

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Comparative Examination of Romantic Jealousy and Aggression Levels of Adult Individuals with and without Childhood Trauma

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## ABSTRACT

Childhood traumas are defined as the negative effects of sexual, emotional, physical abuse, emotional and physical neglect on the psychology and development of the individual under the age of 18. Romantic jealousy is defined as the individual's suspicion between his partner and a real or unusual person or as the individual's reaction to a threat to the romantic relationship. Aggression is defined as a harmful behavior. While the concept of aggression, in which the behavior is at the forefront, is expressed as an attitude that harms other people, in the definitions where the intention is at the forefront, it is defined as the attitudes and actions taken with the aim of hurting. In this study, it is aimed to comparatively examine the romantic jealousy and aggression levels of adult individuals with and without childhood traumas. This study was prepared in accordance with the correlational survey model. The sample selection of the study was made using simple-random sample selection type. The sample group of the study consists of 400 adult individuals in Istanbul. Participants were selected simple-randomly. The data collection process of the research took place in 2021. According to the findings obtained from the research, individuals with childhood trauma score higher in physical, emotional, cognitive, speaking, reprimand, dependency, indifference, positive effects, negative effects, sense of inadequacy, fear of loss, disruptive, assertiveness and passiveness sub-dimensions compared to individuals without childhood trauma. This situation reveals that individuals with childhood trauma have higher levels of romantic jealousy and aggression.

**Keywords:** Childhood traumas, romantic jealousy, aggression, jealousy

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of childhood traumas dates back to ancient times in human history. Child neglect and abuse, which is defined as the negative attitudes and behaviors of parents and adults that have a negative impact on the development of the child, is observed in all cultures. (Kara, Biçer and Gökalp, 2004) It is defined with the concepts of physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect during childhood or young adulthood. Any attitude and behavior that will adversely affect the emotional, physical, social and mental development of individuals under the age of 18 is considered abuse. Ignoring, disproportionately presenting or not meeting the needs such as nutrition, sheltering, health, safety, care and education is also stated as neglect (Demirkapı, 2013). As a result of this action or inaction state, the child's mental, social, sexual and physical development is adversely affected, and her health and safety are under threat (Helvacı and Hocoğlu, 2018; 695). It is observed that the child who has been physically abused damaged from social functioning, and that these children have difficulty in establishing intimacy, have low emotional intensity, and establishing relationships that include anger and abuse. Criminal and aggressive tendencies are among the biggest signs of physical abuse. Suicide attempts and suicidal ideas are more common in individuals who have been physically abused (Kaplan et al., 1999; 1214).

It is also known that emotional abuse causes other types of abuse (Taner & Gökler, 2004). Emotional abuse is expressed as the most difficult type of abuse to understand clearly. Although the concepts of emotional abuse and emotional neglect seem to be intertwined, the concept of emotional neglect is expressed as the inability of the child

to receive the love and attention they need, and the failure to meet these needs by the caregiver or the parents. (Yiğit and Erden, 2015). On the other hand, emotional abuse is defined as the lack of attention, love and care that the child needs, and the psychological harm to the child as a result of not meeting these needs. It is seen that the feelings of staying away from family and caregivers, tension, addiction, incompatibility, anger, aggression and worthlessness are dominant in children who are faced with emotional abuse (Topbaş, 2004). The concept of aggression is expressed as actions involving emotional or physical harm directed against any living or inanimate figure (Çelik, 2006). According to Budak (2017), aggression includes all kinds of attitudes and behaviors that come from feelings of anger, rivalry, hostility and that are done with the aim of harming the individual.

The concept of romantic jealousy is a subject that has been involved in psychology for years. It is often seen as a factor that negatively affects feelings about love. Although it is thought that individuals aim to protect their relationships, it produces negative results (Tortamış, 2014). Romantic jealousy arises not as a result of losing the existing romantic relationship to someone else, but even in the possibility of such a situation. It is defined as the whole of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that threaten the romantic relationship and the self-integrity of the person, which is perceived by the person with whom the person has a romantic relationship, a real or unrealistic rival, or due to the possible romantic relationship. Although the variety and frequency of romantic jealousy seems to be an ongoing feeling to individuals, it is known that it creates different jealousies that are not always passion. The basis of jealousy is the beloved partner in the relationship.

Judgments, wishes, fantasies and behaviors, which are among the factors accompanying and supporting jealousy, are directed to the first person to fall in love. Jealousy arises according to the integrity of the relationship. The traditions of the society have a great importance in the social and cultural factors that make up the relationship between the jealous individual and his partner (Mullen, 1990).

The factors that reveal jealousy are related to the person's identity and self-perception. The origin of the feeling of jealousy is based on the feeling of powerlessness and deprivation of the love that will reveal the feeling of being desired, in childhood or youth. Jealousy emerges as a reaction to the event when the person is helpless and humiliated (Blévis & Heal, 2009). It is observed that individuals who experience intense jealousy are often neurotic, anxious, dependent, upset, insecure, dogmatic, humble, external locus of control, dissatisfied with life, and have negative thoughts towards the external world. (Mathes, Phillips, Skowarn and Dick, 1982;). Romantic jealousy often includes many negative emotions such as fear, sadness, suffering, anger, humiliation, disappointment, grief, shame, nervousness, rage, hatred, envy, self-blame, helplessness, embarrassment, comparison, misfortune, self-pity and insecurity in individuals. (Silva, 1997). In their study, White and Mullen (1989) noticed about the basic emotions associated with romantic jealousy and the emotions described as negative. These feelings, which are described as negative listed as; raging emotions such as disgust, hatred and anger; fear expressing anxiety and sadness; grief involving helplessness; envy that expresses resentment; sexual

arousal that reflects desire and lust; guilt, which includes regret and shame (Guerrero, 1998). Apart from the cognitive and emotional consequences, the negative aspects of the concept of romantic jealousy emerge in behavioral situations and cause individuals to enact attitudes and behaviors that they would not do in a normal time period (Carson & Cupach, 2000). It is obvious that childhood traumas have many negative effects in terms of cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects. In this context, the main purpose of the study is to compare the romantic jealousy and aggression levels of adult individuals with and without childhood traumas. The purpose of choosing this subject is to examine the subject from a different perspective than previous studies. In addition, there is a need for more studies on the relationship between childhood traumas and romantic jealousy and aggression levels in the field. It is thought that the information to be obtained through this study will benefit both those studying in the field and adults. It is thought that this research will have a guiding effect on future research.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

**Model:** This research was prepared in accordance with the correlational survey model. It aims to determine the existence and/or degree of co-variation between two or more variables.

**Participants:** Sample selection of the study was made using simple-random sample selection type. The population of the research consists of adult individuals in Istanbul. The sample group of the study consists of 400 adult individuals

in Istanbul. Participants were selected at random. The research data collection process took place in 2021. Participation criteria: Being over the age of 18 and residing in Istanbul. The study was conducted after the participants approved the informed consent form. Approval was obtained from the ethics committee of Istanbul Aydın University for the application of the scales to the participants. It took approximately 15 minutes for the participants to answer the questions. The data were filled online via the Google form. The information of the participants is kept confidential.

### Measures:

**Demographic Information Questionnaire:** In the Questionnaire prepared by the researcher, questions such as age, gender, educational status, and financial income levels were included.

**Childhood Trauma Questionnaire:** The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, developed by Bernstein in 1994, was reduced from 70 items to 28 items. The scale adapted into Turkish by Şar et al. in 1996 is, a five-point Likert-type self-report scale. This scale, which includes items measuring sexual, emotional, physical and verbal violence in childhood, has five sub-dimensions: emotional, sexual, physical abuse, emotional and physical neglect. (Shar et al., 1996).

**Romantic Jealousy Scale:** The scale was developed by Pines and Aronson in 1983. The scale, which was developed to measure various dimensions of jealousy, is a comprehensive scale that includes a total of 5 subscales; Jealousy Triggers (22 items)", "Reactions to Jealousy (59 items)", "Methods of Coping with Jealousy (17 items)", "Effects of Jealousy (15 items)" and "Causes of Jealousy (16 items)". The tool is likert type and has 7 steps (Pines and Aronson, 1983). Demirtaş (2006) carried out studies on the adaptation of the scale to Turkish.

**The Aggression Inventory:** The inventory includes three sub-dimensions for destructive aggression, assertiveness and passive aggression. Items on destructive aggression are 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24, 29.

Assertiveness-related items are 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 19, 20, 21, 28. Items related to passive aggression are 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 25, 26, 27, 30. The Turkish adaptation, validity and reliability studies of the scale were conducted by Can (2002) and the Cronbach alpha value was found as 0.915 (Can, 2002).

**Data Analysis:** First, the data was transferred to SPSS and then the analyzes were performed. To determine the use of parametric or non-parametric analysis, normality test was applied and kurtosis-skewness values were examined. According to George and Mallery (2010), skewness and kurtosis values between -2 and +2 are sufficient to meet the normal distribution condition. According to Groeneveld and Meeden (1984), Moors (1986), Hopkins and Weeks (1990) and De Carlo (1997), -3 and +3 are sufficient to meet the normal distribution condition. After deciding on the normal distribution, it was decided to use parametric analyzes. The relationships between Pearson Correlation Analysis and Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, Romantic Jealousy Scale and Aggression Inventory were investigated. The confidence interval used for all analyzes was determined as 95%.

**RESULT**

Table 1: Comparison of Scores Obtained from Aggression Scale according to Childhood Trauma Variable

		n	$\bar{X}$	Ss.	t	Sd.	p
Assertiveness	people with no childhood trauma	216	16.20	6.10	-8.18	298.00	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	22.98	9.72			
Passiveness	people with no childhood trauma	216	19.76	7.24	-4.71	327.15	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	23.94	10.01			
Destructiveness	people with no childhood trauma	216	20.38	7.49	-6.12	323.06	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	26.08	10.56			

\*p<0.05 Independent T-Test Samples

The scores they got from the Destructiveness Sub-Dimension, Assertiveness Sub-Dimension and the Passiveness Sub-Dimension differ significantly depending on whether there is a childhood trauma or not. When the

means are compared, it is seen that those with childhood trauma score higher than those without childhood trauma.

Table 2: Comparison of Scores Obtained from Jealousy Triggers Sub-Scale According to Childhood Trauma Variable

		n	$\bar{X}$	Ss.	t	Sd.	p
type 1 trigger	people with no childhood trauma	216	36.27	12.59	-0.30	349.722	0.763
	people with childhood trauma	184	36.71	15.66			
type 2 trigger	people with no childhood trauma	216	37.79	14.31	-0.40	398	0.690
	people with childhood trauma	184	38.38	15.17			
type 3 trigger	people with no childhood trauma	216	26.54	12.93	-1.87	398	0.062
	people with childhood trauma	184	28.97	13.05			

\*p<0.05 Independent T-Test Samples

When the findings are examined, the sub-dimensions of First Type Triggers, Second Type Triggers and Third Type Triggers do not differ significantly according to the

variable of whether there is a childhood trauma or not (p>0.05).

Table 3: Comparison of the Scores Obtained from the Responses to Jealousy Subscale according to the Variable of Childhood Trauma or not

		n	$\bar{X}$	Ss.	t	Sd.	p
Physical Responses	people with no childhood trauma	216	37.23	17.11	-8.24	302.99	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	56.01	26.56			
Emotional Responses	people with no childhood trauma	216	67.86	34.98	-4.28	361.43	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	84.36	41.10			
Cognitive Responses	people with no childhood trauma	216	44.38	20.33	-4.26	363.30	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	53.85	23.66			

\*p<0.05 Independent T-Test Samples

Physical Responses Subscale (t(302.99)=-8.24, p<0.05), Emotional Responses subscale (t(361.43)=-4.28, p<0.05), Cognitive Responses subscale (t(363.30)=-4.26, p<0.05) scores differ significantly depending on whether

there is a childhood trauma or not. When the means are compared, it is seen that those with childhood trauma score higher than those without childhood trauma.

Table 4: Comparison of the Scores Obtained from the Methods of Coping with Jealousy with Jealousy Subscale according to the Variable of Childhood Trauma or not

		n	$\bar{X}$	Ss.	t	Sd.	p
Conversation	people with no childhood trauma	216	6.75	3.37	-3.98	354.02	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	8.27	4.11			
Chide	people with no childhood trauma	216	15.78	7.09	-4.91	348.93	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	19.76	8.85			
Fidelity	people with no childhood trauma	216	9.88	5.88	-4.05	359.41	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	12.53	6.98			
Indifference	people with no childhood trauma	216	6.71	3.88	-4.65	309.45	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	9.06	5.83			

\*p<0.05 Independent T-Test Samples

Conversation subscale ( $t(354.02)=-3.98, p<0.05$ ), Chide subscale ( $t(348.93)=-4.91, p<0.05$ ), Fidelity subscale ( $t(359.41)=-4.05, p<0.05$ ), Indifference subscale ( $t(309.45)=-4.65, p<0.05$ ) scores are differ significantly

according to the variable of whether there is a childhood trauma or not. When the means are compared, it is seen that those with childhood trauma score higher than those without childhood trauma.

Table 5: Comparison of the Scores Obtained from the Positive and Negative Effects of Jealousy Sub-scale by the Childhood Trauma Variable

		n	$\bar{X}$	Ss.	t	Sd.	p
Positive Effects	people with no childhood trauma	216	18.97	10.31	-3.44	398	0.001*
	people with childhood trauma	184	22.51	10.22			
Negative Effects	people with no childhood trauma	216	28.44	12.32	-3.57	398	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	32.78	11.88			

\* $p<0.05$  Independent T-Test Samples

The scores obtained from the Positive Effects Sub-Dimension ( $t(398)=-3.44, p<0.05$ ) and the Negative Effects Sub-Dimension ( $t(398)=-3.57, p<0.05$ ) differ significantly depending on whether there is childhood trauma or not.

When the means are compared, it is seen that those with childhood trauma score higher than those without childhood trauma.

Table 6: Comparison of the Scores Obtained from the Causes of Jealousy Subscale according to the Variable of Childhood Trauma or not

		n	$\bar{X}$	Ss.	t	Sd.	p
Feeling of Inadequacy	people with no childhood trauma	216	27.92	15.14	-2.50	398	0.013*
	people with childhood trauma	184	31.65	14.62			
Fear of Abandonment	people with no childhood trauma	216	18.08	10.43	-4.30	398	0.000*
	people with childhood trauma	184	22.64	10.67			

\* $p<0.05$  Independent T-Test Samples

The scores they got from the Feeling of Inadequacy Sub-Dimension ( $t(398)=-2.50, p<0.05$ ) and the Fear of Abandonment Sub-Dimension ( $t(398)=-4.30, p<0.05$ ) differ significantly according to the variable of having childhood trauma or not. When the means are compared, it is seen that those with childhood trauma score higher than those without childhood trauma.

## DISCUSSION

When the scores obtained from the romantic Jealousy Scale and the Aggression Inventory were examined according to the variable of whether there was childhood trauma or not, it was found that individuals with childhood trauma scored higher on the sub-dimensions of physical, emotional, cognitive, conservation, chide, fidelity, indifference, positive effects, negative effects, feeling of inadequacy, fear of abandonment, destructiveness, assertiveness and passiveness compared to individuals with childhood trauma. This findings reveal that individuals with Childhood Trauma have higher levels of romantic jealousy and aggression. When the literature studies related to the subject are examined;

Violence is seen as one of the traumas created by human beings. (Kira, 2001). As seen in the previous sections, traumas caused by human beings have a very heavy impact on people and can cause mental problems. (Aker, 2006; Aker et al., 2008; Eşsizoğlu et al., 2009; Özgen and Aydın, 1999; Megias et al., 2007).

Ayan's (2007) research findings examining the aggression tendencies of children exposed to domestic violence reveal that individuals who are exposed to violence and abuse have a higher tendency to aggression. The results of Algül et al.'s (2009) study examining the

relationship between self-mutilative behavior, aggression, childhood traumas and dissociation in patients with antisocial personality disorder showed that, there was a positive relationship between verbal aggression, anger and indirect aggression, which are sub-dimensions of Aggression Inventory, and the absence of a history of childhood trauma. It was determined that there is a significant relationship between the presence of childhood trauma and aggression sub-dimensions. In the study of Bilim et al. (2012) in which they examined childhood traumatic experiences, emotion regulation, interpersonal style and general psychological health, it was observed that there was a significant relationship between trait anger and aggression scores and childhood trauma experience. According to the findings of this research, it was determined that individuals who exhibit aggressive behaviors are exposed to their parents' anger and neglect attitudes (Bilim et al, 2012). Duran and Ünsal (2014) also obtained results revealing that there is a significant relationship between childhood traumas and aggression.

When the studies dealing with the relationship between romantic jealousy and Childhood Traumas are examined; In the findings of the study by Main et al., it was concluded that individuals with secure attachment who were not exposed to childhood trauma are more comfortable and intimate in their romantic relationships; It has been determined that individuals with a history of childhood trauma have more physical and emotional jealousy (Main et al., 1985). The results of the study by Widom et al also show that individuals with childhood trauma are more jealous in their emotional relationships (Widom, Czaja, Kozakowski, & Chauhan, 2018). The results of Beck et al.'s study show that individuals with

secure attachment and no history of neglect or abuse in childhood have healthier romantic relationships. It has been observed that individuals who were exposed to neglect and abuse by their parents or caregivers during their childhood showed more jealousy and were not intimate in their relationships (Beck, Davis, & Freeman, 2015). When the findings of the studies were examined, it was determined that they obtained results that support our hypothesis.

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