

## **The Prediction of Ruminative Thought Style Using University Students' Self-Compassion: Case of Cappadocia University**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between self-compassion and ruminative thought style. The general survey method has been applied in the research. The research was carried out with 471 volunteer students studying at Cappadocia University in Turkey, during the 2018-2019 academic year. The study data have been collected using the Self-Compassion Scala, the Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire, and a personal information form. Correlation analysis has been conducted to determine whether a relationship exists between self-compassion and ruminative thought style and the effects of the self-compassion on ruminative thought style has been analyzed through the use of simple regression analysis. The analyses of the data were carried out via SPSS 21. The results showed that there is a negative significant relationship between self-compassion and ruminative thought style ( $\beta = -.441$ ;  $p = .000$ ). According to the result self-compassion was the negative predictor of ruminative thought style.

**Keywords:** ruminative thought style, self-compassion, university students

## Introduction

It is clearly seen that theoretical and experimental studies on the concept of rumination has increased recently. Although there is similarity among various definitions for the term rumination, different researchers defined rumination differently (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2004).

According to Rippere (1977), rumination is permanent (consistent), repetitive, and depressive thought and a common reaction given to bad mood. Among the instances of ruminative thoughts, there are patterns like “Why am I so awkward, my mood is pretty bad, why am I reacting so negatively” and so on (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2004).

In rumination, individuals generally do not try to solve their problems. Instead of taking action against the problem, they tend to think the problematic issue repetitively and passively (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). Rumination is also regarded as a functionless emotional arrangement strategy. According to Leahy (2002); as rumination increases, people have difficulty in expressing their feelings.

Ruminative way of thinking is a predictive variable self-understanding. Self-understanding is a structure that consists of three constituents. Every constituent comprises a positive and negative dimension in itself. These are: self-kindness versus self-judgment, mindfulness versus over-identification and common humanity versus isolation. Self-kindness versus self-judgment is related to the pains that are felt emotionally and the response given in difficult situations (Neff, 2003a). This sub-dimension describes that the attitude of a person towards himself in cases of grief and difficulty is an attitude between self-kindness and self-judgment. Self-kindness means that a person has a kind, compassionate and understanding attitude towards himself in cases of griefs, failures and inabilities, and he can show the care and interest to himself as needed (Neff, 2003b). On the other hand, self-judgment means that a person has accusatory attitude towards himself, punishes himself, and burns himself out in cases of griefs, failures and inabilities. Another factor is being aware of common shares versus isolation. This sub-factor means that griefs and tough experiences are related to being human. It describes cognitive sense-making for sad and difficult situations (Neff, 2003a). Being aware of common shares means knowing that the sad and tough experiences are, in fact, also confronted by many other people, being able to see that suffering griefs is a natural part of being human, and being in an attitude “The tough experiences I have are related to my being a human, they can be confronted by many people, almost all humans may confront tough experiences in their lives” (Neff, 2003a). On the other hand, isolation means that a person considers his experiences, griefs, failures and inabilities as something that only he confronts.

Although there are studies in Turkey that self-kindness and rumination variables are examined separately, no study that these two variables are examined together was found. In this respect, it is thought that the results obtained from this study can be beneficial in this field. In the study carried out in accordance with this opinion, it is aimed to examine to what extent self-kindness variable predict the level of rumination of university students.

## **Methods**

### **Research Model**

Correlational survey model was used in this study in which predictive power of self-understanding of university students for ruminative thought tendencies was examined. Correlational survey model is a research model that aims to determine the presence and/or degree of covariance among two or more variables (Karasar, 2008).

### **Study Group**

In the study, data were collected from 500 students that study in Cappadocia University in 2018-2019 school year. However, 29 students that were found to fill in the scale set incorrectly and/or incompletely were left out of evaluation. Thus, participants of the study consist of 471 students that study in Cappadocia University School of Health Sciences and (9.6%) and Vocational School (90,4%), of which 317 are females (67,3%), 154 are males (32,7%). 80,7% of the participants of the sampling are first-grade students, and 19,3% of them are second-grade students. Age range of the participants varies between 17 and 25.

### **Data Collection Tools**

In the study, Self-Understanding Scale, Ruminative Way of Thinking Scale and the Personal Information Form that was prepared by the researcher were used as data collection tools.

**Self-Understanding Scale:** The scale that was adapted to Turkish by Deniz et al. (2008) consists of 24 items and single dimension. In the 5-point Likert type measurement tool, the items are graded from 1=Scarcely ever to 5=Almost always. In the scale, the items 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22 and 23 are reverse-graded. High points indicate that an individual has high level of self-understanding. Internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .89 (Deniz et al., 2008). The internal consistency coefficient of this study is .87.

**Ruminative Way of Thinking Scale:** The scale that was adapted to Turkish by Karatepe, Yavuz and Türkcan (2013) consists of 20 items and a single dimension. In the 7-point Likert type measurement tool, the items are graded from 1=It doesn't describe me at all to 7=It describes me very well. High points indicate that an individual has high level of ruminative thinking tendency. Internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .91 (Karatepe, Yavuz and Türkcan, 2013). Internal consistency coefficient of this study is .89.

**Personal Information Form:** This form that was prepared by the researcher is intended for collection of personal information such as gender, age, faculty, department, and grade.

### **Data Collection**

Before beginning to collect data, research proposal was presented to Ethical Committee of Cappadocia University. Upon obtaining approval of the Ethical Committee, the scale form was applied by the researcher to the participants during the course hours. Before

commencement of the application, the participants were informed briefly on the purpose of the study and the scale form. The application lasted around 40 minutes.


### Data Analysis

Descriptive analyses, Pearson correlation test and basic linear regression analysis techniques were used through SPSS 21 packaged software in data analysis and significance was tested at ,05 level.

### Findings

Descriptive statistics related to self-understanding and ruminative ways of thinking of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics related to self-understanding and ruminative ways of thinking of the participants

Variables	N	Lowest	Highest		Ss	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self-Understanding	471	24,00	120,00	76,0297	15,82683	-,137	-,085
Ruminative Way of Thinking	471	26,00	140,00	103,5902	21,30537	-,423	-,218

Before beginning the regression analysis, whether the variables prove normality assumption and whether there is a correlation between dependent and independent variable were examined. As seen in Table 1, skewness coefficients of the variables are -,137 and -,423, and their kurtosis coefficients are -,085 and -,218. According to Büyüköztürk (2019), for skewness and kurtosis coefficients to be between the values -1 and +1 indicates that the distribution is normal. In addition, as a result of Pearson analysis, a moderate level of negative and significant correlation was found between the total point of self-understanding and total point of ruminative ways of thinking ( $r=-,441$ ;  $p<,01$ ). Consequently, it is seen that fundamental assumptions of the basic linear regression analysis are proved.

Basic linear regression analysis technique was used in order to determine whether the independent variable (self-understanding) in the study predicts the dependent variable (ruminative way of thinking) and to what extent the independent variable contributes. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Basic Linear Regression Analysis Results Related to Prediction of Ruminative Way of Thinking

Through Self-Understanding

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variable	Reg. coef.	Fn. Err.	$\beta$	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	F
Ruminative Way of Thinking	Invariant	148,708	4,333	-	34,322	,000	,194	113,123
	Self-Understanding	-,593	,056	-,441	-10,636	,000		

$p<,01$

When t-test results related to significance of the regression coefficients given in the tables above are examined, it is seen that self-understanding significantly predicts the

ruminative way of thinking ( $t=-10,636$ ;  $p=,000$ ). In other words, the variable “self-understanding” was found to state 19% of the ruminative way of thinking usage tendencies of the participants alone ( $R^2=,194$ ;  $F(1,469) = 113,123$   $p<,01$ ).

## Conclusion

In this study, to what extent the variable of self-understanding predicts ruminative ways of thinking of the university students was examined. First of all, the correlation between the variables was examined and a moderate level of negative and significant correlation was found between the self-understanding and level of ruminative thinking of the students. Then, the variable of self-understanding was found to be a significant predictor of the ruminative way of thinking in the regression analysis.

As previously mentioned, no study that studies self-understanding and ruminative ways of thinking together was found in review of the studies that were carried out at home. On the other hand, some of the studies that were carried out abroad seem to support the results of this study (Neff, 2003a; Neff, Kirkpatrick and Rude, 2007; Neff and Vonk, 2009; Samaie and Farahani, 2011). While the individuals that have high level of self-understanding generally have significantly more positive mood, they are in a negative mood less (Neff, 2003a). Such individuals feel less depression and anxiety due to adverse events such as failures previous failures, and they have less ruminative thoughts regarding those experiences (Leary et al., 2007; Neff and Vonk, 2009). In the same time, such individuals tend to suppress the feelings that cause rumination less compared to the individuals with low level of self-understanding (Krieger et al., 2016). Likewise, Allen and Knight (2005) suggest that having self-understanding may decrease ruminative thoughts. In that sense, self-understanding is considered as a strong predictor of psychological well-being.

In line with the results obtained from this study, it can be recommended that intermediate effects of different variables in the correlation between self-understanding and ruminative way of thinking can be examined in future studies. The variables that are dealt in this study can be reexamined in individuals that are in different age groups and socio-economic conditions. Practitioners in this field may carry out individual and group guidance/psychological counseling studies for increasing self-understanding levels of students in universities.

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