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# The Analysis On Interpersonal Relationship Dimensions Of Secondary School Students According To Their Ruminative Thinking Skills

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## Abstract

This study focused on the analysis of secondary school students' levels of ruminative thinking and interpersonal relationship dimensions. The sampling consisted of 550 secondary school students. In order to determine the ruminative thinking levels of secondary school students the "Ruminative Thinking Pattern Scale" developed by Brinker and Dozois (2009) and adapted by Karatepe (2010). Also the Scale of Interpersonal Relationship Dimensions was developed by Imamoglu and Aydin (2009) in order to evaluate and determine the interpersonal relationships. The findings of this study would contribute to the determination of the connection between students' interpersonal relationships and their ruminative thinking skills.

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## 1. Introduction

Many studies have been done to open the doors of people's worlds of thoughts and to obtain concrete data about the mysteries hidden behind. One of the most popular topics of studies on types of thinking is ruminative thinking. Etymologically, rumination was derived from the Latin word *Rumen* and it stands for "the continuous rotation of ideas in mind repetitively". It differs from other types of thinking with its uncontrollable, repetitive and recalling aspects (Karatepe, 2010). Due to these dangerous features, ruminative thinking could result in depression. Studies,

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participated by students at adolescence years when there is high risk of getting into ruminative thinking cycle, have shown that the depressive period of the adolescents extended, while the strength of depression increased and more depressive moods were observed in the later periods (Abela et. al, 2002; Brinker & Dozois, 2009; Raes, 2010). Therefore, during high school years when students experience their adolescence periods, it is very important to assess students' ruminative thinking levels for their further developmental transitions (Onen & Kocak, 2012).

Human beings, being affected by their environment and affecting their own environment, continue their living and fulfill their basic needs with the help of the relationships they develop. Interpersonal relationship, which enables individuals to interact with others for fulfilling their needs, could be defined as "mutual interaction and behaviors experienced at different levels from acquaintance to close relationship stemming from various needs among two or more people (Imamoglu, 2008). Individuals as biopsychosocial beings know and define their selves through their interpersonal relationships (Yilmaz, 2010). Therefore, it is very important to analyze the interpersonal relationship dimensions of today's youth as the adults of the future. Another factor indicating the importance of interpersonal relationship analysis is its connection with problem solving skills as individuals avoiding interpersonal relationships are known to have lower problem solving abilities (Kuehner, 2006). For instance, Erozkhan (2009) proved in his study on high school students that their problem solving skills were important definers of their interpersonal relationship styles.

Thinking structures of individuals affect their interpersonal relationships. Nonfunctional thoughts and attitudes have been studied as structures affecting interpersonal relationships and have been subject to many research studies. For instance, Whisman and Friedman (1998) proved in their study that nonfunctional thoughts caused interpersonal problems. Additionally, Duy's (2003) study indicated a significant relationship between nonfunctional thinking structure and negative interpersonal relationships (reported by Imamoglu, 2008). To bring up individuals, who could solve their own problems and progress with strong steps, their interpersonal relationship status and ruminative thinking tendencies shall be considered. On the other hand, no study on the hypothesis that ruminative thinking levels of high school students would affect their interpersonal relationships was found among the interpersonal relationship studies. The main idea of this study stems from the hypothesis that there may be interactions between secondary level students' interpersonal relationships and ruminative thinking levels. In this respect, this study focuses on the interpersonal relationship and ruminative thinking levels.

## 2. Method

The sampling consisted of 550 secondary school students studying at high schools in Ankara. In order to determine the ruminative thinking levels of secondary school students the "Ruminative Thinking Pattern Scale" developed by Brinker and Dozois (2009) and adapted by Karatepe (2010). In the study of reliability with correlation analysis, it was observed that internal consistency of the questionnaire were high ( $\alpha=0.907$ ). Also the "Scale of Interpersonal Relationship Dimensions (SIRD)", which aims to reveal secondary school students' interpersonal relationship dimensions, was developed by Imamoglu and Aydin (2009) in order to evaluate and determine the interpersonal relationships. After the reliability and validity studies, done with 440 young adults, the scale has four subscales. These are interpersonal attachment, empathy, interpersonal trust, and emotional control. The reliability analysis concluded that the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of SIRD were between .78 and .85, while test-repetition test values changed between .62 and .96.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Findings related to interpersonal relationship dimensions

To analyze the interpersonal relationship dimensions of high schools students as the sampling of this study, the average scores of students at the Interpersonal Relationship Dimensions Scale for each subdimension and their standard deviation values were found. The results are displayed on Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis of students' Interpersonal Relationship Dimensions Scale scores

Interpersonal relationship dimension		Empathy	Approval dependence	Trust for others	Emotional
Descriptive	$\bar{X}$	3.85	3.46	3.06	3.10
	ss	.610	.572	.470	.511

Table1 displays that the averages of students' interpersonal relationship dimensions have different values from each other. The highest average is observed to be at the "empathy" dimension and it is followed by "approval dependence", "emotional awareness" and "trust towards others" dimensions in sequence.

### 3.2. Findings related to relationship scans

Pearson Correlation analysis was applied to determine the relationship between high school students' interpersonal relationship dimensions and ruminative thinking levels and the results are displayed on Table2.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Analysis and interpersonal relationship dimensions scale values

		Ruminative Thinking	Empathy	Approval dependence	Trust for others	Emotional awareness
Ruminative Thinking	Pearson Correlation	1	.320	.316	.308	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Each interpersonal relationship dimension of high school students are related to their ruminative thinking levels as Table 2 displays. The highly positive relationship between "empathy" dimension and students' ruminative thinking levels and the low level of relationship between "emotional awareness" are interesting.

## 4. Conclusion and Discussion

Hopelessness for the future and tendency towards negative self-evaluation, which stem from the ruminative thinking styles of individuals, are seen as the key concepts of depression by various theoreticians (Abramson et al, 1989; Beck, 1967). Therefore, these important thinking cycles experienced during adolescence years could lead to psychological disorders. Psychological disorders experienced during the adolescence years are also reflected in individuals' existing and future interpersonal relationships. High school students in their adolescent years shall be analyzed in terms of their ruminative thinking tendencies and their interpersonal relationships. This study derived from the hypothesis that students' ruminative thinking skills are closely related to their interpersonal relationships and important conclusions have been reached.

The study concluded that students' interpersonal relationship dimension averages had different values from each other. The highest average was on "empathy", while the lowest was on "trust towards others" dimension. In other words, students' empathic features were more obvious in their interpersonal relationships while their trust towards others was less visible. This is a pleasant finding as empathy is an indicator of positive and healthy relationship (Imamoglu, 2008). The number of situational uncertainties reflects individuals' needs for less or more trust for others (Goto, 1996). The participating students had lower scores in "trust towards others" dimension, which means that situational uncertainties were less in number. The findings are supported by other findings in the literature (Onen & Ulusoy, 2012). For instance, a study participated by university students concluded that there were differences among the interpersonal relationships within themselves (Sadler, 2001).

The study concluded that the interpersonal relationship dimensions of participating students were related to their ruminative thinking levels. The high level of relationship between the empathy dimension and ruminative thinking as well as the low level of relationship between ruminative thinking and "emotional awareness" were found to be

interesting. Tangney, Baumeister and Bone (2004) concluded in their study that there was a positive relationship between self-control and empathy skills. Individuals with high self-controlling skills were found to be able to see events from the perspectives of others and react appropriately towards their problem analysis and solution. Ruminative thinking feature motivates individuals for thinking cycle and control and functions as a type of self-controlling mechanism. Emotional awareness takes the feelings of individuals' own feelings as basis and enables them to evaluate these feelings for acting in line with their own motional atmospheres. For interpersonal relationships, the level of emotional awareness in an individual is an affecting factor (Imamoglu, 2008). Individuals with high ruminative thinking levels are not able to notice their own feelings due to emotional contradictions. This was the dimension among the interpersonal relationship dimensions that had lower score values.

Dependence on approvals of others and trusting others, having significant relationships with ruminative thinking, indicates that individuals with independent interpersonal relationship types value trust in their relationships (Mackenzie & Shwitzer, 2001). Confidence or lack of confidence towards others is an affecting factor for interpersonal relationships (Imamoglu, 2008). Additionally, it should be considered that biological components affect individual relationships and lead to individual differences in attitudes and behaviors (Steiner- Pappalardo & Gurung, 2002).

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