

The role of Perceived Emotional Intelligence, Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism and Alexithymia in couple relationships

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This study examines the relationship between Perceived Emotional Intelligence (PEI), Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism and Alexithymia in couple relationships and their association with and influence upon satisfaction and romantic jealousy. 209 individuals engaged in a relationship completed a questionnaire that included scales to assess perceived emotional intelligence, dispositional optimism/pessimism and alexithymia as emotional variables and satisfaction in couple relationships and jealousy scales considering age, gender and length of the relationship. The results show that the emotional intelligence dimensions emotional clarity and emotional attention predict satisfaction with one's partner and romantic jealousy, respectively. These results demonstrate the importance of Emotional Intelligence in couple relationships and jealousy.

Keywords: alexithymia, emotional intelligence, jealousy, optimism, pessimism, satisfaction

El papel de la Inteligencia Emocional Percibida, el Optimismo/Pesimismo Disposicional y la Alexitimia en las relaciones de pareja

Este estudio examina la relación entre la Inteligencia Emocional Percibida (PEI), el Optimismo/Pesimismo Disposicional y la Alexitimia en las relaciones de pareja y su relación e influencia sobre la satisfacción y los celos románticos. 209 personas completaron las escalas para evaluar la inteligencia emocional percibida, el optimismo/pesimismo disposicional y la alexitimia como variables emocionales y las escalas de satisfacción en las relaciones de pareja y de celos, considerando la edad, el género y la duración de la relación. Los resultados muestran que las dimensiones de inteligencia emocional, claridad emocional y atención emocional predicen la satisfacción con la pareja y los celos románticos, respectivamente. Estos resultados demuestran la importancia de la Inteligencia Emocional en las relaciones de pareja y los celos.

Palabras clave: alexitimia, celos, inteligencia emocional, optimismo, pesimismo, satisfacción

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O papel da Inteligência Emocional Percebida, do Otimismo/Pessimismo Disposicional e da Alexitimia nas relações de casal

Este estudo examina a relação entre Inteligência Emocional Percebida (PEI), Otimismo/Pessimismo Disposicional e Alexitimia em relacionamentos românticos e seu relacionamento e influência na satisfação romântica e no ciúme. 209 pessoas responderam a um questionário que incluía escalas para avaliar a inteligência emocional percebida, otimismo/pessimismo disposicional e alexitimia como variáveis emocionais, e escalas de satisfação no relacionamento e ciúme, levando em consideração idade, sexo e duração do relacionamento. Os resultados mostram que as dimensões inteligência emocional, clareza emocional e atenção emocional predizem a satisfação com o parceiro e o ciúme romântico, respectivamente. Esses resultados demonstram a importância da Inteligência Emocional nos relacionamentos e no ciúme.

Palavras-chave: alexitimia, ciúme, inteligência emocional, otimismo, pessimismo, satisfação

Romantic relations have both positive and negative results. In people's lives, happy romantic relationships are linked to a number of positive results, both physical and mental, such as lower blood pressure and a strengthening of the immune system (Cornelius et al., 2019; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001), a reduction in mortality (Berkman & Glass, 2000), greater life satisfaction (Fleeson, 2004) and relationship satisfaction (Vasquez et al., 2024), among others; as well as well-being (Gómez-López et al., 2019a, 2019b; Piniagua et al., 2024). However, negative results are connected with violence in couples stemming from jealousy (Aloyce et al., 2023; Bullet et al., 2023; Lorente-Anguís & Lopez-Zafra, 2025), or lower satisfaction with one's partner / relationship (Lopez-Zafra & Rodríguez, 2008), among others. Jealousy emerges as a real or imagined threat to a valued relationship (Buss, 2000; Pines, 1998) and is also related to satisfaction with one's partner (Dandurand & Lafontaine, 2014; Fernández et al., 2023; Massar et al., 2009). Thus, satisfaction and jealousy are outcomes in romantic relationships that may have positive and negative values depending on the quality and the perception of the partner.

Both satisfaction and jealousy imply emotional responses in each partner. The ability to establish and maintain a successful romantic relationship requires the ability to identify emotions in addition to being able to transmit them to others (Carton et al., 1999). Moreover, the ability to understand and appreciate (i.e., empathize with) the feelings of one's partner is essential to positive relationships (Wachs & Cordova, 2007). Results of various studies have shown that positive emotions (Gottman & Levensson, 1992), emotional stability (Russell & Wells, 1994), self-esteem (Arrindell & Luteijn, 2000), empathy (Cramer & Jowett, 2010), and secure attachment style (Feeney, 1999) positively correlated with self-reported happiness with one's partner. By contrast, several negative emotional traits such as frustration

(Lopez-Zafra et al., 2025), impulsivity, fear and depression reflected conflict and maladjustment with one's partner (O'leary & Smith, 1991), and may produce violence derived from jealousy (Aloyce et al., 2023; Bullet et al., 2023; Weisz et al., 2000). In addition, jealousy is an emotion itself, as it involves a specific emotional reaction to protect the relationship (DeSteno et al., 2006).

Albeit positive and negative results have been proposed to explain romantic relations' results, the jointed role of multiple components of emotional functioning, emotional intelligence and alexithymia, as well as dispositional optimism/pessimism, on satisfaction and jealousy in individuals engaged in a relationship while controlling the effect of the individual's factors, such as age, gender and length of relationship are to be analyzed. Therefore, this cross-sectional study is conducted to examine their effects on couple satisfaction.

Emotional Variables and Couple relations

Emotional Intelligence, Alexithymia and Couple relations

Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Alexithymia are considered opposite, inversely related constructs regarding the cognitive processing and regulation of emotion. Perceived Emotional Intelligence (PEI) refers to the meta- knowledge of one's EI. That is, the ability to perceive, glean and express emotions accurately (emotional perception), the ability to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and reasoning to emotions (emotional comprehension or clarity) and the ability to regulate emotions to promote one's own and others' emotional and intellectual growth (emotional repair) (Mayer & Salovey, 1997); whereas Alexithymia describes a complex phenomenon of cognitive-affective manifestations (Nemiah & Sifneos, 1970). Alexithymic individuals are characterized not by their inability to feel or experience emotional states and to express them, but by their difficulty in differentiating and verbalizing them. In fact, alexithymia yields a high relationship with EI, and it is considered as a useful measure to identify low EI

individuals (Taylor et al., 2000). Therefore, we may assert that alexithymia, as a series of deficit mechanisms in the processing of emotions, constitutes a negative mirror image for EI (Fernández et al., 2003; Páez & Velasco, 2001; Velasco et al., 2006).

Studies conducted on the impact of EI in relationships and dating show a positive association between emotional clarity and satisfaction in couple relationships (Fitness, 2000, Schutte et al., 2001); and also, that EI influences choice and satisfaction in couples (Alonso-Ferres et al., 2019; Brackett et al., 2005; Brackett et al., 2006). Moreover, couples in which both members perceived themselves with similar levels of EI were more satisfied with their relationships and dealt with problems in partnerships with better communication patterns (Smith et al., 2008). Also, when both members were low in EI they were less satisfied and had lower scores in the depth of the relationship and higher scores in negative dimensions, such as conflict in the relationship, than couples whose members were both high or one of them high in EI (Brackett et al., 2005). Fitness (2006) suggests that individuals with high EI may successfully manage emotional situations that may be difficult, such as begging or forgiving. An important role may also be played by positively facing conflicts in the relationship and the negative emotions that may be related to these conflicts, such as fear, anger or hate. Thus, individuals with high EI are distinguished by the ability to create a positive emotional climate in their relationship.

In sum, results show that couple's members in which both score high in EI tend to be happier and more satisfied with their romantic relationship than those who obtain low scores (López-Zafra et al., 2008; Schutte et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2008). Therefore, EI may facilitate navigation through the emotionally intense situations that characterize romantic relationships (Casey et al., 2008).

The influence of alexithymia on interpersonal relations has scarcely been studied and the impact of these difficulties in relations has not been empirically studied. In relationships with partners, "putting oneself in the other's shoes" plays an important role in making decisions by consensus and emotional adjustment. But alexithymic

people's interpersonal relations are difficult due to their lack of empathy (Kristal, 1982; Krueger, 1998), predicting worse dyadic adjustment in the quality of the relationship in the couple (Espina, 2002; Moral de la Rubia, 2008). In fact, people with high levels of alexithymia show less committed and satisfying romantic relationships than those with low levels of alexithymia (Hesse & Gibbons, 2019).

Regarding gender differences, several studies have shown that men score higher in alexithymia than women (Moral de la Rubia, 2005a; Taylor et al., 1997); whereas women score higher than men in EI (Extremera et al., 2006; Mayer et al., 1999; Van Rooy et al., 2005).

Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism and Couple relations

One of the issues that has recently received greater scientific thrust is dispositional optimism (Erthal et al., 2021). Optimism refers to the tendency to believe that, in the future, successful outcomes will occur, while its opposite, pessimism, alludes to the belief that in the future adverse or negative results will occur (Avia & Vázquez, 1999; Carver & Scheier, 2001; Chang, 2001; Scheier et al., 1994). Thus, optimism includes controlled expectations over one's positive results in the future along with a self-efficacy component (Gillham et al., 2001).

Several studies have found the relationship between dispositional optimism/pessimism and certain psychological and health variables (Scheier et al., 2021; Scheier & Carver, 2018). Results suggest that pessimistic people are different from optimistic people in their orientation towards problems, since people characterized by optimism show a more rational solution to the problems (Vera-Villaruel & Guerrero, 2003), and that women score higher than men in pessimism; whereas men score higher than women in optimism (Dawson, 2023). However, there are no systematic empirical gender differences in dispositional optimism vs. pessimism, and these differences may be due to different socialization patterns, allowing men to have more experiences than women (Extremera et al., 2007). In the case of romantic relationships, studies have suggested that optimism predicts greater satisfaction in

romantic relationships while reducing the risk of dissolution of the couple (Murray & Holmes, 1997) and that optimistic subjects reported fewer negative interactions than pessimists did in their personal interactions (Raikkonen et al., 1999); this is specially the case in middle-aged adults rather than young adults (Chapman & Hayslip, 2006). These results may be related to the way conflicts are faced. In a longitudinal study, Srivastava et al. (2006), found that couples in which individuals were optimistic talked about conflict with a constructive approach, and Assad et al. (2007) found that satisfaction with one's partner and optimism were related and predicted by cooperation in problem solving. According to the authors, optimism could be a permanent resource in happy romantic relationships.

In sum, we may conclude that optimism promotes a variety of beneficial processes in romantic relationships.

Bearing all these comments in mind, in our study we have a dual purpose. First, to examine the relationships between PEI, Alexithymia, dispositional Optimism vs. Pessimism, satisfaction with one's partner and romantic jealousy in men and women of different ages in our study. Second, to examine the incremental validity of the components of PEI, alexithymia and dispositional Optimism/Pessimism on satisfaction with one's partner and jealousy.

Hypotheses of the Study

Hypothesis 1: Gender differences on dimensions of the study. Specifically, concerning the dimensions of EI we predict that women will score higher in emotional attention, whereas men will score higher in Emotional Clarity and Repair. For the remaining dimensions of the study, we think there will not be any gender differences.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional Intelligence, satisfaction and jealousy in couples. We expect to find relationships between dimensions of perceived emotional intelligence with marital satisfaction and romantic jealousy scales. Specifically, we think that subjects with high emotional

attention will show a higher level of romantic jealousy. We also expect those who score high in emotional clarity and repair to report greater marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Alexithymia and Couple satisfaction. In terms of alexithymia, we predict that individuals with high scores in the dimensions: difficulty in identifying emotions and difficulty in describing emotions will report less marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism and satisfaction. We hypothesize that optimistic individuals will have higher marital satisfaction than pessimists.

Hypothesis 5: Emotional Intelligence, alexithymia and Optimism/Pessimism will predict levels of satisfaction and romantic jealousy. Specifically, we expect that emotional Clarity and Repair of emotions, and dispositional optimism will predict higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower levels of romantic jealousy.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and nine participants from Spain participated in our study (87 men and 122 women). Their ages ranged from 18 to 54 years old ($M = 22.77$; $SD = 7.82$). The mean age for men was 23.95 ($SD = 8.58$) and 21.93 ($SD = 7.15$) for women. The duration of their relationship varied from one to 37.5 years with a mean duration of 3.5 years. The 72.8% of the sample were in a stable relationship. Specifically, the proportion of individuals in a serious relationship but without marital intentions was 26.8% ($n = 56$); 35.4% ($n = 74$) were married, and 10.5 % ($n = 22$) were engaged to be married. The 27.2% had a partner but were not engaged; specifically, 19.1% ($n=40$) were in a new relationship, and 8.1% ($n =17$) had sporadic relationships and were now in a relationship.

Instruments

Perceived Emotional Intelligence (PEI)

To assess PEI, we use the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS; Salovey et al., 1995). On 5-point scales, participants evaluated their EI. Specifically, they completed this 24-item questionnaire that identifies three interpersonal factors: emotional attention, emotional clarity, and emotional repair. Emotional attention conveys the degree to which an individual tends to observe and think about their own feelings and moods (8 items, e.g., “I think it is not worth paying attention to my own emotions or moods”). Emotional clarity refers to an individual’s tendency to discriminate their own emotions and moods (8 items, e.g., “I often perceive my feelings clearly”); emotional repair refers to an individual’s tendency to regulate their own feelings (8 items, e.g., “Although I am sometimes sad, I generally have an optimistic viewpoint”).

The Spanish version of the TMMS was administered by Fernández-Berrocal et al., (2004). Cronbach’s alpha was .90 for emotional clarity, and .86 for emotional repair, and emotional attention. This instrument has proved to be very reliable (reliability = 0.95) and it is suitable to be used in Spanish native samples (Extremera et al., 2006). In our study, Cronbach’s alpha was $\alpha = 0.85$ for emotional Attention and emotional Clarity and $\alpha = 0.78$ for Repair.

Alexithymia

One of the most widely used scales to measure alexithymia is the Twenty-Item Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20; Bagby et al., 1994). On a 5-point scale (from totally agree to totally disagree) participants completed this 20-Item scale. The range of scores that an individual may obtain is from 20 to 100 points; an individual whose score is 61 or higher is considered as “alexithymic”. This scale is made up of three factors: 1) difficulties in identifying emotions and in differentiating them from corporal or physiological feelings that go with emotional activation (DIF); 2) difficulty in describing the feelings of others (DDF), and

finally, 3) externally oriented thinking style (EOT) (Velasco, 2000). This scale has a good internal consistency (Parker et al., 2001, 2003) (total scale $\alpha = 0.84$). The Spanish version is by Martínez-Sánchez (1996). Cronbach's alpha for the Spanish version is 0.81 and in our study 0.72.

Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism

To assess this variable, we use the Life Orientation Test -Revised (LOT-R; Scheier et al., 1994). On a 5-point scale (from Totally agree to Totally disagree) individuals scored 10 items (3 positive, 3 negative and 4 neutral) measuring dispositional optimism vs. pessimism. The Spanish version was developed by Ferrando et al. (2002) with Cronbach's $\alpha=0.68$ in undergraduates. In our study Cronbach's alpha was 0.67.

Satisfaction with partner Scale

On a 9- point scale (from very dissatisfied to very satisfied), this scale assesses the person's current satisfaction with their partner (in general, not only married couples). It is based on the Kansas Marital Scale (KMS, Schumm et al., 1983) and adapted to Spanish population and to any kind of couple by Montes-Berges (2009). It is made up of three items that form a single factor. The items are: How satisfied are you with your present relationship or marriage? How satisfied are you with your current partner? and How satisfied are you with your partner as a couple? The reliability of this scale in our study was $\alpha = 0.95$.

Jealousy Scale

This scale is based on Romantic Jealousy Scale (RJS; White, 1976). It is made up of 6 items that measure the existence of romantic jealousy in the members of the couple. This scale is scored on 7 points for items one, two, four and six, whereas items three and five are scored on 5 points. Previous studies show a Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$ and $\alpha = 0.90$ (Penn, 2002). The Spanish version is by Montes-Berges (2008) and it

is made up of 5 items (e.g. how jealous do you feel when your partner is talking to a person of the opposite sex?) with a reliability index of $\alpha = 0.89$. In our study, the reliability was $\alpha = 0.75$.

Procedure

Subjects were asked to voluntarily participate in a study about couple relationships in their natural environment (campus, home or work settings). Researchers asked for permission in campus and work locations. Four surveyors (2 female and 2 male) asked individuals if they were in a romantic relationship and, if they were, they were asked to complete a questionnaire. The 72% consented to participate and spent over an hour in responding. This study followed the protocol approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Jaén, Spain (Ref. MAY.16/4).

Data Analysis

The software used in this study was SPSS (v. 22). First of all, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and correlations) among study variables were examined. To test our first hypothesis ANOVAS were performed. For the second, third and fourth hypotheses, correlations between all dimensions were performed. The fifth hypothesis included hierarchical regression analyses for each criterion (satisfaction and jealousy).

Results

To test our first hypothesis about gender differences, we carried out ANOVAs. For PEI we found that women scored higher than men in attention to their emotions ($F(1, 208) = 3.61$; $p < .05$; $\eta^2p = .017$). On the contrary, men scored higher in the ability to identify, glean and describe daily emotions ($F(1, 206) = 3.77$; $p < .05$; $\eta^2p = .017$); moreover, men also showed a greater ability to repair their negative emotional states and to maintain positive ones ($F(1, 207) = 4.68$; $p < .05$; $\eta^2p = .024$, see Table 1 for means and standard deviations).

Table 1

Mean and standard deviations for the total sample and for men and women in all variables of the study

Measures	Total (N = 209)		Men (n = 87)		Women (n = 122)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
TMMS – Attention	25.95	6.45	24.95	6.29	26.66	6.49
TMMS – Clarity	27.43	5.96	28.38	5.43	26.76	6.23
TMMS – Regulation	26.44	5.79	27.45	5.75	25.71	5.74
LOT-R-Optimism	10.97	2.12	11.21	2.30	10.80	1.97
LOT-R- Pessimism	8.98	2.23	9.12	2.39	8.87	2.11
TAS20-DIF	15.60	5.47	15.07	5.49	15.97	5.44
TAS20-DDF	12.88	2.98	13.03	3.41	12.78	2.66
TAS20- EOT	22.94	3.90	22.88	3.41	22.99	4.21
TAS20-TOTAL	51.23	9.12	50.59	9.32	51.66	9.01
KMS	15.89	4.00	16.09	3.87	15.75	4.10
RJS	14.84	5.56	14.30	4.77	15.23	6.04

Note. DIF = Difficulty identifying feelings; DDF = Difficulty describing feelings; EOT = Externally oriented thinking; KMS = Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; RJS = Romantic Jealousy Scale.

As predicted, we found no significant differences between men and women in optimism/ pessimism, alexithymia, jealousy and satisfaction with one's partner ($ps > .1$).

To test our second, third and fourth hypotheses, correlations between all dimensions were performed (see Table 2). With regard to the dimensions of PEI, we found positive relationships between the factor Attention to emotions with Clarity and emotional regulation, and there were also positive associations with the alexithymia factor Difficulty in identifying feelings and with the relationship satisfaction scale. Emotional Clarity showed positive relationships with emotional regulation, dispositional optimism and marital satisfaction. Also,

emotional clarity is negatively associated with the three subscales of alexithymia (Difficulty in identifying feelings, difficulty in describing feelings and externally oriented thinking). The emotional regulation factor showed positive relationships with dispositional optimism and the marital satisfaction scale. It also showed negative relationships with the three components of the alexithymia scale.

Dispositional optimism was positively related to the level of marital satisfaction and negatively related to dispositional pessimism, and the three components of the alexithymia scale. On the other hand, dispositional pessimism was positively correlated to the components of the alexithymia scale (difficulty in identifying feelings and difficulty in describing feelings) and negatively with the scale of marital satisfaction.

Table 2

Correlations among variables of the study

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.TMMS-Attention	-									
2.TMMS-Clarity	.15*	-								
3.TMMS-Regulation	.14*	.45**	-							
4.LOTR- Optimism	.02	.39**	.47**	-						
5.LOTR-Pessimism	.07	-.06	-.04	-.24**	-					
6.TAS20-DIF	.16*	-.42**	-.20**	-.28**	.27**	-				
7.TAS20-DDF	.07	-.26**	-.21**	-.18*	.21**	.45**	-			
8.TAS20-EOT	-.06	-.15*	-.07	-.02	-.12	.10	.24**	-		
9. KMS	.08	.34**	.14*	.15*	-.25**	-.33**	-.17*	-.02	-	
10.RJS	.32**	.02	-.00	-.02	.11	.16*	-.01	.03	.01	-

Note. DIF = Difficulty identifying feelings; DDF = Difficulty describing feelings; EOT = Externally oriented thinking; KMS = Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; RJS = Romantic Jealousy Scale.

The components of the alexithymia scale showed the following relationships: The difficulty in identifying feelings component was positively related to difficulty in describing feelings and negatively

to marital satisfaction. Difficulty in describing feelings was positively related to externally oriented thinking and negatively to the scale of marital satisfaction. Externally oriented thinking showed no significant relationship either with marital satisfaction or with the scale of romantic jealousy.

To test our fifth hypothesis, that is, to determine the predictive validity of PEI, dispositional optimism/ pessimism and alexithymia on marital satisfaction and romantic jealousy, we performed hierarchical regression analyses for each criterion (satisfaction and jealousy).

First, we performed a regression analysis to determine the variable that best predicted marital satisfaction (see Table 3). In the first step age, sex and length of the relationship were introduced as covariates. In this step, no predictor for marital satisfaction was found. In a second step, we introduced Dispositional Optimism/ Pessimism as predictors. In this step, dispositional pessimism predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.21, p < .001$). A figure of 4% of the variance was accounted for by dispositional pessimism. That is, individuals who believe that in the future adverse or negative results will occur reported poorer couple relationships. In the third step, we introduced the components of EI as predictors (Attention, Clarity and Emotional regulation). In this step, Emotional Clarity predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = .35, p < .001$) and accounted for 13% of the variance in marital satisfaction. Therefore, individuals who find it easier to understand the origin of their emotions, what events may provoke the experience of these emotions (i.e. physiological reactions, motor responses, thoughts) and their consequences indicate greater satisfaction with their partners.

In the fourth step dimensions of Alexithymia (difficulty in identifying feelings, difficulty in describing feelings and externally oriented thinking) were introduced as predictors. In this step, Difficulty in identifying emotions ($\beta = -.18, p < .04$) predicted satisfaction with one's partner and accounted for 2% of the variance. Individuals with the greatest difficulty in identifying feelings and distinguishing the physiological or bodily sensations that accompany the activation indicated lower emotional satisfaction in couples.

Table 3*Regression analyses for Satisfaction with one's partner and Jealousy scales*

Scale	R^2	F	β	P	ΔR^2
<i>Satisfaction with partner Scale</i>					
Step 1: Covariants	.00	.32			.00
Age			.04	.69	
Sex			-.04	.56	
Length of the Relationship			-.08	.48	
Step 2: Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism	.07	2.80			.05
Optimism			.10	.17	
Pessimism			-.21	.00**	
Step 3: Perceived emotional intelligence	.17	4.39			.13
Attention			.04	.53	
Clarity			.35	.00**	
Repair			-.05	.50	
Step 4: Alexithymia	.19	3.68			.02
Difficulty identifying feelings			-.18	.04*	
Difficulty describing feelings			.00	.93	
Externally oriented thinking			-.00	.96	
<i>Jealousy</i>					
Step 1: Covariants	.05	2.96			.03
Age			-.31	.01**	
Sex			.06	.43	
Length of the relationship			.18	.12	
Step2: Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism	.06	2.26			.04
Optimism			.00	.98	
Pessimism			.11	.14	
Step 3: Perceived emotional intelligence	.16	3.97			.12
Attention			.33	.00**	
Clarity			.00	.96	
Repair			-.06	.49	
Step 4: Alexithymia	.18	3.22			.02
Difficulty identifying feelings			.11	.22	
Difficulty describing feelings			-.13	.12	
Externally oriented thinking			.08	.27	

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

We performed a second hierarchical regression analysis to analyze the potential prediction of the dimensions over jealousy (see Table 3). In the first step we introduced age, sex and length of the relationship as predictors. Age predicted romantic jealousy ($\beta = -.31, p < .01$). Younger individuals reported higher levels of jealousy than older individuals. Secondly, Dispositional Optimism/Pessimism were introduced as predictors. In this phase, romantic jealousy was not predicted by any of the variables of the equation. In the third step, EI dimensions (attention, clarity and regulation) were introduced as predictor variables. In this step, attention to emotions ($\beta = .33, p < .001$) predicted romantic jealousy. That is, individuals who are very attentive to their emotions are characterized by monitoring the progress of their mood at all times, in an effort to try to understand their mood and emotions, which is not productive for the individual as they report higher levels of jealousy. In the fourth step, the components of alexithymia (difficulty in identifying feelings, difficulty in describing feelings and externally oriented thinking) were introduced as predictors. At this stage, none of the variables in the equation accounted for the variance of romantic jealousy (see Table 3).

Discussion

This is the first study to consider both emotional variables (PEI and Alexithymia) personality (dispositional optimism/pessimism) and behavior (jealousy) jointly in their impact on satisfaction with the partner. Our results have shown gender differences in the components of PEI. Specifically, women, unlike men, are characterized as monitoring the progress of their mood in an effort to try to understand their emotions. Women who attend to their emotions without excessive Clarity and adequate Regulation of emotions create a spiral that generates a repetitive emotional process outside the control of individuals, thereby perpetuating, rather than alleviating, their negative mood. Previous studies have shown that high emotional attention along with low

levels of Clarity and regulation are related to a high tendency of repetitive thoughts (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2006; Thayer et al., 2003). These gender differences may be explained by self-report EI measures that have been shown to be influenced by gender stereotypes (Lopez-Zafra & Gartzia, 2014).

Secondly, we have found moderate positive relations between TMMS dimensions and dispositional optimism. These data are in accordance with those found by Catanzo et al. (2000) and Extremera et al. (2007), which suggest that PEI and dispositional optimism/pessimism are somewhat different, but are related. Moreover, the recent meta-analysis by Glassie & Schutte (2024) explains this relation as part of the positive predisposition these individuals may have in which higher EI is associated with more optimism.

Furthermore, correlational analysis has shown positive relationships between the emotional attention component of the TMMS and the alexithymia dimension Difficulty in identifying feelings, whereas Clarity and Regulation of emotions were negatively associated with difficulty in identifying feelings and difficulty in describing feelings. In addition, regulation of emotions was negatively associated with the externally oriented thinking dimension. These results are consistent with previous research in which alexithymia was established as a negative mirror image of PEI (Velasco et al., 2006).

In terms of the relationships between TMMS components and satisfaction with one's partner and jealousy, our results show that emotional attention shows a positive and moderate relationship with the romantic jealousy scale. A plausible explanation is that someone who pays too much attention to emotions and their current mood will have problems in carrying out strategies for effective regulation and this will cause a higher probability of the occurrence of jealousy. Moreover, if we take into account that the emotions associated with jealousy are anxiety, sadness and anger (Farooq et al., 2020; Fitness & Flecher, 1993) and that individuals with a high attention to their emotions reported more depressive symptoms and anxiety (Salovey et al, 2002), we can understand this relationship. On the other hand, emotional clarity and

repair showed positive relationships with satisfaction with the couple. Thus, individuals who know what they are feeling would be more skilled in dealing with emotional problems and so, would experience greater emotional well-being, which is associated with a good relationship. Also, those who are able to stop their negative emotional states and prolong positive ones have good couple relationships.

Of interest is the low, but not significant, positive relationship between satisfaction and jealousy. Studies have shown that the greater the satisfaction, the less the jealousy towards one's partner (Lopez-Zafra & Rodríguez, 2008). However, other studies show that jealousy does not predict or relate to satisfaction (Andersen et al., 1995; Ventura-León et al., 2023). Maybe the use of other types of questionnaires measuring cognitive, behavioural and emotional jealousy would be more informative, as there are several aspects (e.g., physical) that influence the risk of infidelity (Brewer, 2009). Moreover, most studies base in one member of the couple and further studies including both members are necessary (Ranby et al., 2023).

With regard to the second objective of this study, that is, to test the predictive validity of PEI, dispositional optimism/ pessimism and alexithymia on marital satisfaction and romantic jealousy, we found that satisfaction with the partner is predicted, in this order, by Emotional Clarity, Dispositional pessimism and Difficulty in identifying emotions. Fitness (2000, 2006) or Salovey et al. (2001) found similar results, in which emotional clarity was related to a high satisfaction with their partner. In contrast, individuals who think that in the future negative results will occur or have difficulties in identifying emotions will have poor satisfaction with their partner (Hesse & Gibbons, 2019; Humphreys et al., 2009).

For Romantic jealousy our results show that high emotional attention predicts higher levels of jealousy, and this result is related to age, with younger individuals reporting higher levels of jealousy. Thus, younger individuals with high levels of emotional attention are more prone to experiencing jealousy.

A limitation of this study is that the satisfaction scale was very short and focused on couple relations (all kind of couples); maybe a general relationship satisfaction questionnaire would have been more informative. However, this scale has very good reliability and thus it assesses the intended objective of this study. Also, jealousy towards one's partner was a short measure and we cannot differentiate cognitive, emotional or behavioral jealousy. Thus, using other measures could be more informative in future studies.

However, this is a very good starting point to consider emotional variables influencing satisfaction and jealousy in couples and we think that it contributes to knowledge in several ways. In sum, our results suggest the importance of EI in couple relationships and romantic jealousy. In intimate relationships some of our deepest feelings and emotions originate, and the extent to which the couple can perceive, express, understand and manage their emotions plays a crucial role in their happiness and well-being within the relationship (Alonso-Ferres et al., 2019; Fitness, 2006). However, other variables should be considered, as for example, in certain contexts, sociocultural factors could have a significant role in the couple relationships dynamics. Specifically, in contexts of culture of honor or contexts with high gender inequality, adherence to traditional gender roles, patriarchal norms, controlling behaviors and jealousy have promoted the violence (Güler, 2023; Lopez-Zafra et al., 2025; Ocampo Bernasconi et al., 2024; Pichon et al., 2025).

Finally, our results suggest the importance of training and developing emotional skills to improve and strengthen relationships. However, we must point out that EI alone is not sufficient to ensure the happiness and stability of relationships as there are other motivations and objectives to consider, such as communication patterns and a satisfying sex life, among others.

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