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COVID-19 Anxiety and Rumination in University Students in The COVID-19 Process

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the relationship between COVID-19 anxiety and rumination in university students and to examine the contributions of rumination in predicting COVID-19 anxiety. The research group of this study, which was conducted using the descriptive method and the relational scanning model, consisted of 417 students (86.1% female, 13.9% male) studying in different programs at Selçuk University. "COVID-19 Rumination Scale (C-19RS)", "Coronavirus Anxiety Scale Short Form" and personal information form are data collection tools used in the study. Data collected for the research was analyzed via SPSS 25.00 package program. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between COVID-19 anxiety and rumination scores of university students, while regression analysis was performed to determine the contribution of rumination scores in predicting COVID-19 anxiety scores. As a result of the research, there was a moderately significant positive correlation between the COVID-19 anxiety scores of university students and their rumination scores. Rumination scores of university students were found to be a significant predictor of COVID-19 anxiety scores, explaining 31% of the variance in their COVID-19 anxiety scores. The research findings were discussed in light of the literature.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19, University Students, COVID-19 Anxiety, Rumination.

COVID-19 Sürecinde Üniversite Öğrencilerinde COVID-19 Anksiyetesi ve Ruminasyon

ÖZ

Bu araştırmanın amacı, üniversite öğrencilerinin COVID-19 kaygısı ve ruminasyon arasındaki ilişkiyi belirleyerek ruminasyonun COVID-19 kaygısını yordamadaki katkılarını incelemektir. Betimsel yöntemle yapılan ve ilişkisel tarama modelinin kullanıldığı bu çalışmanın araştırma grubu Selçuk Üniversitesi'nin farklı programlarında öğrenim gören 417 öğrenciden (%86,1 kız, %13,9 erkek) oluşmaktadır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak "COVID-19 Ruminasyon Ölçeği (C-19RS)", "Koronavirüs Anksiyete Ölçeği Kısa Formu" ve Kişisel Bilgi Formu kullanılmıştır. Araştırma için toplanan verilerin analizinde SPSS 25.00 paket programı kullanılmıştır. Üniversite öğrencilerinin COVID-19 kaygısı ve ruminasyon puanları arasındaki ilişkiyi belirlemek üzere korelasyon analizi kullanılırken, ruminasyonun COVID-19 kaygısını yordamadaki katkısını belirlemek için regresyon analizi yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda üniversite öğrencilerinin COVID-19 kaygısı puanları ile ruminasyon puanları arasında pozitif yönde orta düzeyde anlamlı ilişkisinin olduğu görülmüştür. Üniversite öğrencilerinin ruminasyon puanlarının COVID-19 kaygısı puanlarına ilişkin varyansın %31'ini açıklayarak, COVID-19 kaygısının anlamlı bir yordayıcısı olduğu bulunmuştur. Araştırma bulguları literatür ışığında tartışılmıştır.

Keywords: COVID-19, Üniversite Öğrencileri, COVID-19 Anksiyetesi, Ruminasyon

1. Introduction

Epidemics have occurred throughout human history. They spread rapidly, and cause the death of millions of people. The COVID-19 epidemic, which continues today, was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. It has also caused changes in the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors of individuals such as intense fear, and anxiety like in other epidemics in the past (Huremović, 2019; Ahorsu et al. 2020). Since the first day of the pandemic, it has been observed that emotional/reactive problems such as fear, panic, anxiety, and insecurity have intensified in people due to situations such as loss of life, the excess number of patients in intensive care, and intubated patients, and comments in the media (Lai et al., 2020). Emotional problems such as fear of death, uncertainty, and helplessness caused by the COVID-19 epidemic causing deaths can be considered an important source of stress because it causes economic problems.

To control epidemics, practices such as quarantine, isolation, and social distance can negatively affect people. The prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic and the uncertainty of when the

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transition to the old lifestyle will bring along uncertainty (Rettie & Daniels, 2021). Anxiety caused by uncertainty can reveal situations that negatively affect mental health such as sudden changes in life, separation from loved ones, restriction of freedom, uncertainty about the disease, stress, helplessness, and boredom (Brooks et al., 2020). Depending on these factors, ruminative symptoms that may adversely affect mental health may occur during the COVID-19 process.

Rumination indicates that the individual thinks over and over again about the emotional state, possible causes, and consequences, without taking action to solve the problem by dwelling on the past (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987; Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008). In the context of traumatic experiences, rumination can be defined as a way of thinking which is repetitive and includes problem-solving, remembering and expectation, that emerges concerning the lived event (Calhoun et al., 2000). It has been determined that those who ruminate more experience more intense negative emotions (Arslan et al., 2020) and a sense of hopelessness (Gardiner et al., 2020). In addition, it has been determined that it weakens the person's positive problem-solving ability and sense of dominance (Demir & Kutlu, 2016; Erdur-Baker & Bugay, 2012) and causes depressive feelings to be experienced for a longer time (Nolen-Hoeksema et al. 1999). Studies show that rumination is positively correlated with anxiety and depression (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2018) and negatively correlated with problem-solving, motivation, and concentration (Smith & Alloy, 2009). Besides, it is negatively correlated with positive mood and positively correlated with negative mood (McLaughlin et al., 2007; Önder & Utkan, 2018). Uncertainty, stress, and sudden changes in daily life in the COVID-19 process can also increase the tendency towards ruminative thinking (Ye et al., 2020).

Although great attention has been paid to identifying infected people with coronavirus, identifying the mental health needs of people affected by the pandemic has been relatively neglected (Xiang et al., 2020). Situations such as the restriction of a large part of the society, the uncertainty regarding the development of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the disruption of educational activities have adversely affected the psychological state of university students who are isolated at home (Ellis, Dumas, & Forbes, 2020; Ye et al., 2020; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020). COVID-19 process affected the social life, daily life, and mental state of university students, especially the younger generation (Bueno et al., 2021; Zengin & Şengel, 2020). With this study, it is thought that it is important to determine the relationship between rumination and COVID-19 anxiety, which is thought to increase among university students with the pandemic, and it will contribute to the studies to be done in this direction. Especially the level of anxiety and rumination may play a role in experiencing the effects of the pandemic more severely or mildly (Kang & Kim, 2021). In addition, the COVID-19 epidemic, which is a newly emerging source of stress, can combine worrying patterns and ruminative thought patterns (Swainston, Chapman, Grunfeld, & Derakshan, 2020). Therefore, there is a need to determine the relationship between COVID-19 anxiety and rumination to cope better with the psychological consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is of particular importance to determine the relationships between these variables, especially among university students whose education and private lives have been negatively affected by the pandemic. In line with the explanations made so far, this study aimed to determine the relationships between the COVID-19 anxiety and rumination scores of university students and to examine the contributions of rumination scores in predicting the COVID-19 anxiety scores.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Method

In this study, the relational survey model, which is made with the descriptive method, was adopted. In this research model, it is tried to determine if there is a relationship between the variables and whether a change in a variable makes any change in other variables (Karasar, 2005). The dependent variable of the study is COVID-19 anxiety, and the independent variable is rumination scores.

2.2. Study Group:

The research group of this study consists of 417 students studying in different programs of Selçuk University and voluntarily agreeing to participate in the research. Descriptive information about the study group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Information of the Study Group

Variables	F	%
Gender		
Female	359	86.1
Male	58	13.9
Grade		
1st grade	182	43.6
2nd grade	160	38.4
3rd grade	39	9.4
4th grade	36	8.6
Place of residence		
City center	232	55.6
District center	110	26.4
Towns/villages	75	18.0
Place of stay (During University Education)		
With Family	180	43.2
Dormitory	189	45.3
Home (Alone/With Friend)	48	11.5

2.3. Data Collection Tools

In this study, the “COVID-19 Rumination Scale”, “Coronavirus Anxiety Scale Short Form” and Information Form are the data collection tools.

2.3.1. COVID-19 Rumination Scale (C-19RS)

The scale was developed by Nikolova, Caniëls, and Curseu (2021) to identify the ruminative symptoms that may occur in the individuals affected by the COVID-19 pandemic process when considering the COVID-19 disease and related concerns. The scale, adapted to Turkish by Kıran and Bozkur (2021), is one-dimensional and consists of 6 items. The scale is a 5-point Likert type and ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .85 (Nikolova et al., 2021). The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be .86 within the scope of the data obtained from this research.

2.3.2. Coronavirus Anxiety Scale Short Form

The Coronavirus Anxiety Scale (COAS), developed by Lee (2020) to identify possible causes of dysfunctional anxiety associated with the COVID-19 crisis was used in the study. Biçer et al. (2020) adapted the scale into Turkish context. The scale is one-dimensional and consists of 5 items. The scale's Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated as .83. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .90 in the current study.

2.3.3. Personal Information Form

The personal information form consists of questions determining the gender, age, class, place of residence, and residence status during the university period of the participants. The personal information form was prepared by the researchers.

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Approval was obtained for the research with the decision of Selçuk University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee dated 28.02.2022 and numbered 24. The data of the research were collected through face-to-face interviews and google form. The SPSS 25.00 package program was used in the analysis process of the research. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between COVID-19 anxiety and rumination scores of university students, and to determine the contribution of rumination scores to predict COVID-19 anxiety scores, regression analysis was used. 0.01 value was considered as the margin of error in the analysis.

3. Results

The results of the statistical analysis of the data, which is collected in line with the purpose of the research, are presented in this section.

Table 2 indicates the results regarding the relationship between the COVID-19 anxiety scores and rumination scores of university students.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistic and Correlation Analysis for the Relationship Between COVID-19 Anxiety Scores and Rumination Scores of University Students

	COVID-19 Anxiety	Rumination	\bar{X}	S
COVID-19 Anxiety	1		2.10	3.53
Rumination	.558**	1	14.03	5.29

**p<.01

Table 2 depicts that there was a positive significant relationship between the COVID-19 anxiety scores ($r=.55$; $p<.01$) of university students and their rumination scores ($r=.55$; $p<.01$). Based on these results, rumination scores were included in the regression analysis to examine the contribution of university students in predicting their COVID-19 anxiety scores, and the results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis on Whether the COVID-19 Anxiety Scores of University Students Predicted Rumination Scores

Variable	COVID-19 Anxiety				
	B	SH	B	t	p
Fixed	-3.12	.40	-	-7.65	0.00
Rumination	.37	.02	.55	13.70	0.00
		R= .55		R ² = .31	
		F= 187.93		p=0.00**	

**p<.01

University students' rumination scores were a significant predictor of COVID-19 anxiety scores, explaining 31% of the variance in their COVID-19 anxiety scores ($R=.55$, $R^2=.31$, $p<.01$). The standardized (β) coefficient and t values revealed that rumination is a significant predictor of COVID-19 anxiety.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This research was carried out to determine the relationships between the COVID-19 anxiety and rumination scores of university students and to examine the contributions of the rumination scores to predict the COVID-19 anxiety scores. As a result of the research, there was a moderately significant positive correlation between the COVID-19 anxiety scores of university students and their rumination scores. Rumination scores of university students were found to be a significant predictor of COVID-19 anxiety scores, explaining 31% of the variance in their COVID-19 anxiety scores.

In the majority of studies on the psychological effects of global epidemics, it is seen that there are relations between pandemic-related anxiety, increased stress, contamination concerns, health anxiety, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal tendency (Chong et al., 2004; Wheaton, Abramowitz, Berman, Fabricant & Olatunji, 2012). As a result of a study conducted by Önel (2021), it was determined that individuals with chronic diseases or living in the same house with them, individuals who lost their relatives, or whose relatives were treated in a hospital during the Covid 19 process had higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress compared to other individuals. Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which are among mental problems, are often associated with rumination. (Wilkinson, Croudace & Goodyer, 2013). As a result of the research conducted by Arslan, Yıldırım, and Aytac (2020) on university students, it was determined that coronavirus anxiety had a significant predictive effect on loneliness and rumination, and high coronavirus anxiety caused more rumination. As a result of a study involving 228 university students, it was determined that COVID-19 anxiety is a moderator in the relationship between generalized anxiety and rumination (Bueno, Sandoval & Lilienthal, 2021). It can be

said that the results obtained from the study are similar to the results of the research explaining the relationship between COVID-19 anxiety and rumination.

Positive and significant relationships were found in the majority of the research results examining the relationships between anxiety and rumination in the literature. As a result of the research conducted by Wilkinson, Croudace, and Goodyer (2013) on adolescents, it was determined that there was a relationship between rumination and anxiety scores. Ruminative thoughts about COVID-19 can put people in a stressful situation, and it increases psychological symptoms (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco & Lyubomirsky, 2008). During the epidemic, information about COVID-19 can serve as a stressor and it can activate mental processes and increase ruminative thoughts (Michl, McLaughlin, Shepherd & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2013), University students, who focus on the pandemic, have more negative cognitions than their peers. These negative cognitions may lead them to have anxiety and depression symptoms (Watkins & Roberts, 2020). It can be said that the uncertainties experienced by university students during the COVID-19 process, the possibility of infecting their family members, causing emotional problems such as fear of death and despair, and being a source of traumatic stress, increase the COVID-19 anxiety and rumination of the students.

It is seen that different opinions about the ways of transmission and treatment of the virus, which causes loss of life in the world and Turkey, increases the uncertainty and anxiety about the disease (Doğan & Düzel, 2020). Anxiety caused by the uncertainty about COVID-19, sudden changes in lifestyle, restriction of freedom and being alone, uncertainty about the disease caused negative psychological states in university students who are isolated at home (Brooks et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2020). In addition, the epidemic process negatively affects the social relations and daily life of students. Students who stay away from the university environment during the COVID-19 process may distance themselves from their social circles and experience loneliness. It is thought that the uncertainties and the negative statements and comments made in the information and communication tools regarding COVID-19, which can cause death, increase the anxiety about the disease in university students.

In conclusion, it has been determined that there are significant relationships between COVID-19 anxiety and rumination in university students, and rumination makes a significant contribution to the prediction of COVID-19 anxiety. There are studies in the literature on subjects such as COVID-anxiety and subjective vitality, loneliness rumination (Arslan, Yıldırım, & Aytac, 2022) depression, subjective well-being, student burnout (Gündoğan, 2022) among university students. In future studies, it will be useful to conduct studies showing the relationship between COVID-19 Anxiety and COVID-19 Rumination variables with variables such as automatic thinking, optimism, life satisfaction, depression, and resilience. In addition, this research was carried out only on university students, and the psychopathological characteristics of the students, whether they had COVID-19 or the loss of a family member, were not taken into account. In the new studies to be done, the groups to be formed by considering these features can be handled separately and whether there is a differentiation can be evaluated. It is thought that it would be beneficial to conduct new studies in different sample groups such as children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly, apart from university students.

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Araştırmacıların Katkı Oran Beyanı / Contribution of Authors

Yazarların çalışmadaki katkı oranları %50/%50 şeklindedir.

The authors' contribution rates in the study are %50/%50 form.

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı / Conflict of Interest

Çalışmada herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person in the study.

İntihal Politikası Beyanı / Plagiarism Policy

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Bu çalışmada Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi kapsamında belirtilen kurallara uyulmuştur.

In this study, the rules specified within the scope of the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive were followed.