

Love's Digital Dilemma: Exploring the Impact of Social Media Monitoring on Trust in Student Relationships with Different Attachment Styles

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Abstract

The dynamics of a love relationship, especially those in a student population, have been profoundly impacted by the phenomenon of social media monitoring in the present day. With an emphasis on students with diverse attachment styles, this thesis examines how social media monitoring and the consequent online jealousy behaviors have an impact on trust in romantic relationships. This was analyzed by answering the research question *'How do attachment styles influence the relationship between social media monitoring, online jealousy, and trust among students in a committed relationship?'*. A final sample of 151 respondents (mean age = 23.1 years, range 20-38 years; 76.2% female, 22.5% male), representing diverse sexual orientations and various lengths of romantic relationships (ranging from less than one month to more than 10 years) were selected based on students in a romantic relationship in which both people in the relationship actively use social media, ensuring a representative sample for examining the effects of social media monitoring, trust, online jealousy, and attachment styles. This study's conclusions, which are based on quantitative data from surveys given to students in committed relationships, show that social media monitoring positively influences online jealousy, and surprisingly also trust in a romantic relationship. Continuing with online jealousy that upsets the trust levels. Moreover, people who exhibit an anxious attachment style are more likely to perceive their partner's online interactions and behaviors as potential dangers to their relationship, which causes a more noticeable disturbance. However, this is only the case at high levels of anxiety attachment. Whereas, opposite of beliefs, the avoidant attachment style does not seem to influence the connection between online surveillance and jealousy. The analysis also emphasizes how social media plays a factor in fostering an atmosphere that makes it simpler for partners to participate in surveillance activities. In conclusion, while social media surveillance can undermine emotional closeness and trust in romantic relationships, knowing how each person's attachment style differs might help design approaches that promote positive relationship dynamics. This study adds to the continuing conversation on how technology affects interpersonal relationships and provides insightful information for future studies and solutions that try to build trust in the digital era.

Keywords: Online Jealousy, Trust, Social Media Monitoring, Romantic Student Relationships, Attachment Styles

Table of Contents:

Abstract.....	2
Table of Contents:.....	3
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Theoretical Framework.....	6
The use of social media to monitor the partner.....	6
Navigating trust and monitoring dynamics in a romantic relationship.....	7
Origin and impact of online jealousy	9
Attachment styles	11
Conceptual framework	14
3. Research Design and Methods.....	15
Method	15
Analysis	15
Sample and procedure.....	16
Measures	17
<i>Social media monitoring</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Trust</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Online jealousy</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Attachment styles</i>	<i>20</i>
4. Results	23
Assumption testing.....	23
Hypotheses testing.....	24
5. Discussion.....	29
<i>Social media monitoring on trust.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>The effect of online jealousy.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>The influence of anxious attachment style</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Unanticipated avoidant attachment style effects.....</i>	<i>33</i>
Limitations and future directions.....	34
6. Conclusion	38
7. References.....	39
8. Appendix.....	47
Appendix A. Survey.....	47

1. Introduction

In the current technology-driven era, couples have discussions based on questions such as ‘Whose post did you comment on?’ or ‘Whose picture did you just like?’ (Quiroz et al., 2024, p. 2). These conversations have extensively integrated themselves into the foundation of communications of modern-day relationships that justify perceived jealousy situations (Yoshimura, 2004, pp. 94-97). Analyzing and surveilling partners on social media and interpreting digital signs appears to be the modern manifestation of jealousy (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2016, pp. 147-148). It even quietly influences how couples navigate the complexities of intimacy and trust in this era of digitally interconnected lives (Coundouris et al., 2021, p. 11). Especially when every like, follow, or comment can elicit curiosity, awareness, and occasionally misinterpretation, interpersonal dynamics are changing due to the silent force of online jealousy (Quiroz et al., 2024, pp. 1-2). This jealousy may stir up discussions and emotions within couples, creating a change in their emotional satisfaction and vulnerability (Yoo et al., 2014, pp. 275-276). Online jealousy affects couples in ways that go beyond short-lived arguments and affect the fundamentals of how they view and interact with one another (Dijkstra et al., 2010, pp. 330-331).

Additionally, it is suggested that these communicative patterns may influence emotional intimacy, which guides a relationship's satisfaction (Yoo et al., 2014, pp. 288-289). This emotional intimacy relates to a sense of trust felt to a romantic partner that fosters expressing felt emotions and experiences to that partner (Ferreirat al., 2013, p. 340). This trust may be different depending on how secure one may be in relationships, also known as the attachment style (Chursina, 2023, p. 229). Bounding by the type of attachment style, it may create different outcomes in the influence of online jealousy and trust (Chursina, 2023, p. 229). These aspects prove especially insightful for students, given their frequent use and need for social media, which greatly influences how they interact with others (Thomas et al., 2020, p. 8). Their dependence on online platforms for communication is essential to their ability to stay involved in their social and private lives (Wang et al., 2012, p. 1830).

Furthermore, the widespread daily use of social media has transformed how people communicate, interact, and engage with one another (Yacoub et al., 2018, p. 53). Despite its numerous benefits, social media platforms have created new problems within the mechanics of romantic connections (Yacoub et al., 2018, p. 53). Among these issues is the phenomenon of social media partner monitoring and online jealousy, which have a complex connection with trust (Aloia, 2023, pp. 446-450). It is important to comprehend how the trust of students in a relationship is affected by online jealousy and social media platforms monitoring to promote healthy relationships at a time when the lines separating the actual and virtual worlds are becoming increasingly blurred (Sullivan et al., 2020, p. 2409). The results add to the current conversation about how technology affects relationships, social standards, and emotional health (Braghieri et al., 2022, p. 3662). Furthermore, examining how students' trust in romantic relationships is affected by social media

monitoring is a big step toward understanding the complex interactions between psychology and technology altogether (Aloia, 2023, pp. 436-439).

The impact of social media on romantic relationships is well studied, usually in the context of how social media use is affected by online jealousy and trust, for example by Dijkstra et al. (2010, pp. 329-345) and Muise et al. (2014, pp. 35-50), but not enough research is done on romantic surveillance via social media platforms. It is of importance to investigate these aspects to shed light on the ways in which trust in relationships are shaped by technology in order to provide nuanced insights on the complex dynamics of modern relationships in both offline and online situations by looking at these connected elements. Moreover, to provide meaningful applicable knowledge to social media network creators to create healthier online environments for students and to contribute to larger societal conversations about how technology affects interpersonal interactions.

The Attachment Theory by Bowlby (1969/1982) is instrumental in linking these aspects by suggesting that people develop emotional ties and behaviors towards their romantic partner, possibly based on the use and engagement of social media platforms. The strength of these ties, in turn, may significantly affect their emotional perception of the romantic relationship.

As researchers explore further into the complexities of social media monitoring and trust, an assortment of future research directions emerges, calling for further investigation and inquiry into those aspects (e.g., Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1572; Marshall et al., 2013, p. 20). Examples of such directions are how the impression of romanticized innocent interactions on social media affects feelings of jealousy and insecurity in romantic relationships (Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1572), or how individual attachment styles and personality features influence vulnerability to online jealousy and trust issues (Marshall et al., 2013, p. 20). An in-depth examination of the various ways that social media monitoring affects emotional intimacy among students in committed relationships is the goal of this research, which aims to shed light on the subtleties of this phenomenon and provide insights that apply to both individual relationships and the larger context of shifting interpersonal dynamics and society norms. While having in mind to interpret a more comprehensive understanding of the difficulties and dynamics that student couples encounter in the digital era. With these considerations, the research question is stated as follows:

‘How do attachment styles influence the relationship between social media monitoring, online jealousy, and trust among students in a committed relationship?’

2. Theoretical Framework

The use of social media to monitor the partner

Social media platforms provide people with limitless access to their partners' personal life and behaviors, promoting interaction but also potential trust difficulties (Yacoub et al., 2018, pp. 53-54). In one perspective, these platforms facilitate more communication and sharing, creating a sense of closeness (Yacoub et al., 2018, p. 54). Nevertheless, more often the public character of social media includes elements of examination envy, and privacy issues, which can have an influence on partners' trust (Rueda et al., 2015, p. 428). This usually stems from social media providing people with a wide range of networks to maintain contact with others, think of ex-partners or potential new partners (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2018, p. 16; Dunn & Ward, 2020, p. 38). This creates a perceived danger of unloyalty connected with social media that can destroy trust in a relationship, which may result in increasing suspicion and jealousy (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2018, pp. 18-19; Dunn & Ward, 2020, p. 38). Another perspective could be social media use that may generate a sense of secrecy and uncertainty in romantic relationships (McDaniel et al., 2017, p. 89). Partners can experience being isolated or disregarded if their significant other participates in secretive or deceitful online activity, such as deleting conversations or adding an ex-partner on social media platforms (McDaniel et al., 2017, p. 89). This lack of openness around social media usage can generate distrust and suspicion since people can doubt their partner's interests and motives (Clayton et al., 2013, p. 719; McDaniel et al., 2017, p. 89).

Muise et al. (2009, p. 443) introduced the idea that the more time spent on the platform Facebook will increase the likelihood of perceived jealousy within romantic relationships. This is being supported by previous research that is convinced that spending a greater quantity and frequency of time on social media platforms might cause jealousy and distrust within romantic relationships (Clayton et al., 2013, p. 719; Muise et al., 2009, p. 443). This is a suitable trend that may also be applicable to multiple various digital platforms, as being researched on Snapchat by Utz et al. (2015, pp. 144-145) and on Instagram by Fejes-Vékássy et al. (2020, pp. 6834-6835). Furthermore, Muscanell and Guadagno (2016, p. 156) found that the public and everlasting character of information on social media platforms can lead to jealousy, depending on people's motivations and behavior on these platforms. It can establish a setting with little privacy and the ability to encourage unrestricted flirty behavior (Muscanell and Guadagno, 2016, pp. 151-152). Therefore, these platforms offer a socially acceptable way of tracking users' significant other's social media activity (Muise et al., 2014, p. 443). Such monitoring can take several forms, such as checking images posted by their partner, or seeing if their partner is accepting new social media friend requests (Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1545). In a comparable manner, it has been proposed that other characteristics of social media platforms, such as the usage of emoticons may elicit jealousy (Daspe et al., 2018, p. 549). Rueda et al. (2015, p. 440) confirm this proposition by concluding that an individual using social media platforms is a big force

in creating jealousy and conflicts within their romantic relationship. Additionally, the increased usage and monitoring of social media by an individual may trigger negative consequences in their relationship, such as jealousy, and reduced relationship quality and satisfaction (Bouffard et al., 2022, p. 1525).

The practice of social media surveillance in romantic relationships is a technique that is becoming more and more common (Aloia, 2023, p. 436). Individuals may see it as a safeguard against unfaithfulness or a means of upholding openness and trust (Aloia, 2023, p. 447), whereas others may regard it as an indication of mistrust or insecurity (Muisse et al., 2009, p. 443). People may even start using applications or softwares to monitor their romantic partner's internet activity, especially if they suspect infidelity (Almansoori et al., 2022, p. 120). Using monitoring applications to keep an eye on communications, location information, or browser history is one way to apply this in practice (Almansoori et al., 2022, p. 120). Whilst these tools could provide the person with suspicions, a sense of control, or reassurance (Almansoori et al., 2022, p. 134), if they are utilized without permission or openness, it can still damage trust and confidence in a relationship (Hertlein & van Dyck, 2020, p. 608).

It is very possible that the use of social media has an impact on aspects such as insecurity and jealousy in interactions between people in romantic relationships (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2018, pp. 18-19; Dunn & Ward, 2020, p. 38; Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1572). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of online jealousy and social media monitoring is required by reviewing the behaviors on social media in general as opposed to focusing on the activities on individual platforms. This strategy works because, despite the distinctive features and characteristics of each social media site, the fundamental causes of jealousy frequently transcend over platform borders (Delle et al., 2023, pp. 340-341). The psychological processes that underlie jealousy are the same regardless of the platform, whether it is making comparisons to other people or making sense of unclear encounters (Delle et al., 2023, pp. 340-341). Studying social media adoption in general makes it possible to pinpoint common jealousy drivers and mechanisms that work in a variety of digital environments.

Navigating trust and monitoring dynamics in a romantic relationship

Trust is the sense one may get regarding another one's reliability and assumptions about the potential future of a close relationships (Rempel et al., 1985, p. 95), in this study this will be applied to that of a romantic relationship. Trust additionally entails intimate partners indulging in certain behaviors, which might demand a significant amount of commitment and challenges (e.g., being emotionally vulnerable with each other), which is going to certainly emerge after a particular point in a romantic relationship (Rempel et al., 1985, p. 95). Given the universal influence of digital technology, it has resulted in an extensive number of dynamics that might shift the basis of trust between partners who are in love (Yoshimura, 2004, pp. 94-97). Online jealousy is a big contributor

to these intricate interactions. Berger and Calabrese's (1975, pp. 99-112) Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) provides a theoretical basis for understanding the dynamics at play. According to this theory, people look for knowledge to predict and explain behaviors of others, which lowers uncertainty and raises predictability (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-112). Moreover, the URT highlights the development of strong connections and the establishment of trust depend on this process, stating that when people feel safe and more certain in their comprehension of one another, there is an increase in intimacy and trust (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-112). However, when there is a perceived sense of lack of control, the partner being monitored can have suffocation feelings and may have the desire to hide aspects of their lives, increasing uncertainty and decreasing trust within the romantic relationship (Aloia, 2023, p. 437; Berger & Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-112). Therefore, the perceptions of people in romantic relationships who frequently experience miscommunications about their partner's thoughts, feelings, or intentions during online encounters (e.g., by examining a romantic partner's posts (Aloia, 2023, p. 437), especially the ones with the opposite sex (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-100), may pave the way for the rise of jealousy (Basting et al., 2023, p. 488).

Social media monitoring has grown into an increasingly common activity (Aloia, 2023, p. 437). Because of the ease and full disclosure of internet interactions, many people are inclined to monitor their romantic partner's digital trail (Rueda et al., 2015, p. 428). However, the incentives for such surveillance might be varied and multifaceted. For some people, social media monitoring provides security and an impression of connectivity in busy romantic partnerships when interactions in person are limited (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019, p. 2). In these instances, surveillance may be viewed as harmless, creating an impression of security and intimacy (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019, p. 2). On the other hand, social media monitoring might be motivated by negative feelings like jealousy, feeling unsafe, or suspicion (Aloia, 2023, p. 437). When motivated by these negative emotions, monitoring behaviors can easily escalate into a cycle of distrust and surveillance, weakening the basis of trust in a romantic relationship (Aloia, 2023, p. 441). Subsequently, constantly monitoring a partner's internet behaviors can build dissatisfaction, resulting in a toxic environment that fosters control and mistrust (Aloia, 2023, pp. 441-442). Furthermore, excessive digital monitoring can be damaging to the foundations of trust in a relationship contradicting the basic ideals of autonomy and privacy, which are critical components of a healthy romantic relationship (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019, p. 2).

Rempel et al. (1985, pp. 95-112) created a framework called the dyadic model of trust, recognizing that while some people bring a behavioral tendency to trust within a relationship, it is behaviors inside the relationship that moderate degrees of trust. This explains trust based on the factors of certain behaviors such as keeping their promises made to their partner or always believing in their partner (Rempel et al, 1985, p. 96). When social media monitoring comes into play, the partner's opinion of the other person's reliability may be weakened if the monitoring actions is seen as invasive or questionable (Muisse et al., 2009, p. 443). Additionally, online activities lack the range of

nonverbal clues that can be seen in face-to-face conversations, leaving them potentially vulnerable to misunderstanding (Basting et al., 2023, p. 489). Innocent interactions or signals on social media might then be misinterpreted as evidence of sexual desire or betrayal, generating jealousy and mistrust (Nannini & Meyers, 2000, p. 118). For that reason, the difficulty in appropriately assessing one's partner's intentions and emotions during perceived online encounters can cause a heightened sense of miscommunication, skepticism, and distrust. Therefore, the subsequent hypothesis comes to place:

H1: Social media monitoring is negatively related to trust within a romantic relationship.

Not accordingly judging a significant other's emotion delivery that causes miscommunication indicates that individuals feeling intense online jealousy may have concerns or contradictions about their partner's behaviors, thereby undermining the basis of trust required for emotional connection (Basting et al., 2023, p. 489). As jealousy grows, people may become less likely to openly communicate their deepest thoughts and emotions with their significant other (Knobloch et al., 2001, p. 207). And the frequent comparison and associated anxiety caused by online jealousy can limit the vulnerability and sharing of perspectives necessary for effective emotional conversations on trust (Knobloch et al., 2001, p. 209). These conversations can create a solid foundation of trust and deepen emotional intimacy that may improve a relationship (Knobloch et al., 2001, p. 209; Kovan, 2023, p. 114). In contrast, a deficiency in trust can create misconceptions and a worsened communication with one's partner which causes tensions and alienation in romantic relationships (Kovan, 2023, p. 119). This contributes to the overall perception of jealousy, that it leads to negative emotions and potential tension and anxiety in interpersonal relationships (Salovey & Rodin, 1988, p. 17), which in turn could negatively affect the trust and communication within the relationship.

Origin and impact of online jealousy

The concept of jealousy can be widely defined as an emotional reaction based on any threats related to stability and security to a relationship of value (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989, p. 182). A relationship of value can encompass various sorts of relationships, however, in this context, it usually refers to either romantic or sexual relationships (Dijkstra et al., 2010, p. 329). Given the central theme of this research on the online premises and romantic relationships, the term online jealousy refers to "*jealousy experienced by an individual due to a potential threat (perceived or actual) of the loss or deterioration of a romantic relationship due specifically to their partner's or spouse's use of and activities undertaken on social media platforms, especially if such activities involve a potential rival for extra-dyadic, romantic attention*" (Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1544). The most commonly felt emotions by an individual coming from online jealousy are disgust (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2016, p. 145) or betrayal (Dunn & Ward, 2020, p. 39) towards their significant other. Pfeiffer and Wong

(1989, p. 182) also discussed that jealousy may occur in different forms to create dimensions within the concept of jealousy, coined the Multidimensional Jealousy Concept, which may be applicable to online jealousy as well (Sullivan, 2021, p. 6). This concept includes cognitive thoughts, emotional reactions, and engaging in observable behaviors. Cognitive thoughts explain dwelling on negative and intrusive thoughts regarding a partner's activities are examples of cognitive elements that may contribute to heightened uncertainty and anxiety (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989, p. 183). Emotional reactions might vary from sorrow and rage to extreme frustration and distrust (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989, p. 183). Moreover, behaviorally, people may monitor their partner's activity in order to get comfort or evidence of faithfulness while suffering increased misery (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989, p. 183). This concept is relevant as different aspects of jealousy can now be separately analyzed with other parameters. This consideration will not be implemented in this study for the applicability of this research, however it is beneficial to keep in mind to better understand and interpret the results. Subsequently, Muise et al. (2009, p. 36) put these three aspects into action by doing research on online jealousy on Facebook with a focus on the emotional feelings and jealousy behaviors. Their work is an example supported by the previously mentioned Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) proposed by Berger and Calabrese (1975, pp. 99-112). According to this theory, individuals often experience miscommunication regarding their partner's intentions during online interactions. This uncertainty can result from a lack of nonverbal signals and immediate input that occurs in conversations that take place in person (Basting et al., 2023, p. 489). To lessen this perceived miscommunication, people may watch their partner's online activity, such as their social media accounts, comments, likes, and associations with others (Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1545). Which, depending on how both partners interpret and react to these behaviors, can either build or erode trust (Aloia, 2023, pp. 437-441). Due to the fact that when people move through social media platforms, they come across a variety of perceived triggers that elicit emotions of fear or worthlessness, it fosters early components of jealousy (Clayton et al., 2013, p. 718; Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1572). Based on URT, trust can be considered as a dependent variable in this situation since it can be impacted and fluctuated by the feelings of uncertainty and perceived threats, and jealousy that are sparked by online interactions (Aloia, 2023, pp. 437-441; Berger and Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-112; Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1572).

A substantial drive to be aware and have knowledge of perceived threats to a romantic relationship can be detrimental to couple interactions, leading to further intruding on a romantic partner's online activities and a potential higher risk of separation (Muise et al., 2009, p. 443). As it has become rather easy to monitor and control a significant other's online behavior due to social media's public nature (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2016, p. 156), it is of great importance to gain a better understanding of how this type of behavior affects a couple's relationship communication, quality, and satisfaction. This is especially the case when infidelity comes into play. When there is suspicion of infidelity, people tend to look for evidence supporting their claim of perceived infidelity of their

partner (Weigel & Shrouf, 2014, pp. 1-2). Becoming jealous and watching the romantic partner are linked to relationship discontentment, this may result in difficulty for individuals to quit lurking around since this behavior has been considered as addictive (Muisse et al., 2009, p. 443). Although the behavior is wrong, the monitoring content and activities are found in a public environment and are consistently creating an environment for online jealousy (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2016, p. 156).

In a relationship that is committed, emotional intimacy is heavily built on a sense of trust (Ferreirat et al., 2013, p. 340). As jealousy grows, this trust may be jeopardized, resulting in an imbalance in communication and emotional connection (Basting et al., 2023, p. 489). These individuals experiencing jealousy may find themselves continually doubting their partner's faithfulness and desires, resulting in different perceptions of mutual understanding and emotional support (Aloia, 2023, p. 437; Berger & Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-100). This extra caution over their relationship, for example monitoring their partner, can foster an environment of distrust and unease, overshadowing moments of closeness and connection (Basting et al., 2023, p. 489; Kovan, 2023, p. 119). Moreover, the persistent desire for reassurance or clarification regarding the online interactions of their partner may then cause stress and restrict the free sharing of emotions and the formation of a genuine connection between couples (Knobloch et al., 2001, p. 207). Instead of focusing on cultivating true connection, the emphasis on online behaviors and perceived suspicious ambiguities may result in an issue between partners' communication, affection, and trust (Clayton et al., 2013, p. 718). Bush et al. (1988, p. 288) found a defining strong link between jealousy and trust levels in a romantic relationship by concluding that jealousy evoking activities give one a sense of unstableness or insecurity in a romantic relationship, which makes them question their romantic partner and diminish their level of trust in the significant other. This may also be applicable to the connection between online jealousy and trust in romantic partnerships as jealousy brought on by online interactions can also cause emotions of instability and insecurity (Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1572), leading people to potentially doubt their romantic partner's loyalty and, as a result, perhaps eroding the trust they have in the significant other (Bush et al., 1988, p. 288). Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: Online jealousy mediates the relationship between social media monitoring and trust within romantic relationships.

Attachment styles

According to the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982), people develop the distinction between secure and insecure attachment styles which predicts the level of anxiety or avoidance that may create the extent of jealousy. It also explains that one's attachment style is formulated in their early childhood years based on the attention one received through their caregivers, and that it is difficult to change effortlessly or from one day to another (Bowlby, 1969/1982). A person's

attachment style is unique and reflects how one may feel and behave in relationships with friends, family, or partners (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2022, p. 392). The anxious attachment style refers to *"a negative model of self, characterized by fear of relational rejection and abandonment, combined with the lack of a sense of self-worth"* (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2022, p. 393). Whereas the avoidant attachment style comes from *"a negative model of others and is characterized by emotional suppression, self-reliance, and discomfort with closeness and interdependence because of expectations that the partner will be unavailable"* (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2022, p. 393). The avoidant attachment style can also be identified by the need for independence and control in relationships due to the fact that they believe emotional connection with someone is impossible and/or unpleasant (Simpson & Rholes, 2017, p. 20). Therefore, these individuals tend to distance themselves from other people (Simpson & Rholes, 2017, pp. 20-23). These two types of attachment styles are the opposite of being securely attached in relationships (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2022, p. 393), also known as the secure attachment which is characterized by the expectation that others will be available and receptive to one, accommodated by the capacity to effectively regulate and minimize unpleasant emotions and create an atmosphere that is supportive of closeness and emotional comfort (Marazziti et al., 2010, p. 53). To summarize, secure attached people often indicate and express their optimistic perceptions about themselves and those around them and show a stronger belief in their relationship and their significant other's love (Marazziti et al., 2010, p. 53; Monteoliva et al., 2016, p. 933). Whereas on the contrary, insecure (i.e., avoidant or anxious) attached people usually offered more pessimistic perceptions, displaying a considerably less favorable attitude toward their partner and a less favorable view of anything related to their relationship (Monteoliva et al., 2016, p. 934; Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2022, p. 393).

These anxious and avoidant attachment styles could be an indicator of online jealousy. While having these in mind; individuals in romantic relationships may feel inadequate, avoidant, anxious, or insecure when exposed to perfectly edited and idealized portrayals of others' lives on social media sites (Marshall et al., 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, especially when they are anxious, they are more likely to compare themselves with perceived potential competitors and assume that their partner would much rather engage in activities with these perceived better looking people of the opposite sex (Monteoliva et al., 2016, p. 934). Constantly seeing skilfully presented images of people of the other sex online may elicit inappropriate sentiments of worthlessness or jealousy (Monteoliva et al., 2016, p. 934), thereby perhaps affecting the emotional dynamics of the relationship.

According to Hira and Bhogal (2022, p. 6168), an anxious attachment style contributes to high levels of jealousy based on fear of abandonment, contributing to the interpretation of harmless interactions as dangers to a romantic relationship, and experiencing increased jealousy driven by supposed involvement from others on social networking sites to the partner in a romantic relationship. This is supported by Chursina (2023, pp. 223-224) stating that jealousy deriving from online platforms will become damaging in people's relationships as it harms the trust and relationship

satisfaction within their relationship. Especially when the strong need for extra care and closeness from the romantic partner is needed and not met, online jealousy will be further jeopardized (Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2022, p. 1433). Furthermore, Hira and Bhogal (2022, p. 6168) concluded that an avoidant attachment style is a strong indicator of online jealousy. This can be explained based on a feeling of disconnection with their partner that may cause jealousy (Chursina, 2023, p. 229), which aligns with the previously mentioned Attachment Theory of Bowlby (1969/1982).

Generally, if online jealousy in a relationship is created, it can be linked to an insecure attachment style (Fitzpatrick & Lafontaine, 2017, p. 644; Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2022, p. 1451). People with an insecure attachment style frequently do not accept the assurance that they receive from people who are close to them, despite their seeking and longing for input from others (Evraire et al., 2022, p. 21). As a result, they are prone to conduct excessive reassurance seeking (Evraire et al., 2022, p. 21). In this sense, the excessive reassurance seeking is leading individuals to distrust and question the intentions of their partner (Evraire et al., 2022, p. 25). Consequently, these anxiously attached individuals will then continue to seek reassurance (e.g., by online surveillance) in order to regain the perceived intimate connection they have of their partner (Evraire et al., 2022, p. 31).

Social media can intensify concerns by inciting feelings of inadequacy or abandonment fear due to its images of relationships and idealized lives (Hira & Bhogal, 2022, p. 6168). The relationship of social media monitoring and online jealousy with attachment styles as moderators are deeply entwined as people react differently to social media stimulants depending on their attachment type (Hira & Bhogal, 2022, p. 6168). Marshall et al. (2013, p. 2) stated that individuals with an anxious attachment style are considerably more prone to be jealous because these individuals tend to use social networking sites more to invade their partner's privacy, for example, to monitor their partner's online activities on those social media platforms. Therefore, the anxious attachment style acts as a moderator for the relationship of social media monitoring and online jealousy within a romantic relationship. People who are avoidantly attached frequently find it difficult to communicate their emotional needs and weaknesses truthfully (Marshall et al., 2013, p. 3). Moreover, these individuals have a negative perception of themselves and others, as many of them have been put into emotionally vulnerable places to be hurt by others and they do not want to be put into that position again (Guerrero, 1998, p. 276). This leads to easily developed skepticism which will motivate avoidant individuals to gather information online (e.g., by social media monitoring) (Aloia, 2023, pp. 448-449). In order to preserve some degree of emotional control and defend themselves against imagined risks, social media monitoring may be used to confirm suspicions of deceit (Marshall et al., 2013, p. 3). However, when people with an avoidant attachment style struggle with their own inner issues and fears, their dependence on outside validation via social media may feed into an obsessive cycle (Marshall et al., 2013, p. 4). As a result, in romantic relationships, the avoidant attachment style also acts as a moderator for the association between social media monitoring and online jealousy. Implementing the attachment styles as moderators is done in a similar way as previous studies (e.g.,

Nitzburg & Farber, 2013, p. 1183; Muise et al., 2014, p. 42) Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Social media monitoring is positively related to online jealousy within a romantic relationship, especially for people with an anxious attachment style.

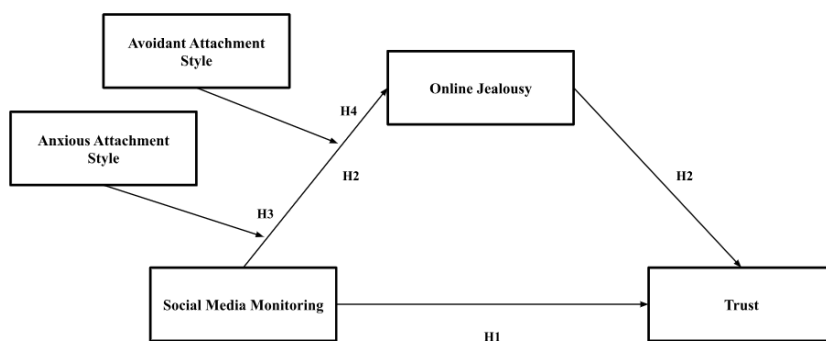
H4: Social media monitoring is positively related to online jealousy within a romantic relationship, especially for people with an avoidant attachment style.

Conceptual framework

This study explores relationships by using social media monitoring as the independent variable, trust as the dependent variable, online jealousy as the mediator, and anxious and avoidant attachment styles as moderators. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of this model. Furthermore, the education level and country of origin are used as demographic variables. Moreover, the control variables age, length of the romantic relationship, and frequency of communication with the romantic partner and the dummy variables of the control variables gender (0 = male, 1 = female), sexual orientation (0 = heterosexual, 1 = non-heterosexual) are implemented in this model. These control variables are based on previous research (e.g., Muise et al., 2009, pp. 441-444; Orosz et al., 2015, pp. 1-6; Utz & Beukeboom, 2011, pp. 511-527; Valentova et al., 2020, pp. 1-6) that state these variables may influence dynamics within romantic relationships, such as jealousy and trust. Furthermore, the variable length of relationship can be used in this research as a continuous control variable as it has been implemented before by Darvell et al. (2011, p. 720) in an identical way. Considering the categories of less than a month, a few months, 6-12 months, 1-2 years, 2-5 years, 5-10 years, and more than 10 years.

Figure 1

Conceptual model



3. Research Design and Methods

Method

The research project implemented a quantitative survey approach to examine the degree to which trust in romantic relationships is impacted by online jealousy and social media monitoring. By employing the thorough gathering of data from a significant number of participants, the links between social media monitoring, online jealousy, trust, and anxious and avoidant attachment style were examined using statistical analysis.

Quantitative surveys provide an organized and effective way to collect quantifiable data about the probability and consequences of factors (Choy, 2014, pp. 101-102), in this case mainly on online jealousy and social media monitoring in romantic relationships. Surveys enable the use of established assessment techniques, such as validated scales or surveys created particularly to assess for example online jealousy and trust in relationships (Choy, 2014, pp. 101-102). This promotes data consistency and makes it easier to compare the results. In order to evaluate social media monitoring and trust, the survey instrument uses existing measures that capture the pattern, severity, and perceived outcomes of online jealousy recurrence. This approach is supported by its capacity to offer measurable data on the degree to which social media monitoring affects trust. The gathered data is statistically analyzed to find trends, correlations, and possible predictions.

Strict ethical concerns are cautiously included throughout every part of the project. Steps were taken based on the recommendations of The Netherlands Association of Universities' ethical consent for data gathering based on their Code of Conduct for Research Integrity requirements (VSNU, 2005). Participants were given an informed consent with information about the goal, processes, and possible effects of the study before participating with the study to provide complete information and details to the participant. Moreover, confidentiality and anonymity were stressed, to guarantee the identities of participants remaining safe throughout the duration of the research (Hoft, 2021, p. 226). Additionally, the end of the informed consent consisted of the option to withdraw from the study at any point during the survey. This dedication to ethical standards seeks to protect the well-being and rights of every person concerned (Ross et al., 2018, p. 138).

Analysis

The survey data that were gathered were put through detailed processing and analysis using statistics of IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29 software including the Hayes' Process Macro (2017), which enables thorough statistical analyses of the research focus. SPSS is a choice of software to ensure accurate analysis of correlations, regressions, validity, and reliability testing. Assumption testing of normality and linearity were first done to ensure required conditions are met in order for the further data analysis to be accurate and reliable, followed by hypothesis testing to investigate if the hypotheses may be accepted or rejected. Descriptive statistics were used in

quantitative data analysis to describe the sample and important variables. Correlation analyses were used to investigate the connection between the different variables. Regression analyses were also used to find possible influences and determinants.

Sample and procedure

The study's target demographic consists of presently enrolled students who are at least 18 years old and are currently in a romantic relationship. Considering that the study issue relates to romantic digital interactions, participants were selected based on their active use of social media platforms, while ensuring that their romantic partners also actively use these platforms. This criterion is crucial to accurately examine the dynamics of social media monitoring, online jealousy, and trust. The investigation aims to understand how anxious and avoidant attachment styles may moderate the relationship between these variables, providing insights into the intersection of digital behavior and relationship psychology.

In order to effectively reach a large audience, an online platform Qualtrics convenience sampling technique (Emerson, 2021, p. 76) was utilized to secure an adequate number of at least 150 respondents. Additionally, to gather more participants, the survey was also posted on the research platforms of SurveyCircle and SurveySwap. Moreover, this survey was being shared on social media platforms to reach the target audience. Obtaining a sample that is representative of the variety of students in a committed relationship that experience online jealousy was the aim. The convenience sampling strategy is appropriate for the interpretive nature of this study, even if it may restrict the findings' applicability to a larger population (Emerson, 2021, p. 77). Additionally, to encourage more participation and a varied sample, the survey was conducted in English, making it possible for people from various regions worldwide to participate.

A total of 240 responses were collected. Seventy-seven of those were filtered out as they did not fit the inclusion criteria, and a further 12 responses were removed as those were responses that did not complete the whole survey. After data filtering and cleaning, 151 participants were included in the final sample for further analyses. In the final sample, the gender distribution was as follows: 76.2% female and 22.5% male participants. The remaining 1.3% indicated their gender as 'other' or 'prefer not to say'. Participants' average age was 23.07 ($SD = 2.00$). The sexual orientation of the respondents consisted of 88.1% heterosexual, 3.3% homosexual, 7.9% bisexual participants, and the remaining 0.7% participants were indicated as 'other' or 'prefer not to say'. Moreover, the sample obtained 23 different countries of origin most prominent being The Netherlands (68.9%), Belgium (4.6%), and Hong Kong (4.0%). The most named obtained degrees were university bachelor's degree (60.3%), followed by some university but no degree (26.5%). Lastly, the most mentioned relationship length was 6 to 12 months (26.5%) followed by a few months (25.2%), and 1 to 2 years (19.2%).

When conducting the online survey, participants first got an explanation on what the general topic of the survey is and how long it is going to take, followed by an informed consent (see

Appendix A). During the survey (see Appendix A) participation, the first questions were regarding filter questions followed by demographic questions. Subsequently, there were questions regarding their social media usage. Then the level of trust within their relationship was measured, followed by questions about online jealousy, and subsequently having questions regarding their attachment style. Finally, participants were thanked for their participation.

Measures

Social media monitoring

Social media monitoring was measured through the scale from Tokunaga (2011) containing 13 items. Participants have answered the statements based on how much they agree with each item using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). Examples of the statements were 'I often spend time looking through my partner's social networking site pictures' and 'I try to monitor my partner's behaviors through his/her social networking page' (see Appendix A). The measured social media monitoring is not regarding a specific platform but rather social media in general. This scale indicates that participants, on average, do not necessarily engage frequently in social media monitoring behaviour ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.22$), but there is high agreement across the items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$), as shown in Table 3.

Trust

A reviewed form of the Dyadic Trust Scale by Larzelere and Huston (1980) with eight items that originated from the 26-items scale of Rempel et al. (1985) was implemented to capture the trust levels of participants to their romantic partner. Note that the answers are based on one person of the relationship answering questions related to the relationship, not an answer based on both people in the relationship answering. This is a reliable scale as it has been implemented in the same way by other studies related to trust in intimate relationship (e.g., Thompson et al., 2005, pp. 313-360; Geyskens et al., 1996, pp. 303-317). Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agree with the given eight statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). An example statement was 'I feel that I can trust my partner completely' (see Appendix A). This trust scale shows that, on average, participants' trust levels are well above moderate ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.08$) with high levels of consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) (See Table 3).

Online jealousy

Online jealousy was measured by implementing Utz and Beukeboom's (2011) 26 items adapted scale from Muise et al.'s (2009) online jealousy scale. The implementation of online jealousy on Facebook in their scale was adjusted to online jealousy on social media in general. This is possible as it has shown to be reliable given it has been implemented in the same way by Utz and Beukeboom (2011). Participants assessed to what extent they are likely to behave in certain situations with each

item using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Very unlikely, 7 = Very likely). The responses were assessed by asking questions such as 'How likely are you to become jealous after your partner has added an unknown member of the opposite sex?' (See Appendix A). As presented in Table 3, the participants exhibit moderate levels of online jealousy behaviour ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.27$), with responses showing extremely high internal consistency across the items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$). As it is a relatively large scale, a factor analysis was implemented. The 26 items were put into an exploratory factor analysis using Principal Components extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation based on Eigenvalues (> 1.00), $KMO = .95$, $\chi^2 (N = 151, 325) = 4086.68$, $p < .001$. Factor loadings of individual items onto the two factors found are presented in Table 1. However, all components are heavily loaded onto one factor, therefore, it is not applicable to divide this scale into factors.

Table 1

Factor loadings of the two factors found for the scale 'online jealousy'.

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
Become jealous when you discover that your partner has added an unknown person of the opposite sex on social media.	.81	.25
Getting angry because your partner does not want to display his/her correct relationship status on social media.	.72	.02
Feeling threatened when your partner adds an ex-partner of his/her to his/her social media.	.73	.34
Monitor your partner's activities on social media.	.83	- .04
Ask your partner about his/her social media activities.	.79	.18
Become jealous when you see that your partner had posted a comment on a post of someone of the opposite sex.	.84	.28
Get angry if your partner restricts your access to his/her social media profile.	.65	.11
Experiencing jealousy when your partner uploads photos on social media of themselves with an arm around someone of the opposite sex.	.68	.45

(Table 1 continued)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
Getting jealous when your partner uploads photos of themselves with his/her ex-partner on social media.	.61	.52
Find the private messages that your partner sends via social media suspicious.	.84	- .22
Worrying about your partner falling in love with someone else on social media.	.81	- .28
Become jealous when you see that your partner has received a comment from someone of the opposite sex.	.82	.27
Get jealous when your partner uploads photos of themselves with an unknown user of the opposite sex.	.77	.39
Worry that your partner is using social media to initiate relationships with users of the opposite sex.	.77	- .43
Suspect your partner of secretly having an intimate relationship with someone else on social media.	.80	- .40
Getting jealous when your partner uploads photos of themselves that are sexually provocative.	.72	- .001
Worrying that someone else on social media I attracted to your partner.	.74	.06
Arguing with your partner about social media.	.85	- .23
View your partner's social media pages if you find his/her activities suspicious.	.72	.18
Regularly view/check your partner's social media.	.79	- .12
Worrying that your partner is using social media to get back in touch with his/her ex.	.81	- .28
Ask your partner about his or her social media following.	.80	.04

(Table 1 continued)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
Using social media to make your partner jealous.	.81	- .29
Add your partner's friends on social media to better monitor your partner.	.84	- .09
Experiencing jealousy regarding social media.	.82	- .03
Trying to gain access to your partner's social media accounts.	.77	- .41
Eigenvalue	16.02	2.20

Attachment styles

Attachment style is being measured by using Wei et al.'s (2007) scale related to attachment styles. It is a 12-item scale which is grouped into two overarching attachment style categories: anxious attachment style, and avoidant attachment style. This includes an answering system of a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). Participants were asked to answer these statements based on how they usually handle in certain situations.

The 12 items were entered into an exploratory factor analysis using Principal Components extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation based on Eigenvalues (> 1.00), $KMO = .84$, $\chi^2 (N = 151, 66) = 1311.97$, $p < .001$. The resultant model explained 68.5% of the variance in attachment styles. Factor loadings of individual items onto the two factors found are presented in Table 2. Based on Breu et al.'s (2002, p. 25) categories, only the factor loadings greater than 0.4 are shown as those have low predictions of a factor. The factors found were:

Anxious attachment style. This included six items related to the anxious attachment style with statements such as 'I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner' (see Appendix A). The participants showed averagely moderate levels of anxious attachment style ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.24$) with a good internal consistency between the items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) (see Table 3).

Avoidant attachment style. This factor included six items contributing to the avoidant attachment style with statements such as 'I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back' (see Appendix A). This factor indicates that participants, on average, present slightly above moderate levels of avoidant attachment style ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.23$) with responses demonstrating high internal consistency between the items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) (see Table 3).

Table 2

Factor loadings, explained variance and reliability of the two factors found for the scale 'attachment style'.

Item	Avoidant attachment style	Anxious attachment style
I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.	.88	
I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me.	.82	
I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.	.81	
I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.	.79	
It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	.73	
I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.	.68	
I get frustrated if my romantic partner is not available when I need them.		.80
I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.		.78
I do not often worry about being abandoned.		.70
I worry that a romantic partner will not care about me as much as I care about them.		.59
My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	.50	.52
I find that my partner does not want to get as close as I would like.		.65
<i>R</i> ²	.42	.27
<i>Cronbach's α</i>	.92	.85
Eigenvalue	5.02	3.20

Table 3*Descriptive statistics*

	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Cronbach's α
Social media monitoring	3.56	1.22	1.00	6.46	.94
Trust	5.25	1.08	1.00	5.88	.92
Online jealousy	3.12	1.27	1.00	3.12	.97
Anxious attachment style	3.41	1.24	1.00	3.41	.85
Avoidant attachment style	3.71	1.23	1.00	2.71	.92
Age	23.07	2.00	20	38	
Gender	.77	.42	0	1	
Sexual orientation	.12	.33	0	1	
Frequency of communication	4.08	.92	2	5	
Length of relationship	3.52	1.37	1	7	

4. Results

Assumption testing

To ensure the validity of the statistical analyses for hypothesis testing, preliminary assumption testing for normality, linearity, and multicollinearity were conducted. Firstly, normality testing was performed to assess how the sampling distribution of the data is (Pek et al., 2018, p. 2). The Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were simultaneously performed to assess the normality of the data distribution. The dataset under consideration showed a significant deviation from normality for the independent variable social media monitoring as indicated by the Shapiro-Wilk test results ($W = .945, p < .001$) and Kolmogorov-Smirnov testing outcomes ($W = .147, p < .001$), as presented in Table 4. Furthermore, the results also presented that the dependent variable trust also failed to be normally distributed as investigated through the Shapiro-Wilk testing ($W = .889, p < .001$) and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results ($W = .190, p < .001$). Moreover, through Shapiro-Wilk testing, the mediator online jealousy ($W = .941, p < .001$) and moderator anxious attachment style ($W = .954, p < .001$) and avoidant attachment style ($W = .893, p < .001$) variables also show that the residuals were not normally distributed. Which were confirmed by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test findings respectively on online jealousy ($W = .137, p < .001$), anxious attachment style ($W = .154, p < .001$), and avoidant attachment style ($W = .182, p < .001$). These suggest the normality assumption was disrupted for all these variables suggesting that the relationship between social media monitoring and trust may not be linear (Pek et al., 2018, p. 4), therefore the linearity assumption was tested after. In addition, when non-normality occurs, analyses could provide less accurate p-values and confidence intervals (Pek et al., 2018, p. 4). However, in this case this consequence of non-normality will not be of issue as there is a large enough sample size (explained in detail in the discussion section).

Table 4

Tests of normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk
	Statistic	Statistic
Social media monitoring	.147*	.945*
Trust	.190*	.889*
Online jealousy	.137*	.941*
Anxious attachment style	.154*	.954*
Avoidant attachment style	.182*	.893*

Note. * indicates significance at $p < .001$

Secondly, linearity was tested to demonstrate if there is a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variable (Pek et al., 2018, p. 2). It shows that social media monitoring and trust as the independent and dependent variables have a significant linear connection ($p < .001$) and therefore accept the linearity assumption.

Thirdly, multicollinearity assumption testing was implemented in order to investigate if there is an interrelated correlation between predicting variables, which could indicate a lack of independence between variables (Alin, 2010, p. 370). This was tested by looking at the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and R^2 . If the VIF is larger than 5-10 and the R^2 is between 0.8 and 0.9, multicollinearity is detected (Kim, 2019, p. 559). In this research, the R^2 is not in that range (0.25) and the VIF's for social media monitoring (2.24), online jealousy (2.64), anxious attachment style (3.01), and avoidant attachment style (1.07) were also not in the given range. Moreover, as there is a little overlap in the scales between online jealousy and trust, a correlation analysis was used to see if there is a high, meaning between 0.68 to 1.0 according to Taylor (1990, p. 37), significant correlation which could indicate collinearity of the variables that could harm the validity and reliability of the hypothesis testing. According to the correlation output (see Table 5), there is a significant ($p < 0.05$), but weak (- 0.20) correlation which is not enough to jeopardize the further analysis.

Table 5

Correlations

	Social media monitoring	Trust	Online Jealousy	Anxious attachment style	Avoidant attachment style
Social media monitoring	-				
Trust	.106	-			
Online jealousy	.659*	- .202	-		
Anxious attachment style	.724*	.031	.762*	-	
Avoidant attachment style	.116	- .347*	.254	.170	-

Note. * indicates correlation is significant $p < .001$

Hypotheses testing

To test the hypotheses, the Hayes' Macro Process (2017) model 7 via bootstrapping method was implemented. Several relationships were investigated to see the direct and indirect effect, see Figure 2 to get a better understanding for the following explanation of the findings. Additionally, the moderators were also simultaneously tested within the relationship of social media monitoring and online jealousy.

The first hypothesis was proposed to investigate the complex relationship between social media monitoring and trust within a romantic relationship. This path (c') of direct effect was hypothesized to be negative, but the results showed it to be positively significant ($c' = .140, p < .05$) (see Table 6 and Figure 2). Therefore, H1 was rejected. However, with the control variables of age, gender (0 = male, 1 = female), sexual orientation (0 = heterosexual, 1 = non-heterosexual), length of romantic relationship, and frequency of communication within a couple taken into account; it is good to note that only the control variable frequency of communication within a couple showed to have a significant effect on the levels of trust ($\beta = .245, p < .001$). This indicates that students in romantic relationships who communicate more with their partner are more likely to trust their romantic partner, making frequency of communication a possible predictor of the levels of trust. Furthermore, only 32.6% of the dependent variable trust can be explained by the selected variables shown in Table 6. Meaning that the chosen control variables may not be the best as they explain only a little portion of variance of the levels of trust within a romantic relationship.

The second hypothesis predicted online jealousy as the mediator of the relationship between social media monitoring and trust within a romantic relationship. The bootstrapping method will consider if a mediator has a mediating effect when (1) the indirect effect of social media monitoring on trust within a romantic relationship on the mediator of online jealousy, and (2) the bias corrected 95% confidence interval surrounding the indirect effect from 5,000 bootstrap re-samples. The indirect effect is only accepted as statistically significant if its bias corrected 95% confidence interval excludes the zero point. According to the results shown in Table 6 and Figure 2, path a of the indirect effect from social media monitoring to online jealousy shows to have a significant and positively related effect ($a = .685, p < .05$) and path b from online jealousy to trust also indicates that this relationship is significant and negative ($b = -.109, p < .05$). In addition, the confidence interval for the indirect effect (-0.141) entirely excludes zero (-0.207 to -0.091). Therefore, online jealousy acts as a significant mediator between social media monitoring and trust within a romantic relationship, leading to the acceptance of H2.

Table 6

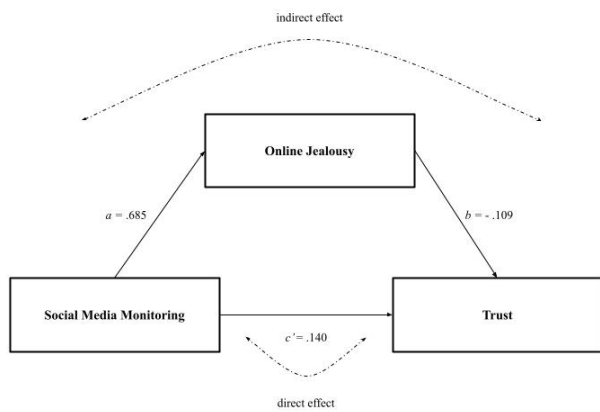
Results of mediated moderation analysis

	Online jealousy			Trust		
	β	Standard error	p	β	Standard error	p
Social media monitoring	.685	.064	< .001*	.140	.042	.001
Online jealousy	-	-	-	-.109	.043	.012*
Moderating effect of anxious attachment	.094	.030	.002*			
Moderating effect of avoidant attachment	-.099	.056	.082			
Age	-.021	.029	.464	-.021	.020	.284
Gender	.180	.134	.181	.028	.090	.753
Sexual orientation	-.401	.173	.022	.035	.116	.763
Length of relationship	-.108	.044	.015	.051	.030	.087
Frequency of communication	-.358	.062	< .001**	.245	.045	< .001**
R^2	.737			.326		
	$F(8, 142) = 49.704, p < .001$			$F(7, 143) = 9.899, p < .001$		

Note. * significant at $p < .05$, ** significant at $p < .001$

Figure 2

Direct and indirect effect of online jealousy mediation



Note. Significance level at $p < .05$

The third and fourth hypotheses suggest two different attachments styles, avoidant and anxious, as moderators in the relationship between social media monitoring and online jealousy. Using the identical output that was employed to test H1 and H2, H3 was tested to examine anxious attachment style as a moderator in the relationship between social media monitoring and online jealousy. The overall model shows that the moderating effect of anxious attachment style has a significant impact on the relationship between social media monitoring and online jealousy ($\beta = .095$, $p < .05$). Moreover, as presented in Table 7, the confidence intervals of the anxious attachment style do not contain zero (- .022 to - .002), consequently this further supports that anxious attachment style has a moderating effect within this relationship. Hence, H3 is accepted and supported. As further displayed in Table 8, the anxious attachment style only has a significant effect in the relationship at high levels of anxiety, not significant at low nor moderate levels of anxiety. This can be explained because only at high levels of anxious attachment (at +1SD, IE = 4.644) does the bootstrap confidence interval not include zero (- .073 to - .005).

Table 7

Indexes of moderation effect between social media monitoring and online jealousy

	Index	Standard error	Lower level confidence interval	Upper level confidence interval
Anxious attachment style	- .010	.005	- .022	- .002
Avoidant attachment style	.011	.011	- .011	.034

Table 8

Conditional effect at values of the anxious attachment style moderator

	Anxious attachment style	Index	Standard error	Lower level confidence interval	Upper level confidence interval
-1SD	2.173	- .006	.012	- .033	.015
Mean	3.408	- .019	.013	- .050	.002
+1SD	4.644	- .031	.017	- .073	- .005

The fourth and last hypothesis provides the avoidant attachment style as the moderator within the social media monitoring and online jealousy connection. The equivalent data output was once more employed to analyze this. This model indicated that the moderation effect of the avoidant attachment style does not have a significant impact on the relationship between social media

monitoring and online jealousy ($p = .082$) as its interval (- .011 to .034) does include the zero point. Therefore, H4 will be rejected.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to answer the research question '*How do attachment styles influence the relationship between social media monitoring, online jealousy, and trust among students in a committed relationship?*'. This was done by investigating the relationship between social media monitoring and the level of trust within a romantic relationship which could be mediated by online jealousy. Furthermore, Bowlby's (1969/1982) Attachment Theory is applied by implementing anxious and avoidant attachment styles as moderators to analyze the connection between social media monitoring and online jealousy. The results showed insightful information on the complex interactions between the variables, and these findings and their implications will be discussed in more detail below.

Social media monitoring on trust

This study's objective for the first hypothesis was to investigate the connection between social media monitoring and trust in romantic relationships, with the hypothesis being that there is a negative association between the two (H1). The findings disproved the hypothesis by showing that there was a statistically significant positive association between the common activity of social media monitoring on trust. Additionally, the low R^2 value (0.326) indicated that the chosen control variables may not be the best for this research, as these variables only explained 32.6% of the dependent variable trust. This discovery calls for a careful analysis because it contradicts widely held beliefs in the contents of current research. The present research did not find evidence supporting a negative relationship, despite a large amount of research found reinforcing this narrative (e.g., Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2018, pp. 18-19; Aloia, 2023, p. 441; Clayton et al., 2013, p. 719; Rueda et al., 2015, p. 428) suggesting the negative effects of social media monitoring on romantic relationship trust. This unexpected result could be explained by a number of factors. First and foremost, it is probable that social media surveillance practices have changed over time. As social media usage grows more and more common, couples might have discovered ways to lessen the harmful effects of social media monitoring. According to Van Ouytsel et al. (2019, p. 2), to minimize potential conflicts and misunderstandings, partners could have set explicit boundaries and mutual agreements regarding appropriate online behaviors. And with no conflicts, social media monitoring will not be seen as negative and can even be turned into something positive, which could explain why there is a significant positive direct effect between social media monitoring and trust levels. Torreon (2020, p. 24) adds to this by concluding that trust can only be established when there is careful monitoring within a relationship, meaning that transparency and openness are built on the basis of clear and mutually agreed-on social media norms. This understanding between partners can then strengthen their sense of assurance and stability, which in turn may improve their sense of trust (Torreon, 2020, p. 24; Van Ouytsel et al., 2019, p. 2).

Second, variations between people in the perception and experience of social media surveillance may be quite important. As claimed by Van Ouytsel et al. (2019, p. 2), some people may view monitoring as a harmless or even beneficial practice that fosters a sense of security and connection. On the other hand, others can see it as an indication of insecurity and mistrust (Muise et al., 2009, p. 443). The absence of significant correlation in this study may point to a nuanced interaction between these diverse impressions that offsets the overall effect and calls for attention on the importance of the broader context of social media interactions. Although there is evidence that social media has the ability to affect relationship dynamics positively (e.g., Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2018, pp. 18-19; Aloia, 2023, p. 441; Clayton et al., 2013, p. 719; Rueda et al., 2015, p. 428), the precise nature of this influence seems to be more nuanced than previously thought. The URT explains it by focusing on the effect of feeling safe when lowering uncertainty to improve intimacy and trust in relationships (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-112). Therefore, when looking through the URT in another perspective, it can explain that based on conducting social media monitoring, individuals may perceive a continuous reduction in uncertainty and unknown behavior of their partner which can increase trust in a romantic relationship (Aloia, 2023, p. 437; Berger & Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-100). In order to effectively inform relationship interventions in the digital age, future studies should carry out further exploration of the complex dynamics and aspect within trust and online surveillance. This is especially the case with students, as they tend to use social media platforms more regularly and incorporate them fully into their relationships and daily lives (Thomas et al., 2020, p. 8). Students' experiences may be indicative of the changing social media usage norms and behaviors, which may be very different from those of other demographics.

Additionally, as this research focused on social media in general instead of a specific social media platform, this could indicate that students adapt their behaviors across different platforms, potentially influencing the nature of social media monitoring and the effect it has on trust. Different circumstances and expectations can be created by each platform. For example, Snapchat might promote less permanent and private communications (Utz et al., 2015, pp. 144-145), yet Instagram might encourage greater public sharing and visibility (Fejes-Vékássy et al., 2020, pp. 6834-6835). These different settings can affect how people view monitoring. While monitoring a partner's public activity on Instagram may be viewed as a means of keeping in touch (Fejes-Vékássy et al., 2020, pp. 6834-6835), the private nature of Snapchat content may make it appear more intrusive (Utz et al., 2015, pp. 144-145). Therefore, different platforms could create different perspectives on social media surveillance, such as staying connected, and even positively influence the trust levels in a romantic relationship. Moreover, partners do not always use identical social media platforms. One may only use Instagram, whereas the other could be using multiple social media platforms. A lack of this research is that it has not included only partners using the same platforms, consequently its effects may be compromised since different platforms could influence usage patterns and behaviors towards jealousy differently (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011, p. 517).

The effect of online jealousy

It has been found that online jealousy is a significant mediator in the relationship between social media monitoring and trust levels in a romantic relationship (H2). It first confirms the initial part of the findings that the increased surveillance on social media on a romantic partner significantly contributes to the increasing feelings of online jealousy. It is good to mention that on the other hand, it is also feasible that those who are already more prone to online jealousy will be more likely to keep a close eye on their partner's social media activity. Therefore, the causality of those variables can be less convincing (Sprecher & Metts, 1990, pp. 846-850) and could come from the high R^2 value of online jealousy (0.737) based on some overlap between the two variables. Additionally, since this study uses cross-sectional data, it adds to why it is not possible to conclusively determine which way causation runs (Shrout, 2011, pp. 853-859) As previously mentioned, social media platforms provide immense extensive access to a partner's online behavior (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2016, p. 156), this often triggers jealousy by exposing perceived potential threats to a relationship's stability and security (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989, p. 182). Especially as it captures and influences the emotional fluctuation brought by online jealousy. The results add to previous research conclusions of the open and public nature of social media platforms that foster a ripe environment for jealousy (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2016, p. 156; Rueda et al., 2015, p. 428), by showing that a big part of that is done by monitoring. This can be explained through interaction observed as flirtatious or indicative of a romantic interest (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2016, pp. 151-152). For students, who might already be navigating the uncertainties and insecurities of young adulthood (Martin et al., 2013, p. 732), the added dimension of social media surveillance can amplify these feelings. Especially since students nowadays often utilize more platforms that value privacy and limited visibility (Lewis et al., 2008, pp. 79-80). These channels may not be as transparent and public as popular social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, which could have a different impact on jealousy dynamics. The online jealousy factor also adds to the conversation of how Pfeiffer and Wong's (1989, p. 182) Multidimensional Jealousy Concept is being implemented in the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. As the social media monitoring is an example of paying attention to something which creates an emotional reaction of online jealousy and resulting in a behavior action of showing distrust and possibly more social media monitoring activities.

Online jealousy also contributes to the discussion by supporting the analyses and conclusions of the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-112). For students, social media monitoring becomes a readily available tool to reduce these uncertainties. However, as the previous research suggests, this monitoring could lead to miscommunication and further uncertainty regarding a partner's intentions and behaviors (Bastings et al., 2023, p. 489). This paradox is particularly relevant for students who may lack the experience and skills to navigate these complexities effectively (Martin et al., 2013, pp. 732-738), thereby fostering a cycle of monitoring

and jealousy issues. Furthermore, the repetitive exposure to potential threats on social media, as highlighted by Bastings et al. (2023, p. 489), is particularly impactful for students. The frequency and intensity of social media interactions noticed by students mean that perceived threats are not only frequent but also highly visible and often public (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2016, p. 156). Constantly being aware of one's surroundings can intensify emotions such as jealousy and insecurity (Kupfer et al., 2022, pp. 26-27), therefore social media monitoring is a crucial precursor to these negative reactions.

The second part of the results suggest that online jealousy is a significant negative predictor of trust within a romantic relationship creating a mediator for an indirect effect in the relationship of social media monitoring and trust. Meaning the more an individual has jealousy feelings due to social media platforms, the less trust there will be within that romantic relationship. Online jealousy creates doubt in a romantic partner's faithfulness that erodes trust and mutual understanding required for a healthy relationship (Aloia, 2023, p. 437), stemming from imbalanced communication. For a relationship to be healthy, trust is essential (Teoh et al., 2023, pp. 2-3). However, trust is immediately undermined by online jealousy as it fosters skepticism and insecurity (Tandon et al., 2021, p. 1572). It is hard to keep the same degree of trust when a partner doubts the other's faithfulness. Moreover, a common result of jealousy is poor communication (Aylor & Dainton, 2001, pp. 386-388). Rather than communicating honestly about uncertainties and fears, the jealous partner may then act in a passive-aggressive manner (Aylor & Dainton, 2001, pp. 385-387). This failure in communication might keep miscommunications from being resolved and result in new issues. In order to resolve conflicts and strengthen mutual respect and understanding, effective communication is crucial, but jealousy can seriously impede this process (Aylor & Dainton, 2001, pp. 385-388). The emotional reactions elicited from online jealousy will further increase the diminishing level of trust (Basting et al., 2023, p. 489). As individuals become more preoccupied with their partner's online behaviors and activities that they perceive as potential infidelity (Nannini & Meyers, 2000, p. 118), their ability to create genuine emotional connection lowers to an extent that trust will be jeopardized. Especially in the student phase of life which often involves significant emotional turbulence and identity exploration (Martin et al., 2013, p. 732). This emotional volatility can make students more susceptible to feelings of jealousy and insecurity (Go et al., 2021, pp. 383-386), further impacting their ability to trust their partners.

The influence of anxious attachment style

The findings signify that the anxious attachment style has a significant moderating effect within the relationship of social media monitoring and online jealousy in a romantic student relationship (H3). Meaning that with an anxious attachment style, that individual's attachment style tends to have an influencing effect between the factors of social media surveillance and online jealousy in their relationship. Online jealousy is more common among anxiously attached people as they have a low opinion of themselves and worry about being rejected or abandoned (Marshall et al.,

2013, p. 2). When they constantly keep an eye on their partner's social media activity, it will feed into their fears as these people are more inclined to see seemingly harmless encounters and interactions as potential dangers to their relationship (Monteoliva et al., 2016, p. 934). This goes in line with Hira and Bhogal's (2022, p. 6168) claims that anxiously attached people are significantly influenced by perceived threats from social media contacts and activities, which can heighten feelings of jealousy. Additionally, individuals with an anxious attachment style have a constant need for emotional intimacy and assurance, which is frequently unfulfilled and breeds mistrust and suspicion (Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2022, p. 1433). Their romantic partner's online activity is a constant source of affirmation of insecurity and potential infidelity for them due to this emotional state, therefore it paradoxically makes them feel more jealous and results in creating more relationship problems (Hira & Bhogal, 2022, p. 616; Marshall et al., 2013, p. 2; Monteoliva et al., 2016, p. 934; Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2022, p. 1433). Individuals are particularly exposed to developmental vulnerability during the student phase of life, as they are still establishing their sense of self and how they interact with others (Wang et al., 2012, p. 1830). As anxiously attached students cling to their relationships for validation and reassurance, they may be more vulnerable to the negative impacts of social media monitoring and online jealousy. According to the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982), anxiously attached people may have cognitive biases tendencies, such as confirmation bias. This means it could lead to individuals indulging in constantly looking for so called evidence to support their suspicions instead of the actual existence of real evidence. Consequently, social media platforms try to help those anxiously attached individuals by giving them the possibility to monitor their partner online, but in the end, it feeds circular feelings and behaviors such as distrust and jealousy.

Furthermore, people with low or moderate levels of anxious attachment style typically have a more secure attachment style, which are typified by more positive than negative views in their romantic partner's love and commitment (Marazziti et al., 2010, p. 53). Due to the emotional confidence that they have in their partner, it is less likely that they engage in behaviors that derive from suspicion (Marazziti et al., 2010, p. 53), such as social media monitoring. This is being supported as these individuals are also less likely to then perceive their romantic partner's online activities as a danger (Marazziti et al., 2010, p. 53), which decreases their online jealousy ability. The varying ways securely and anxiously attached individuals perceive and respond to stimuli on social media platforms might be the reason for the lack of effect at low and moderate degrees of anxious attachment as these differences are significant factors influencing social media monitoring and online jealousy.

Unanticipated avoidant attachment style effects

The connection between social media monitoring and online jealousy is further examined by investigating if the avoidant attachment style is a moderating factor within that positive relationship (H4). Contrary to predictions, the findings show that avoidantly attached people do not exhibit

increased levels of effect on jealousy due to social media monitoring to the extent that was anticipated. The avoidant attachment style is characterized by a tendency to reduce emotional reliance on other people, which could extend to romantic relationships (Evraire et al., 2022, p. 21). On the contrary of anxiously attached people who tend to be more needy and monitor their romantic partner in attempt to abandon their anxieties and insecurities within the romantic relationship (Marshall et al., 2013, p. 2), those who are avoidantly attached may find it difficult to go and monitor their romantic partner as it conflicts with their general discomfort with emotional closeness and exposure (Simpson & Rholes, 2017, p. 20). Subsequently, their romantic partner's social media activities might not have as much of an impact on their jealousy levels. Moreover, individuals with an avoidant attachment style may use social media platforms to validate their concerns for dishonesty, but they do so with an emotional distance instead of with strong jealousy feelings (Chursina, 2023, p. 229). It could be described as a need to preserve emotional control rather than have it as a jealousy reaction. It is also less likely that strong jealousy feelings arise when faced with the tendency to withdraw instead of interacting deeply with the romantic partner. These individuals' discomfort with dependence, reliance, and emotional intimacy leads them to avoid situations that could create vulnerability (Simpson & Rholes, 2017, p. 20), such as monitoring a romantic partner's online activities and behaviors. To conclude, the coping mechanism from avoidantly attached people is emotional suppression and self-reliance which reduces the likelihood of having jealousy created by social media interactions. As it is noted that people who have an avoidant attachment style typically suppress their emotions and rely on themselves to deal with relationship concerns and emotional discomfort rather than asking their partner for comfort or keeping an eye on their partner's social media activity (Simpson & Rholes, 2017, p. 20). In essence, avoidantly attached people deny their emotions and depend on self-reliance as a coping mechanism to protect themselves from the psychological anguish that jealousy can cause when it comes to romantic relationships and social media interactions. This highlights the importance of considering individual attachment styles in understanding the dynamics of social media use and its impact on romantic relationships.

Limitations and future directions

This study has several limitations, first of all is the method of sampling; non-probability convenience sampling. Although the findings can be useful to be generalized to the sample population, it restricts its potential to be applied to a larger population. Due to the possibility that the sample may not fairly reflect the wide range of attachment styles and behaviors presented in the general population, this method may induce selection bias (Emerson, 2021, p. 76). Convenience sampling may also result in the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of demographic groups, which could distort the results and lower the conclusions' general validity (Emerson, 2021, p. 76). In order to guarantee a more representative and generalizable sample, probability sampling approaches should be taken into consideration for future study.

Secondly, this research focused on social media in general giving the results a broader perspective, whereas most of the previous research has been confined to the social media platform Facebook (e.g., Daspe et al., 2018; Hira & Bhogal, 2022, Marshall et al., 2013). This wide scope enhances the applicability of the results beyond any specific platform, providing a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon. However, that makes it not possible to see if the investigated effects will be different across platforms which makes it rather difficult to generalize the results to a larger population. This uncertainty also affects how findings may be understood and applied to student groups in which social media platform's distinct features and functionalities are likely to be used by students for a variety of purposes. For example, Instagram gives the ability to see someone's followers and received comments (Fejes-Vékássy et al., 2020, pp. 6834-6835), whereas Snapchat gives a probability to see one's location (Utz et al., 2015, pp. 144-145), and Facebook provides the opportunity to show a relationship status on one's profile (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011, p. 511). The influence of social media monitoring behaviors on online jealousy and trust levels in romantic relationships may vary significantly among students, depending on their platform preferences and usage patterns. This could ultimately alter how social media monitoring will be executed and if it extends it to online jealousy and trust levels in romantic relationships. Moreover, when filling in the survey, participants do not specify the particular platform they have in mind when reporting their engagement in social media surveillance behavior. This lack of platform specification complicates the assessment of the results' applicability across all social media platforms (Utz et al., 2015, pp. 141-142), especially when most studies on this topic have a focus on the platform Facebook (e.g., Hira & Bhogal, 2022, pp. 6166-6169; Nitzburg & Farber, 2013, pp. 1183-1190; Rueda et al., 2015, pp. 419-445). In conclusion, this research's wide reach improves the knowledge of general social media dynamics, but its consequences for student populations are complex and need more investigation. Subsequently, future studies should dive into the effects of how various social media platforms affect students' social media monitoring practices while considering their individual preferences, usage patterns, and interpersonal relationships, also taking into account some of the newer and less traditional social media platforms. This can be implemented by analyzing the different effects of various social media platforms such as done by Utz and Beukeboom (2011, p. 517).

Thirdly, there is a little overlap in the questions in the scale of social media monitoring and online jealousy as one question in the online jealousy scale directly mentions monitoring behaviors. Multicollinearity and correlation tests were done to see if there is too strong of a connection that would implicate the effects of online jealousy and trust based on an overlap instead of actual mediation effect. The results indicated that based on Taylor's (1990, p. 37) recommendations, the correlation between those variables is not enough to jeopardize the analysis and its results. However, to exclude potential multicollinearity and significant overlap in variables, future research should think about improving the measurement scales by taking out the overlapping dimension in order to more accurately capture the unique characteristics of online jealousy and trust levels. By verifying that any

detected effects are, in fact, indicative of the real phenomenon at hand rather than errors of measurement overlap, this approach may improve the reliability and validity of the findings. Especially since the online jealousy is very focused on the platform Facebook, this could lead to a heavy leaning towards that platform in the findings. According to the Cultivation Theory (Shrum, 2017, p. 1-12), peoples' perceptions and actions can be greatly influenced by the norms and dominant portrayals that are displayed on particular media platforms. Researchers should be aware of platform-specific effects on concepts like online jealousy and trust in the setting of social media, like Facebook, where some content may be more common or prominent. Further studies need to examine the ways in which these platform dynamics mold user experiences and perspectives, guaranteeing that assessment instruments precisely capture the unique subtleties of every platform's impact. In line with Cultivation Theory, which emphasizes how media exposure shapes specific ideas and behaviors (Shrum, 2017, p. 1-12), this method calls for extensive assessment techniques to properly evaluate the influence of social media on relationship dynamics. In addition, the causality of this relationship is questioned based on the cross-sectional data. To find out if pre-existing jealousy causes higher monitoring behavior, or if social media monitoring causes online jealousy, longitudinal research is necessary (Solomon & Theiss, 2008, pp. 339-354).

Continuing, the theoretical framework around H1 is mainly focused on the possible negative effects while overlooking the possible positive effects. Future implementation should therefore explore and incorporate the positive dimensions of this relationship to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Moreover, as the insecure attachment styles can be further divided into different insecure attachments, it would be beneficial for future research to go more in depth into more distinct attachment styles.

Lastly, but most importantly, during the assumption testing it was proven that the data was not normally distributed. This will normally be seen as undesirable as it could lead to biases, however in this case it can be justified that the results are still considered to be valid. According to Schmidt and Finan (2018, p.150), when there is a large enough sample size, data can still be analyzed in ways for it to be valid and reliable even when data violated the normality assumption. This large enough sample size is based on the ratio of at least 10 participants per parameter (Schmidt & Finan, 2018, p.150). This research has 10 parameters (i.e., social media monitoring, trust, online jealousy, anxious attachment style, avoidant attachment style, gender, age, sexual orientation, length of relationship, frequency of communication within relationship) which means it needs at least a sample size of 100 to ensure that the violation of normality assumption does appreciably affect the validity and reliability of this research. With 151 participants in the final sample, this threshold has been fulfilled and is sufficient to thereby minimize the effects of non-normality on this study's outcomes.

In the end, the analyses that were done do not allow for the absolute demonstration of cause and effect. Thus, it is essential that thorough statistical research should receive priority in order to delve deeper into the effects of the variables like social media surveillance, trust, online jealousy, and

avoidant and anxious attachment styles. Such studies are necessary to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of the ways in which these variables interact and influence people's attitudes and behaviors in relationships. On top of that, these play a crucial role in clarifying the fundamental reasons for human behavior, which enhances our understanding of relational dynamics. These results are highly relevant to businesses that operate in, for example, the online dating market because they highlight how social media surveillance affects relationship dynamics and trust in a similar way to how platform interactions affect user perceptions and engagement. By adopting customized features and communication tactics to lessen the negative effects of online jealousy, dating app providers can improve user experience and retention rates by promoting healthier user relationships and improving overall user experience. This is made possible by an understanding of this phenomena.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study confirms that social media monitoring significantly contributes to online jealousy, which in turn has a significant effect on trust within student romantic relationships. This puts focus on the need for student couples to navigate social media usage with care and attention, establishing boundaries for communication to decrease negative impacts of online jealousy on relationship trust in this digital age. Furthermore, it shows that students with high levels of anxious attachment style significantly influences the relationship of social media monitoring and online jealousy in their romantic relationships. Whereas, avoidantly attached students surprisingly does not have an effect on this connection. These address the importance of the need of tailored support mechanisms to navigate social media dynamics effectively in romantic contexts. These insights are essential for fostering healthy relationship dynamics and promoting emotional well-being among student populations.

7. References

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8. Appendix

Appendix A. Survey

Consent form:

Consent to Participate in Romantic Relationship Behavior Research

Dear participant, you are asked to take part in a research for a master thesis project at Erasmus University of Rotterdam that attempts to look into various behaviors in romantic relationships. If you accept the invitation to take part, you will be invited to fill out an online survey. The survey will include questions regarding your romantic relationships and attachment type, which is expected to take around 8 minutes to complete.

Your privacy is of the utmost importance. As a result, all collected data will be anonymous and securely kept. Individual responds will not be connected to identifiable information to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, no harm of any kind will be envisaged, and no information is being withheld from the participant regarding the goals of this research. Lastly, participating in this survey is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any moment.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can contact Phoebe Tan at 673404pt@eur.nl

By taking the survey, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the information provided in this consent form. You now willingly agree to take part in the study.

Filter questions:

1. Are you currently an enrolled student?
2. Are you currently in a committed romantic relationship?
3. Do you use social media?
4. Have you used social media within the last month?
5. Does your partner use social media?
6. Which social media platform(s) do you use?
7. Which social media platform(s) does your partner use?

Demographic and control variables:

8. Please indicate your age.
9. What is your gender?
10. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
11. In which country do you currently reside?
12. What is your sexual orientation?
13. How long have you been in your current relationship?
14. On average, how often do you and your partner communicate with each other?

Social media monitoring (Tokunaga, 2011):

- 1 I visit my partner's social networking site page often.
- 2 When visiting my partner's social networking site page, I read the new posts of his/her friends.
- 3 I often spend time looking through my partner's social networking site pictures.
- 4 I pay particularly close attention to news feeds that concern my partner.
- 5 I notice when my partner updates his/her social networking site pages
- 6 I am generally aware of the relationships between my partner and his/her social networking site friends.
- 7 If there are messages on my partner's social networking site posts I don't understand, I try to investigate it through others' social networking site.
- 8 I try to read comments my partner posts on mutual friends' posts.
- 9 I am generally aware of my partner's social networking site activities.
- 10 I peruse my partner's social networking site page to see what s/he's up to.
- 11 I know when my partner hasn't updated his/her social networking site page in a while.
- 12 I try to monitor my partner's behaviors through his/her social networking site page.
- 13 I explore my partner's social networking site page to see if there is anything new or exciting.

Trust (Larzelere and Huston, 1980):

- 1 My partner is primarily interested in his/her own welfare.
- 2 There are times when my partner cannot be trusted.
- 3 My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me.
- 4 I feel that I can trust my partner completely.
- 5 My partner is truly sincere in his/her promises.
- 6 I feel that my partner does not show me enough consideration.
- 7 My partner treats me fairly and justly.
- 8 I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me.

Online jealousy (Utz and Beukeboom, 2011):

- 1 Become jealous when you discover that your partner has added an unknown person of the opposite sex on social media.
- 2 Getting angry because your partner does not want to display his/her correct relationship status on social media
- 3 Feeling threatened when your partner adds an ex-partner of his/her to his/her social media.
- 4 Monitor your partner's activities on social media.
- 5 Become jealous when you see that your partner has posted a comment on a post someone of the opposite sex.
- 6 Ask your partner about his/her social media activities.
- 7 Experiencing jealousy when your partner uploads photos on social media of themselves with an arm around someone of the opposite sex.
- 8 Get angry if your partner restricts your access to his/her social media profile.
- 9 Getting jealous when your partner uploads photos of themselves with his/her ex-partner on social media.
- 10 Find the private messages that your partner sends via social media suspicious.
- 11 Worrying about your partner falling in love with someone else on social media.
- 12 Become jealous when you see that your partner has received a comment from someone of the opposite sex.

- 13 Get jealous when your partner uploads photos of themselves with an unknown user of the opposite sex.
- 14 Suspect your partner of secretly having an intimate relationship with someone else on social media.
- 15 Worry that your partner is using social media to initiate relationships with users of the opposite sex.
- 16 Getting jealous when your partner uploads photos of themselves that are sexually provocative.
- 17 Worrying that someone else on social media is attracted to your partner.
- 18 View your partner's social media pages if you find his/her activities suspicious.
- 19 Arguing with your partner about social media.
- 20 Regularly view/check your partner's social media.
- 21 Worrying that your partner is using social media to get back in touch with his/her ex.
- 22 Ask your partner about his or her social media following.
- 23 Add your partner's friends on social media to better monitor your partner.
- 24 Using social media to make your partner jealous.
- 25 Trying to gain access to your partner's social media accounts.
- 26 Experiencing jealousy regarding social media.

Attachment style (Wei et al., 2007):

- 1 It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
- 2 I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.
- 3 I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.
- 4 I find that my partner does not want to get as close as I would like.
- 5 I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.
- 6 My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
- 7 I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.
- 8 I do not worry about being abandoned.
- 9 I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
- 10 I get frustrated if my romantic partner is not available when I need them.
- 11 I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me.
- 12 I worry that a romantic partner will not care about me as much as I care about them.