMU, which in turn predicts higher OJ. No mediation expected for RE.

Theoretical grounding: IE overlaps with anxious attachment and threat-monitoring; RE with avoidant attachment and relational withdrawal. Social media may amplify IE-driven vigilance through continuous visibility of partner behaviour.

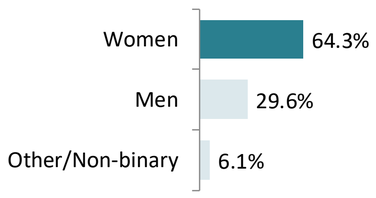
3 METHOD

Cross-Sectional Survey
Predictors: IE, RE · Mediator: I-SMU · Outcome: OJ

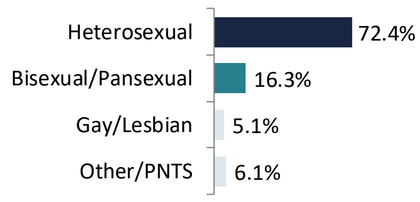
98 Emerging adults

18–29 Age range M=22.46, SD=2.45

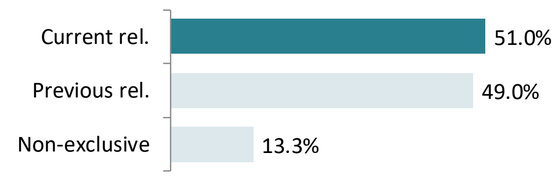
Gender (%)



Sexual Orientation (%)



Relationship Status (%)



SRE-R	Sense of Relational Entitlement Scale – Revised; 15 items (IE: 8, RE: 7); 5-pt Likert	α=.87 /.89
DJS	Digital Jealousy Scale; 9 items; 6-pt Likert (online jealousy)	α=.90
SMUIS	Social Media Use Integration Scale; 10 items; 6-pt Likert (I-SMU)	α=.88

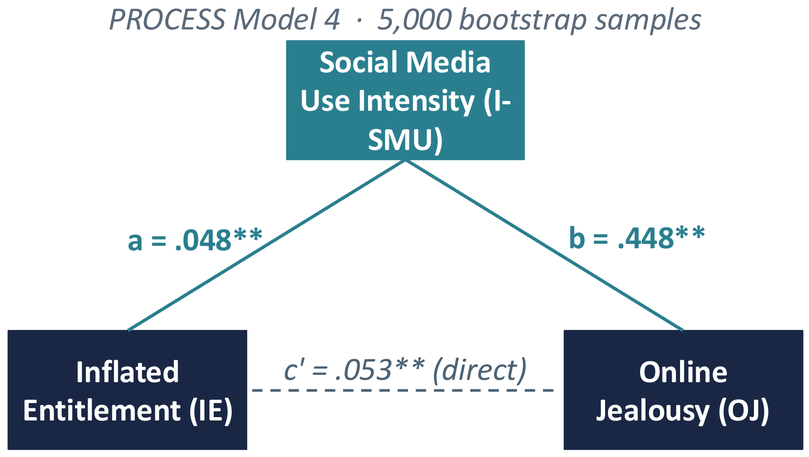
4 RESULTS

20.43 IE Mean SD=7.10 | **16.94** RE Mean SD=6.98 | **2.91** OJ Mean SD=1.19 | **3.61** I-SMU Mean SD=1.03

Correlation	r(96)	p/Effect
Inflated Entitlement → Online Jealousy	.443**	<.001 Moderate
Restricted Entitlement → Online Jealousy	.253*	.006 Small
Restricted Entitlement → Online Jealousy (controlling for Inflated Entitlement)	.181	.075 Non-significant
Inflated Entitlement → Social Media Use Intensity	.331**	<.001 Moderate
Social Media Use Intensity → Online Jealousy	.490**	<.001 Moderate

*Note: one-tailed p-values IE/RE → OJ and IE → I-SMU; two-tailed IE–RE. Normality assumed (N = 98). *p < .05. **p < .01*

PROCESS Model 4 · 5,000 bootstrap samples



Indirect effect (IE → I-SMU → OJ) = .022 | 95% CI [.006, .038] | Boot SE = .008

Overall model	**R^2 = .33**	F(2, 95) = 23.26, p < .001
Total effect	**b = .075**	SE = .015, p < .001
Direct effect c'	**b = .053**	SE = .015, p = .001

*Sensitivity (G*Power): minimum detectable R^2 = .09 at 80% power; observed R^2 = .33, adequately powered.*

5 DISCUSSION

H1 Partially Supported

IE significantly and moderately predicted OJ, consistent with theoretical links to possessiveness and threat-vigilance. Entitlement-driven expectations may heighten sensitivity to ambiguous partner interactions online.

RE showed a small unexpected positive association, potentially reflecting cognitive jealousy through rumination rather than behavioural expression. The effect became non-significant when controlling for IE, suggesting shared variance rather than a unique RE effect.

H2 Supported

I-SMU partially mediated the IE to OJ link, indicating that more deeply integrated social media use is one pathway through which inflated entitlement activates online jealousy. IE also retained a significant direct effect, suggesting multiple routes through which entitlement shapes digital relational experiences.

6 CONCLUSIONS & LIMITATIONS

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- Entitlement-based relational processes extend into digital contexts, with IE predicting OJ both directly and via I-SMU.
- Social media use intensity is one mechanism through which inflated entitlement heightens online jealousy in emerging adults.
- RE's small positive association with OJ may reflect internal jealousy rumination despite behavioural withdrawal; the effect disappears when controlling for IE.
- Findings support incorporating social media processes and entitlement dimensions into models of online relational jealousy.

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Convenience sampling limits generalisability to broader or more diverse populations.
- Cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; longitudinal designs are needed.
- No partner-report or behavioural log data; dyadic and observational methods are recommended.
- Future research should test multi-path models including jealousy dimensions, disclosure scales, and additional mediating mechanisms.

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p.kolyda@acg.edu · konstantina.michail@acg.edu · t.michalopoulou@acg.edu