



# “We saw that jealousy can also bring violence”: A qualitative exploration of the intersections between jealousy, infidelity and intimate partner violence in Rwanda and Uganda

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## ABSTRACT

Efforts to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV) have been informed by emerging research on common triggers of IPV and the importance of engaging with couple dynamics. This paper reports on secondary data analysis from the qualitative evaluations of the SASA! intervention in Uganda, (conducted in 2012 involving 40 community members) and the Indashyikirwa intervention in Rwanda, (conducted between 2014 and 2018 involving 14 couples and 36 other stakeholders). It explores the under-researched linkages between romantic jealousy and IPV, and describes how these interventions mitigated it. A qualitative approach using interviews and focus groups with women and men was used. Overall, jealousy was common in both settings, and led to relationship challenges including breakdown of trust; quarrels about resources; conflict, controlling behaviours, and ultimately, physical and emotional IPV. Jealousy was seen to operate through different gendered pathways. Participants described women to question men about their whereabouts and intentions because of jealousy or the suspicion of infidelity, whereas participants described men to be jealous or suspicious of women socialising with, or attracting the attention of, other men and using violence in response. Through gender transformative strategies, SASA! and Indashyikirwa were described by participants to reduce the contribution of romantic jealousy to conflict and violence by encouraging improved relationship faithfulness and honesty; supporting reduced suspicion through improved relationship trust and communication; and identifying jealousy and suspicion of, or real infidelity, as direct triggers of IPV. While these programmes show promising results, gaps remain including a lack of standardised measures of the multidimensional concept of romantic jealousy. Recognition that programmes should be evaluated for their ability to reduce romantic jealousy when identified as a trigger for IPV in a specific context should also be emphasised. More research is also needed on the forms, gendered pathways, and consequences of romantic jealousy to inform context-specific programming.

## 1. Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) against women, is defined as physical, sexual, economic or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse (Heise, 2011; Saltzman et al., 2002). It also incorporates controlling behaviours which include acts to constrain women's mobility, ability to work, or access to friends and relatives (Aizpurua et al., 2017). IPV is the most common form of violence against women and girls, a violation of women's human rights and a common experience worldwide (Devries et al., 2013a,b; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). Globally, nearly one in three women experience physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner during their lifetime (World

Health Organization, 2021). IPV also has negative effects on women's physical, mental and emotional health (Karen M. Devries et al., 2013a; Jewkes et al., 2010; Stöckl et al., 2013), and is associated with harmful sexual and reproductive health (SRH) outcomes potentially including increased HIV risk (Dunkle et al., 2006; Durevall and Lindskog, 2015; Kayibanda et al., 2012; Kouyoumdjian et al., 2013; Maman et al., 2000), increased risk for harmful alcohol consumption, and adverse effects on children (Guedes et al., 2016), making it a serious public health concern.

IPV is highly prevalent in both Uganda and Rwanda and in neighbouring countries in East Africa. In Uganda, the 2016 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) found that of all women aged 15–49, 36% had ever experienced physical IPV and 22% had ever experienced sexual IPV.

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Twenty-two percent of women experienced violence in the 12 months preceding the survey. In Rwanda, despite the government's significant political will to prevent and respond to IPV (Slegh and Kimonyo, 2010; Umubyeyi et al., 2014, 2016), according to the 2014/15 DHS, an estimated 20.7% of women aged 15 to 49 in the general population reported having experienced physical or sexual violence by a husband/partner in the preceding 12 months. Forty percent of ever married women experienced some form of emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime (National Institute of Statistics Rwanda (NISR), 2016; Pichon et al., 2020).

Efforts to prevent IPV have been informed by emerging research around the common triggers of, and pathways to, IPV (Abramsky et al., 2012; Buller et al., 2016; Ellsberg et al., 2000; Fulu and Heise, 2014). Socio-ecological models of IPV consider the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community and societal factors that usually converge to cause IPV (Heise, 2011). More recent attention has shifted from individual risk and protective factors, to couple and community factors affecting IPV (Vanderende et al., 2012). Heise's revised version of the socio-ecological model (Heise, 2011) highlights the importance of relationship dynamics in understanding IPV, including decision-making among couples (Zegenhagen et al., 2019) and romantic jealousy or (suspicion of) infidelity (Capaldi et al., 2012; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012).

Jealousy is associated with controlling behaviours of an intimate partner, which includes monitoring one's whereabouts, limiting contact with friends or families, and restricting access to resources or employment, education or medical care (World Health Organization, 2012). Data from the 2014/15 Rwandan DHS found that the main controlling behaviours women aged 15–49 ever experienced from their husbands/partners were jealousy or anger if she talked to other men (35%), insisting on knowing where they are at all times (29%), and not permitting them to meet female friends (14%). The main controlling behaviours men experienced from wives were jealousy or anger if they talked to other women (39%) and insisting on knowing where they are at all times (24%). Only 5% reported that their wives try to limit contact with family and 4% said their wives do not permit them to meet male friends. Such behaviours are considered a form of emotional IPV, which can have significant health consequences independent of physical and sexual IPV (Gibbs et al., 2018).

Romantic jealousy and suspicion of infidelity have been found to be associated with more insecure and anxious attachments, low self-esteem and insecurity, and alcohol abuse (Martinez-León et al., 2017). Romantic jealousy has also been found to be associated with decreased relationship quality and satisfaction (Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra, 2007), and greater uncertainty about one's relationship (Bush et al., 1988). A recent systematic review found that male and female suspected infidelity and anticipated infidelity, as well as anticipated partner suspicions of female infidelity and accusations of female infidelity, can all lead to different forms of IPV against women (Pichon et al., 2020). The systematic review also identified how a lack of communication skills, economic control and dependency, and alcohol, interacted with these pathways to increase risk of IPV. There is however limited evidence on relational drivers of IPV, including jealousy, and even less on how programmes can attempt to mitigate jealousy to reduce IPV.

This paper focuses on forms of romantic jealousy, which White (1981) define as a “complex set of thoughts, feelings and actions that follow a threat to self-esteem and/or threaten the existence or quality of the relationship. These threats are generated by the perception of a real or potential attraction between the partner and a (perhaps imaginary) rival” (p.24) (White, 1981). The analysis uniquely assesses the conceptualisations and pathways of jealousy as a trigger of IPV, including physical, sexual, emotional and economic IPV. Based on qualitative impact evaluation data of two successful IPV prevention programmes; the SASA! intervention in Uganda (Kyegombe et al., 2014) and the Indashyikirwa programme in Rwanda (Stern and Niyibizi, 2018) this paper further assesses how these can be mitigated.

## 1.1. Theoretical framework

This study is guided by the work of Buunk who employs a multidimensional framework of jealousy which is defined as a negative response to the actual, imagined or expected emotional or sexual involvement of a partner with a third party (B. Buunk and Bringle, 1987). Buunk subdivides romantic jealousy into: a) *reactive* jealousy, caused by intimate behaviour of a partner with a third party; b) *anxious* or *past anxious* jealousy, focused on the possibility that a partner is, or was, sexually or emotionally involved with someone else; c) *preventive* jealousy, aimed at preventing intimate contact of the partner with a third party upon slight indications of interest (B. P. Buunk, 1997). Buunk's jealousy framework provides useful theoretical grounding for this study by providing a structure against which to examine the potential role of jealousy as a trigger for IPV in Uganda and Rwanda where the SASA! intervention and the Indashyikirwa programme were conducted. Though largely gender neutral in its presentation, by theorising that romantic jealousy may be subdivided into three different dimensions – reactive jealousy, anxious jealousy and preventive jealousy – Buunk's framework enables an exploration of the pathways through which romantic jealousy may be a trigger for relationship conflict that leads to violence. It also facilitates a nuanced understanding of jealous responses by recognising that jealousy is multidimensional and may manifest (and be measured) in different ways. It also highlights an overlap with behaviour that is often measured and conceptualised as ‘controlling behaviour’.

## 2. Intervention approaches

### 2.1. SASA!

SASA!, is a community mobilisation intervention designed by Raising Voices and implemented in Kampala by the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP), both of which are Uganda-based NGOs. SASA! uses positive, non-punitive programming which aims to change social norms and address the imbalances in power between primarily heterosexual women and men that perpetuate both violence against women and HIV (Michau, 2008). SASA!, seeks to improve relationship trust and communication through emphasising the potential benefits of happy, healthy and safe relationships. It also addresses the sexual and reproductive health risks of multiple/concurrent relationships. SASA! is currently being used by over 60 organisations in more than 20 countries around the world.

Described in detail elsewhere (Abramsky et al., 2012), SASA!'s approach is grounded in two theoretical frameworks: the Ecological Model and Prochaska and Velicer's Stages of Change theory (Prochaska and Velicer, 1997). A key element of this latter theory is that before a new behaviour can be consolidated, individuals must pass through various phases. SASA! is designed as a four-phase change process and guides communities through a structured programme of discovery, critical reflection and skills-building (Michau, 2008).

### 2.2. Indashyikirwa

Indashyikirwa (meaning ‘agents for change’ in Kinyarwanda) has been described in detail elsewhere (Stern and Niyibizi, 2018) and seeks to reduce experiences of IPV, shift beliefs and social norms that sustain IPV, to support equitable, non-violent relationships, and to ensure more supportive and empowering responses to survivors of IPV. Indashyikirwa draws strongly on ideas and concepts of SASA!, notably its emphasis on healthy alternatives to violence, positive and negative types and uses of power, critical personal reflection, and moving incrementally from knowledge, attitudes, skills and actions. However, Indashyikirwa also works more explicitly to address emerging evidence from the field about the triggers of IPV and the importance of skills-building to create positive alternatives to violence (Stern and Niyibizi, 2018). The

couples' curriculum and community activism materials also identify romantic jealousy as a key trigger of IPV and encourage participants to come up with positive alternatives to violence during periods of relationship conflict. As such, the language of jealousy emerged strongly in the qualitative data from Rwanda whereas in Uganda, romantic jealousy was more often conceptualised using language relating to suspicion of infidelity and unfaithfulness.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. SASA!

##### 3.1.1. Study setting

The SASA! study, which included a cluster randomised controlled trial, a qualitative evaluation, a process evaluation and an economic costing, was conducted between 2008 and 2012 in eight high-density impoverished communities in two administrative divisions in Kampala which has a high prevalence of IPV and HIV. Patriarchy is a dominant aspect of the social-cultural context with men generally considered the head of the household and women expected to be subservient to them (Ssetuba, 2005). Polygamy is legal in Uganda and though not considered desirable, men's extra-marital relationships are normalised and tolerated by some, including women. Women's extra-marital relationships are more strongly condemned than those of men, and are often secretive when they do occur (Tuyizere, 2007).

##### 3.1.2. Sampling and data collection

As elaborated elsewhere (Kyegombe et al., 2014) qualitative data were collected in 2012 at the time of follow-up data collection. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with community members (20 women and 20 men). All interviews were conducted in Luganda and guided by a semi-structured tool. Mean interview duration was 90 min. Sex-matched interviews were conducted by a team of four experienced research assistants who participated in intensive training for the qualitative study which complemented their prior training as SASA! researchers. All interviews were audio recorded.

##### 3.1.3. Data analysis

The overall approach to analysis was thematic complemented by the use of constant comparative and deviant case analysis methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). During regular team debriefs, data were discussed including any emerging themes or novel lines of enquiry which were then explored in subsequent interviews. As elaborated elsewhere (Kyegombe et al., 2014), interviews were transcribed verbatim (McLellan et al., 2003) and assisted by NVIVO 10 software (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2018), data were coded using a coding frame until coding saturation was achieved whereby no new codes emerged from the data. The secondary analysis of the data that supports this paper was conducted after sorting the coded data (Long-Sutehall et al., 2011) and extracting all data that related to romantic jealousy and IPV. This was then analysed using constant comparative techniques from which the model of the data presented in this paper was developed.

#### 3.2. Indashyikirwa

##### 3.2.1. Study setting

The programme was implemented from November 2014–August 2018 across 14 sectors in 3 provinces of rural Rwanda, and an independent evaluation as part of the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Programme was conducted concurrently. In 2003, the Rwandan constitution exclusively recognised civil, monogamous marriages and the family law prohibited polygamy, which was relatively common in rural Rwanda until recently (Uwineza and Pearson, 2009). Polygamy continues to be prohibited through penalties against polygamous marriages (Polavarapu, 2011). In Rwanda, illegality can strongly influence social norms and what is tolerated by society

(Stern et al., 2018). Indeed, polygamy is not condoned by religious or community leaders and extra-marital relationships by men, and especially women, are strongly condemned.

#### 3.3. Sampling and data collection

All stakeholders of the programme were interviewed qualitatively at multiple time points across the intervention as detailed elsewhere (Stern and Niyibizi, 2018). For this paper, we drew on data collected through baseline, midline and endline interviews conducted with 14 couples (28 individuals interviewed separately), 11 opinion leaders and 3 women's safe space facilitators, as well as baseline and endline interviews conducted with 12 community activists. We also draw on the formative research, whereby 24 focus group discussions (FGDs) (eight per province) using social vignettes to unpack social and gender norms related to IPV were conducted with six to eight community members per FGD. In each province, FGDs were conducted with unmarried women under the age of 25; married women over 25; unmarried men under 30; and married men over 30 in order to tease out variations of gender norms according to age, marital status and sex. One of the scenarios of the social vignette asked how a husband would commonly react to his wife coming home late from work if he was known to be a jealous man. Interviews took place at preferred locations for interviewees, and to ensure privacy. Two female Rwandan qualitative researchers and three male Rwandan qualitative researchers external to the programme conducted the interviews. The interviews were conducted in Kinyarwanda and audio recorded.

#### 3.4. Data analysis

Data was transcribed and translated verbatim into English by a language specialist and professional translator. Thematic analysis was conducted to uncover predominant themes in order to provide a grounded, detailed and holistic account of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). After carefully reading the transcripts, the second author established a preliminary coding structure to thematically analyse the data. All of the transcripts were analysed by the second author using this thematic coding framework with the assistance of NVIVO 11 software. One of the thematic codes established was 'Jealousy' and the data from this code represents the majority of data analysed for this paper. An additional transcriber coded a small subset of the baseline transcripts using NVIVO 10 and inter-coder agreement was found to be 95%.

Following the primary coding of the data for each intervention, using constant comparative techniques, the data from the jealousy codes were compared by sub-theme to identify where the theme was described similarly in each context and where the sub-theme was described differently. Following this process, a model of the combined analysis was developed as described below.

#### 3.5. Ethical considerations

The primary SASA! study obtained ethical approval from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Makerere University, and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology. Indashyikirwa's primary study obtained ethical approval from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, from the Rwandan National Ethics Committee, and the South African Medical Research Council, (see Kyegombe et al. (2014) and Stern et al. (2018) for further detail on ethical considerations). Secondary analysis of the two datasets fell under the original objectives of the studies which had sought to understand the impact of SASA! and Indashyikirwa on experiences and perpetration of IPV. Furthermore, the first and second authors led the original studies hence no further ethical approval for the secondary analysis was required.

## 4. Results

In the sections that follow, we explore how romantic jealousy and unfaithfulness were described and experienced by the participants across settings. We then focus on the consequences of romantic jealousy and suspicions of infidelity on relationships. Finally, we describe strategies used by SASA! and Indashyikirwa to mitigate romantic jealousy and their influence on the beneficiaries' relationship quality.

### 4.1. Views of romantic jealousy and unfaithfulness

Data from Rwanda indicate that romantic jealousy was extremely common and could be normalised among those 'you love.' There was also consensus that if one member of a couple is jealous, it tends to result in mutual jealousy in a relationship:

*As he is jealous of me, I become jealous of him too – so, I can tell him 'Me too, I don't want you to hang around with so and so who are ill-mannered'; in that case, am I not showing my feelings? It's true, really. And additionally, you should be jealous of the one you love.* (Female Partner of Couple 02, Western Province, Rwanda)

Furthermore, jealousy was generally perceived as a negative trait which undermines patience and understanding among couples, and was cited as a common trigger of conflict and/or IPV:

*When a man [who is not her husband] is with a woman, he feels he needs her and he starts to tell her sweet words and looking at her in an attractive way, do you understand? And when her husband notices that or even a neighbor can notice, he informs her husband, he can beat his wife.* (Opinion Leader 04 Western Province Midline, Rwanda)

Described more commonly using the language of 'infidelity' and 'unfaithfulness' rather than 'jealousy', in Uganda there was more variation in the normative acceptance of infidelity. Some participants described the infidelity in their relationship as a painful experience which fundamentally affected their wellbeing and increased their concerns about their health, particularly in relation to the risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections:

*For me my worry was that my husband had 'married' more than one woman and I did not know this before I went to his home. I got to know about this when I was already at his home and this worried me a lot. I doubted his health since he had more than one woman.* (CF2, female community member, Uganda)

Others normalised infidelity as something that was common and not necessarily reflective of any serious problems in a relationship, although this view was most often expressed by men in relation to their own extra-marital relationships.

*Those are some of the common weaknesses we have as men in this world ... but even our grandparents had good wives but when it came to that, they had to get other partners but not because they did not like their wives.* (CM1, male community member, Uganda).

The cultural legitimacy for men to seek extra-marital relationships also emerged in the data from Rwanda, including through a Kinyarwanda proverb condoning an insatiable sexual appetite for men: "*When we grew up, we always overhead people saying 'A man is for women' or 'A man is like a bull, nothing can prevent it from copulating with whichever cow it wants.'*" (Focus Group 02 Men Under 30 Eastern Province, Rwanda). In Uganda there was a suggestion that some women tolerated infidelity as long as it was discrete, perhaps reflecting the normative nature of infidelity and women's acceptance that their relationship may not be monogamous:

*He respects me ... he could have someone outside of our marriage but he has never shown me anyone ... he always comes back home by 8:00pm ...*

*I don't know what he does during the day [but] as long as I have not seen them [other women] ...* (CF10, female community member, Uganda)

It may also have reflected the social and structural constraints faced by women. These include their economic and social dependence on men for maintaining their social status and meeting their and their children's financial needs. In turn this may have limited their ability to react to any jealousy that they may have felt and thus its contribution to relationship conflict and IPV. It might also have been related to an observation in both countries that women were at times blamed for their husband's infidelity, attributed to their perceived failure to fulfil their gender roles and expectations, including to meet their husband's sexual needs:

*When we went to pray they told us that it's usually because of women that men become unfaithful. They emphasised that except for habit, a husband could not be unfaithful because his wife can satisfy him. "If he becomes unfaithful to you, it is because Satan has visited you" they added, "you have to kneel down and pray for him [your husband] otherwise, can you beat him [your husband]? What can you do to him"?* (Female Partner of Couple 01 Eastern Province, Rwanda)

In both Rwanda and Uganda, jealousy and infidelity were seen to operate through different gendered pathways for men and women. Women were more often described to question men about their whereabouts and intentions because of jealousy or the fear or suspicion of infidelity, which in itself was identified as a trigger of conflict or men's use of IPV.

*"You know whenever a woman spends a night alone in your house, she starts imagining many things. To the extent that even if she trusted you so much, she will get bad thoughts and start asking questions regarding where you spend your nights. Things worsen when you get home and you don't have money. In the end the whole relationship will turn violent"* (male community member, Uganda)

Men were often described to be jealous or suspicious of women socialising with, or attracting the attention of, other men which often resulted in them exerting more control, and at times violence, against their partners. Particularly in Rwanda, there was also considerable discussion of how men are considered more prone to jealousy than women. This was strongly related to men's use of jealousy to justify their control of their partners and assert their authority over them. It was also related to women's perceived susceptibility to men's advances:

*The husband may have bad behaviour like committing infidelity and when his wife questions him about his relationship with another woman the husband immediately beats her. Why? Because the wife is jealous. On the other hand, the husband can be jealous of his wife because people say "Abagore ni inzabya zoroshye" [women are like fragile pots]. It can happen that the wife goes to buy some stuff from a male shopkeeper and when her husband notices she is having a conversation with the shopkeeper, he can be jealous of her and this can make him beat her. [...] The woman cannot beat her husband when she is jealous of him, but the husband beats his wife when he is jealous of her.* (Opinion Leader 04 Western Province Midline, Rwanda)

Regardless of the specific gendered pathways, in both countries, jealousy and infidelity were described by both women and men to negatively affect relationships, and trigger conflict, and in some cases, IPV (as elaborated below), although men's jealousy was more often described to result in conflict or a change in their partner's behaviour than that of women.

### 4.2. Break down of relationship trust and influence of the community

In both Rwanda and Uganda, participants described how relationships could be destroyed due to infidelity or rumours of infidelity, whether legitimate or not. In Uganda for example, many participants

ascribed infidelity as having caused or precipitated the breakdown in their relationship:

“I think my husband got another woman that is why he changed. They told me that when I separated with him in three days, he brought another woman in the house.” (CF2, female community member, Uganda).

A few participants also described how the suspicion of infidelity by people outside of the couple could act to exacerbate tensions between couples, even when they had made mutual decisions about their relationship, for example to live separately for employment-related reasons:

“His brother was not happy with our decision to live in separate homes. He thought I was seeing another man ... so he advised him to get another wife.” (CF1, female community member, Uganda)

In Rwanda using a social vignette, focus group participants were asked how “Albert” would be likely to react if he heard community members gossiping that “Francine” had been seen laughing with another man behind the market while at work. The majority of participants concurred that Albert would not react negatively if he trusts Francine, but if he is a jealous man, hearing this could lead to conflict and/or his use of violence against Francine. A few male participants also spoke about how families and relationships can be intentionally destroyed by others due to gossip and rumours around partner infidelity: “*There is even someone who may come with the intention of destroying your marriage and he/she can tell you that your husband fornicates when it is not even the case.*” (Focus Group 02 Men Under 30 Northern Province, Rwanda). One male partner of a couple similarly described how someone had gossiped to his wife that he had had an affair, which was not true, and it created much conflict, which took significant efforts to resolve. Although he did not describe this to have led to IPV, based on the findings across participants, gossip about a wife having an affair was reported by participants to be more likely to result in IPV than had a husband been accused.

#### 4.3. Conflict and intimate partner violence

In both countries, jealousy or the fear of infidelity, in addition to exacerbating relationship conflict and tension, were also described to lead directly to physical IPV. This was most often described as a trigger for men, though rarely women, to use violence against their partners in response to real or suspected infidelity:

*She got a phone call from another man and she answered it and talked and that's how the battle begun because then she deleted the call [...]. He then asked her “where is the call you just received now? Why did you delete it?” And the battle [violence] followed.* (CM2, male community member, Uganda)

Jealousy and infidelity, whether real or suspected, were also described to lead to conflict in relationships through causing quarrels about household resources in a few cases in Rwanda, and more commonly in Uganda. In Uganda, for example, women often described being angry or hurt by the concern that they or their children's needs were not being met owing to resources being diverted to another woman or household:

*With regard to responsibility, our husbands are no longer having only one wife, they always have three or four wives, in the end you realise that the first wife, whom he married first, he abandons you with your children, so then he fails to fulfil his responsibilities .... he now focuses on the second and third wife. So the others continue to suffer.* (CF17, female community member, Uganda)

This was often exacerbated when a child had resulted from either a previous relationship or through infidelity. This was often particularly challenging where family resources were strained and any real, or suspected, diversion of resources to another woman or family was

perceived by women to further strain their households' financial well-being and ability to meet their children's needs:

*You know women; she can also react badly I suppose. But it is hard to find out because there is no money that I spend on her [the other woman] apart from paying school fees for the kid, there is no money I spend on this woman [the other woman] for her [his wife] to suspect that I am wasting the family resources on another woman.* (CM1, male community member, Uganda)

Both women and men in Rwanda and Uganda also described forms of jealousy, whereby men sometimes sought to control the behaviour of their partners because of anxious jealousy and preventive jealousy. This included preventing women from working outside of the home, controlling when they were able to leave the house, whom they were permitted to visit, and what they wore:

*Well, it would not be bad if a woman helped in my [financial] responsibilities but you know it is not easy to trust a woman [...] women admire a lot and so at work is where she might find someone to admire her and change her mind into cheating.* (CM6, male community member, Uganda)

Owing to the social and structural context in both countries, women did not have the power to similarly control the movements of their partners. Control of women's movement and economic freedoms due to romantic jealousy was described to lead to solitude and anxiety for some women:

*He was saying that other men give me money and that he doesn't want me to have many clothes so that other men don't flirt with me. So because I was in solitude I wouldn't take any decision. I was always afraid and sad.* (Female Partner of Couple 01 Northern Province Endline, Rwanda)

By preventing women from earning an independent income or having control of any resources, at times it was also described to threaten women's economic independence thus increasing women's dependence on their partners. IPV was also described to be triggered by men who were jealous when women brought money or more money than anticipated home, as they assumed it was from another man, challenging their male provider role.

*When I had sold and made some profit, sometimes I would tell myself, I need a fabric so let me buy it because he was not giving it to me – there is even one time when he burnt my fabric, he said: “this is the fabric that your men bought you! Where did you get the money from? From your selling, can you get money to buy food and the clothes? Your men gave you money!”* (Female Partner of Couple 01 Northern Province Midline, Rwanda)

#### 4.4. Strategies to mitigate romantic jealousy and infidelity

Under Indashyikirwa and SASA!, two main strategies were used to mitigate the impact of romantic jealousy and infidelity. The first was to improve relationship trust and communication, and the second, was to highlight the potential for jealousy and (suspicion of) infidelity to be direct triggers of IPV. These strategies emerged more strongly under Indashyikirwa given the specific focus in the programming on reducing the impact of romantic jealousy and infidelity as key triggers for IPV.

##### 4.4.1. Improving relationship trust and communication

In both Uganda and Rwanda, the benefits of reduced jealousy and infidelity in relationships were identified through engagement with the respective programmes. This included fostering improved trust in relationships:

*I have to feel that my wife can stay at home and she can be there on my behalf and vice versa. [...] If I don't trust her and go away for work and I do not trust her, we found that we cannot succeed. We found that*

*trusting each other is essential in everything that we do in our household.* (Male Partner of Couple 03 Eastern Province Midline, Rwanda)

Yes it [SASA!] is very useful because there are times when I ask her to stay [and manage] the shop and I even delay, because I get caught up, but she never thinks that I have gone for other things [infidelity]. She will always understand and trust me but it's all because of the lessons we learnt in SASA! (CM8, male community member, Uganda).

Improved communication among couples was often described as important in supporting greater trust, which was a skill supported through the Indashyikirwa programme. Participants also discussed the value of communicating more openly about jealousy:

*When she went to sing in the choir she could come back home late. I didn't believe she was in the choir, instead I thought that she was having an affair with other people. [...] I could never tell her about it, and I suffered unnecessarily; but today I can tell her about anything that worries me, and she can also tell me anything that she is worrying about.* (Male Partner of Couple 04 Eastern Province Endline, Rwanda)

Through Indashyikirwa, several participants shared learning the importance of not taking gossip at face value, but instead basing their reactions on their own knowledge as well as greater self-awareness of the potential impact of false accusations against their partner:

*Now there is a way you can solve it thanks to the lessons we got. We've learnt that when you have false suspicions about someone because you saw him with another person, that can be a source of violence.* (Female Partner of Couple 01 Western Province Midline, Rwanda)

This in particular was described to reduce relationship conflict and violence. A few partners of couples also related the importance of asking for forgiveness for causing jealousy (even if unintentional) with some describing how they limited communication with members of the opposite sex in order to further reduce relationship tensions and conflict: "Because he had given his phone number to that girl, he asked me for forgiveness and promised not to give his phone number to any girl anymore." (Female Partner of Couple 02 Northern Province, Rwanda).

In Rwanda there was some suggestion however that for some couples, relationship tensions were reduced through women avoiding interaction with the opposite sex to mitigate the romantic jealousy of their husbands, rather than as a result of a fundamental shift of improved trust or decreased controlling behaviours:

*He is somehow jealous of me. [...] he has that character even since I fell in love with him; consequently, I cannot allow that any young man visits us and stay at home for so long because I know that he dislikes that. So, when your husband dislikes something and you do it, you are spoiling your relationship.* (Female Partner of Couple 02 Eastern Province, Rwanda)

The Indashyikirwa programme did not encourage this strategy, and it was instead a strategy that some women reported using as a means of reducing potential triggers of jealousy in their relationships.

#### 4.5. Highlighting the potential for jealousy to lead to IPV

SASA! and Indashyikirwa addressed jealousy and (the suspicion of) infidelity as direct triggers of IPV. Some participants in Rwanda described for example how learning about jealousy as key trigger of IPV and its consequences was helpful, as was learning that accusing someone of being unfaithful or being unnecessarily jealous could be considered a form of emotional IPV: "We saw that jealousy can also bring violence. You can see your husband discussing with another woman and you say that he is cheating on you. We found that saying that can also be a form of violence". (Female Partner of Couple 01 Western Province Midline, Rwanda) Some opinion leaders spoke of educating community members about the

consequences of and how to mitigate romantic jealousy:

*We saw that once there is jealousy between a couple there may also be violence. During meetings we tell them that jealousy doesn't solve anything and that once there is a problem, they should rather talk about it and solve it. Once they fail to solve it, they should seek help from the authority in charge, they should report it before there is any violence. During the general assembly we also explained that jealousy doesn't create a healthy couple; the important thing is trusting each other as a couple.* (Opinion Leader 05 Eastern Province Midline, Rwanda)

Similarly, in Uganda, SASA! was often described to provide participants with space to evaluate their relationship including the role of infidelity in negative relationship outcomes as a means of supporting them to change their behaviours:

*They also talked about family problems common in our community for instance beating your wife and I realised that I was also doing some of these things in my relationship with my partner like taking the partner's savings without her knowledge and denying her finances, being promiscuous and sleeping around with very many women when you are married and many other things including unnecessary drinking of alcohol. I was convinced that if one follows what is being talked about in SASA! you can be helped to change your ways and become a better person.* (CM3, male community member, Uganda)

In both Uganda and Rwanda, reduced jealousy and fear of infidelity was also described to reduce some men's controlling behaviours:

*Before these lessons I could suspect her that she has bad manners but that was not true. I was lying about her. But now there is no problem and she chats with other people. I even give her the right to visit her friends without any problem.* (Male Partner of Couple 04 Eastern Province Midline, Rwanda)

Indeed, in Uganda, some male study participants credited SASA! for encouraging them to be less suspicious of their partner's behaviour as a means of reducing relationship tensions and violence that arose from their controlling behaviour:

*They [SASA! activist] told me to just try and see if she does the mistakes that I thought she would do. I was told to give her a chance but if she made the mistake I would implement my plan of not letting her work ... I tried it and realised she didn't have any problem.* (CM6, male community member, Uganda)

#### 4.6. Impact of reduced romantic jealousy and improved faithfulness

In Uganda, some study participants ascribed improvements in their partner's faithfulness to participation in SASA! activities and engagement with SASA! activists. They described this to have reduced relationship tensions and conflict:

*I think he became more faithful and I think he is still faithful because he has attended so many SASA! activities. You know you might start a relationship very well but then it can fail after some time, but I think because my husband has been to SASA! this has helped him to be a good man.* (CF1, female community member, Uganda)

SASA!'s programming on the risks and consequences of HIV infection through multiple sexual partners was also described by a few men to have directly led to their decision to reduce their sexual partners with this in turn having positive impacts on the quality of the relationship with their partner:

*After I watched [the SASA! film on HIV], I had to look at my past experience, I thought of all that I had gone through in the past, and accepted to change my ways ... I stopped going out with other women ... to avoid getting HIV/AIDS, which may breed domestic violence in a home*

[...] and I know my wife must have noted a change in how I behave these days. I used to go home late, which is not the case now. (CM18, male community member, Uganda)

Improved faithfulness to one's spouse, particularly by men, was also described to have arisen out of engagement with Indashyikirwa given the heightened awareness of the relationship between jealousy and IPV, and resulted in reduced relationship tension:

*Then I told her: "I no longer do that thing!" [have an affair] so my wife was telling me: "if you really took a decision, talk with that one also. Tell her no and leave her." And I agreed. So, one day I confessed and I said: "May God sees this! You woman, I don't want to be in conflict with my wife which can even lead to killing each other. Please go find other people who love you and I will continue to love my wife." I separated with that woman. Now I live well with my wife since the beginning of these lessons. (Male Partner of Couple 01 Eastern Province Midline, Rwanda)*

## 5. Discussion

There is limited conceptual literature on the relationship between romantic jealousy and IPV and how violence prevention programmes can seek to mitigate jealousy to improve quality of relationships and reduce IPV. This paper assesses conceptualisations and consequences of romantic jealousy and its linkages to IPV in Uganda and Rwanda based on the secondary analysis of impact evaluation data of the SASA! intervention in Uganda and the Indashyikirwa programme in Rwanda.

Overall, jealousy and suspicions of infidelity were described by both women and men to be common among couples in both settings. They described jealousy and suspicion of infidelity to lead to relationship conflict through a number of different mechanisms including a breakdown of the relationship and trust; quarrels about resources; and as a trigger of conflict, controlling behaviours and IPV. This manifested as physical, emotional, and economic IPV and controlling behaviours whereby in response to anxious or preventive jealousy, and in alignment with a patriarchal context where men are expected to be the main providers, men sought to exert control on women's ability to work outside the home, leave the house, determine who they visited, as well as what they wore.

In Rwanda, romantic jealousy was perceived to both undermine patience and understanding among couples as well as to act as a common trigger for conflict and/or IPV. Similarly, in Uganda, romantic jealousy and suspicion of infidelity were also generally viewed negatively although there was some variation in the cultural acceptance of infidelity. In both settings there was also some suggestion of cultural acceptance for men to seek extra-marital relationships which may reflect constructions of masculinity which assume that men are hypersexual and thus normalising their sexual engagements outside of marriage.

In both countries, jealousy and suspicion of infidelity were seen to operate through different gendered pathways for men and women with women's jealousy quite different in content and ability to drive violence and conflict in relationships than men's. Women were more often described to question men about their whereabouts and intentions because of anxious jealousy or the suspicion of infidelity, whereas men were more often described to demonstrate preventive jealousy or be suspicious of women socialising with, or attracting the attention of, other men. Particularly in Rwanda, men were also considered more prone to jealousy than women, which strongly related to conceptions of male control and authority through jealousy, and women's perceived susceptibility to other men's advances.

All forms of romantic jealousy as theorised by Buunk (1997) were identified in the data yet played out differently across the two settings. This reflects the reality that the events that elicit jealousy, the social legitimacy that jealousy is given, and the behavioural responses to jealousy that are considered appropriate, often differ based on cultural context (Puentes and Cohen, 2003; Salovey, 1991). In Uganda, there was

much more discussion of reactive jealousy, attributed to infidelity. Although reactive jealousy and infidelity were also identified in Rwanda, and more normalised among men, this was less explicitly discussed compared to Uganda. Polygamy is outlawed in Rwanda, though not in Uganda, and infidelity is a social taboo and socially sanctioned in Rwanda, which may explain this difference. In Rwanda, anxious jealousy was particularly common. Indeed, there were examples of how people outside a relationship may try to provoke anxious jealousy, as a means of threatening or undermining another's relationship. In both settings, preventive jealousy was common, and much more so by men of their female partners. This may relate to gender-related factors whereby the threat of a rival challenges men's self-esteem and masculinities, resulting in them using their power against their partner. Masculinities and gender role expectations might also help to explain why, as a result of participation in the interventions, some men described changes in their behaviours through which they 'gave their partners permission to visit whomever they wanted' with this still implying a role for men in controlling their partner's movements. This cross-comparative study importantly shed light on how forms of romantic jealousy play out differently across contexts, and in relation to gender norms, IPV and relationship conflict.

The findings of this study resonate strongly with those of a recent mixed-method systematic review by Pichon et al. (2020) in which the authors summarise the mechanisms and pathways from infidelity and romantic jealousy to intimate partner violence (Pichon et al., 2020). As illustrated in Fig. 1 these pathways display strong gendered aspects with Pathway 3 in particular overlapping strongly with the findings of this study. Our findings suggest that men who anticipate partner infidelity use controlling behaviours and economic IPV in response. Women's jealousy on the other hand is more often constrained by power asymmetries and structural constraints. Our findings on women experiencing accusations of infidelity as a form of psychological IPV are also reflected in the findings of the systematic review suggesting that this is an important pathway between jealousy and IPV.

SASA! and Indashyikirwa sought to mitigate the impact of romantic jealousy and infidelity as a means to reduce relationship conflict and violence through a number of different strategies. These included encouraging improved faithfulness and honesty in relationships; supporting reduced suspicion and fear in relationships through improved relationship trust and communication; and identifying jealousy and suspicion of, or real infidelity, as direct triggers of IPV. Importantly, both programmes relied on a positive approach to support couples to consider the benefits of trusting relationships, rather than solely emphasising the consequences of jealousy and infidelity. Both programmes also supported development of skills, including open communication skills, and encouraging critical reflection, as strategies to mitigate the commonality and consequences of romantic jealousy. In addition, SASA!'s use of community dramas was regularly described to provide participants with an opportunity to critically reflect how their relationships could be similarly affected by infidelity and IPV, particularly with relation to HIV-related risk behaviours. In practice the findings from Rwanda on women avoiding interaction with the opposite sex as a way of mitigating jealousy from their partner highlights an important tension in the findings. While women's decision to curb their social interactions, movements, or how they dressed served as a successful safety strategy and a means of not 'provoking' their partner's jealousy thus reducing relationship conflict and IPV, it fails to address the underlying power and gender inequalities that drive IPV. This reflects an important challenge for gender transformative programming that seeks to interrupt pathways between jealousy and IPV. This challenge notwithstanding, the findings of this study suggest that interventions that seek to not only prevent IPV but support healthy, equitable relationships may provide valuable avenues for IPV and HIV prevention and also for fostering positive and healthy expressions of love which do not include jealousy and controlling behaviours (Ruark et al., 2017) This study has strengths and limitations. In Uganda, by interviewing a wide range of community

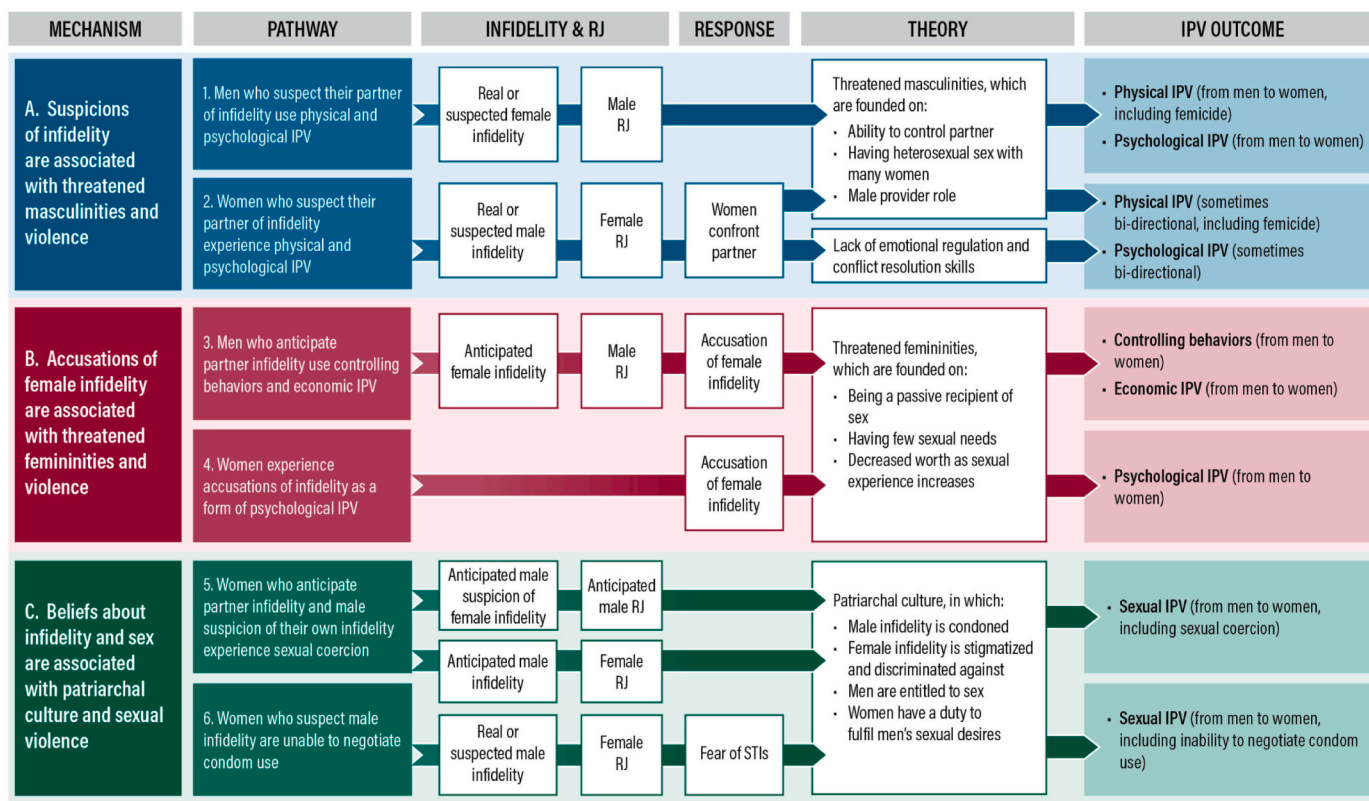


Fig. 1. Identified mechanisms and pathways from infidelity and romantic jealousy to intimate partner violence [HERE].

members from all intervention communities, we were able to maximise the heterogeneity of the sample and thus include the perspectives of a variety of different community members. In terms of SASA!, given that the study sought to examine change over time, multiple interviews with the same individuals across different time points would also have enabled deeper insights into how the intervention impacted on jealousy and infidelity, as drivers of IPV, to emerge. Multiple prospective interviews would also have reduced the study’s reliance on participants’ recall ability which may have been affected by desirability bias, particularly with relation to outcomes that they experienced in their relationship. The data were collected to assess the impact of the SASA! Intervention and Indashyikirwa programme on multiple outcomes, rather than focusing explicitly on romantic jealousy. This limited our ability to explore forms and consequences of romantic jealousy, including pathways to IPV. There may also be social desirability bias around participants wanting to report favourably on interventions they clearly valued. We attempted to mitigate this by using field researchers who identified themselves as clearly ‘external’ to the programme and emphasising the confidentiality of their answers. We also acknowledge that the first and second authors’ leading role in the design and/or evaluation of the interventions may have influenced this secondary data analysis. Both authors have previously published data on the pathways through which the interventions were revealed to worked which may have influenced their interpretation of the data and findings that are modelled in this paper. While this is a potential concern, this paper is part of a larger collaboration on linkages between romantic jealousy and IPV and early findings were discussed with other members of the collaboration who had no involvement with either study. Similarly, the third author was not part of either of the original studies.

6. Conclusion

Romantic jealousy was identified as extremely common among couples, and in some cases normalised. It was generally seen to

negatively impact the quality of and trust within relationships, and to be a significant risk factor for women to experience IPV and controlling behaviours. There was encouraging indication from the data that romantic jealousy can be mitigated and reduced, especially when identified as an explicit trigger of conflict and IPV, and if skills are encouraged to mitigate jealousy to improve trust in relationships and improve faithfulness. Much more attention should be given to measuring and addressing the multidimensional concept of romantic jealousy as part of comprehensive IPV prevention programmes that incorporate a gender transformative focus and work with men and women as couples, and programmes should be evaluated for their ability to reduce romantic jealousy. More research is also needed on the forms, gendered pathways and consequences of romantic jealousy, to inform such programming, and how this may vary depending on the context for implementation.

Credit author statement

Nambusi Kyegombe conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, writing original draft, supervision. Erin Stern conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, writing original draft, supervision. Ana Maria Buller writing – original draft, funding acquisition.

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