

## Rumination and Happiness of Public School Teachers in Peru

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### **Abstract**

*Teachers must adopt behaviors that should be developed since their time in university, such as emotional regulation. There are situations that can be traumatic, leading to the act of permanently repeating events or behaviors, affecting emotional balance; this can be rumination. This research sought to link rumination with happiness, drawing on contributions from Positive Psychology. A quantitative approach with a correlational study was employed to determine the association between rumination and happiness. Seventy teachers from public schools in Metropolitan Lima participated in the study. The findings allowed for the inference of a moderate relationship between the two variables, which was encouraging as regulating emotions and adopting resilient behaviors help better cope with difficulties that any individual may face in different situations.*

**Keywords:** Rumination, Happiness, Teachers, Schools.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Exercising the teaching profession requires having competencies that allow for adequate professional performance, which are acquired from initial training (Álvarez, 2021). The challenges are constant and ongoing, such as those faced during the health emergency, where teachers had difficulties connecting with their students and had to devise multiple ways to ensure they continued receiving their classes (Picón et al., 2020). Additionally, external factors contribute to the development of adequate work, such as the validation of the educational community, which values the work they do (Guzmán, 2018). Undoubtedly, teachers are permanently exposed to situations that can elevate or undermine the work they do in schools; however, a crucial factor for good professional practice is having emotional support.

A notable achievement from the Peruvian government is the inclusion of socio-emotional competencies in the National Educational Project (PEN), which is in effect until 2023 and should be worked on in schools. However, the adverse factors left by the Covid-19 health emergency regarding emotional issues demand coordinated and planned actions from leadership to strengthen emotional well-being (Gonzales-Sánchez et al., 2023). The return to classrooms required adopting a resilient attitude during what was termed the new normal (Gonzales-Sánchez et al., 2022), yet the focus was primarily on students' emotional strengthening, neglecting the issue of teachers.

It is important to consider the work on emotions with teachers. Education demands paradigm shifts, and the realm of emotions requires "introducing, formalizing, and systematizing emotional education in pedagogical discourse and teaching practice" (Bisquerra & Mateo-Andrés, 2019, p. 16). Proper management of emotions, especially emotional regulation, should be included in the training of future teachers in universities (Barría-Herrera et al., 2021). Zambrano Mendoza (2021) pointed out weaknesses in the training of teachers regarding emotional skills, while Chávez & Henríquez (2023) determined that it is essential for teachers to recognize and control emotions as part of socio-emotional skills. Being sensitive to the surrounding environment will improve professional practice (Chávez & Henríquez, 2023).

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Maintaining the directionality of teachers' emotions is the focus of this study on rumination. In the face of emotional distress, repetitive thoughts arise (Toro et al., 2020), which can lead to negative outcomes such as depression or anxiety (Arditte et al., 2016) due to the worry they cause. According to González et al. (2017), rumination has two aspects: reflection for problem-solving and reproach, the latter being negative. It can become obsessive thinking, generally occurring in response to traumatic situations (Puigarnau, 2008). Andrades & García (2021) identified two types of ruminative responses: intrusive rumination, involving unexpected thoughts about the distressing event, and deliberate rumination, where repetition occurs intentionally.

Colloquially, rumination is like turning the same issue over and over. So how can this negative behavior be positive? Considering Positive Psychology, rumination can foster resilience and optimism as an adaptive process (Sánchez-Aragón, 2020). Positive Psychology focuses on self-actualization and personal well-being, promoting a state of mind that empowers the individual while rejecting psychological or physical distress (García, 2014). Additionally, it "seeks to understand positive emotions, increase strengths and virtues, promote human potential, and strive for excellence" (Elba & Cruz, 2017, p. 662).

In this light, it might be feasible to find happiness through the constant repetition of events with a didactic and improvement-oriented aim. In complex situations, diverse contexts can emerge where an individual can find essence and happiness, considering that something positive can be derived from something negative. Therefore, happiness helps to face adverse situations (Loayza-Rivas, 2021).

Happiness leads to optimism in life; neurons make synapses and generate dopamine, causing satisfaction (Rica, 2019). It involves subjective affective experiences, which can be measured through cognition and emotions (Deschamps et al., 2020). In this sense, happiness contributes to an improved quality of life (Campo, 2020). It is also necessary to note that happiness today is linked to the favorable perception others have of oneself, including the acceptance enjoyed on social media (Bard & Magallanes, 2020).

Considering the aspects mentioned above, this study aims to determine the relationship between rumination and happiness among teachers in Peruvian public schools. This investigation takes into account that rumination has been considered a trigger for negative attitudes; however, it can also be linked to positive aspects, considering the resilience and adaptive process that every person goes through after a loss.

## METHODOLOGY

The study followed a quantitative approach, with a basic and correlational level, aiming to find an association between rumination and happiness. Seventy teachers from public schools in Metropolitan Lima participated. Two Likert scale instruments were administered to understand their perceptions on the topics of interest in this research. The inclusion criteria were being a contracted or appointed teacher currently in practice and belonging to public secondary schools in Lima. Teachers from other levels and modalities outside Regular Basic Education (EBR) were excluded.

## RESULTS

**Table 1**The correlations obtained between variables V1 and V2

Spearman Rho	V1	Correlation coefficient	1.000	,564**
		Sig. (bilateral)		0.000
		N	68	68
	V2	Correlation coefficient	,564**	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	
		N	68	68
** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).				
As well as between V1 and the dimensions of V2, were positive and statistically significant for the four factors studied.				

The table 2 Shows that variables V1 and V2

			V1	d1	d2	d3	d4
Spearman Rho	V1	Correlation coefficient	1.000	,501**	,349**	,151**	,452**
		Sig. (bilateral)		0.000	0.004	0.218	0.000
		N	68	68	68	68	68
	d1	Correlation coefficient	,501**	1.000	,723**	-,284*	,624**
		Sig. (bilateral)	0.000		0.000	0.019	0.000
		N	68	68	68	68	68
	d2	Correlation coefficient	,349**	,723**	1.000	-,294*	,519**
		Sig. (bilateral)	0.004	0.000		0.015	0.000
		N	68	68	68	68	68
	d3	Correlation coefficient	,151**	-,284*	-,294*	1.000	-0.025
		Sig. (bilateral)	0.218	0.019	0.015		0.842
		N	68	68	68	68	68
	d4	Correlation coefficient	,452**	,624**	,519**	-0.025	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.842	
		N	68	68	68	68	68
**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).							
*. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral).							

Are moderately positively correlated (correlation coefficient of 0.564), and this correlation is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). This Spearman correlation analysis shows the relationships and statistical significance between V1 and the variables d1, d2, d3 and d4. It allows us to understand how these variables are monotonically related to each other, providing information about patterns of association in the analyzed data.

## DISCUSSION

The findings revealed a moderate association between the study variables, with a Spearman's Rho coefficient of 0.564, which is quite encouraging. Rumination, as a repetitive act, is generally linked to the constant replay of negative aspects. In this context, Guzmán et al. (2023) demonstrated that a traumatic event like the COVID-19 pandemic, where negative aspects were constantly repeated, showed that more experienced and older teachers were able to regulate their emotions and be resilient compared to younger teachers. Similarly, González et al. (2017b) found that rumination in university students can have positive effects for coping with adverse situations, which provide valuable lessons.

From another perspective, Aching (2019) demonstrated in a community study on eating habits that rumination can have negative cognitive effects as it limits and blocks individuals from adopting new positive behaviors. Similar behaviors were observed regarding rumination by Andrades & García (2021) when they examined the repercussions on children who faced the 2015 Chile earthquake, where post-traumatic effects were unfortunate. The possibility of the fear of re-experiencing the adverse situation emerged, based on the experience and geographical conditions of the country.

Finally, Díaz & Prieto-Ursúa (2023) studied the effects of shared rumination, avoiding the negative aspect, with the aim of regulating emotions and finding solutions such as forgiveness.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between rumination and happiness among teachers in Peruvian public schools. The findings show that rumination has been linked to the repetition of traumatic situations, creating negative conditions. However, constant repetition can aid in coping and adopting resilient behaviors, where adverse memories can be disregarded. This study aimed to incorporate the contributions of positive psychology by prioritizing emotional aspects. Consequently, regulating emotions and adopting resilient behaviors help individuals better face the difficulties they may encounter in various situations.

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