Original Research Article

Exploring Variations in Male Jealousy and Retaliatory Infidelity in Romantic Relationships: The Impact of Rival Sexual Orientation

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ABSTRACT

Background: Evolutionary psychology posits male sexual jealousy as a mechanism to prevent cuckoldry, yet research evaluating jealousy as an adaptive function has yielded mixed findings regarding the paternity uncertainty hypothesis. To examine the applicability of evolutionary theories, this study explores whether the perception of threats remains hardwired in primal instincts or has evolved to align with contemporary worldviews. The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of a rival's sexual orientation on jealousy levels in heterosexual males in monogamous relationships.
Methodology: A quantitative, non-experimental study on 100 heterosexual males of the age range 18-29 years from Mumbai, India. Modified versions of the MJS and YSEX? scales were administered via a 100-item Google Form after pilot testing.
Results: Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests. Participants reported significantly higher jealousy towards heterosexual male rivals compared to other rival types, but no significant difference between homosexual male rivals and heterosexual/homosexual female rivals, as well as between both female levels. No significant difference in retaliatory infidelity likelihood was observed across rival types.
Conclusions: A rival's sexual orientation did not significantly impact jealousy levels. These findings suggest a need to view jealousy through a socio-cognitive lens beyond its function as an innate mechanism for survival and reproduction.
Keywords: jealousy, retaliatory infidelity, paternity uncertainty hypothesis, heterosexual male, rival's sexual orientation

(Paper received – 17th July 2024, Peer review completed – 28th August 2024, Accepted – 18th September 2024)

INTRODUCTION

What can be said about the jealousy of a man who appears to be focused on his partner's actions with others? This man is concerned about his partner engaging in intimate activities with other individuals, and he experiences jealousy due to a 'perceived betrayal' in this regard. Romantic jealousy is a combination of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that arise in response to challenges to one's self-esteem or to the stability and satisfaction of the relationship. These challenges stem from perceiving actual or possible romantic interest between one's partner and a rival, which may be real or imagined. Experiencing a sense of insufficiency as a partner, valuing sexual exclusivity, and having invested comparatively more in the relationship were positively correlated with higher levels of both chronic and relationship-based jealousy [1]. The characteristic of jealousy, that it consistently involves three or more distinct individuals, is significant in differentiating it from envy. Perhaps a more significant difference is the focus, is what unsettles an individual in the case of jealousy is not merely that the rival possesses something they desire, specifically, the esteem or affection of a particular individual or group, but that this affection or esteem has been granted by someone

important to them freely, by choice, and from whom they seek this esteem or affection [2]. Individuals experiencing jealousy do recognize that their partners are beings with the capacity for rational decision-making, and not just mere objects [2]. Consequently, if the partner's actions were forced upon him or her, the intensity of jealousy would likely be weaker [3]. This study, anchored in the Paternity Uncertainty Hypothesis, is an exploration of male jealousy's profound origins.

Jealousy is an emotional response to the threat of losing a valued relationship to a rival [4-8]. Studies exploring the Paternity Uncertainty Hypothesis have produced varied results, with some findings supporting the hypothesis of jealousy as an inherent mechanism, while others contradicting evolutionary theory, resulting in a spectrum of data from strongly supportive to downright disconfirming. In reviewing five lines of evidence, including self-report responses, psychophysiological data, domestic violence, and morbid jealousy cases [9], Harris found inconsistencies with the evolutionary hypothesis. The evaluation of a perceived threat and the subsequent decisions regarding how to address it are influenced not only by one's own self-assessment of capabilities and feelings, but also by the assessments of both the loved one and the rival [10-12, 1]. The potential strain on our relationship escalates when the rival aligns closely with what our partner desires [13]. Sheppard and others found no sex differences in the perceived acceptability of the two forms of infidelity [14], sexual or emotional betrayal. Sheets and Wolfe [15] similarly discovered that both men and women rated emotional infidelity as more distressing than sexual infidelity. In two studies with significantly greater statistical power than the original study [16], Harris [17] found no evidence suggesting that women, on average, exhibit greater autonomic arousal to emotional infidelity imagery compared to sexual infidelity imagery. Heterosexual women, lesbian women, gay men, bisexual women, and bisexual men exhibited similar levels of distress over sexual infidelity [18], and interestingly, bisexual men displayed no difference in jealousy responses to gay men, irrespective of the fact that they were currently in relationships with women.

Men seem to be either less inclined or less capable than women to overlook or pardon a partner's infidelity [19-20]. As per the latest report on crime in India for the year 2020 published by the National Crime Records Bureau, the 3,031 murders out of 29,193 cases in total were attributed to romantic rivalry. Examination of NCRB data indicates that over 10% percent of all homicides in India are attributed to extramarital connections [21]. Although considering women's lower involvement in violent crime altogether, it remains plausible that infidelity triggers a similar level of rage in both sexes, with men possibly exhibiting a lower threshold for intense violence, potentially influenced by factors such as perceived efficacy in executing violent acts or other biological and social factors. There appears to be a more general sex difference, that males resort to greater violence than females, in any aspect.

A Reproductive Threat-Based Model of Evolved Sex Differences in Jealousy suggests that evolutionary selection processes led to a response that considers reproductive compatibility as a crucial factor [22], therefore, sex-based distinctions in jealousy fade away when infidelity carries no risk of conception [23], which occurs when the partner becomes involved with a rival of the same sex. Men are significantly more inclined to find female-female sexual contact erotic [24-25] compared to women's inclination towards male-male sexual contact. Researchers have noted that participants' preferences of their female partner’s same-sex attraction varied depending on the duration of the relationship, with a preference for such attraction being more pronounced in short-term rather than long-term partners [26]. Women are more frequently requested to engage in homosexual activities compared to men, who are more prone to soliciting females to participate in such homosexual behaviors [27]. Wang and Apostolou [28] discovered that individuals with same-sex attractions demonstrated higher tolerance to both same-sex and opposite-sex infidelity compared to those without such attractions, suggesting factors beyond preference for similarity influence tolerance levels and a significant main effect of relationship seriousness, with stronger negative reactions to long-term partner infidelity versus short-term partners, independent of the partner's sex. Another perspective of jealousy is that of biology, which claims that lower 2D:4D ratios, indicative of higher prenatal testosterone levels, may influence brain structure and behavior, potentially contributing to sex differences in romantic jealousy [29].

According to the Paternity Uncertainty Hypothesis, through an evolutionary perspective, men’s jealousy is attuned to other males. If our primal instincts still dominate in a world characterized by transformed sex roles, societal norms and fluid sexual orientations, a heterosexual male will experience jealousy regardless of his male rival’s sexual orientation. While existing literature has examined manifestations of male jealousy

in two major contexts. First, heterosexual male rivals, who have the biological capability to reproduce with the female partner and therefore pose a direct threat to paternity certainty. And second, homosexual female rivals, who do not possess reproductive capabilities. Which is an erroneous assumption that jealousy is evoked solely on norms, disregarding the possibility that heterosexual male participants may still feel suspicious of and threatened by homosexual male rivals, since jealousy, as Farrell [2] suggests, is driven by the 'perception' of a threat to a valued relationship.

This research explores a novel dimension. It delves into the potential threat perception and jealousy experienced by male participants when their rival possesses the biological ability to reproduce with the female partner but is sexually oriented towards other males, representing a gay individual as a rival. Additionally, the study compares rivals of four different sexual orientations to ascertain the extent to which they evoke jealousy in male participants. The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the existing body of evidence that may contradict evolutionary theories while addressing a notable research gap by including the possibility of male homosexual rivals.

METHODOLOGY

Research Question 1: What are the effects of a rival's sexual orientation on level of jealousy of the heterosexual male partner in a monogamous relationship?

Hypothesis

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in the level of jealousy of the heterosexual male partner in a monogamous relationship when imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual male rival compared to imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual female rival.

$H_1$1: There is significant difference in the level of jealousy of the heterosexual male partner in a monogamous relationship when imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual male rival compared to imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual female rival.

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference in the likelihood of the heterosexual male partner's retaliatory infidelity in a monogamous relationship when imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual male rival compared to imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual female rival.

$H_1$2: There is significant difference in the likelihood of the heterosexual male partner's retaliatory infidelity in a monogamous relationship when imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual male rival compared to imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual female rival.

Variables

Predictor Variable

- **Rival's Sexual Orientation:** Sexual orientation is a part of individual identity that includes a person's sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behavior and/or social affiliation that may result from this attraction

Levels: Heterosexual Male, Homosexual Male, Heterosexual Female, Homosexual Female

Outcome Variables

- **Jealousy:** Jealousy is an emotional response to the threat of losing a valued relationship to a rival.
- **Retaliatory Infidelity:** An act of engaging in infidelity with the specific intention of seeking revenge in response to perceived betrayal by one's partner.

Tools

- **Jealousy Intensity:** is measured by The Multidimensional Jealousy Scale by Elphinston, Feeney, & Noller. It is a scale of 24 items, divided into cognitive, emotional and behavioral domains. Rated on a 7 point likert scale [30].
- **Retaliatory Infidelity**: measured by the Why Have Sex? (YSEX?) scale by Meston and Buss [30]. The sub-scale includes one item, rated on a 5-point likert scale [31].

Sample

Convenience sampling (Purposive) sampling
Heterosexual Males, Age Range: 18 to 29 years

Procedure

A 100-item Google Form survey was generated to administer the survey. Items were piloted (n=10) to refine instruments measuring jealousy and infidelity likelihood. The MJS and YSEX? scales were adapted for the study's four predictor variables.

Participants from online platforms were screened for eligibility. Eligible participants received a Google Form link for the survey including informed consent, debriefing, and contact information for feedback. Participants were presented with all four predictor variables concurrently to minimise fatigue.

Ethical Considerations

Participants provided informed consent after receiving information about the study and the right to withdraw. Confidentiality was ensured with data used solely for academic purposes. Participants were debriefed on the study's goals and their contribution. To ensure data integrity, participants were encouraged for honest responses, and the researcher maintained responsible data collection, analysis, and reporting. Standardized scales and proper citations guaranteed data accuracy and proper referencing of prior research.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Jealousy Intensity: Heterosexual male rivals elicited the highest jealousy (M=87.67, SD = 18.840669), followed by homosexual male rivals (M=72.31, SD=18.9351340). Both male rival types had higher jealousy scores than heterosexual female rivals (M=71.03, SD=16.24836) and homosexual female rivals (M=71.86, SD=16.956879). The median values show a similar trend. Data showed some positive skew, indicating a few participants with higher jealousy scores.

Likelihood of Retaliatory Infidelity: Heterosexual male rivals elicited the highest likelihood of retaliatory infidelity (M=1.95, SD=1.760251), followed by homosexual male rivals (M=1.86, SD=1.825853). Heterosexual female rivals & homosexual female rivals (M=1.82) had no difference in mean values. Despite these differences in means, the median (Mdn=1) remained consistent across all groups, suggesting a low overall likelihood of retaliation regardless of rival's sexual orientation. The data distribution skewed slightly positive, indicating a few participants with a higher likelihood of retaliation.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Outcome Variable Jealousy				Outcome Variable Retaliatory Infidelity			
	Hetero sexual Male	Homo sexual Male	Hetero sexual Female	Homo sexual Female	Hetero sexual Male	Homo sexual Male	Hetero sexual Female	Homo sexual Female
Mean	87.67	72.31	71.03	71.86	1.95	1.86	1.82	1.82
Median	89.0	71.0	68.5	70.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
SD	18.840669	18.935134	16.24836	16.956879	1.760251	1.825853	1.671991	1.707855
Min.	45.000000	30.000000	29.00000	30.000000	1.000000	1.000000	1.000000	1.000000
Max.	157.000000	126.00000	116.0000	120.000000	7.000000	7.000000	7.000000	7.000000
Skew	0.454412	0.649328	0.346206	0.559668	1.767005	1.999639	2.050856	2.061908
Kurtosis	0.914771	0.343119	0.383466	0.555002	1.813664	2.533286	2.965326	2.998964

Friedman Test

Friedman test was conducted on each of the outcome variables separately. A level of 0.05 significance was used in the Friedman test.

Intensity of Jealousy: The Friedman test revealed a significant difference (p = 1.448e-22) in jealousy intensity among the four rival groups (W=0.349, Q=104.79).

Likelihood of Retaliatory Infidelity: The Friedman test found no significant difference (p=0.621) in likelihood of retaliatory infidelity across the four rival groups (W=0.0059). Therefore, we retain the null hypothesis H_02: There is no difference in the likelihood of the heterosexual male partner's retaliatory infidelity in a monogamous relationship when imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual male rival compared to imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual female rival.

Table 2: Friedman Test

	Outcome Variable Jealousy	**Outcome Variable Retaliatory Infidelity**
Source	Sexual Orientation	Sexual Orientation
W	0.349307	0.005904
ddof1	3	3
Q	104.792079	1.771277
P-unc	1.44837162204259e -22	0.621205327521184

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test

Considering a significance level of 0.05, the analysis showed significant differences in jealousy levels between heterosexual male and heterosexual female rivals (Statistic: 168.5, P-value: 1.67e-14), heterosexual male and homosexual female rivals (Statistic: 229.0, P-value: 2.65e-14), and even heterosexual male and homosexual male rivals (Statistic: 315.0, P-value: 2.99e-13).

But the pairs homosexual male - heterosexual female (Statistic: 1594.5, P-value: 0.49), homosexual male and homosexual female rivals (Statistic: 1355.0, P-value: 0.86), and heterosexual female and homosexual female (Statistic: 1800.0, P-value: 0.63) had no significant differences.

Table 3: Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test

Outcome Variable Jealousy		
Pair Comparisons	**Statistic**	**P-value**
Heterosexual Male - Homosexual Male	315.0	2.9887
Heterosexual Male - Heterosexual Female	168.5	1.6678
Heterosexual Male - Homosexual Female	229.0	2.6501
Homosexual Male - Heterosexual Female	1594.5	0.4992
Homosexual Male - Homosexual Female	1355.0	0.8607
Heterosexual Female - Homosexual Female	1800.0	0.6286

Benjamini-Hochberg method

To reject the null hypothesis of this study, the FDR procedure must show significant differences in the following pairs of predictor variables: Heterosexual Male - Heterosexual Female, Heterosexual Male - Homosexual Female, Homosexual Male - Heterosexual Female and Homosexual Male - Homosexual Female.

Post-hoc FDR test reveals significant differences among all four predictor variables, Heterosexual Male, Homosexual Male, Heterosexual Female, Homosexual Female with an adjusted p-value (1.01) and significance level set at 0.05. Similarly, significant differences were observed for Heterosexual Male - Homosexual Male with an adjusted p-value (5.23), Heterosexual Male - Heterosexual Female with an adjusted p-value (5.84), and Heterosexual Male - Homosexual Female with an adjusted p-value (6.18). But there were no significant differences in the adjusted p-values for the comparisons between Homosexual Male

- Heterosexual Female (0.69), Homosexual Male - Homosexual Female (0.86), Heterosexual Female - Homosexual Female (0.73). Since the expected pairs of predictor variables did not significantly differ from each other, we retain the null hypothesis: H_01: There is no difference in the level of jealousy of the heterosexual male partner in a monogamous relationship when imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual male rival compared to imagining his partner's infidelity with a heterosexual/homosexual female rival.

Table 4: Benjamini-Hochberg method

Outcome Variable Jealousy			
Pair Comparisons	**Raw P-value**	**Adjusted P-value**	**Reject Null**
Overall Comparisons	1.4483	1.0138	1
Heterosexual Male - Homosexual Male	2.9887	5.2303	1
Heterosexual Male - Heterosexual Female	1.6678	5.8374	1
Heterosexual Male - Homosexual Female	2.6501	6.1836	1
Homosexual Male - Heterosexual Female	0.4993	0.6990	0
Homosexual Male - Homosexual Female	0.8607	0.8607	0
Heterosexual Female - Homosexual Female	0.6287	0.7335	0

The Friedman test was conducted to assess differences across all levels of the predictor variable. For pairwise comparisons, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was conducted. To control the false discovery rate, the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure was applied. Data visualization was done through violin plots. The Friedman test showed a significant difference in jealousy intensity among the four levels of predictor variables. However, there was no significant difference in the likelihood of retaliatory infidelity, retaining the second null hypothesis. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test for the outcome variable jealousy gave an output showing a significant difference of heterosexual male rivals from the rest of the 3 levels, but there was no significant difference between homosexual male's rivals and heterosexual female rivals, homosexual male rivals and homosexual female rivals as well as between both female levels. Post-hoc analysis confirmed significant differences among certain pairs of predictor variables, supporting the findings of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test and thus retaining the first null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The key findings of the paper provided evidence against the Paternity Uncertainty Hypothesis, aligning with the findings of Harris [9], which similarly identified discrepancies with evolutionary hypotheses. In contrast, they diverge from the Reproductive Threat-Based Model of Evolved Sex Differences in Jealousy [22] proposed by Sagarin. Harris's work, like the current study, highlights complexities that challenge conventional evolutionary perspectives on jealousy, suggesting a need for further investigation into alternative theoretical frameworks to better understand human behavior in romantic relationships.

While the findings revealed that heterosexual male rivals triggered higher levels of jealousy compared to both heterosexual female and homosexual female rivals, it is interesting to observe that they also elicited more jealousy than homosexual male rivals. According to the Paternity Uncertainty Hypothesis, homosexual male rivals, possessing the biological capacity to reproduce with female partners, should theoretically be perceived as romantic rivals, irrespective of their sexual disinclination towards females. This may be attributed to the fact that jealousy arises more from cognitive assessments than innate mechanisms, when romantic benefits are jeopardized and aspects of one's self-concept are challenged by a rival. Modern factors like technology and exposure to diverse cultures [30], along with societal views on relationships [32],

all influence how jealousy manifests across cultures. From an evolutionary standpoint, men, fear raising offspring not their own, might be more jealous of sexual infidelity with male rivals. However, such focus on sexual infidelity alone might not be the best defense. A male who does not act until there are evident signs of sexual betrayal only, is simply waiting for the worst outcome. The sexual act is typically preceded by a gradual buildup of attraction and various behavioral cues that pave the way for intercourse. The best way to ensure partner loyalty would be to stay vigilant for any signs whatsoever of the female partner's attraction towards a rival, such as flirting. Taken together, our findings indicate a need to explore jealousy beyond its function as an innate mechanism for survival and reproduction.

Implications of study

This study challenges applying purely evolutionary ideas to jealousy, a domain better explained by social and cognitive factors alongside biological imperatives. This broader view of jealousy, beyond just survival and reproduction, aids therapists and researchers in considering various cognitive processes that shape motivations, decisions, and preferences. Shifting social norms, like voluntary childlessness, necessitate adapting our understanding of jealousy to encompass diverse relationships [33]. Discussions with participants during debriefing sessions revealed some men view childlessness as a rational and conscious choice, not just a physical constraint. Dense, collectivist societies valued families for social roles and elder care. However, societal shifts towards capitalism and individualism has gradually diminished the traditional reliance on children as a source of financial support in old age, leading to a rise in voluntary childlessness, evident in countries like India, particularly among the educated strata.

Research conducted across parts of the globe shows an increase in rates of voluntary childlessness, influenced by factors such as career aspirations, financial constraints, and lifestyle preferences [34-36]. The adherence to societal norms dictating procreation and parenthood may necessitate individuals to compromise their personal aspirations, prompting a careful calculation of the trade-offs involved in deviating from established norms. This intricate decision-making process emphasizes the significance of adopting a cognitive and social perspective over evolutionary theory that is kin selection. Exploring individuals 'unique dispositions, priorities, and environment becomes imperative for gaining a comprehensive understanding of how jealousy manifests, and it seems so, practically, that innate mechanisms play little to no role in such scenarios. The findings, therefore, progresses to question the validity of paternity uncertainty hypothesis, which completely is based on procreation as the goal of mankind, to explain the impartiality of a male's jealousy expression between a rival with sexual disinclination but reproductive capability with his female partner and a rival with sexual inclination but reproductive incapability with his female partner. The study, while recognizing humans as decision makers, therefore argues, that an acknowledgment of socio-cultural setting, education levels, heteronormativity, religion, internalized norms along several other factors are just an initial step towards understanding the perception of threat and jealousy of a male whose relationship is threatened by a rival.

Limitations of the Study: The 100-item survey may have caused fatigue, and the small sample size limits generalizability. The under-researched variable "retaliatory infidelity" lacks dedicated scales, limited YSEX? sub-scale which includes only a single item related to retaliatory infidelity.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should expand the participant pool to include heterosexual females and homosexuals of both genders. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of jealousy beyond the heterosexual male demographic. Additionally, investigating and controlling for factors like age, cultural background, homophobia, dark personality traits, attachment styles, and past relationship experiences could shed light on the complex interplay that influences jealousy. Furthermore, research and scale development are necessary for retaliatory infidelity, a variable currently lacking sufficient literature.

CONCLUSION

This study challenges traditional evolutionary views on jealousy in monogamous relationships, highlighting the role of individual differences, cultural influences, and social contexts. Despite its limitations, it addresses

a gap by testing the applicability of paternity uncertainty hypothesis in the case of rivals with reproductive congruence but sexual disinclination. It further paves the way for future research on personality, attachment, and other contributing factors to jealousy.

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Acknowledgements – Nil
Conflict of Interest – Nil
Funding – Nil