



EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL ANXIETY, RUMINATION AND RESILIENCE IN YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Social anxiety refers to the feelings of discomfort, nervousness, or apprehension experienced in social situations, often stemming from a fear of being judged, rejected, or negatively evaluated by others. Social anxiety is a prevalent and debilitating phenomenon that can significantly impact an individual's well-being and functioning in various social contexts. Rumination, on the other hand, is the tendency to dwell on negative thoughts, emotions, or experiences repeatedly and persistently, often without finding resolutions or engaging in problem-solving. Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. This study investigates the interplay between social anxiety, rumination, and resilience.

Sample size was 120 participants, with an equal gender distribution of 60 males and 60 females which allowed for the exploration of gender differences in the analysis. The sampling method used was snowball sampling. Correlation analysis, ANOVA and Regression were used in this study. The result showed that the correlation was significant at 0.01 level which meant that a significant gender difference in the relationships among social anxiety, rumination, and resilience is found. Social anxiety and rumination showed a significant impact on resilience for females compared to males.

Keywords: Social anxiety, Rumination, Resilience, Young Adults

INTRODUCTION

Social anxiety

Anxiety is a future oriented response which involves both cognitive and emotional components where one individual feels apprehensive, tense and uneasy about something. Social anxiety is characterized by intense fear or apprehension in situations involving potential scrutiny or evaluation by others, such as social interactions, public speaking, or performance-based situations. At its core, social anxiety stems from a fear of negative evaluation or rejection by others, as well as a heightened self-consciousness and concern about appearing anxious or inadequate. Individuals with social anxiety often experience physical symptoms like trembling, sweating, blushing, or rapid heartbeat in social situations, as well as cognitive symptoms like negative self-talk, rumination, and distorted perceptions of their own performance or others' judgments.

It's essential to distinguish between social anxiety and social anxiety disorder (SAD). While social anxiety disorder is a clinical condition marked by excessive fear of social situations

to the extent that it interferes significantly with daily functioning, social anxiety itself exists on a spectrum and is a common aspect of human experience.

Causes of Social Anxiety

Biological factors: Studies suggest that social anxiety may have a hereditary component, with individuals having a biological predisposition to experiencing heightened emotional and physiological responses in social situations. Imbalances or dysregulation of neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, have been linked to the development of social anxiety.

Psychological factors: Individuals with social anxiety often exhibit cognitive distortions, such as overestimating the likelihood of negative evaluation, catastrophizing, and engaging in negative self-talk. Poor self-concept, negative self-image, and lack of confidence in one's abilities can contribute to heightened social anxiety. Setting unrealistically high standards for oneself in social situations can lead to increased anxiety and self-consciousness.

Environmental factors: Traumatic or negative social experiences during childhood or adolescence, such as bullying, rejection, or humiliation, can shape social anxiety later in life. Overprotective or overly critical parenting can contribute to the development of social anxiety by limiting opportunities for social skill development or reinforcing negative self-perceptions. Certain societal norms, expectations, or cultural values may place greater emphasis on social conformity or performance, increasing the potential for social anxiety.

Learning experiences: Observing and imitating the socially anxious behaviours of others, such as parents or peers, can reinforce and perpetuate social anxiety. Negative or traumatic social experiences can lead to classical conditioning, where certain social situations become associated with anxiety and avoidance behaviours.

Situational factors: Entering novel social environments or situations where one lacks prior experience or familiarity can trigger anxiety. Situations that involve being evaluated or performing in front of others, such as public speaking or job interviews, can induce heightened social anxiety.

Social anxiety often arises from a combination of these factors, and the relative contribution of each factor may vary from individual to individual.

Additionally, while social anxiety is a normal emotional response, when it becomes persistent, excessive, and significantly impairs daily functioning, it may indicate the presence of a social anxiety disorder, which requires professional evaluation and treatment.

RESILIENCE

It refers to an individual's ability to adapt and bounce back from adversity, trauma, or significant sources of stress. According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2022), resilience is "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress." It is not a trait that individuals either possess or lack; rather, it involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be developed and strengthened over time.

Resilience can be of many types. Psychological resilience refers to an individual's ability to cope with and adapt to adversity, stress, and traumatic experiences while maintaining mental well-being. It involves factors such as emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and a positive mindset. Emotional resilience is the capacity to experience and manage intense emotions effectively, allowing individuals to recover from setbacks or challenging situations without becoming overwhelmed or derailed by negative emotions. Physical resilience refers to the body's ability to withstand and recover from physical stress, illness, or injury. It involves factors such as physical fitness, proper nutrition, and effective stress management. Social resilience involves the

ability to cultivate and maintain supportive relationships, navigate social environments, and access resources within one's community.

It plays a crucial role in coping with adversity and building a sense of belonging. Academic or career resilience refers to an individual's ability to persist and bounce back from setbacks or challenges in educational or professional settings, such as academic struggles, job loss, or career transitions.

RUMINATION

Rumination is characterized by the process of repetitive thinking that is often experienced as uncontrollable and not necessarily by a specific content of thought. Rumination, however, frequently takes the form of depressive rumination, which refers to repetitive, negative thinking, generally about past events, or current stressors.

Rumination is often differentiated from other forms of repetitive thought processes, such as problem-solving or reflection. Unlike problem-solving, which involves actively seeking solutions, rumination is characterized by a passive and perseverative focus on negative content without actively addressing or resolving the underlying issues. This repetitive dwelling on negative thoughts and emotions can become a maladaptive coping mechanism, exacerbating and prolonging distress.

Ruminative thoughts are obsessive in nature and can be divided into two subtypes: reflective and brooding. Brooding rumination involves passively dwelling on the causes, meanings, and consequences of negative emotions or experiences. Reflective rumination involves actively attempting to gain insight or solve problems related to negative emotions or experiences.

Beyond the two subtypes of rumination, there are also three forms of rumination that have been proposed by Mikulincer; state rumination which involves a general dwelling on failures,

specifically focusing on the negative feelings and outcomes, and action rumination which focuses on actions you took in the past or want to take in the future. People may also excessively think about how to achieve a goal, achieve a desired outcome, or correct past mistakes. This is called task-irrelevant rumination

Review of Literature

Social anxiety refers to the feelings of discomfort, nervousness, or apprehension experienced in social situations, often stemming from a fear of being judged, rejected, or negatively evaluated by others. While not everyone experiences it at a clinical level, many individuals grapple with varying degrees of discomfort and avoidance in social settings. It is a common experience, with estimates suggesting that up to 50% of the population experiences some degree of social anxiety (Stein & Stein, 2008).

Rumination can exacerbate negative emotional states, impair problem-solving abilities, and contribute to the development or maintenance of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety disorders. Numerous studies have established a negative relationship between rumination and resilience. Rumination can hinder resilience by perpetuating negative thought patterns, reducing cognitive flexibility, and depleting psychological resources necessary for effective coping (Holm et al., 2021).

A study by Liang et al., (2023) found that individuals with higher levels of social anxiety and rumination tend to experience greater difficulties in initiating and maintaining social relationships, leading to increased social isolation and loneliness.

Research by Kirmayer et al. (2022) suggests that social anxiety and rumination can contribute to avoidance of social situations, reduced participation in community activities, and weaker social support networks, which can have detrimental effects on overall social cohesion and well-being.

A recent study by Kim and Lee (2023) revealed that the combination of social anxiety and rumination can significantly impair academic performance among college students, potentially due to factors such as difficulty participating in class discussions, seeking help from instructors, or focusing during exams.

Research by Zhu et al. (2022) found that individuals with higher levels of social anxiety and rumination are more likely to experience difficulties in job performance, particularly in roles that involve frequent social interactions or public speaking, which can limit career advancement and job satisfaction.

A recent meta-analysis by Huang et al. (2023) confirmed the strong association between social anxiety, rumination, and the development of various mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse problems.

A study by Ren et al. (2023) suggests that the interplay between social anxiety and rumination can create a vicious cycle, where rumination exacerbates social anxiety, which in turn reinforces ruminative tendencies, leading to a heightened risk of mental health issues.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study the relationship between social anxiety, rumination and resilience in young adults.

Objectives:

- To study the relationship between social anxiety, rumination and resilience in young adults.
- To study the gender difference in social anxiety, rumination and resilience in young adults.

Hypotheses:

- There will be a significant negative correlation between social anxiety and resilience.
- There will be a significant negative correlation between rumination and resilience.
- There will be a significant positive correlation between rumination and social anxiety.
- There will be significant gender differences in the relationships among social anxiety, rumination, and resilience.
- Social anxiety and rumination will have a significant impact on resilience for females as compared to males.

Variables of the study

Independent variables: Social Anxiety and Rumination

Dependent variables: Resilience

Sample

The Sample size was 120 participants, with an equal gender distribution of 60 males and 60 females. This allows for the exploration of gender differences in the analysis. The sampling method used was snowball sampling.

Procedure

The data was gathered using an online survey method. Questionnaires of all three scales i.e. Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale, Rumination Response scale (RSS) and Brief Resilience Scale were created using google forms. The sampling method used was snowball sampling.

TOOLS

- **Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (Liebowitz, 1987):** Each item is rated on a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating greater levels of social anxiety. For each item, the participant rates their fear (LSAS-F) or avoidance (LSAS-A) of a specific social situation on a scale from 0 to 3: 0 = None 1 = Mild 2 = Moderate 3 = Severe. Scores for the LSAS-F and LSAS-A subscales are calculated separately by summing the ratings for each item within each subscale. The total score for the LSAS is obtained by summing the scores of the LSAS-F and LSAS-A subscales. The maximum total score is 144. Higher total scores indicate more severe social anxiety symptoms.
- **Brief Resilience Scale:** Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The total score is calculated by summing the responses to all items, with higher scores indicating greater resilience.
- **Rumination Response Scale (Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991)**

RESULT ANALYSIS

Table 2
Correlations

		X	Y	Z
X	Pearson Correlation	1	.59	-.32
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001

Y	Pearson Correlation	.59	1	-.39
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001
Z	Pearson Correlation	-.32	-.39	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Table: 3*ANOVA (Female)*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.04	2	2.52	7.7	.001

Residual	18.62	57	.327		
Total	23.67	59			
a. Gender = Female					
b. Dependent Variable: Z					
c. Predictors: (Constant), X,Y					

Table 5*Coefficients (Female)*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.243	.307		13.818	<.001
X	-.001	.003	-.067	-.496	.622
Y	-.021	.007	-.424	-3.114	.003
a. Gender = Female					
b. Dependent Variable: Z					

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.46	.21	.185	.57
a. Gender = Female			
b. Predictors: (Constant), X,Y			

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B		Beta		

(Constant)	3.829	.289		13.272	<.001
X	-.005	.004	-.212	-1.291	.202
Y	-.006	.008	-.129	-.787	.435
a. Gender = Male					
b. Dependent Variable: Z					

Table 8:*Model Summary (Male)*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.31	.097	.065	.57
a. Gender = Male			
b. Predictors: (Constant), X,Y			

DISCUSSION

The title of the research study was Exploring the Relationship Between Social Anxiety, Rumination, and Resilience in young adults. The tools used for the research included Liebowitz Social Anxiety scale, Brief Resilience scale and Rumination response scale.

The Correlation coefficient between X (social anxiety) and Y (rumination) was 0.59, which shows positive correlation. This means that as social anxiety increases, rumination also tends to increase, and vice versa. Correlation coefficient between X (social anxiety) and Z (resilience) was -0.32, which is a negative correlation. This suggests that as social anxiety increases, resilience tends to decrease, and vice versa. The Correlation coefficient between Y (rumination) and Z (resilience) was 0.399, which is also a negative correlation. This indicates that as rumination increases, resilience tends to decrease, and vice versa. All these correlations were found statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

The ANOVA result for female shows a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$) in the mean resilience scores across different levels of social anxiety and rumination. This suggests that for females, resilience levels are significantly associated with or impacted by their levels of social anxiety and ruminative thinking patterns. The ANOVA result for males indicates no statistically significant difference ($p = 0.055$) in mean resilience scores across different levels of social anxiety and rumination. This implies that for males, resilience levels may not be as strongly associated with or impacted by social anxiety and rumination compared to females.

Multiple regression analysis with interaction terms to explore if the relationship between social anxiety/rumination and resilience varies by gender. Include social anxiety, rumination, gender, and the interaction between social anxiety/rumination and gender as

predictor variables. This allows you to test if the slopes of the regression lines differ significantly between males and females.

Regression was used to assess how the independent variables predict the dependent variable within each group. The relationship is considered statistically significant, implying that the observed differences in resilience levels across different levels of social anxiety and rumination are unlikely to have occurred by chance. On the other hand, the result for male indicated insignificant relationship between these variables. However both social anxiety and rumination showed negative relationships with resilience (indicated by the negative unstandardized coefficients). Based on the low values of R-square (0.097) and adjusted R-square (0.065) (Table-6), it can be interpreted that social anxiety and rumination (X and Y) have a relatively small effect on resilience for males. The model explains (Table-8) only about 6.5% (adjusted R-square) of the variance in resilience for males. Compared to the results for males, the values of R-square (0.21) and adjusted R-square (0.185) for females are higher, indicating that social anxiety and rumination (X and Y) have a more substantial effect on resilience for females in this model.

CONCLUSION

As the analysis was conducted, it was found that all five hypotheses were supported. In other words, the sample did not contradict the hypotheses; thus, they were accepted. The correlations were found statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Specifically, there was a significant negative correlation between social anxiety and resilience, as well as between rumination and resilience. Additionally, there was a significant positive correlation between rumination and social anxiety, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of social anxiety tend to engage in more ruminative thinking patterns. Furthermore, significant differences in social anxiety, rumination, and resilience levels were observed between females and males, as

determined by ANOVA. Regression analysis was employed to assess how independent variables predict the dependent variable within each gender group (male and female). The result showed that social anxiety and rumination have a more substantial effect on resilience for females as compared to males. Hence, we accept all the hypotheses.

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