



Testing a Dyadic Model of Romantic Jealousy, Reassurance Seeking, Partner Monitoring, and Relationship Instability

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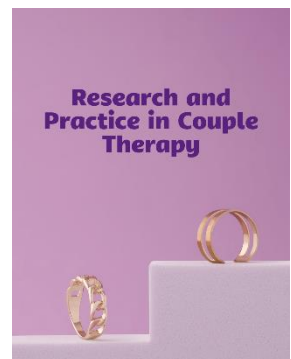
ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to test a dyadic model examining the direct and indirect associations among romantic jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring, and relationship instability by simultaneously evaluating actor and partner effects within romantic couples. This cross-sectional correlational study was conducted among 412 romantic couples (N = 824 individuals) residing in the United States. Participants were recruited through online platforms, community organizations, and university participant pools and were required to be at least 18 years old and involved in a committed romantic relationship for a minimum of six months. Data were collected using the Multidimensional Jealousy Scale, Reassurance-Seeking Scale, Partner Monitoring Scale, and Marital Instability Index. Descriptive statistics, reliability analyses, and Pearson correlations were performed using SPSS version 29. Dyadic relationships among variables were examined through the Actor–Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) within a structural equation modeling framework using AMOS version 29. Model fit was evaluated using χ^2/df , CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR indices, and indirect effects were tested through bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples. Results indicated significant positive associations among romantic jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring, and relationship instability (all $p < .001$). The proposed dyadic structural model demonstrated excellent fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.24$, CFI = .967, TLI = .961, RMSEA = .039, SRMR = .041). Actor effects revealed that romantic jealousy significantly predicted reassurance seeking ($\beta = .53$, $p < .001$), partner monitoring ($\beta = .49$, $p < .001$), and relationship instability ($\beta = .17$, $p < .001$). Reassurance seeking ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$) and partner monitoring ($\beta = .42$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted relationship instability. Significant partner effects were also observed, indicating that one partner's jealousy predicted the other partner's monitoring behaviors ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$) and relationship instability ($\beta = .18$, $p = .001$), while partner monitoring predicted the partner's instability ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$). Bootstrapping analyses confirmed significant indirect effects of jealousy on relationship instability through reassurance seeking ($\beta = .11$, $p < .001$) and partner monitoring ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$). The findings support a comprehensive dyadic model in which romantic jealousy contributes to relationship instability both directly and indirectly through reassurance-seeking and partner-monitoring behaviors. The results highlight the importance of considering emotional insecurity as an interpersonal process that affects both members of a romantic dyad. Reassurance seeking and monitoring behaviors appear to function as key mechanisms through which jealousy undermines relationship stability. These findings underscore the value of dyadic perspectives in relationship research and suggest that interventions targeting insecurity, excessive reassurance seeking, and partner surveillance may enhance relationship functioning and long-term stability.

Keywords: Romantic jealousy; reassurance seeking; partner monitoring; relationship instability; Actor–Partner Interdependence Model; dyadic analysis; attachment insecurity; romantic relationships; electronic partner surveillance.

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Introduction

Romantic relationships represent one of the most influential interpersonal contexts across adulthood, providing opportunities for emotional intimacy, mutual support, identity development, and psychological well-being. The quality and stability of romantic relationships have been consistently associated with mental health outcomes, life satisfaction, and overall functioning. However, relationship stability is not determined solely by positive interpersonal experiences; rather, it is shaped by a complex interaction of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral processes that occur within and between partners. Among the relational experiences that have attracted considerable scholarly attention, romantic jealousy has emerged as a particularly important construct due to its association with relationship distress, conflict, emotional insecurity, and relational dissolution (Maras et al., 2024; Wildey et al., 2026). Understanding how jealousy contributes to relationship instability and identifying the interpersonal mechanisms through which it operates remain critical objectives for contemporary relationship science.

Romantic jealousy is generally conceptualized as a complex emotional response that arises when individuals perceive a threat to a valued romantic relationship. Such threats may be real or imagined and often involve concerns regarding a partner's emotional or sexual involvement with alternative partners. Although jealousy may serve adaptive functions by motivating individuals to protect important relationships, excessive or chronic jealousy has been linked to numerous negative outcomes, including relationship dissatisfaction, emotional distress, hostility, and interpersonal dysfunction (Blayney & Burgess, 2023; Wildey et al., 2026). Recent evidence suggests that jealousy is not merely a transient emotional reaction but rather a dynamic relational process that fluctuates within individuals and across relationships while also demonstrating substantial stability over time (Wildey et al., 2026). These findings highlight the importance of examining jealousy within broader relational systems rather than treating it solely as an individual-level phenomenon.

The increasing integration of digital communication technologies into daily life has further transformed the experience and expression of romantic jealousy. Social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and online social networks have created new opportunities for individuals to monitor partners, compare themselves with perceived rivals, and seek information about relationship threats. Research has demonstrated that attachment anxiety predicts heightened social media jealousy and electronic partner surveillance, both of which contribute to lower relationship satisfaction and increased relational distress (Métellus et al., 2025). Similarly, social networking activities have been associated with attachment-related insecurities and heightened emotional stress, suggesting that digital environments may amplify vulnerability to jealousy-related concerns (Langlais et al., 2023; Stöven & Herzberg, 2023). Moreover, social media interactions increasingly shape interpersonal perceptions and emotional experiences within close relationships, creating novel contexts in which jealousy may emerge and persist (Nesi et al., 2023).

Attachment theory provides one of the most influential frameworks for understanding jealousy and related relationship behaviors. According to attachment perspectives, individuals develop internal working models of self and others based on early relational experiences, and these models subsequently influence emotional regulation, interpersonal expectations, and relationship functioning throughout life (Malik et al., 2021). Individuals characterized by attachment anxiety tend to fear abandonment and rejection, leading them to become hypervigilant to signs of relationship threat. In contrast, individuals with attachment avoidance often minimize emotional dependence while struggling with intimacy and trust. Extensive evidence indicates that attachment insecurity contributes to relational distress, maladaptive coping strategies, and interpersonal dysfunction across diverse relationship contexts (Karaköse & Ledermann, 2026; Overall et al., 2022).

Research has consistently demonstrated that attachment insecurity is associated with jealousy-related processes. Individuals with anxious attachment report heightened sensitivity to potential relationship threats, greater emotional reactivity, and

increased concerns regarding partner availability and commitment. Attachment insecurity has also been linked to conflict escalation, emotional flooding, relationship dissatisfaction, and vulnerability to relationship instability (Morgan & Woodin, 2025; Overall et al., 2021; Pudelko et al., 2025). Furthermore, attachment-related vulnerabilities frequently spill over between partners, affecting both individual and relational outcomes. Contemporary dyadic research suggests that attachment insecurity is not solely an individual characteristic but a relational process that shapes the experiences of both members of a couple (Morgan et al., 2024; Overall et al., 2022).

One behavioral manifestation of attachment-related insecurity is reassurance seeking. Reassurance seeking refers to the tendency to repeatedly seek confirmation, validation, and evidence of acceptance from significant others. Although occasional reassurance seeking may promote intimacy and emotional connection, excessive reassurance seeking can place strain on relationships by creating cycles of dependency, frustration, and relational uncertainty. Research indicates that reassurance seeking is strongly associated with attachment anxiety, reduced interpersonal trust, and psychological vulnerability (Bui & Moscovitch, 2024; Evraire et al., 2022). Individuals who experience persistent fears of rejection may seek continual reassurance from romantic partners in an attempt to regulate emotional distress and alleviate uncertainty. However, such behaviors may paradoxically undermine relationship quality by reinforcing insecurity rather than resolving it.

Recent developments in relationship research have highlighted the broader construct of support-seeking behaviors within romantic partnerships. The development of the Romantic Support-Seeking Scale has provided empirical evidence that support-seeking processes are central to relationship functioning and emotional regulation within intimate relationships (Perks et al., 2025). While support seeking can facilitate adaptive coping and relational closeness, excessive reassurance seeking may represent a maladaptive variant characterized by persistent doubts regarding one's worthiness of love and a partner's commitment. Consequently, reassurance seeking may constitute an important mechanism through which jealousy contributes to relationship instability. Another behavioral response frequently associated with jealousy is partner monitoring. Partner monitoring involves efforts to observe, track, verify, or scrutinize a partner's behaviors, communications, social interactions, and activities. Advances in digital technology have expanded opportunities for monitoring behaviors, making surveillance more accessible and pervasive than in previous generations. Studies have shown that attachment anxiety, social media jealousy, and electronic partner surveillance are closely interconnected processes that influence relationship outcomes (Métellus et al., 2025). Individuals experiencing jealousy may engage in monitoring behaviors as a strategy to reduce uncertainty and gain information about perceived threats. However, these behaviors often increase suspicion, intensify conflict, and erode trust within relationships.

The significance of monitoring behaviors has been further illustrated in studies examining cyber dating violence, digital dating abuse, and problematic relationship behaviors. Romantic attachment insecurity has been associated with cyber dating violence among adolescents and young adults, with dyadic analyses indicating that attachment-related vulnerabilities contribute to maladaptive digital relationship behaviors (Laforte et al., 2023). Similarly, jealousy has been identified as a significant predictor of digital dating abuse within romantic partnerships (Maras et al., 2024). Research examining reactions to perceived partner phubbing has also demonstrated that individuals characterized by narcissistic tendencies exhibit heightened emotional responses to perceived threats to relational attention and validation (Hart et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings suggest that monitoring and surveillance behaviors may represent critical pathways linking emotional insecurity to relationship dysfunction.

Relationship instability refers to uncertainty regarding the future of a relationship and includes thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with relationship dissolution. Instability is a multidimensional construct influenced by emotional, cognitive, interpersonal, and contextual factors. Previous studies have identified attachment insecurity, relationship dissatisfaction, conflict processes, and relational transgressions as important predictors of relationship instability and

dissolution risk (Conradi et al., 2021; Jean et al., 2024). Furthermore, obsessive concerns regarding romantic relationships have been shown to predict marital instability, highlighting the importance of examining cognitive and emotional vulnerabilities that threaten relational security (Genç, 2026).

The interpersonal consequences of insecurity extend beyond individual experiences and often operate through dyadic processes. Dyadic frameworks emphasize that romantic partners mutually influence one another's emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. For example, partner attachment insecurity predicts poorer relationship functioning during periods of heightened stress, and these effects often spill over between partners (Overall et al., 2021). Similarly, research examining forgiveness, attachment, conflict, and relationship satisfaction has demonstrated that actor and partner effects contribute simultaneously to relationship outcomes (Conradi, 2022; Rigby & Cobb, 2022). Such findings underscore the necessity of employing dyadic approaches when investigating relationship phenomena.

The Actor–Partner Interdependence Model has emerged as one of the most widely used analytical frameworks for examining dyadic processes. This approach allows researchers to evaluate both actor effects, in which an individual's characteristics influence their own outcomes, and partner effects, in which one partner's characteristics influence the outcomes of the other partner. Dyadic analyses have been successfully applied to the study of attachment, mindfulness, conflict, aggression, infidelity attitudes, relationship satisfaction, and psychological adjustment (Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2023; Jaurequi et al., 2023; Knox et al., 2023). Evidence from these studies demonstrates that relational experiences are fundamentally interdependent and that understanding couple functioning requires consideration of both partners simultaneously.

Additional research has revealed that attachment-related vulnerabilities contribute to diverse relational difficulties, including psychological aggression, intimate partner violence, emotional dysregulation, and relationship dissatisfaction (Leclerc et al., 2021; Lefebvre et al., 2021). Partner pairings characterized by insecure attachment have been associated with greater conflict, negative emotional experiences, and maladaptive relationship behaviors (Morgan & Woodin, 2025; Pudenko et al., 2025). Conversely, attachment similarity and secure relational functioning appear capable of buffering some of the negative consequences associated with insecurity (Conradi et al., 2021). These findings suggest that relationship instability may emerge from ongoing interactions between emotional insecurity and maladaptive interpersonal behaviors.

Contemporary scholarship has increasingly emphasized the role of emotional regulation and coregulation within close relationships. Emotional experiences are not managed solely at the individual level but are frequently regulated through interactions between partners (Paley & Hajal, 2022). Consequently, jealousy, reassurance seeking, and monitoring behaviors may be understood as attempts to regulate emotional insecurity within relational contexts. Unfortunately, these strategies may prove ineffective when they reinforce rather than alleviate uncertainty. Persistent reassurance seeking may burden partners and diminish trust, whereas monitoring behaviors may intensify suspicion and conflict. Over time, these processes may contribute to escalating relational instability.

Broader research on interpersonal relationship dissolution further supports the importance of examining insecurity-related processes. Studies investigating friendship dissolution and romantic relationship challenges indicate that insecurity, uncertainty, and difficulties in emotional communication frequently precede relationship breakdowns (O'Brien et al., 2025; Santucci et al., 2025). Attachment-related concerns regarding responsiveness, commitment, and trust have also been associated with reduced relationship quality and increased vulnerability to relational disruption (Gosselin et al., 2024; Jean et al., 2024). Together, these findings suggest that jealousy-related processes may play a substantial role in determining whether relationships remain stable or become increasingly vulnerable to dissolution. Despite the growing body of literature on jealousy, attachment, and relationship functioning, several important gaps remain. First, many studies have focused on individual-level predictors of jealousy without examining the interpersonal pathways through which jealousy influences relationship outcomes. Second,

although reassurance seeking and partner monitoring have each been linked independently to insecurity and relationship distress, relatively little research has examined these variables simultaneously within a comprehensive dyadic framework. Third, existing investigations often overlook partner effects despite substantial evidence that relationship processes operate interdependently. Finally, the increasing prominence of digital communication technologies highlights the need to better understand how monitoring behaviors contribute to contemporary relationship instability.

Therefore, the aim of the present study was to test a dyadic model examining the direct and indirect associations among romantic jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring, and relationship instability by simultaneously evaluating actor and partner effects within romantic couples.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

This study employed a cross-sectional correlational design grounded in the Actor–Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) framework to examine the dyadic associations among romantic jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring behaviors, and relationship instability in romantic relationships. The study was conducted in the United States and targeted adult couples who had been involved in a committed romantic relationship for a minimum of six months. The dyadic design enabled the simultaneous examination of individual and partner effects, recognizing that relationship processes are inherently interdependent and that one partner’s emotions and behaviors may influence both their own outcomes and those of their partner.

Participants consisted of 412 heterosexual and same-sex couples (824 individuals) recruited from diverse regions across the United States through online advertisements, social media platforms, community organizations, and university participant pools. Eligibility criteria included being at least 18 years of age, currently involved in an exclusive romantic relationship, having sufficient English-language proficiency to complete the questionnaires, and providing informed consent independently from one’s partner. Couples experiencing severe relationship violence or currently engaged in legal separation or divorce proceedings were excluded from participation. The mean age of participants was 31.84 years ($SD = 8.67$), with ages ranging from 18 to 58 years. The average relationship duration was 5.92 years ($SD = 4.38$), and participants represented diverse educational, occupational, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Data were collected electronically using a secure online survey platform. Each partner completed the questionnaires independently to minimize response contamination and social desirability effects.

Measures

Romantic jealousy was assessed using the Multidimensional Jealousy Scale developed by Pfeiffer and Wong (1989). This widely used instrument measures jealousy across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. The scale consists of 24 items distributed across three subscales, with respondents indicating the extent to which they experience jealousy-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in romantic situations. Items are rated on Likert-type response formats, with higher scores indicating greater levels of romantic jealousy. The instrument has demonstrated strong psychometric properties across diverse populations and relationship contexts. Previous studies have reported satisfactory internal consistency coefficients for the total scale and its subscales, and evidence supports its construct, convergent, and discriminant validity. Reliability and validity have been consistently confirmed in numerous investigations involving romantic relationship dynamics.

Reassurance seeking was measured using the Reassurance-Seeking Scale developed by Joiner and Metalsky (2001). This instrument evaluates the tendency to repeatedly seek confirmation, validation, and reassurance from significant others regarding

one's worth, attractiveness, and relationship security. The scale contains 10 items rated on a five-point Likert continuum ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores reflect greater engagement in excessive reassurance-seeking behaviors. The scale has demonstrated strong internal consistency and temporal stability in previous research. Studies have also established its convergent validity through associations with interpersonal dependency, attachment insecurity, and relationship distress. Reliability and validity indices reported in prior investigations support its suitability for research involving romantic relationships and interpersonal functioning.

Partner monitoring behaviors were assessed using an adapted version of the Partner Monitoring Scale developed by Tokunaga (2011). This measure evaluates the frequency with which individuals observe, track, verify, or monitor their partner's activities, social interactions, communication patterns, and online behaviors. The scale consists of 15 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from never to very frequently. Higher scores indicate greater engagement in partner surveillance and monitoring activities. Previous research has demonstrated adequate internal consistency and factorial validity for the measure across diverse relationship samples. The instrument has been widely used in studies examining jealousy, trust, relational uncertainty, and technology-mediated relationship behaviors. Evidence from prior investigations confirms the reliability and validity of the scale for assessing monitoring tendencies within romantic relationships.

Relationship instability was assessed using the Marital Instability Index developed by Booth, Johnson, and Edwards (1983). Although originally designed for married couples, the measure has been extensively applied to both marital and nonmarital committed relationships. The instrument consists of 14 items that assess thoughts, discussions, and behaviors related to relationship dissolution, separation, and uncertainty about relationship continuation. Participants respond to items using Likert-type scales reflecting the frequency and intensity of instability-related experiences. Higher scores indicate greater perceived relationship instability. The scale has demonstrated excellent psychometric characteristics, including strong internal consistency, predictive validity, and sensitivity to relationship functioning. Numerous studies have confirmed its reliability and validity as a measure of relationship vulnerability and dissolution risk.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29 and AMOS version 29. Preliminary analyses included data screening procedures to identify missing values, outliers, and violations of statistical assumptions. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values, were calculated for all study variables. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine bivariate associations among romantic jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring, and relationship instability.

Given the dyadic nature of the data, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model was employed within a structural equation modeling framework. This approach enabled the simultaneous estimation of actor effects, reflecting the influence of an individual's predictor variables on their own outcomes, and partner effects, reflecting the influence of one partner's predictor variables on the other partner's outcomes. Maximum likelihood estimation procedures were used to estimate model parameters. Model fit was evaluated using multiple fit indices, including the chi-square statistic, Comparative Fit Index, Tucker-Lewis Index, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. Indirect effects were examined through bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals. Statistical significance was established at $p < .05$ for all analyses. The dyadic modeling strategy allowed for a comprehensive examination of the interpersonal mechanisms linking romantic jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring behaviors, and relationship instability within romantic couples.

Findings and Results

A total of 824 individuals forming 412 romantic couples participated in the study. The mean age of participants was 31.84 years (SD = 8.67), ranging from 18 to 58 years. Approximately 54.1% of participants identified as female, 44.8% as male, and 1.1% as non-binary or another gender identity. Regarding relationship status, 62.4% were married, 28.7% were cohabiting, and 8.9% were involved in committed dating relationships. The average relationship duration was 5.92 years (SD = 4.38). Approximately 71.6% of participants had completed at least a bachelor's degree, while 78.3% were employed either full-time or part-time. The sample represented diverse ethnic backgrounds, including White/Caucasian (58.5%), Hispanic/Latino (15.2%), African American (11.8%), Asian American (9.6%), and other ethnic groups (4.9%). Preliminary screening indicated no significant violations of normality assumptions, and missing data constituted less than 2% of all observations and were handled using full information maximum likelihood estimation.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability Coefficients, and Correlations among Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4
1. Romantic Jealousy	62.41	12.78	.91	—			
2. Reassurance Seeking	31.56	7.24	.89	.58**	—		
3. Partner Monitoring	43.18	9.11	.90	.67**	.61**	—	
4. Relationship Instability	28.77	8.56	.92	.55**	.48**	.63**	—

Note. N = 824. α = Cronbach's alpha. **p < .001.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and bivariate correlations for the primary study variables. All measures demonstrated excellent internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .89 to .92. Romantic jealousy showed strong positive correlations with reassurance seeking ($r = .58, p < .001$), partner monitoring ($r = .67, p < .001$), and relationship instability ($r = .55, p < .001$). Reassurance seeking was significantly associated with partner monitoring ($r = .61, p < .001$) and relationship instability ($r = .48, p < .001$). The strongest association emerged between partner monitoring and relationship instability ($r = .63, p < .001$), suggesting that surveillance-oriented relationship behaviors may be particularly relevant to perceptions of relationship vulnerability. Overall, the correlation matrix provided preliminary support for the hypothesized associations among jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring, and relationship instability and justified proceeding with dyadic structural equation modeling.

Table 2. Structural Equation Model Fit Indices for the Proposed Dyadic Model

Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Criterion
χ^2	412.73	—
df	184	—
χ^2/df	2.24	< 3.00
CFI	.967	> .95
TLI	.961	> .95
RMSEA	.039	< .06
SRMR	.041	< .08

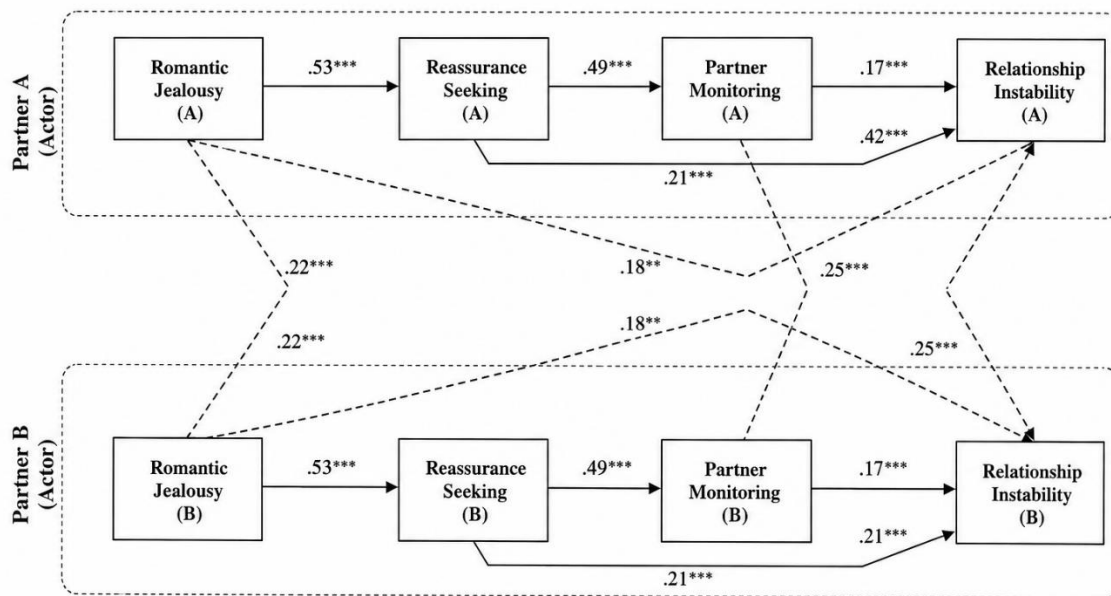
The fit indices presented in Table 2 indicated that the proposed dyadic structural model demonstrated excellent fit to the observed data. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio was 2.24, remaining well below the recommended threshold of 3.00. Furthermore, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = .967) and Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI = .961) exceeded the recommended criterion of .95, suggesting strong correspondence between the theoretical model and the empirical data. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .039) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR = .041) also reflected excellent fit. Collectively, these indices provided strong evidence that the hypothesized dyadic model adequately represented the

relationships among romantic jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring, and relationship instability, thereby supporting further interpretation of the structural pathways.

Table 3. Actor and Partner Effects in the Dyadic Structural Model

Structural Path	β	SE	CR	p
Jealousy → Reassurance Seeking (Actor)	.53	.04	12.74	< .001
Jealousy → Partner Monitoring (Actor)	.49	.05	10.88	< .001
Reassurance Seeking → Relationship Instability (Actor)	.21	.04	5.24	< .001
Partner Monitoring → Relationship Instability (Actor)	.42	.05	8.61	< .001
Jealousy → Relationship Instability (Actor)	.17	.05	3.56	< .001
Jealousy → Partner's Monitoring (Partner Effect)	.22	.06	3.67	< .001
Jealousy → Partner's Instability (Partner Effect)	.18	.05	3.29	.001
Monitoring → Partner's Instability (Partner Effect)	.25	.06	4.12	< .001

The actor–partner interdependence analyses revealed significant actor and partner effects throughout the model. Higher levels of romantic jealousy predicted increased reassurance seeking ($\beta = .53, p < .001$) and greater partner monitoring behaviors ($\beta = .49, p < .001$) within individuals. In turn, both reassurance seeking ($\beta = .21, p < .001$) and partner monitoring ($\beta = .42, p < .001$) significantly predicted relationship instability. A direct effect of jealousy on relationship instability also remained significant ($\beta = .17, p < .001$), suggesting partial mediation. Importantly, partner effects demonstrated substantial interpersonal influence within relationships. One partner's jealousy significantly predicted the other partner's monitoring behaviors ($\beta = .22, p < .001$) and perceptions of relationship instability ($\beta = .18, p = .001$). Similarly, partner monitoring behaviors exerted significant effects on the partner's perception of relationship instability ($\beta = .25, p < .001$). These findings support the dyadic nature of romantic relationship processes and indicate that emotional insecurity and surveillance behaviors extend beyond individual experiences to affect both members of the relationship.



Note. Standardized path coefficients are shown.
 Solid lines represent actor (within-person) effects.
 Dashed lines represent partner (cross-partner) effects.
 ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1. Final Actor–Partner Interdependence Structural Model Linking Romantic Jealousy, Reassurance Seeking, Partner Monitoring, and Relationship Instability

The final structural model illustrated significant direct and indirect pathways connecting romantic jealousy to relationship instability through reassurance seeking and partner monitoring. Standardized path coefficients demonstrated that romantic jealousy served as a central antecedent variable influencing both intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship processes. The strongest pathway emerged from romantic jealousy to reassurance seeking and partner monitoring, while partner monitoring exhibited the most substantial direct effect on relationship instability. The figure also highlights the reciprocal interpersonal influence between partners, showing that one individual's emotional experiences and behavioral responses significantly contributed to the partner's perceptions of relationship stability. The overall pattern of findings supports the conceptualization of jealousy as a relational phenomenon that operates through multiple psychological and behavioral mechanisms within romantic dyads.

Table 4. Bootstrapped Indirect Effects of Romantic Jealousy on Relationship Instability

Indirect Path	β	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p
Jealousy → Reassurance Seeking → Instability	.11	.07	.16	< .001
Jealousy → Partner Monitoring → Instability	.21	.15	.29	< .001
Total Indirect Effect	.32	.25	.40	< .001

Bootstrapping analyses with 5,000 resamples demonstrated significant indirect effects of romantic jealousy on relationship instability through both mediating variables. The indirect effect through reassurance seeking was significant ($\beta = .11$, 95% CI [.07, .16]), indicating that individuals experiencing elevated jealousy were more likely to seek repeated reassurance from their partners, which subsequently increased perceptions of relationship instability. An even stronger indirect pathway emerged through partner monitoring ($\beta = .21$, 95% CI [.15, .29]), suggesting that jealousy-driven surveillance and monitoring behaviors constitute a particularly influential mechanism linking jealousy to relationship difficulties. The total indirect effect was substantial and statistically significant ($\beta = .32$, 95% CI [.25, .40]), confirming that reassurance seeking and partner monitoring jointly explained a considerable proportion of the association between romantic jealousy and relationship instability. These mediation findings support the theoretical proposition that relationship instability arises not only from jealous emotions themselves but also from the interpersonal behaviors that jealousy generates within romantic partnerships.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study examined a dyadic model linking romantic jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring, and relationship instability among romantic couples. Consistent with the proposed hypotheses, the findings demonstrated significant positive associations among all primary study variables. Romantic jealousy was positively associated with reassurance seeking, partner monitoring, and relationship instability. Furthermore, the structural model revealed that reassurance seeking and partner monitoring partially mediated the association between jealousy and relationship instability. Importantly, both actor and partner effects were identified, indicating that one partner's jealousy and monitoring behaviors influenced not only their own perceptions of relationship instability but also those of their romantic partner. The overall model demonstrated excellent fit, suggesting that the proposed conceptual framework provides a robust explanation of how emotional insecurity and relationship-regulation behaviors contribute to instability within romantic relationships.

One of the most important findings was the positive association between romantic jealousy and relationship instability. Individuals who reported higher levels of jealousy also reported greater uncertainty regarding the future of their relationships and greater concerns about relationship continuity. This finding aligns with theoretical perspectives suggesting that jealousy functions as an indicator of perceived relational threat. When individuals perceive potential threats to exclusivity, commitment, or emotional security, they may become increasingly preoccupied with protecting the relationship. Although jealousy may

initially serve adaptive purposes by motivating relationship maintenance behaviors, persistent or excessive jealousy can undermine trust, increase conflict, and reduce relationship satisfaction. The current findings are consistent with research demonstrating that cognitive jealousy is associated with relationship distress and maladaptive relational outcomes (Wildey et al., 2026). They also correspond with evidence indicating that jealousy contributes to problematic relationship functioning, particularly when individuals experience chronic concerns regarding partner commitment and responsiveness (Maras et al., 2024; Métellus et al., 2025). Furthermore, the results support findings showing that obsessive concerns about romantic relationships predict marital instability and vulnerability to relationship dissolution (Genç, 2026).

The findings also revealed that romantic jealousy was a strong predictor of reassurance-seeking behavior. Individuals who experienced greater jealousy were more likely to repeatedly seek validation, confirmation, and emotional reassurance from their partners. This result is theoretically consistent with attachment perspectives, which propose that individuals experiencing insecurity often attempt to regulate emotional distress through proximity-seeking and reassurance-seeking behaviors (Malik et al., 2021; Overall et al., 2022). Jealousy is characterized by uncertainty regarding relationship security, and reassurance seeking may emerge as an effort to reduce this uncertainty and restore feelings of safety. However, excessive reassurance seeking may inadvertently reinforce insecurity by creating dependence on external validation. The present findings are consistent with evidence indicating that reassurance seeking is associated with attachment anxiety, interpersonal insecurity, and reduced trust in romantic relationships (Evraire et al., 2022). Similarly, research has demonstrated that individuals characterized by heightened emotional vulnerability and social anxiety frequently engage in excessive reassurance seeking as a means of managing uncertainty and self-doubt (Bui & Moscovitch, 2024). The current results extend these findings by demonstrating that jealousy constitutes an important antecedent of reassurance-seeking behavior within romantic relationships.

Another significant finding was the strong association between romantic jealousy and partner monitoring. Individuals reporting elevated jealousy were substantially more likely to engage in behaviors designed to observe, track, or verify their partners' activities. This finding supports contemporary conceptualizations of jealousy as a state characterized by heightened vigilance and sensitivity to perceived relationship threats. When individuals fear betrayal, rejection, or abandonment, they may attempt to gather information that reduces uncertainty and increases perceived control over relationship outcomes. Unfortunately, monitoring behaviors often intensify rather than alleviate insecurity. The present findings align closely with research demonstrating that attachment anxiety contributes to electronic partner surveillance and social media jealousy (Métellus et al., 2025). They also correspond with studies showing that social networking environments facilitate surveillance behaviors among insecure individuals (Langlais et al., 2023; Stöven & Herzberg, 2023). Furthermore, previous investigations have identified jealousy as a significant predictor of digital dating abuse and cyber-related relationship problems, suggesting that monitoring behaviors may represent one manifestation of broader insecurity-driven relational processes (Laforte et al., 2023; Maras et al., 2024).

The mediating role of reassurance seeking provides important insight into the mechanisms through which jealousy contributes to relationship instability. The results suggest that jealousy does not affect relationship stability solely through direct emotional distress. Instead, jealous individuals often engage in reassurance-seeking behaviors that may gradually alter relational dynamics. Although reassurance seeking may initially elicit supportive responses from partners, repeated demands for validation can eventually generate frustration, emotional exhaustion, and perceptions of relational burden. Over time, these patterns may contribute to reduced relationship satisfaction and increased instability. This interpretation is supported by research demonstrating that excessive reassurance seeking is associated with diminished trust and maladaptive interpersonal functioning (Evraire et al., 2022). The findings also complement recent work highlighting the central role of support-seeking processes in relationship functioning and emotional regulation (Perks et al., 2025). Collectively, these results suggest that

reassurance seeking represents a critical behavioral pathway through which emotional insecurity translates into relational vulnerability.

Partner monitoring also emerged as a significant mediator of the association between jealousy and relationship instability. In fact, the indirect effect through partner monitoring was stronger than the indirect effect through reassurance seeking, highlighting the central role of surveillance behaviors in contemporary romantic relationships. Monitoring behaviors may initially be intended to reduce uncertainty and protect the relationship; however, they frequently communicate distrust, suspicion, and insecurity. As a result, partners may perceive monitoring as intrusive or controlling, leading to conflict and emotional distancing. These dynamics may gradually weaken relationship stability. The present findings are consistent with evidence showing that electronic partner surveillance contributes to lower relationship satisfaction and heightened relational distress (Métellus et al., 2025). They also align with research linking jealousy to digital dating abuse and coercive relational behaviors (Maras et al., 2024). Given the increasing integration of digital communication technologies into romantic relationships, these findings underscore the importance of understanding monitoring behaviors as a significant risk factor for relationship instability.

A particularly noteworthy contribution of the present study is the identification of significant partner effects. One partner's jealousy predicted not only their own monitoring behaviors and relationship instability but also their partner's outcomes. This finding reinforces the dyadic nature of romantic relationships and supports theoretical models emphasizing emotional interdependence between partners. Relationship processes rarely occur in isolation; rather, one partner's emotional experiences often influence the psychological functioning of the other partner. These results are highly consistent with contemporary dyadic research demonstrating spillover effects between partners across various domains of relationship functioning (Overall et al., 2022). Similar partner effects have been observed in studies examining attachment insecurity, depressive symptoms, conflict processes, mindfulness, forgiveness, and relationship satisfaction (Conradi, 2022; Jaurequi et al., 2023; Morgan et al., 2024). The current findings extend this literature by demonstrating that jealousy-related behaviors similarly operate through interpersonal pathways.

The observed partner effects can also be interpreted through attachment and co-regulation frameworks. According to attachment theory, emotional experiences are regulated not only internally but also through interactions with significant others. When one partner experiences jealousy and insecurity, these emotions may alter communication patterns, increase conflict, and affect perceptions of safety within the relationship. Consequently, the partner may also begin to experience uncertainty regarding relationship stability. This interpretation is consistent with research demonstrating that attachment insecurity predicts poorer relationship functioning during stressful periods and that these effects often spill over between partners (Overall et al., 2021). Furthermore, emotional regulation and co-regulation processes have been conceptualized as fundamentally relational phenomena occurring within family and couple systems (Paley & Hajal, 2022). The present findings support this perspective by illustrating how one partner's emotional insecurity can shape the relational experiences of both members of the couple.

The findings additionally contribute to growing evidence emphasizing the importance of attachment-related vulnerabilities in understanding relationship dysfunction. Although attachment insecurity was not directly measured as a focal variable in the current model, the observed patterns closely resemble mechanisms identified in attachment research. Attachment insecurity has been associated with emotional flooding, negative emotional responses during conflict, relationship dissatisfaction, aggression, and intimate partner violence (Leclerc et al., 2021; Lefebvre et al., 2021; Morgan & Woodin, 2025; Pudelko et al., 2025). The current results suggest that jealousy, reassurance seeking, and monitoring behaviors may represent specific manifestations of broader attachment-related concerns regarding abandonment, responsiveness, and trust. This interpretation is further supported by studies showing that attachment insecurity influences perceived partner responsiveness, forgiveness

processes, and relationship commitment (Gosselin et al., 2024; Jean et al., 2024). Consequently, interventions targeting attachment-related vulnerabilities may be particularly effective in reducing jealousy-related instability.

Another important implication concerns the role of digital environments in contemporary romantic relationships. Modern communication technologies provide unprecedented opportunities for connection, but they also create conditions that facilitate jealousy, comparison, surveillance, and insecurity. Social media interactions expose individuals to ambiguous information about partners and potential rivals, thereby increasing opportunities for misinterpretation and threat perception (Nesi et al., 2023). Research has consistently demonstrated associations among attachment anxiety, social media jealousy, electronic surveillance, and relationship dissatisfaction (Métellus et al., 2025). The present findings provide additional support for these concerns by demonstrating that monitoring behaviors represent a significant mechanism linking jealousy to instability. As romantic relationships become increasingly embedded within digital contexts, understanding these processes becomes essential for both researchers and clinicians.

Taken together, the results support a comprehensive dyadic model in which romantic jealousy functions as a central emotional vulnerability that contributes to relationship instability both directly and indirectly through reassurance seeking and partner monitoring. The findings suggest that jealousy initiates a cascade of emotional and behavioral responses that ultimately undermine relationship security. Moreover, these processes extend beyond the individual, affecting both members of the romantic dyad. By integrating attachment perspectives, dyadic theory, and contemporary research on digital relationship processes, the present study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how emotional insecurity influences relationship stability in modern romantic partnerships.

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design prevents definitive conclusions regarding causal relationships among jealousy, reassurance seeking, partner monitoring, and relationship instability. Second, all variables were measured using self-report instruments, introducing the possibility of social desirability bias and shared method variance. Third, although the sample was geographically diverse within the United States, the findings may not generalize to non-Western cultural contexts where romantic norms and relationship expectations differ. Fourth, the study focused primarily on committed romantic relationships and did not distinguish extensively among dating, cohabiting, and married couples. Finally, the model did not include other potentially important variables such as attachment style, trust, relationship satisfaction, conflict resolution skills, or personality characteristics that may influence jealousy-related processes.

Future studies should employ longitudinal and experimental designs to clarify the temporal and causal relationships among the study variables. Researchers may benefit from examining whether reassurance seeking and partner monitoring predict subsequent increases in jealousy and instability over time, thereby creating reciprocal cycles of relational dysfunction. Future investigations should also incorporate attachment dimensions, trust, relationship satisfaction, emotional regulation, and communication patterns into more comprehensive dyadic models. Cross-cultural studies would help determine whether the observed associations operate similarly across diverse cultural settings. Additionally, researchers should explore distinctions between offline and online monitoring behaviors and examine how emerging technologies influence jealousy-related dynamics within romantic relationships.

The findings highlight the importance of helping couples recognize and manage jealousy before it escalates into maladaptive relational patterns. Couple therapists may benefit from assessing reassurance-seeking behaviors and partner monitoring practices as indicators of underlying insecurity. Interventions that strengthen trust, improve emotional regulation, enhance communication skills, and increase relationship transparency may reduce the likelihood that jealousy evolves into chronic instability. Psychoeducational programs can also help couples understand the unintended consequences of excessive reassurance seeking and surveillance behaviors. Encouraging partners to develop secure relational expectations, establish

healthy digital boundaries, and foster mutual responsiveness may contribute substantially to long-term relationship stability and well-being.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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