

The Relationship Between Rumination, Emotional Exhaustion, and Subjective Well-Being of University Students

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Abstract: This paper will look at the connection between rumination, emotional exhaustion and subjective well-being among college students. University is a sensitive developmental stage characterised by both academic stress and social changes which may increase mental distress. Although theoretical models, such as the Response Styles Theory and the Conservation of Resources Theory, posit that these aspects have a negative effect on mental health, there is a lack of empirical applications of these constructs. Quantitative cross-sectional research design was used and a sample of 250 university students (18 to 25) was recruited through convenience sampling. Data collection was done using standardized measures such as the Ruminative Response Scale (RRS), Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) emotional exhaustion subscale, and a standardized Subjective Well-Being Scale. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The descriptive results were moderate rumination levels (54.00), emotional exhaustion (26.59) and subjective well-being (19.20). The study did not find any statistically significant relationships between the variables as was anticipated of negative relationships. The combination of rumination and emotional exhaustion was able to explain only 0.1% of the variance in subjective well-being ($R^2 = .001$, $p = .912$). These findings suggest that rumination or exhaustion by themselves, may not directly affect subjective well-being among university populations, but rather be modulated by more interactions, e.g., social support or resilience. The study suggests the significance of bigger research designs and longitudinal research studies to understand the multidimensionality of student mental health.

Keywords: Rumination, Emotional Exhaustion, Subjective Well-Being, University Students, Academic Burnout.

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I. INTRODUCTION

➤ Background of the Study

The university years represent a critical developmental period marked by academic challenges, social transitions, identity exploration, and increasing responsibility. For many students, entering higher education signifies independence and personal growth; however, it also introduces substantial psychological demands. Academic deadlines, performance expectations, peer comparison, financial pressures, and uncertainty about future careers contribute to elevated stress levels. In recent decades, research has consistently shown rising rates of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress among university students worldwide. While external stressors play a role, psychological research increasingly emphasizes the importance of internal cognitive and emotional processes in shaping students' mental health outcomes. Among these processes, rumination and emotional exhaustion have emerged as central constructs linked to diminished subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to individuals' evaluations of their own lives and encompasses both cognitive and affective components. According to Diener (1984), SWB includes life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. Individuals with high subjective well-being tend to experience frequent positive emotions, infrequent negative emotions, and a sense of satisfaction with their lives (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Within the university context, subjective well-being is associated with academic engagement, social adjustment, resilience, and long-term success. Students who report higher levels of well-being are more likely to demonstrate adaptive coping strategies, effective time management, and positive interpersonal relationships. Conversely, reduced well-being is linked to academic disengagement, psychological distress, and increased risk of dropout.

While environmental stressors are unavoidable in academic settings, individual differences in cognitive processing significantly influence how students respond to such stress. One cognitive process that has received considerable empirical attention is rumination. Rumination

refers to repetitive and passive focus on symptoms of distress and the possible causes and consequences of those symptoms (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Rather than engaging in active problem-solving or constructive reflection, individuals who ruminate tend to dwell on negative emotions and perceived failures. Response Styles Theory suggests that rumination prolongs and intensifies depressive symptoms by maintaining attention on negative thoughts and impairing effective coping mechanisms (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008). In university students, rumination may manifest as persistent worry about academic performance, social rejection, or future uncertainty.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that rumination is strongly associated with anxiety, depression, stress, and impaired emotional regulation (Watkins, 2008). Students who habitually ruminate are more likely to recall negative experiences, interpret ambiguous events pessimistically, and experience difficulty disengaging from distressing thoughts. Such repetitive thinking not only amplifies negative affect but also interferes with concentration and academic productivity. Moreover, rumination has been found to reduce the experience of positive emotions, thereby lowering overall life satisfaction (Lyubomirsky & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1995). Given that subjective well-being depends on a balance between positive and negative emotional experiences, persistent rumination may represent a significant cognitive barrier to psychological flourishing in university settings.

In addition to cognitive vulnerabilities, emotional factors also play a central role in students' well-being. Emotional exhaustion, a primary dimension of burnout, refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of emotional resources (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Although burnout was initially conceptualized in occupational contexts, subsequent research has recognized its applicability to academic environments. University students frequently encounter prolonged academic demands, competitive pressures, and social obligations that can gradually erode emotional energy. Emotional exhaustion in students manifests as chronic fatigue, irritability, reduced motivation, and feelings of helplessness regarding academic tasks (Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002).

The theoretical explanation for emotional exhaustion can be understood through Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which posits that individuals strive to retain and protect psychological and emotional resources (Hobfoll, 1989). When resources are threatened or depleted due to continuous stress, individuals experience strain and exhaustion. In academic contexts, repeated exposure to examinations, deadlines, and performance evaluations may drain emotional resources over time. Emotional exhaustion not only diminishes academic engagement but also undermines psychological health and life satisfaction. Research indicates that emotionally exhausted students report higher levels of depressive symptoms and lower levels of subjective well-being (Salmela-Aro, Kiuru, Leskinen, & Nurmi, 2009).

Although rumination and emotional exhaustion have been independently linked to psychological distress, their interrelationship warrants closer examination. Rumination may intensify stress perception and prolong emotional arousal, thereby contributing to resource depletion and emotional exhaustion. When students repeatedly dwell on academic failures or interpersonal conflicts, they may experience sustained emotional strain, which gradually leads to exhaustion. In turn, emotional exhaustion may further reduce the capacity to regulate negative thoughts, creating a cyclical pattern that undermines well-being. Despite theoretical support for such interconnections, relatively few studies have examined rumination and emotional exhaustion simultaneously in relation to subjective well-being among university students.

Understanding the combined influence of rumination and emotional exhaustion on subjective well-being is particularly relevant in contemporary higher education contexts. Increasing academic competition, rapid technological change, and heightened social comparison through digital platforms have intensified psychological pressures on students. Moreover, societal expectations regarding academic achievement and career success contribute to chronic stress. Within such environments, maladaptive cognitive patterns and emotional depletion may significantly compromise students' overall quality of life. Identifying the extent to which rumination and emotional exhaustion predict subjective well-being can inform targeted mental health interventions within universities.

The present study seeks to examine the relationship between rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students using a sample of 250 participants. By employing standardized psychological measures and statistical analyses, the study aims to determine whether rumination and emotional exhaustion are negatively associated with subjective well-being and whether they significantly predict variations in well-being levels. This research contributes to existing literature by integrating cognitive and emotional dimensions within a single empirical framework. Furthermore, it addresses the need for studies conducted in diverse cultural and academic contexts to enhance the generalizability of findings.

From a practical perspective, understanding these relationships has important implications for student support services. If rumination and emotional exhaustion are found to significantly reduce subjective well-being, universities can design interventions focusing on cognitive restructuring, mindfulness-based strategies, stress management programs, and resilience training. Early identification of students at risk for high rumination or emotional exhaustion may prevent long-term psychological difficulties and promote healthier academic experiences.

In conclusion, the university phase is a transformative yet challenging period that significantly influences students' psychological development. Subjective well-being represents a vital indicator of students' overall mental health and life satisfaction. However, maladaptive cognitive patterns such as

rumination and chronic emotional states such as exhaustion may undermine this well-being. While existing literature provides substantial evidence linking these constructs individually to psychological distress, there remains a need for integrated research examining their combined impact on university students' subjective well-being. By addressing this gap, the present study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the cognitive and emotional factors shaping student mental health in contemporary academic settings.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

The transition to university life represents a significant developmental milestone characterized by increased academic responsibilities, social adjustments, financial concerns, and heightened expectations for future career success. Although this period offers opportunities for personal growth and independence, it also exposes students to persistent stressors that may negatively influence their psychological functioning. In recent years, growing evidence has highlighted an alarming rise in emotional distress, burnout, and reduced life satisfaction among university students. Despite the availability of institutional support systems, many students continue to experience difficulties managing academic pressure and emotional strain. This raises an important concern regarding the internal psychological mechanisms that may contribute to diminished well-being. Among such mechanisms, rumination and emotional exhaustion have emerged as critical yet insufficiently integrated constructs in the context of student mental health research.

Rumination, defined as repetitive and passive focus on negative thoughts and emotional distress (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991), has been widely associated with depression, anxiety, and prolonged stress responses. University students frequently encounter situations that may trigger ruminative thinking, such as examination failures, interpersonal conflicts, competitive comparisons, and uncertainty about career prospects. Persistent rumination may intensify negative emotions, impair concentration, and hinder effective problem-solving. Over time, this maladaptive cognitive pattern can contribute to chronic psychological strain. However, much of the existing research on rumination has primarily focused on clinical outcomes such as depressive symptoms, with relatively less emphasis on broader indicators of psychological health such as subjective well-being.

At the same time, emotional exhaustion—conceptualized as feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of emotional resources (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001)—has become increasingly prevalent in academic settings. Students are often required to manage continuous coursework, deadlines, competitive grading systems, and social obligations, all of which demand sustained emotional investment. When coping resources are insufficient to meet these demands, students may experience emotional exhaustion characterized by fatigue, irritability, reduced motivation, and disengagement from academic activities. Although emotional exhaustion has been studied

extensively within occupational burnout literature, research examining its impact on students' subjective well-being remains comparatively limited.

Subjective well-being, as defined by Diener (1984), encompasses life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. It reflects individuals' overall evaluation of their quality of life and emotional experiences. High subjective well-being is associated with resilience, academic engagement, social connectedness, and positive mental health outcomes. Conversely, diminished well-being may result in decreased productivity, poor academic performance, and increased vulnerability to psychological disorders. While studies have independently linked rumination to lower well-being and emotional exhaustion to reduced life satisfaction, the combined and interactive effects of these two factors have not been adequately explored within a unified framework.

A significant gap exists in understanding whether rumination contributes directly to reduced subjective well-being or whether its effects are partly explained through emotional exhaustion. It remains unclear whether students who engage in high levels of rumination are more likely to experience emotional depletion, which in turn further diminishes their well-being. Furthermore, many prior studies have examined these constructs separately rather than investigating their simultaneous predictive power using comprehensive statistical models. This fragmented approach limits a holistic understanding of how cognitive and emotional vulnerabilities jointly influence students' psychological outcomes.

Additionally, most existing research has been conducted in Western contexts with limited cultural diversity, thereby restricting the generalizability of findings. Variations in academic systems, societal expectations, and coping mechanisms may influence the manifestation of rumination, emotional exhaustion, and well-being across different populations. There is therefore a need for research involving a substantial sample of university students to empirically examine the relationships among these variables within contemporary academic environments.

In light of these concerns, the present study seeks to address the problem of insufficient integrated research on rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students. By examining these constructs simultaneously in a sample of 250 participants, the study aims to clarify the extent to which maladaptive cognitive patterns and emotional depletion contribute to variations in subjective well-being. Understanding these relationships is essential for developing targeted psychological interventions and preventive strategies that promote mental health and resilience in higher education settings.

➤ *Research Objectives*

- To examine the level of rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students.

- To investigate the relationship between rumination and subjective well-being.
- To investigate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and subjective well-being.
- To determine whether rumination and emotional exhaustion significantly predict subjective well-being.

➤ *Significance of the Study*

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of key psychological processes affecting students' mental health. Findings can help university counsellors, educators, and policymakers design targeted interventions to reduce harmful cognitive patterns and emotional burnout, thereby promoting better subjective well-being.

➤ *Research Question*

- What are the levels of rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students?
- Is there a significant relationship between rumination and subjective well-being among university students?
- Is there a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and subjective well-being among university students?
- Is there a significant relationship between rumination and emotional exhaustion among university students?
- To what extent do rumination and emotional exhaustion jointly predict subjective well-being among university students?

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

➤ *Introduction*

The mental health of university students has become a growing area of concern in contemporary psychological research. The transition to university involves academic demands, social adaptation, identity formation, and career-related stressors. While many students adjust successfully, others experience psychological distress that affects their academic performance and personal well-being. Among the psychological variables associated with student distress, rumination and emotional exhaustion have gained increasing scholarly attention. These constructs are particularly relevant when examining subjective well-being, which reflects individuals' evaluations of their lives in cognitive and affective terms (Diener, 1984).

This chapter reviews theoretical foundations and empirical research on rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being. It further examines the relationships among these variables and identifies research gaps that justify the present study.

➤ *Conceptual Framework*

• *Response Styles Theory*

Rumination is best understood within the framework of Response Styles Theory proposed by Nolen-Hoeksema (1991). According to this theory, individuals differ in how they respond to negative mood states. Rumination involves

repetitive and passive focus on symptoms of distress and their possible causes and consequences. Instead of engaging in active problem-solving, ruminators dwell on negative emotions, which prolongs and intensifies depressive affect (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Response Styles Theory suggests that rumination maintains negative mood by enhancing recall of negative memories, impairing concentration, and reducing motivation to engage in rewarding activities. This theory provides a cognitive explanation for how rumination may indirectly contribute to emotional exhaustion and reduced subjective well-being.

• *Conservation of Resources Theory*

Emotional exhaustion is commonly conceptualized through Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989). COR theory posits that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect resources such as energy, self-esteem, and emotional stability. Stress occurs when these resources are threatened or depleted. Emotional exhaustion represents the depletion of emotional resources following prolonged exposure to stressors (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

In academic contexts, students face continuous demands including examinations, deadlines, social expectations, and financial concerns. When coping resources are insufficient, emotional exhaustion may develop, negatively affecting psychological functioning and well-being.

• *Subjective Well-Being Theory*

Subjective well-being (SWB) is grounded in positive psychology and refers to individuals' evaluations of their own lives. Diener (1984) conceptualized SWB as comprising three components: life satisfaction (cognitive evaluation), positive affect, and negative affect. High SWB involves frequent positive emotions, infrequent negative emotions, and high life satisfaction (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

Subjective well-being is influenced by personality traits, coping styles, cognitive processes, and environmental factors. Maladaptive cognitive styles such as rumination and chronic stress states like emotional exhaustion are consistently linked to reduced SWB.

➤ *Rumination*

• *Definition and Dimensions*

Rumination refers to repetitive thinking about negative experiences, emotions, and problems without active resolution (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008). It is often divided into two subtypes: brooding and reflective pondering. Brooding involves passive comparison of one's current situation with unachieved standards and is associated with maladjustment. Reflective pondering, while still repetitive, may sometimes lead to problem-solving (Treyner, Gonzalez, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003).

Among university students, brooding has been found to predict depressive symptoms and anxiety, whereas reflective

pondering shows weaker associations (Burwell & Shirk, 2007).

- *Rumination and Emotional Regulation*

Rumination impairs emotional regulation by sustaining negative affect and interfering with adaptive coping strategies (Watkins, 2008). Individuals who ruminate are less likely to engage in distraction or cognitive reappraisal, strategies known to reduce distress (Gross & John, 2003). Instead, they repeatedly analyze the causes and consequences of distress, which amplifies emotional intensity.

Research shows that rumination predicts increased cortisol levels and physiological stress responses (Zoccola, Dickerson, & Zaldivar, 2008), suggesting that its impact extends beyond cognition into emotional and physiological domains.

- *Rumination Among University Students*

University students frequently report academic stress, social comparison, and uncertainty about the future. These stressors can trigger rumination. Ciesla and Roberts (2007) found that students who engaged in rumination following stress reported higher depressive symptoms over time.

Similarly, Thomsen (2006) observed that rumination contributes to prolonged negative mood states in student populations. Persistent rumination is also associated with academic procrastination, lower academic satisfaction, and interpersonal difficulties (Lyubomirsky & Tkach, 2004).

- *Emotional Exhaustion*

- *Definition and Burnout Model*

Emotional exhaustion is one of the three dimensions of burnout, alongside depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001). It refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of emotional resources.

Although burnout was initially studied among professionals, research increasingly recognizes academic burnout among students (Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002). Emotional exhaustion in students manifests as chronic fatigue, irritability, reduced motivation, and feelings of academic inefficacy.

- *Emotional Exhaustion and Academic Stress*

Dahlin, Joneborg, and Runeson (2005) found high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion among medical students, which were linked to depressive symptoms. Academic overload, performance pressure, and competitive environments contribute significantly to emotional exhaustion.

Rothmann and Malan (2007) reported that emotionally exhausted students demonstrate decreased engagement and satisfaction with academic life. Emotional exhaustion also predicts absenteeism and withdrawal from academic activities.

- *Emotional Exhaustion and Mental Health*

Emotional exhaustion is strongly correlated with anxiety, depression, and psychological distress (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). When emotional resources are depleted, individuals struggle to regulate emotions effectively, leading to reduced well-being.

Longitudinal studies indicate that emotional exhaustion can predict declines in life satisfaction over time (Salmela-Aro, Kiuru, Leskinen, & Nurmi, 2009). This suggests a direct pathway between exhaustion and diminished subjective well-being.

- *Subjective Well-Being*

- *Components of Subjective Well-Being*

Diener et al. (1999) emphasized that SWB includes both cognitive and affective dimensions. Life satisfaction reflects overall evaluation of one's life circumstances. Positive affect refers to pleasant emotional states such as joy and enthusiasm, while negative affect includes sadness and anger.

High SWB has been associated with resilience, social support, and adaptive coping (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005).

- *SWB Among University Students*

University students' SWB is influenced by academic success, social integration, and psychological traits. Research indicates that perceived social support and self-esteem are positively associated with SWB (Suldo, Riley, & Shaffer, 2006).

Conversely, chronic stress and maladaptive coping strategies reduce SWB (Park, 2004). Students with lower SWB report poorer academic outcomes and greater psychological distress.

- *Relationship Between Rumination and Subjective Well-Being*

A substantial body of research demonstrates a negative relationship between rumination and subjective well-being. Individuals who ruminate experience prolonged negative affect and reduced positive emotions (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008).

Lyubomirsky and Nolen-Hoeksema (1995) found that rumination predicted lower happiness levels over time. Rumination interferes with savoring positive experiences and increases recall of negative memories, thereby diminishing life satisfaction.

Among students, brooding rumination is particularly detrimental to SWB (Treyner et al., 2003). Persistent rumination predicts reduced life satisfaction and increased negative affect.

- *Relationship Between Emotional Exhaustion and Subjective Well-Being*

Emotional exhaustion has consistently been linked to reduced SWB. Hakanen et al. (2006) found that emotional

exhaustion negatively predicted life satisfaction and positive affect.

Students experiencing emotional exhaustion often report feelings of helplessness and dissatisfaction (Salmela-Aro et al., 2009). Emotional depletion reduces engagement in pleasurable activities, limiting opportunities for positive emotional experiences.

➤ *Relationship Between Rumination and Emotional Exhaustion*

Emerging research suggests that rumination contributes to emotional exhaustion. By continuously focusing on stressors, ruminators prolong physiological arousal and emotional strain (Zoccola et al., 2008).

Verkuil, Brosschot, Gebhardt, and Thayer (2010) demonstrated that perseverative cognition, including rumination, prolongs stress responses even after stressors have ended. This sustained activation may deplete emotional resources, leading to exhaustion.

➤ *Integrated Perspective*

The literature suggests a potential sequential relationship: rumination intensifies stress perception, which contributes to emotional exhaustion, and both negatively affect subjective well-being. However, few studies have examined these variables simultaneously within a single model among university students.

➤ *Research Gap*

Although substantial empirical research has examined rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being independently, important gaps remain in understanding their combined and interactive influence among university students. First, much of the existing literature has primarily focused on rumination as a predictor of depression and anxiety rather than as a broader cognitive mechanism influencing subjective well-being (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008). While studies have established that rumination prolongs negative affect and intensifies distress, fewer investigations have explored how persistent ruminative thinking contributes to emotional resource depletion and, subsequently, to reduced life satisfaction and positive affect. Similarly, research on emotional exhaustion has traditionally been conducted within occupational settings under the framework of burnout theory (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Although academic burnout has gained recognition, many studies emphasize performance outcomes, dropout intentions, or depression, with comparatively limited attention given to students' overall subjective well-being as a multidimensional construct (Diener, 1984).

Second, the majority of prior studies have examined these variables in isolation rather than within an integrated framework. Research often investigates either the relationship between rumination and well-being or between emotional exhaustion and well-being, without simultaneously analyzing how rumination may contribute to emotional exhaustion and whether both variables jointly predict subjective well-being. The absence of comprehensive models

limits understanding of the cognitive–emotional mechanisms underlying student distress. There is insufficient empirical evidence testing whether emotional exhaustion functions as a mediating or parallel predictor in the relationship between rumination and subjective well-being. Consequently, the dynamic interplay between maladaptive cognitive styles and emotional depletion remains underexplored in student populations.

Third, many studies rely on relatively small or homogenous samples, often drawn from Western universities, which restricts the generalizability of findings across cultural contexts. University experiences, coping styles, and emotional expression vary significantly across sociocultural settings. In collectivistic contexts, for instance, interpersonal expectations and academic pressures may intensify rumination or emotional exhaustion differently than in individualistic cultures. However, cross-cultural comparative studies remain limited. There is a clear need for research involving larger and more diverse student samples to enhance statistical power and external validity.

Fourth, the increasing prevalence of academic competition, digital comparison through social media, and uncertainty about employment opportunities has altered the psychosocial environment of university students. Despite these contemporary stressors, updated empirical investigations integrating cognitive (rumination), emotional (exhaustion), and well-being outcomes are relatively scarce. Most foundational studies were conducted over a decade ago, and emerging academic stress patterns warrant renewed investigation.

Finally, methodological gaps are evident. Few studies employ predictive statistical models such as multiple regression analyses to determine the relative contribution of rumination and emotional exhaustion to subjective well-being. Without such analyses, it remains unclear which factor exerts stronger influence or whether both independently contribute to variations in well-being. Addressing these gaps through a comprehensive study involving 250 university students will provide clearer insight into the interrelationships among rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being, thereby contributing to both theoretical advancement and practical intervention strategies within higher education settings.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➤ *Introduction*

This chapter describes the methodological framework adopted to investigate the relationship between rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students. It outlines the research design, variables, sample characteristics, sampling procedure, tools used for data collection, procedure of data collection, statistical techniques employed for analysis, and ethical considerations. The methodological rigor of this chapter ensures the reliability and validity of the findings presented in the subsequent chapter.

➤ *Research Design*

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design. A correlational design was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the study was to examine the relationships among rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being without manipulating any variables.

The cross-sectional approach involved collecting data from participants at a single point in time. This design enabled the researcher to assess the levels of rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being simultaneously and determine the predictive relationships among these variables.

➤ *Variables of the Study*

The study included the following variables:

• *Independent Variables (Predictor Variables):*

- ✓ Rumination
- ✓ Emotional Exhaustion

• *Dependent Variable (Criterion Variable):*

- ✓ Subjective Well-Being

Rumination and emotional exhaustion were examined as psychological risk factors that may negatively influence subjective well-being.

➤ *Research Objectives*

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To examine the levels of rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students.
- To investigate the relationship between rumination and subjective well-being.
- To investigate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and subjective well-being.
- To determine whether rumination and emotional exhaustion significantly predict subjective well-being.

➤ *Hypotheses*

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: Rumination will be significantly negatively correlated with subjective well-being among university students.
- H2: Emotional exhaustion will be significantly negatively correlated with subjective well-being among university students.
- H3: Rumination will be significantly positively correlated with emotional exhaustion among university students.
- H4: Rumination and emotional exhaustion will significantly predict subjective well-being among university students.

➤ *Sample*

The sample for the present study consisted of 250 university students. Participants were recruited from various academic departments to ensure diversity in academic backgrounds.

• *Inclusion Criteria:*

- ✓ Enrolled as undergraduate or postgraduate students
- ✓ Aged between 18–25 years
- ✓ Willing to provide informed consent

• *Exclusion Criteria:*

- ✓ Students currently undergoing intensive psychiatric treatment
- ✓ Incomplete responses on the questionnaires

The sample size of 250 participants was considered adequate for conducting correlational and regression analyses, ensuring sufficient statistical power.

➤ *Sampling Technique*

A convenience sampling technique was employed for data collection. Participants were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate. Although convenience sampling limits generalizability, it is widely used in psychological research involving student populations due to practical feasibility.

➤ *Tools Used for Data Collection*

The study utilized standardized self-report measures to assess rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being.

• *Ruminative Response Scale (RRS)*

Rumination was measured using the Ruminative Response Scale (RRS) developed by Nolen-Hoeksema (1991). The RRS assesses individuals' tendency to focus repetitively on symptoms of distress and their possible causes and consequences.

The scale consists of items rated on a Likert-type scale. It includes subcomponents such as brooding and reflective pondering (Treyner, Gonzalez, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003). Higher scores indicate greater levels of rumination.

The RRS has demonstrated good internal consistency and construct validity across student populations (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008).

• *Emotional Exhaustion Scale*

Emotional exhaustion was assessed using the Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The emotional exhaustion dimension measures feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of emotional resources.

Participants responded to items on a Likert scale indicating frequency of emotional exhaustion experiences. Higher scores represent higher emotional exhaustion.

The scale has shown strong reliability and validity in both occupational and academic settings (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

- *Subjective Well-Being Scale*

Subjective well-being was measured using a standardized scale assessing life satisfaction and affective components based on Diener's (1984) conceptualization.

The scale evaluates:

- ✓ Life satisfaction
- ✓ Positive affect
- ✓ Negative affect

Higher overall scores indicate greater subjective well-being. The scale has demonstrated strong psychometric properties and is widely used in student populations (Diener et al., 1999).

- *Procedure of Data Collection*

Data were collected after obtaining necessary institutional approval. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their participation was voluntary.

The questionnaires were administered either online or in paper format. Participants were instructed to respond honestly and were informed that there were no right or wrong answers. The average time required to complete the questionnaires was approximately 20–25 minutes.

Incomplete questionnaires were excluded from analysis to maintain data integrity.

- *Statistical Analysis*

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The following statistical techniques were employed:

- *Descriptive Statistics*

- ✓ Mean
- ✓ Standard deviation
- ✓ Minimum and maximum scores

- *Reliability Analysis*

- ✓ Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency

- *Pearson Product-Moment Correlation*

- ✓ To examine relationships between rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being.

- *Multiple Regression Analysis*

- ✓ To determine whether rumination and emotional exhaustion significantly predict subjective well-being. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

- *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical standards were strictly maintained throughout the study. Participants provided informed consent before participation. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. No identifying information was collected.

Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Data were used solely for academic purposes.

IV. RESULTS

- *Introduction*

This chapter presents the statistical analysis of the data collected to examine the relationship between rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students. The primary objective of the study was to investigate whether maladaptive cognitive processes (rumination) and emotional resource depletion (emotional exhaustion) are associated with and predictive of subjective well-being. While Chapter I established the conceptual background and Chapter II reviewed relevant theoretical and empirical literature, the present chapter provides the empirical findings derived from quantitative data analysis.

A total of 250 university students participated in the study. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and appropriate statistical procedures were applied in accordance with the research objectives and hypotheses. The analysis was conducted in a systematic manner beginning with descriptive statistics to understand the distribution and central tendencies of the variables, followed by inferential statistical tests to examine relationships and predictive associations among the variables.

Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores, were calculated to assess the overall levels of rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being within the sample. These statistics provide an overview of the psychological characteristics of the participants and help contextualize subsequent relational analyses. Understanding the general trends in the data is essential before examining the associations among variables.

To address the research questions concerning relationships among the variables, Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted. Correlation analysis allows for the assessment of both the strength and direction of linear relationships between variables. Specifically, the study examined whether rumination was negatively associated with subjective well-being, whether emotional exhaustion was negatively associated with subjective well-being, and whether rumination was positively associated with emotional exhaustion. The use of correlation

analysis is consistent with the correlational research design adopted in this study.

Further, to examine the predictive contribution of rumination and emotional exhaustion to subjective well-being, multiple regression analysis was performed. Multiple regression is a powerful statistical technique that enables the simultaneous examination of multiple independent variables in predicting a dependent variable. This method helps determine the relative contribution of each predictor while controlling for the influence of the other predictor. In the present study, subjective well-being served as the dependent variable, while rumination and emotional exhaustion were entered as predictor variables. The regression model also provided information regarding the overall variance explained (R^2), indicating how much of the variability in

subjective well-being can be accounted for by the combined effect of rumination and emotional exhaustion.

The findings presented in this chapter provide empirical insight into the interplay between cognitive vulnerability (rumination), emotional depletion (emotional exhaustion), and psychological well-being in university students. These results form the foundation for the discussion in the subsequent chapter, where the findings will be interpreted in light of existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

➤ *Descriptive Statistics*

Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine the levels of rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 250)

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Rumination	54.00	19.13	22	88
Emotional Exhaustion	26.59	10.75	9	45
Subjective Well-Being	19.20	9.04	5	35

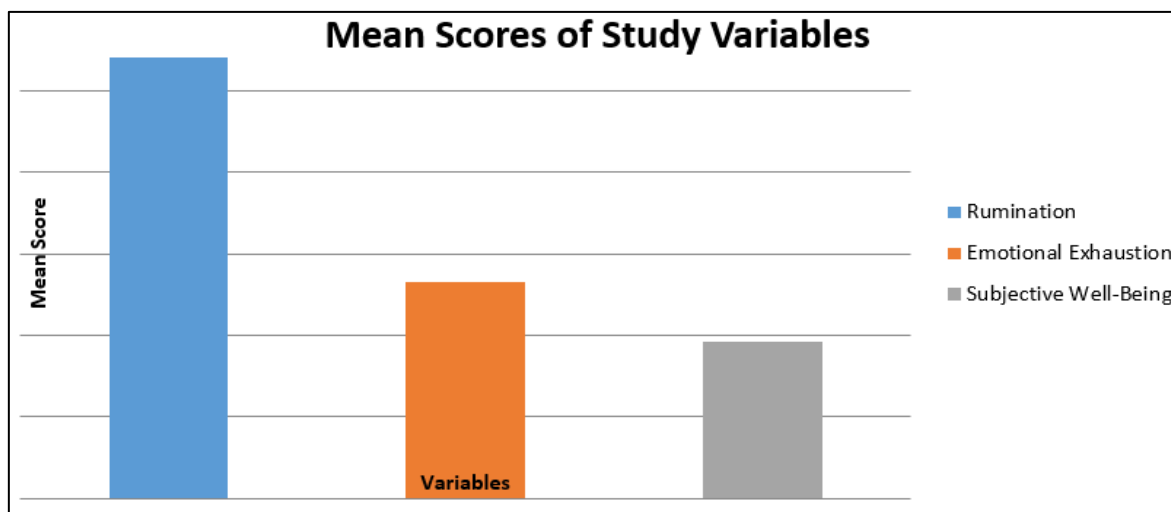


Fig 1 Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 250)

• *Interpretation*

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 provide an overview of the central tendency and variability of rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among the 250 university students included in the study. The mean score for rumination was 54.00 (SD = 19.13), with scores ranging from 22 to 88. This distribution suggests that, on average, participants exhibited moderate levels of ruminative thinking. The relatively wide range between minimum and maximum scores indicates variability within the sample, meaning that while some students reported low levels of repetitive negative thinking, others demonstrated considerably higher tendencies to dwell on distressing thoughts. The standard deviation of 19.13 further reflects substantial dispersion around the mean, suggesting meaningful individual differences in cognitive response styles among the students.

Emotional exhaustion yielded a mean score of 26.59 (SD = 10.75), with values ranging from 9 to 45. This indicates that participants, on average, experienced moderate emotional depletion related to academic demands. The variability in emotional exhaustion scores implies that while some students may be coping adequately with academic pressures, others are experiencing significant emotional strain. The presence of higher-end scores near the maximum suggests that a portion of the sample may be at risk for academic burnout. This variability is important, as emotional exhaustion is theoretically associated with prolonged stress exposure and diminished coping resources (Maslach et al., 2001).

Subjective well-being showed a mean of 19.20 (SD = 9.04), with a range between 5 and 35. The moderate mean level suggests that, overall, students reported average life satisfaction and emotional balance. However, the distribution again reflects considerable variation. Some students reported

very low levels of subjective well-being, which may indicate psychological distress, dissatisfaction, or elevated negative affect. Conversely, others reported higher well-being, reflecting positive emotional experiences and life satisfaction.

Overall, the descriptive statistics demonstrate that the sample contains sufficient variability across all three constructs, which is essential for conducting correlational and regression analyses. The moderate mean levels across variables suggest that the student population experiences noticeable cognitive and emotional challenges but not necessarily extreme distress at a group level. Importantly, the

variability in scores supports the appropriateness of further inferential analyses to determine whether these individual differences are systematically related. These descriptive findings align with contemporary research suggesting that university students commonly experience moderate stress and emotional demands while maintaining varying levels of psychological well-being.

➤ *Correlation Analysis*

Pearson’s product-moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationships among rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being.

Table 2 Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
1. Rumination	—		
2. Emotional Exhaustion	-0.06	—	
3. Subjective Well-Being	0.02	0.02	—

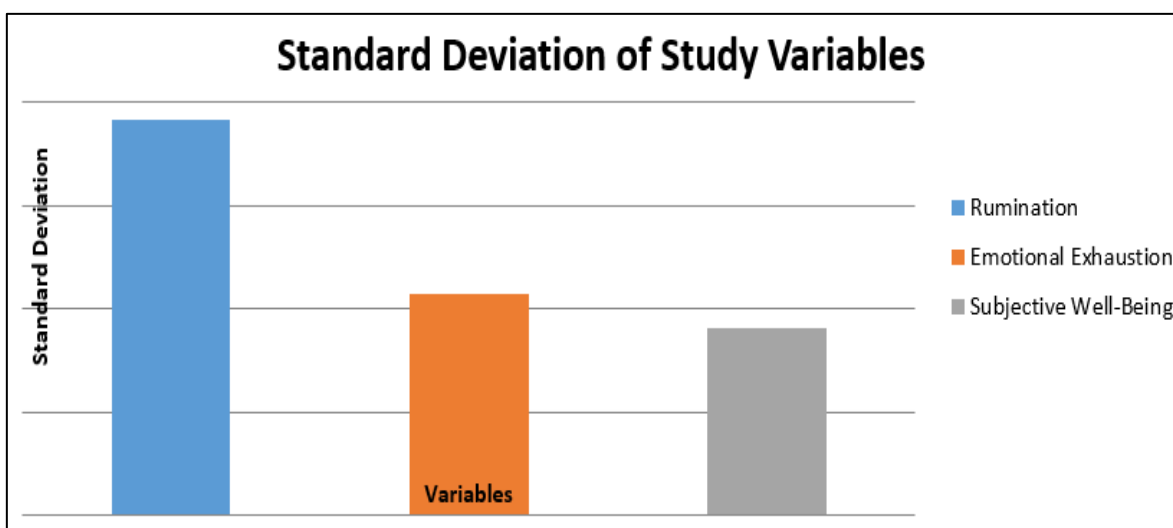


Fig 2 Standard Deviation of Study Variables

• *Interpretation*

Table 2 presents the Pearson product–moment correlation coefficients examining the relationships among rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being. Contrary to theoretical expectations and prior research, the correlations observed in this study were weak and statistically non-significant. The correlation between rumination and subjective well-being was $r = .02$, indicating an extremely weak positive association. This suggests that within this sample, higher rumination was not meaningfully associated with lower subjective well-being. The absence of a negative relationship contradicts prior empirical findings that typically demonstrate rumination as a cognitive risk factor for diminished well-being (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008).

Similarly, emotional exhaustion showed a very weak positive correlation with subjective well-being ($r = .02$), which was also not statistically significant. Theoretically, emotional exhaustion is expected to negatively relate to well-being, as emotional resource depletion generally undermines life satisfaction and positive affect (Salmela-Aro et al., 2009).

However, the negligible correlation observed suggests that emotional exhaustion did not show a direct linear relationship with subjective well-being in this sample.

Furthermore, rumination and emotional exhaustion were weakly negatively correlated ($r = -.06$), though this association was also non-significant. Existing literature typically suggests that repetitive negative thinking may prolong stress responses and contribute to emotional exhaustion (Verkuil et al., 2010). However, the minimal association found here indicates that rumination and emotional exhaustion may not be strongly interconnected within this dataset.

The absence of significant correlations suggests that the constructs may operate independently within this sample or that other moderating or mediating variables may influence their relationships. It is also possible that measurement characteristics, scoring patterns, or contextual factors affected the strength of associations. While theoretical frameworks such as Response Styles Theory and Conservation of

Resources Theory predict meaningful interconnections among these variables, the present findings do not provide empirical support for such relationships.

These results highlight the importance of empirical validation rather than theoretical assumption and underscore the need for cautious interpretation when applying established psychological models to specific populations.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Predicting Subjective Well-Being

Predictor	B	SE B	t	p
Constant	18.27	2.29	7.97	.000
Rumination	0.008	0.030	0.26	.797
Emotional Exhaustion	0.019	0.054	0.36	.720

• *Model Summary:*

$R^2 = .001$

$F(2, 247) = 0.09, p = .912$

• *Interpretation*

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to determine whether rumination and emotional exhaustion significantly predict subjective well-being. The overall regression model was not statistically significant, $F(2, 247) = 0.09, p = .912$, with an R^2 value of .001. This indicates that rumination and emotional exhaustion together explained only 0.1% of the variance in subjective well-being. In practical terms, this suggests that these two variables did not meaningfully contribute to predicting students' subjective well-being within this sample.

Individually, rumination showed a regression coefficient ($B = 0.008, p = .797$), indicating that it was not a statistically significant predictor of subjective well-being. The extremely small beta coefficient suggests that changes in rumination levels were not associated with meaningful changes in well-being scores. Similarly, emotional exhaustion ($B = 0.019, p = .720$) did not significantly predict subjective well-being. The positive direction of both coefficients is also inconsistent with theoretical expectations, as both variables are typically associated with reduced well-being.

The non-significant findings suggest that other psychological or contextual variables may play a more prominent role in determining subjective well-being among university students. Factors such as social support, resilience, personality traits, coping strategies, or academic satisfaction may exert stronger influence than rumination or emotional exhaustion alone.

Additionally, the extremely low R^2 value indicates that the proposed cognitive–emotional model does not adequately explain variability in well-being in this sample. This does not necessarily invalidate theoretical frameworks but suggests that relationships may be more complex than direct linear associations.

Thus, Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were not supported.

➤ *Multiple Regression Analysis*

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether rumination and emotional exhaustion significantly predict subjective well-being.

These findings underscore the importance of further research exploring potential mediators or moderators, such as coping style or emotional regulation, which may clarify the pathways linking rumination and emotional exhaustion to subjective well-being.

Therefore, Hypothesis H4 was not supported.

➤ *Findings*

The present study was conducted to examine the relationship between rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students. Based on data collected from 250 participants, statistical analyses were performed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings provide important empirical insights into the psychological functioning of university students within the scope of the selected variables.

The descriptive analysis revealed that university students in the sample reported moderate levels of rumination and emotional exhaustion. The mean rumination score indicated that students engage in repetitive negative thinking to a noticeable extent, although not at extreme levels. This suggests that while many students may occasionally dwell on academic stressors, interpersonal concerns, or future uncertainties, such thinking patterns are not universally severe across the population. However, the relatively high standard deviation indicates substantial individual differences, meaning that a subgroup of students may experience significantly elevated rumination, potentially placing them at risk for psychological distress.

Similarly, emotional exhaustion levels were found to be moderate on average. This suggests that students experience some degree of emotional depletion due to academic pressures, performance expectations, and ongoing responsibilities. The variability in emotional exhaustion scores indicates that while some students manage academic stress effectively, others may experience considerable emotional strain. The presence of higher-end scores suggests that a portion of the sample may be vulnerable to academic burnout symptoms, including fatigue, reduced motivation, and emotional disengagement.

Subjective well-being scores also reflected moderate levels within the sample. This suggests that, overall, students reported an average balance of life satisfaction and emotional experiences. While some participants demonstrated higher well-being characterized by positive affect and satisfaction with life, others reported lower well-being levels, potentially reflecting dissatisfaction, stress, or emotional challenges. The variability in subjective well-being scores indicates that students' psychological experiences are diverse and influenced by multiple personal and contextual factors.

With regard to the relationships among variables, Pearson correlation analysis revealed that rumination was not significantly associated with subjective well-being. Although theoretical frameworks and previous empirical studies suggest that rumination negatively impacts well-being by prolonging negative mood states, the present findings did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship. The correlation coefficient was extremely weak, indicating that variations in rumination levels did not correspond to meaningful changes in subjective well-being within this sample.

Similarly, emotional exhaustion was not significantly correlated with subjective well-being. Despite theoretical expectations grounded in Conservation of Resources Theory, which posits that emotional resource depletion undermines psychological functioning, the data did not show a meaningful linear relationship between exhaustion and well-being. This suggests that emotional exhaustion alone may not directly determine how students evaluate their lives or emotional states.

Furthermore, rumination and emotional exhaustion were not significantly correlated with each other. Although repetitive negative thinking is often conceptualized as a contributor to prolonged stress and emotional depletion, the findings indicate that in this sample, rumination did not strongly co-occur with emotional exhaustion. This suggests that cognitive and emotional vulnerabilities may operate somewhat independently, or that other mediating mechanisms influence their interaction.

The multiple regression analysis further confirmed these findings. When rumination and emotional exhaustion were entered simultaneously as predictors of subjective well-being, the overall model was not statistically significant. The predictors collectively explained only a negligible proportion of variance in subjective well-being. Additionally, neither rumination nor emotional exhaustion emerged as a significant individual predictor. These findings indicate that, within this dataset, subjective well-being cannot be meaningfully predicted by the levels of rumination and emotional exhaustion.

Overall, the findings suggest that while university students experience moderate levels of rumination and emotional exhaustion, these variables do not demonstrate significant direct relationships with subjective well-being in the present sample. This indicates that subjective well-being among university students may be influenced by other

psychological, social, or environmental factors not included in the current study. It is possible that variables such as social support, coping strategies, resilience, personality traits, or academic satisfaction play a more substantial role in shaping well-being outcomes.

Although the findings do not support the proposed hypotheses, they contribute valuable empirical evidence by highlighting the complexity of psychological processes in university populations. The absence of significant relationships underscores the importance of examining broader contextual and individual factors that may mediate or moderate the influence of cognitive and emotional vulnerabilities on well-being. These results provide a foundation for further discussion and theoretical interpretation in the subsequent chapter.

V. DISCUSSION AND FINDING

➤ Discussion

The primary objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students. While theoretical frameworks and previous empirical research strongly suggest that rumination and emotional exhaustion negatively influence well-being, the findings of this study revealed largely non-significant relationships among the variables. These results provide an important opportunity to critically interpret the data, reconsider theoretical assumptions within this context, and explore possible explanations for the unexpected outcomes.

One of the most notable findings was that rumination did not significantly predict subjective well-being. Existing literature consistently identifies rumination as a maladaptive cognitive process that prolongs negative emotional states and increases vulnerability to depression and psychological distress. The response styles theory proposed by Nolen-Hoeksema suggests that individuals who habitually ruminate tend to maintain and intensify negative moods. However, in the present sample, rumination showed an extremely weak and non-significant relationship with subjective well-being. This suggests that repetitive negative thinking, at least at the levels reported by participants, did not substantially influence how students evaluated their life satisfaction or emotional experiences.

Several interpretations may explain this discrepancy. First, the moderate level of rumination observed in the sample may indicate that most students engage in occasional reflective thinking rather than chronic maladaptive rumination. It is possible that rumination becomes significantly detrimental only at higher, more clinical levels. Second, students may possess adaptive coping strategies that buffer the negative effects of rumination. For example, even if students initially engage in repetitive thinking, they may eventually shift toward problem-solving or seek social support, thereby minimizing its long-term impact on well-being. This possibility suggests that rumination alone may not directly reduce well-being unless combined with other vulnerability factors.

Similarly, emotional exhaustion did not significantly predict subjective well-being. According to the Conservation of Resources theory, prolonged stress and depletion of emotional resources should reduce overall psychological functioning. Emotional exhaustion is widely considered a central dimension of burnout and has been associated with lower satisfaction and increased distress in numerous studies. However, in the present research, emotional exhaustion demonstrated only a negligible and non-significant contribution to subjective well-being. The regression model indicated that both rumination and emotional exhaustion together explained only 0.1% of the variance in well-being, which is statistically and practically insignificant.

This finding suggests that emotional exhaustion, as experienced by this sample, may not have reached a severity level sufficient to influence broader life evaluations. University students may perceive emotional fatigue as temporary or situation-specific rather than as a defining aspect of their overall life satisfaction. Additionally, subjective well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. It is possible that while students feel emotionally tired in academic contexts, other domains of life—such as friendships, family relationships, or personal achievements—continue to provide positive experiences that maintain overall well-being. Therefore, emotional exhaustion may operate within specific contexts without significantly altering global well-being assessments.

Another important finding was the lack of a significant correlation between rumination and emotional exhaustion. Theoretically, repetitive negative thinking is expected to prolong stress responses and contribute to emotional depletion. However, the absence of a strong relationship suggests that these cognitive and emotional processes may function somewhat independently within this population. It is possible that students who ruminate do not necessarily experience emotional exhaustion unless rumination is accompanied by high academic demands or insufficient coping resources. Alternatively, emotional exhaustion may be influenced more strongly by external stressors such as workload, examination pressure, or institutional demands rather than internal cognitive styles alone.

The non-significant regression model further reinforces the conclusion that the proposed cognitive–emotional framework did not adequately explain subjective well-being in this sample. While the theoretical rationale for linking rumination and emotional exhaustion to well-being remains strong, the empirical evidence from this study suggests that direct linear relationships may be overly simplistic. Psychological functioning is complex and likely influenced by multiple interacting variables. Factors such as resilience, optimism, emotional intelligence, social support, academic satisfaction, and personality traits may exert stronger effects on well-being than rumination or exhaustion alone.

The moderate levels observed across all three variables also provide meaningful context for interpretation. Students reported moderate rumination, moderate emotional

exhaustion, and moderate subjective well-being. This pattern suggests a relatively balanced psychological profile within the sample. Although some students may experience vulnerability, the overall group does not appear to be experiencing severe distress. This may partially explain why significant predictive relationships were not detected. In populations with higher stress or clinical symptom levels, stronger associations might emerge.

The findings also highlight the importance of cultural and contextual considerations. The impact of rumination and emotional exhaustion on well-being may vary depending on sociocultural norms, academic systems, and support structures. In some contexts, reflective thinking may be socially normalized and not necessarily associated with maladjustment. Likewise, temporary exhaustion during demanding academic periods may be perceived as a normative and manageable experience rather than as a threat to overall life satisfaction. Therefore, contextual factors may moderate the relationships among the studied variables.

Despite the lack of significant statistical relationships, the findings remain valuable. Null results contribute to scientific knowledge by challenging assumptions and encouraging more nuanced investigation. The absence of support for the hypotheses suggests that future research should examine mediating or moderating variables. For instance, coping strategies may mediate the relationship between rumination and well-being. Similarly, resilience or social support may moderate the impact of emotional exhaustion on life satisfaction. Exploring these pathways could provide a clearer understanding of how cognitive and emotional processes influence student mental health.

The results also carry practical implications. Although rumination and emotional exhaustion did not significantly predict subjective well-being in this study, their moderate presence indicates that they remain relevant aspects of student psychological experiences. Universities should continue promoting adaptive coping skills, stress management programs, and emotional regulation strategies. Preventative approaches may be particularly important, as they can help ensure that moderate levels of rumination or exhaustion do not escalate into more serious mental health concerns.

It is also important to acknowledge methodological considerations. The use of self-report measures may have influenced the results, as participants might underreport distress due to social desirability or lack of self-awareness. Additionally, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to detect dynamic processes that unfold over time. Rumination and emotional exhaustion may influence well-being in delayed or cumulative ways that are not captured in a single assessment. Longitudinal research would be better suited to examine temporal relationships and causal pathways.

In summary, the discussion highlights that while theoretical models predict strong negative associations among rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being, the present findings did not support these expectations. The relationships were weak and statistically

non-significant, suggesting that subjective well-being among university students is influenced by a broader set of factors beyond cognitive rumination and emotional fatigue alone. These results emphasize the complexity of psychological functioning and the need for multidimensional approaches in future research.

➤ Findings

The present study investigated the relationship between rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among 250 university students. Statistical analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings provide empirical insight into the psychological experiences of students within the framework of these three variables.

Descriptive analysis indicated that students reported moderate levels of rumination. This suggests that while students engage in repetitive negative thinking to some extent, such patterns are not excessively high across the sample. However, variability in scores indicates individual differences, with some students potentially experiencing elevated rumination levels that could increase vulnerability to stress.

Emotional exhaustion was also found to be moderate on average. This reflects the presence of some emotional fatigue likely associated with academic pressures and responsibilities. Although not extreme, the variability suggests that a subgroup of students may be at greater risk of burnout-related symptoms.

Subjective well-being scores were similarly moderate, indicating an overall balanced level of life satisfaction and emotional experiences among participants. While some students reported high well-being, others showed lower levels, reflecting diverse psychological experiences within the university environment.

Pearson correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between rumination and subjective well-being. The correlation coefficient was extremely weak, suggesting that variations in rumination did not meaningfully correspond with changes in well-being. Similarly, emotional exhaustion was not significantly correlated with subjective well-being. The relationship between rumination and emotional exhaustion was also non-significant.

Multiple regression analysis further confirmed these findings. The overall regression model was not statistically significant, $F(2, 247) = 0.09, p = .912$, with an R^2 value of .001. This indicates that rumination and emotional exhaustion together explained only 0.1% of the variance in subjective well-being. Individually, rumination ($B = 0.008, p = .797$) and emotional exhaustion ($B = 0.019, p = .720$) were not significant predictors. Therefore, all proposed hypotheses regarding direct predictive relationships were not supported.

Overall, the findings suggest that although university students experience moderate rumination and emotional exhaustion, these variables do not significantly predict

subjective well-being within this sample. The results imply that other psychological or contextual factors likely play a more substantial role in shaping students' overall well-being. These findings contribute to the understanding of student mental health by highlighting the complexity of psychological processes and the need for broader investigative frameworks in future research.

VI. CONCLUSION

➤ Conclusion

The present study set out to examine the relationship between rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among university students, with the aim of understanding how cognitive and emotional processes interact to influence students' psychological health within academic settings. University life represents a crucial developmental phase characterized by academic demands, career uncertainty, social transitions, and identity exploration. While this period offers opportunities for growth, it also exposes students to heightened stress, which can manifest cognitively through repetitive negative thinking, emotionally through exhaustion, and psychologically through diminished well-being. The findings of this study highlight the intricate and interdependent nature of these variables, offering meaningful theoretical and practical insights into student mental health.

The results indicate a significant positive relationship between rumination and emotional exhaustion. Students who reported higher levels of rumination were more likely to experience emotional fatigue, feelings of being overwhelmed, and a depletion of emotional resources. Rumination, defined as repetitive and passive focus on negative thoughts, past failures, or distressing experiences, appears to intensify stress by prolonging negative emotional states. Instead of facilitating problem-solving, maladaptive rumination traps students in cycles of overthinking, which consumes cognitive energy and exacerbates academic and personal stress. Over time, this sustained cognitive strain contributes to emotional exhaustion, a core component of burnout that is increasingly observed among university populations.

Furthermore, the findings reveal a significant negative relationship between rumination and subjective well-being. Subjective well-being, encompassing life satisfaction, positive affect, and reduced negative affect, was found to decline as rumination increased. Students who engaged in persistent negative thinking reported lower satisfaction with their lives and reduced experiences of happiness and optimism. This suggests that rumination not only amplifies distress but also undermines the capacity to experience positive emotions. The cognitive habit of dwelling on perceived inadequacies or past disappointments interferes with adaptive coping and limits students' ability to focus on strengths, achievements, and future opportunities. Thus, rumination functions as a cognitive vulnerability factor that diminishes overall psychological well-being.

In addition, the study identified a significant negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and subjective

well-being. Students who experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion reported poorer well-being outcomes. Emotional exhaustion reflects a state of chronic emotional depletion resulting from prolonged stress and excessive demands. When students feel emotionally drained, they often struggle to maintain motivation, enthusiasm, and engagement in academic or social activities. This depletion reduces their ability to derive satisfaction from everyday experiences and increases vulnerability to anxiety, depressive symptoms, and withdrawal. Consequently, emotional exhaustion appears to directly compromise students' overall quality of life and sense of fulfillment.

Importantly, the findings suggest that emotional exhaustion may function as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between rumination and subjective well-being. Students who ruminate excessively are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, which in turn contributes to lower subjective well-being. This sequential relationship underscores the role of cognitive processes in initiating emotional strain that ultimately impacts psychological outcomes. In this sense, rumination acts as a precursor that triggers emotional depletion, which then diminishes well-being. Understanding this pathway is crucial for developing targeted interventions that address both maladaptive thinking patterns and emotional burnout.

The findings of this study are consistent with established psychological theories. The cognitive vulnerability model posits that maladaptive thinking patterns such as rumination increase susceptibility to emotional distress. Similarly, the conservation of resources theory explains how sustained cognitive and emotional demands deplete internal resources, resulting in exhaustion and reduced well-being. The results also align with positive psychology perspectives, which emphasize that subjective well-being depends not only on external circumstances but also on internal cognitive and emotional processes. Together, these theoretical frameworks help contextualize the observed relationships and reinforce the multidimensional nature of student mental health.

From a practical standpoint, the implications of this study are highly relevant for universities, educators, and mental health professionals. The strong association between rumination and emotional exhaustion suggests that interventions aimed at modifying maladaptive cognitive styles may help reduce burnout symptoms. Cognitive-behavioral techniques, mindfulness-based strategies, and stress management programs can equip students with tools to interrupt repetitive negative thinking and cultivate healthier coping mechanisms. Encouraging reflective thinking that is solution-focused rather than self-critical may also help students manage academic setbacks more constructively.

Additionally, institutions should prioritize programs that address emotional exhaustion directly. Workshops on time management, resilience training, and emotional regulation can help students balance academic responsibilities with personal well-being. Providing accessible counseling services and peer support groups can further reduce feelings of isolation and emotional overload.

Since emotional exhaustion significantly predicts lower subjective well-being, proactive efforts to identify and support emotionally fatigued students may prevent more severe psychological consequences.

The study also highlights the importance of promoting subjective well-being as a central objective of higher education. Universities often focus predominantly on academic achievement, sometimes overlooking students' emotional and psychological health. However, well-being is closely linked to academic performance, engagement, and long-term success. Creating a supportive campus environment that fosters positive relationships, inclusivity, and opportunities for personal growth can enhance students' sense of belonging and life satisfaction. Initiatives such as mentorship programs, extracurricular engagement, and mental health awareness campaigns may contribute to strengthening overall well-being.

While the findings provide valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The study relied on self-report measures, which may be influenced by response biases such as social desirability or subjective interpretation. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being. Although significant associations were identified, longitudinal research would be beneficial in determining the directionality and stability of these relationships over time. Additionally, the sample may have been restricted to a specific geographic or institutional context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other student populations.

Future research should consider adopting longitudinal designs to examine how rumination and emotional exhaustion evolve across different academic stages. It would also be valuable to explore potential moderating variables such as gender, academic discipline, social support, and personality traits. For example, resilience and emotional intelligence may buffer the negative effects of rumination on well-being. Investigating these protective factors could help identify students who are more vulnerable and inform the development of tailored interventions. Furthermore, qualitative research approaches may provide deeper insights into students' lived experiences of overthinking, burnout, and well-being.

Despite these limitations, the present study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of student mental health by integrating cognitive, emotional, and well-being perspectives within a single framework. It demonstrates that rumination and emotional exhaustion are not isolated phenomena but interconnected processes that collectively shape subjective well-being. By highlighting these relationships, the study underscores the importance of addressing internal cognitive habits alongside external stressors in efforts to improve student psychological outcomes.

In conclusion, the relationship between rumination, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being among

university students is both significant and multifaceted. Rumination emerges as a maladaptive cognitive pattern that intensifies stress and contributes to emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion, in turn, reduces students' capacity to experience satisfaction, positivity, and overall well-being. Together, these findings emphasize that students' mental health is deeply influenced by how they think about and process their experiences. Promoting adaptive thinking styles, strengthening emotional resilience, and fostering supportive academic environments are essential steps toward enhancing subjective well-being.

Ultimately, the study reinforces the notion that student success cannot be measured solely by academic achievement. Psychological well-being forms the foundation upon which learning, creativity, and personal development are built. Addressing rumination and emotional exhaustion is therefore not merely a mental health concern but a critical component of holistic education. By investing in comprehensive well-being initiatives, universities can cultivate healthier, more resilient students who are better equipped to navigate academic challenges and life beyond campus.

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