

University Rumination in Pandemic Context

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Emotions are part of every human being; they are part of the biological structural system. They are sensations that are acquired through neurological transmitters. Therefore, they play an important role in the development of people. From the sentimental perspective, which are internal feelings that, in turn, are divided into secondary and adaptive emotions, rumination consists of repetitive, intrusive, and unwanted ideas with feelings of worry, sadness, among others, that generate symptoms of emotional discomfort. Therefore, obsessive and difficult to handle ideas are presented.

The general objective of the research was to know the rumination levels of university students according to age and gender. The quantitative approach was used, the descriptive method, the type of study was substantive with a sample of 850 students of the health career under a random probabilistic sampling. The Ruminative Response Scale instrument was used with two dimensions: reproaches and reflection. The results showed that women obtained a high level of rumination with 44.4%; regarding age, between 21 and 23 years old, they obtained a high level of rumination of 39.4 and, in the reproach dimension, they obtained a percentage of 42%. It is concluded that these students presented obsessive ideas and, sometimes, were compulsive due to the situation of confinement to which they were subjected for more than two years of the pandemic.

Keywords: emotions, rumination, reflection, reproaches

INTRODUCTION

In Peru, the covid-19 pandemic caused the government to decree on March 15th, 2020, the state of national emergency and mandatory social isolation as an exceptional measure to prevent the virus from spreading. This caused the face-to-face academic activities in basic and higher educational institutions to

be interrupted and that the modality, as the educational study had been providing, migrate to become virtual. In this way, some problems arise in both teachers and students, among which stress stands out (Estrada y Mamani, 2021).

Peru is part of this problematic situation since 52% of the population faces emotional problems caused by the fear of contracting the coronavirus pathology and the efforts generated by isolation, in which they experience strong anxiety, which is a common response. However, if it manages to be a constant emotional discomfort, it creates psychological deficiencies (Castro, 2020). Emotions arise as an individual's reaction to the situations they face, and it is these same emotions that will be reflected through behavior. Emotions arise through the interaction between cognition and behavior (Castro, 2020).

In emotions, usually, various components are inhabited, such as the characteristic feeling of the person, a physiological response that leads to the reaction that generates stressful stimuli before any disposition of the individual. An expression scheme which is a part of its own, so it is contextualized during the feeling that is transmitted and these are sadness, anger, and fear (Ríos, 2020). They are reactions of a psychological and physiological type that are represented in the forms of adaptation when the individual perceives stimuli of an important object, person, place, event, or memory that occur in thousandths of seconds. They are not feelings because they are inescapable; that is, unavoidable. However, emotions can make themselves known through positive or negative sensations.

University students are the most affected in terms of emotional instability due to the pandemic, which is why there have been problems with disorders such as anxiety, post-traumatic stress, depression, suicidal convictions, insomnia, etc. Universities, somehow, must foster a sufficient level of social growth so that the appropriate requirement for the mental health of students can be clearly and concisely stated (Cobo et al., 2020).

The havoc caused by the quarantine and how it has affected the emotional state of people has been demonstrated, since the accelerated increase in covid-19 cases and the excessive dissemination of negative news have produced uncertainty as to how this problem will be handled and the measures that the state will take care for public health. Consequently, it has caused stress, panic, and irritability in university adolescents because they do not know how their university life will continue after this event (Cabrera, 2020).

Likewise, social confinement is also presented as a risk factor for young people. Spending several hours of the day being in the same place causes a state of anxiety in them that manages to reach great levels of stress that generates a lot of emotional exhaustion, thus preventing them from receiving a correct education because, continuously, it is difficult for them to reach a level optimal concentration for the acquisition of new knowledge (Apaza et al., 2021).

Rumination arises after experiencing a distressing problem. The person will seek to recover internal balance, but this involves thinking about the problem, bringing with it a longer feeling of anguish (Weiss y Berger, 2010). Which would cause little motivation, sadness and feel less energy to carry out any activity. University students have greater problems with rumination and depression than the general population (García, 2020). Considering all this, the pandemic is clearly one of the distressing problems that students have gone through without considering the transition from face-to-face to virtual classrooms (Tamayo et al., 2020).

Rumination Conceptualization

Rumination is defined as repetitive ideas about one's own sadness, its causes and possible consequences; it is a predictor of some psychopathologies and is a factor strongly linked to depression. In such a way that rumination occurs more in women since they are more prone to suffer from depression and anxiety than in men. In such a way that, sometimes, this term is taken as a maladaptive numbing strategy when there are not good moods; but, on the contrary, negative, it is there the moment to redirect the thoughts (Tamayo et al., 2020).

Rumination is understood as a broad class of repetitive and recurring thoughts that revolve around a common instrumental theme and that are repeated in the absence of environmental demands that require such thoughts for immediate adaptive purposes (Rosa y Keegan, 2018). It is when a stressed or depressed

person has many thoughts about what is happening to them and the symptoms they present in a passive way; that is, they do not look for solutions to it. All people faced with adversity, come to rumination; but there are people who present a rumination cycle much more often than others (Bonilla, 2019).

In this way, students are experiencing various situations that are detrimental to their well-being, one of the most outstanding is the psychological phenomenon of rumination. Ruminations are the obsessive thoughts that an individual presents, which cause intense worries about the possible future that they may have; his goal is to make sense of the discomfort he is experiencing. This is how a false perception of control and security appears that aggravates the way of dealing with daily problems since rumination does not offer a solution to these and only focuses on all the negative aspects that intervene in their conflicts (Velásquez et al., 2020).

Obsessive Thinking Characteristics

The relationship between cognitive processes of negative orientation, rumination and worry with symptoms of anxiety, depression and eating disorders was demonstrated with adults. For their part, negative and obsessive thoughts are considered the main factors of psychological vulnerability, predictors of anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and eating behavior, since these intrusive and ruminative thoughts predispose toward negative aspects of the self and the environment. Psychological rumination is considered a risk factor for depression, anxiety and eating disorders. On the other hand, it was shown that ruminative thoughts and psychological distancing help reduce the relationship between workplace bullying and insomnia symptoms (Moreno et al., 2018).

In the present context, to face the impact of the pandemic, the objective of emotional regulation is to increase positive emotions while decreasing negative ones. Coping strategies are implemented seeking to solve the problems generated by events that cause stress, other strategies are the modification of the situation, regulation of the emotional response, attention, and cognitive deployment (Ubillos et al., 2020). However, given the disastrous health consequences experienced during the present pandemic, psychological rumination comes at times of great psychological and emotional impact, such as coping with grief. Coping mechanisms are developed with the aim of handling situations of threat, stress, or loss in an appropriate way. Among the main characteristics, the following are mentioned:

Repetitive character: Ruminative thinking arises as a defense, also as a cognitive coping style against the loss of a loved one, but also from moments of rumination with turns to details, elements, or meanings. These ruminations appear during mourning as intrusive and out of control thoughts, questions such as why?, what happened?, “what if...”, among others.

Lack of expression of affections: in these cases, rumination results in oscillating between extremes, the need to defend and the need to escape; between ruminative thoughts of guilt and ruminative thoughts of anger. These overlap each other and replace it; in this way, there is a phenomenon of circularity where the person does not feel any strong emotion, in a state of anxiety or confusion, this being another characteristic of ruminative thought.

Lack of action or passivity: ruminative thoughts tend to be invalidating with passivity and inaction because dreams, suppositions, fantasies are recurrent. Those people who face obsessively become inexpressive with emotions and focus on the mental without acting decisively and looking for a solution, making decisions without clear discernment very difficult; that is, ruminative thought is accompanied by the passivity that characterizes it.

Loss of general vision: it arises due to the excess of said obsessive or ruminative thought, since it focuses on a certain aspect of reality. Ruminative thought fixes its attention on one aspect or detail, being inconsistent and leaving the rest aside, there is not a complete and detailed vision of the situation. Being a constant and obsessive thought, it is characterized by being rigid and inflexible from the cognitive structure.

Loneliness: people who suffer from ruminative thoughts tend to loneliness and isolation without connecting with others, without internal contact or with the external environment. Ruminative thoughts become constant and repetitive, passivity is shown, little affective expression and with it isolation, increasing depressive and anxious disorders.

Internalizing Psychopathology and Cognitive Rumination

These years, very relevant changes have been manifested in the social, scientific, economic and technological spheres, which pressure human beings to strengthen their autonomy, initiative, self-confidence and flexibility, the possibility of adapting to new circumstances for so that significant degrees of development can be achieved. Internalizing psychopathology is closely linked to cognitive rumination, anxiety, somatization and depression problems mention the various disorders which experience, maintain and develop stealthy anxiety from within. This type of category defines the different behaviors as functioning towards oneself. Undoubtedly, it harms the individual in the independent processes of interrelation based on the environment in which it unfolds and associates anxious and dependent personality characteristics, also phobias, difficulties in solving problems in thought and fears. These psychopathologies manifest a high predominance in society as indicated by the World Health Organization; likewise, the usual problems that afflict the population are depression and anxiety due to mental health that impairs the ability to work and produce (Toro et al., 2020).

On the other hand, speaking generally, every day, the population of young people is increasing because they think too much, causing a delay in the development of their successful life. This negative thinking, which unfortunately creates difficulties, is called cognitive rumination (CR). This denomination manifests itself as that thought that occurs repeatedly that, in the long run, will cause no beneficial effects on the person's peace of mind and likewise wears out their mental health. The CR is characterized not only by appearing repetitively, but by being passive since they do not give way in any way to the person's reaction. Various studies based on the experiment confirmed that cognitive rumination causes alterations, negative stress, and mood irritations. Otherwise, it erodes the person's ability to face and resolve adversities, causing anxiety and depression.

On the other hand, there are two subtypes of rumination: reflective and negative, the negative being the most dangerous since recurring negative thoughts arise based on different circumstances due to the critical moments of this virus, in relation to performance in studies, in relation to the coexistence of his other relatives; that is, tolerance, the lack of interaction with other people who are not from the family environment and with the same environment (Pimentel y Cova, 2011).

The first of them refers to the fact that an emotion has regulatory capacities; it means that a person cannot sustain the same emotion for a long time since this implies a great wear and tear on a cognitive and, in turn, physical level. For example, a person who gets upset about not getting the result they wanted in an exam cannot sustain the same emotion with the same intensity for a long time, since sustaining it requires a great expenditure of energy (Gómez y Calleja, 2016).

Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation "serves to avoid, displace, transform, minimize, inhibit or intensify emotions" (p.75) (Pascual y Conejero, 2019). It starts with a global perspective; subsequently, the assigned value continues and ends with the act. Likewise, the regulation goes through a cycle composed of identification, in which the beginning of emotional regulation is determined, there is also the selection where a strategy is established according to the person and the implementation, where what is previously defined is applied. However, the phase where a difficulty may possibly arise will be in the selection phase since, depending on the strategy applied, it will be revealed if the response is optimal or will result in an adverse manner (Advíncula, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

A positivist paradigm was used, a quantitative approach of non-experimental design of transactional line. The type of study was substantive, at a descriptive level with a probabilistic sample that consisted of 850 university students from the Faculty of Health Sciences of a Private University. The instrument used in this investigation was the Ruminative Response Scale (ERR, for its acronym in Spanish). Version adapted to the Mexican population to evaluate the ruminative thinking style in its two dimensions: (ERR reproaches) and reflection (ERR reflection). Similarly, there are items that assess depressive symptoms

(Hernández, 2020). It is a 22-item self-report with four response options: “almost never,” “sometimes,” “often,” and “almost always”. With a cut-off point of 40 and a maximum of 88 points, the higher the score, the more ruminative responses there are. It has a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.93.

RESULTS

TABLE 1
LEVELS OF THE RUMINATION VARIABLE AND ITS DIMENSIONS

Levels	Rumination		Reflection		Reproaches	
	F	%	F	%	f	%
Low	159	18.7	319	37.5	330	38.8
Medium	243	28.6	190	22.4	163	19.2
High	448	52.7	341	40.1	357	42.0
Total	850	100.0	850	100.0	850	100.0

In table 1, it was observed that, in terms of rumination, 18.7% presented a low level; 28.6%, medium level and 52.7%, high level. In relation to the reproach dimension, 38.8% presented a low level; 19.2%, medium level and 42%, high level. In relation to the reflective dimension, it was found that 37.5% gave results with a low level; 22.4%, medium level and 40.1%, high level.

TABLE 2
LEVELS OF THE RUMINATION VARIABLE BY GENDER

		Rumination			Total
		Low	Medium	High	
Sex	Male	147 17.3%	211 24.8%	71 8.4%	429 50.5%
	Female	12 1.4%	32 3.8%	377 44.4%	421 49.5%
Total		159 18.7%	243 28.6%	448 52.7%	850 100.0%

In table 2, the students obtained a 44.4% high level of rumination; 3.4% presented medium level and 1.4%, low level; in male students, 8.4%, high level; 24.8%, medium level and 17.3%, low level.

TABLE 3
LEVELS OF THE RUMINATION VARIABLE BY AGE

		Rumination			Total
		Low	Medium	High	
Age	Under 20	80 9.4%	127 14.9%	46 5.4%	253 29.8%
	From 21 to 23	47 5.5%	69 8.1%	335 39.4%	451 53.1%
	Over 24	32 3.8%	47 5.5%	67 7.9%	146 17.2%
Total		159 18.7%	243 28.6%	448 52.7%	850 100.0%

In table 3 of the students under 20 years of age, 9.4% obtained a low level of rumination; 14.9%, medium level and 5.4%, high level. In students from 21 to 23 years old, 5.5% obtained a low level of rumination; 8.1%, medium level and 39.4%, high level. Regarding students older than 24 years, 3.8% obtained a low level; 5.5%, medium level and 7.9%, high level.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Rumination is a failed strategy in controlling emotions and managing problems. It is not only harmful, but counterproductive for coping with adverse stimuli. If it is not given correctly, there will be a focus of attention on oneself and an evaluation activity of the difficulties experienced in order to implement resolution mechanisms. There are various studies that prove that rumination brings with it a bad mood and affects memory, there is some difficulty in solving problems in x situations with this disorder (Pimentel y Cova, 2011).

All that has been said proves the effect that rumination syndrome has on patients who suffer from it, adding to it the problems that it has brought about in the interpersonal aspect, depression. In fact, evidence of the interpersonal management that depressed people present was found. In the investigation, it was evidenced that patients develop activities that, in a certain way, go against the interpersonal (Rodríguez et al., 2017). On the other hand, the patients suffer, lament, and complain, all of this results in bad views socially; for this reason, ruminators are not surrounded by many people and tend to isolate themselves in comfortable places for them. These actions or behaviors form a vicious circle where the patient worsens his mood and bad thoughts.

Various investigations have shown that there is a strong link between depression and ruminative thoughts in university students, it should be noted that this is more frequent in women than men due to the continuous submission of stress to achieve good grades and optimal academic performance in their careers, in addition to having to face family, personal and couple problems (García et al., 2017).

Thus, among the main reasons that are presented, are the possible risks of contagion due to essential outings that were carried out in the pandemic in the early years, purchases, or work; the physical and emotional health history of older family members within the home; the continuing misinformation about care and prevention; economic redistribution among household members and living with vulnerable or infected members (Matassini, 2021). Giving as a consequence various emotion. Fear, anguish, and uncertainty due to the continuous worry of an uncertain situation potentiate the aforementioned emotional challenges (Johnson et al., 2020). On a larger and alarming scale, the main suicide theories emphasize social relationships as a priority in its prevention, since people who experience suicidal ideas show a lack of interpersonal connections, disconnecting from their community, presenting thoughts of loneliness due to social isolation (Hernández, 2020).

Likewise, an investigation was carried out focusing on the radical change of the pedagogical format in university education. This study was carried out by the Department of Psychology of the University of York, in Canada, through a virtual questionnaire in which 1857 higher education students from different institutions in Israel participated, where an accelerated increase in the behavior of young people was shown. students before this new modality of teaching, one of them was their state of mind that showed high levels of anxiety, frustration, stress, and depression. In the same way, a decrease in the degree of concentration and motivation to learn, where students who had a low capacity for adaptability used to have more possibilities of developing said negative emotions before the change of their new educational format (Besser et al., 2020).

It was evidenced that the majority of university students, who took the virtual modality, presented low and intermediate levels of anxiety and depression; likewise, younger students present higher levels of depression, anxiety and avoidance of experiences; on the other hand, the humanities area presents a higher level than the health area. In addition, first cycle students show a high level of depression; while, in general, students who had a relative or friend with covid-19 present the highest levels of the evaluated areas (Arenas et al., 2020).

While rumination focuses on negative thoughts of hopelessness and disappointment about what is happening to us at a certain moment. In this way, students face grief with ruminative thoughts that create situations of fear and fear before this pandemic. Finally, rumination is the repetitive, obsessive thoughts that students have about negative episodes that they experienced during the pandemic, such as the loss of a family member, grief, illness, leading them to anxiety, depression, and not meeting the academic goals that had been proposed. The results were that women had rumination for being more vulnerable due to a macho culture, due to the learned gender role expectations (Palacios et al., 2021). The gender theory determines that rumination has a greater probability of being depressive symptoms obtained by women than by men, explaining the sensations of the lack of control on their part over environments due to the lesser relevance that is given to them in the environment. power and social status, causing a lack in their generalized expectations about the control of events, leading them to a decrease in their state of mind caused by their demotivation, passivity, self-efficacy, loss of their self-esteem and control, resulting in stress and emotional anguish to which they arrive due to all these characteristics, lead them to fall into rumination (Rosa y Keegan, 2018).

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