



Research paper

An exploratory study of the heterogeneity of the jealousy phenomenon and its associations with affective temperaments and psychopathological dimensions in a large Brazilian sample



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ABSTRACT

Background: Jealousy is a heterogeneous emotion on a spectrum from normality to psychopathology. The relationship between different jealousy subtypes/dimensions and affective temperaments remain unknown. In addition, few large surveys have investigated the associations between jealousy subtypes and psychopathological dimensions.

Methods: A Brazilian Portuguese version of the “Questionario della Gelosia” (QUEGE) was developed. We obtained data from an anonymous web-based research platform. Socio-demographic data was obtained and participants answered the QUEGE, the TEMPS-Rio de Janeiro, and the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised (SCL-90-R).

Results: 2042 participants (29% men, 71% female, mean age±SD: 28.9 ± 8.8 years), took part in this survey. Confirmatory factor analysis provided a five-factor model for the QUEGE with self-esteem, paranoia, interpersonal sensitivity, fear of being abandoned, and obsessive dimensions. The anxious, irritable, cyclothymic, and depressive temperaments were independently associated with jealousy dimensions, whereas the hyperthymic temperament was associated with lower scores on the self-esteem jealousy dimension ($N=2042$, $P<0.001$). Jealousy subtypes were dissimilarly associated with SCL-90R psychopathological dimensions, whereas the ‘obsessive’ jealousy dimension was not significantly associated with SCL-90R dimension scores. We found no independent influence of gender across any jealousy dimension.

Limitations: A convenience web-based sample was employed. Cross-sectional design precludes the establishment of causal inferences.

Conclusions: Our data indicate that a five-factor solution may provide the best-fit model for the QUEGE. Different jealousy subtypes were independently associated with affective temperaments and psychopathological dimensions. These associations reported herein should be confirmed in prospective studies.

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1. Introduction

Jealousy is a complex and common emotion, which involves cognitive, emotional and behavioral reactions related to the threat of losing a loved one to a real or imaginary rival (Kingham and Gordon, 2004; Pfeiffer and Wong, 1989). Jealousy may have a genetic influence and play an evolutionary role enabling the propagation of one's own genes in detriment of those of a true rival (Harris, 2003; Walum et al., 2013). In accordance to the evolutionary psychological perspective, sexual dimorphic reactions to infidelity may occur, with men predominantly reacting to sexual infidelity, while women would more intensely react to emotional infidelity (Harris, 2003). However, some scientists adopt a social cognitive perspective, and argue that sex differences in the expression of romantic jealousy do not exist or otherwise could be explained by stereotypes about how each gender becomes engaged in a romantic relationship (Carpenter, 2012; DeSteno and Salovey, 1996; Harris, 2003). In addition, it is worthy to note that cultural aspects may also influence the expression of jealousy (Bhugra, 1993).

The so-called pathological jealousy encompasses a heterogeneous set of conditions commonly encountered in clinical practice (Kingham and Gordon, 2004; Seeman, 1979). The definition of pathological jealousy has varied across different historical periods according to limits and norms of what manifestations would be acceptable or not (Mullen, 1991). Furthermore, it has become increasingly clear that pathological jealousy is not a unitary phenomenon, and may occur in a *continuum* from within a 'normal range' through to delusional jealousy (Kingham and Gordon, 2004; Mullen, 1991). Jealousy may be a burdensome manifestation of several psychopathological conditions including but not limited to affective disorders (Kingham and Gordon, 2004), obsessive-compulsive spectrum disorders (Marazziti et al., 2003a; Parker and Barrett, 1997), alcohol use disorders (DiBello et al., 2015; Michael et al., 1995), psychotic disorders (Seeman, 1979; Soyka et al., 1991; Soyka and Schmidt, 2011), and also as a neuropsychiatric disturbance in neurodegenerative diseases (e.g., Parkinson's disease) (Cipriani et al., 2012; Perugi et al., 2013).

There are no precise boundaries between "normal" and "pathological" jealousy, and identifying this demarcation has been an elusive, if not an impossible task (Docherty and Ellis, 1976; Marazziti et al., 2010b; Mullen and Martin, 1994). Therefore, a dimensional approach has been increasingly adopted and may aid in the understanding of jealousy (Elphinston et al., 2011; Marazziti et al., 2010a, 2003b, 2010b; Pfeiffer and Wong, 1989). Marazziti et al. (2010b) developed the "Questionario della Gelosia" which we will refer to as the Jealousy Questionnaire (JQ). The exploratory factor analysis of the JQ in a sample 500 Italian university students revealed five subtypes/dimensions of jealousy namely *self-esteem*, *paranoia*, *interpersonal sensitivity*, *fear of being abandoned*, and *obsessionality* (Marazziti et al., 2010b). This underlying factor structure is yet to be confirmed in an independent sample.

Relatively few studies have investigated personality constructs that could be associated with jealousy. Buunk (1997) found an association between three types of jealousy (reactive, preventive, and anxious) and neuroticism, social anxiety, rigidity and hostility in a sample of 100 Dutch male and female subjects recruited through a national television announcement. Low self-esteem has also been related to jealousy (Mathes et al., 1985; Stieger et al., 2012). Costa et al. (2015) found that a small sample of individuals with pathological jealousy presented with higher scores in novelty seeking and harm avoidance and lower scores on self-directedness and cooperativeness in Cloninger's temperament and character inventory (TCI) dimensions (Cloninger et al., 1994) relative to controls. In addition, individuals with pathological jealousy had elevated trait impulsivity (Costa et al., 2015).

Affective temperaments may represent a heritable and relatively stable aspect of personality (Rihmer et al., 2010). Based on previous work from Kraepelin (1921) and Kretschmer (1936), Akiskal and

colleagues operationalized the concept of affective temperaments for research purposes with the definition of hyperthymic, cyclothymic, irritable, anxious, and depressive temperaments (Akiskal et al., 2005, 1998; Akiskal and Akiskal, 2005). Since then, accumulating evidence indicates that affective temperaments may influence creativity (Akiskal and Akiskal, 2007), and may also contribute to the emergence and modify the expression of affective disorders (Carvalho et al., 2013; Fountoulakis et al., 2016; Qiu et al., 2016), premenstrual dysphoric disorder (Camara et al., 2016), somatic symptoms (Hyphantis et al., 2013), and even suicidality (Baldessarini et al., 2016). Hence, the hyperthymic temperament may protect against suicidality, whereas the depressive temperament may increase suicidal risk (Serafini et al., 2011). To the best of our knowledge, no previous study has evaluated the association between affective temperaments and different subtypes/dimensions of jealousy.

The current study has three aims: (1) to develop a Brazilian Portuguese version of the JQ, and to investigate its factor structure in a large sample; (2) to explore associations between different jealousy dimensions and affective temperaments; and (3) to explore associations between psychopathological and jealousy dimensions.

2. Methods

2.1. Sample selection

Consecutive participants ($N=2153$) were recruited through a large web-based Brazilian study (Portal Temperamento e Saúde Mental, www.temperamentoesaudemental.org). This website provides an encrypted and confidential platform for data collection, and was developed in a collaboration between the Federal University of Ceará (UFC) and the University of Fortaleza (UNIFOR). The research ethics committee of the Hospital Universitário Walter Cantídio approved the procedures for online data collection under the protocol number 1.058.252. To access the surveys, participants were required to be at least 18 years old and asked to sign an electronic informed consent form. A number of validation questions throughout the protocol were employed to maximize the reliability of the data. This exploratory study included participants who had provided reliable responses to the attention and validation questions. From the initial sample, 2153 participants answered the complete survey. After quality review, 2042 subjects remained eligible and were included in the analyses (response rate: 94.8%). The mean \pm SD age of the participants was 28.9 ± 8.8 years. The sample predominantly comprised of women (71.0%), while most participants were single (63.4%). Table 1 summarizes sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.

This online survey collected sociodemographic data (age, gender, educational level, race, marital status, religious affiliation, occupation, and gross monthly income). In addition, this web-based platform included several validated psychological and psychiatric measures, including the jealousy questionnaire (JQ), the Temperament in Memphis Pisa and San Diego (TEMPS) instrument, and the Symptom-Checklist 90-Revised (SCL-90R). These measures are thoroughly described below.

2.2. Development of the Brazilian version of the JQ

A Brazilian Portuguese version of the JQ was developed in three steps: (1) translation from the original Italian version (Marazziti et al., 2010b) to Brazilian Portuguese by a bilingual mental health expert; (2) back-translation to Brazilian Portuguese by a bilingual mental health expert; and (3) semantic equivalence evaluation of the two versions by the author of the original instrument (DM). The version approved by the author was pre-tested in a convenience sample for transcultural adaptation ($N=25$). This pilot study was conducted at the Porangaba campus of the UFC. Subjects were students and/or employees who had completed high school; each participant signed a written informed

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