Rumination and coping: How emerging adults deal with romantic breakups

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Rumination; coping stress; emerging adulthood; romantic breakup; relationship dissolution	painful, or rumination with their c coping strate As many as The measur which has b positive rela was a positi found that of emerging a	Romantic relationship breakups among emerging adults are often described as unpleasant painful, or stressful. During these stressful periods, emerging adults may engage in rumination that could prolong the stress, while also engaging in different strategies to cope with their condition. This study aims to determine the relationship between rumination and coping strategies used by emerging adults in dealing with breakups in romantic relationships As many as 141 participants were recruited by using convenience sampling for this study The measuring tools used are the Ruminative Response Scale RRS-10) and the Brief COPE which has been adapted to Bahasa Indonesia. The results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between rumination and groblem-focused coping strategies. It is also found that different types of rumination are correlated with different coping strategies in emerging adults who have gone through romantic breakups. This study has practical implications for the development of interventions to overcome relationship breakups.						

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INTRODUCTION

Emerging adulthood (18-25 years old) is a distinct period characterized by identity exploration as they start to make important decisions about their future. One of the main areas explored is love (Arnett, 2000, 2015). Emerging adults are starting to draw attention to the opposite sex, starting romantic relationships, considering which partner is the best fit for them for their future, and what kind of relationship they would like to build (Kłym & Cieciuch, 2015). Going through this exploration means emerging adults could experience a transition from one relationship to another with different partners. They might experience a series of breakups (Cohen et al., 2003). Almost all emerging adults report that they have been in at least one romantic relationship breakup (Connolly et al., 2014; Quan-Haase et al., 2018; Rhoades et al., 2011). Around 27.8% of emerging adults in college report that a romantic relationship is one of their stressors during college years, while 14.8% of emerging adults report that their stressors are related to relationship breakup (Musabiq & Karimah, 2018). Hence, romantic relationship breakup is a common event that happens during emerging adulthood (McKiernan et al., 2018).

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Romantic relationships for emerging adults are an important part of identity, social status, intimacy, and emotional security (Vaziri et al., 2021). As a result, romantic relationship breakups are usually perceived as a sad and upsetting event, but not necessarily a disaster that changes their life (Carter et al., 2019). Based on the transactional theory of stress and coping, there are various ways for emerging adults to primarily appraise their romantic breakup experience as a stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The most common appraisals were negative or stressful appraisals such as sadness, confusion, grief, frustration, anger, and anxiety (Carter et al., 2019; Vaziri et al., 2021). These negative or stressful appraisals are related to alterations in emerging adult behavior, such as dysfunctionality, avoidance of communication, aggression, and self-destructive behavior (Soltani & Fatehizade, 2020; Vaziri et al., 2021). Relationship breakup distress could even impact their physical and immunity condition (Field, 2017; Graham et al., 2014). On the other side, some emerging adults report that they appraise the romantic breakup with a sense of relief and freedom, are less anxious, are happier after going through a breakup, and are gaining stress-related growth (Carter et al., 2019; Norona & Olmstead, 2017). This benign-positive appraisal would lead to a more positive outcome in facing a romantic breakup (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emerging adults perceive that they could learn from their experience and grow out of their relationship, to build better relationships in the future (Tuval-Mashiach et al., 2015).

Appraising a romantic relationship breakup as a stressful event is related to one's tendency to maintain the negative ambience and to have repetitive thoughts about the event, so-called rumination (Michl et al., 2013; Wrape et al., 2016). Rumination is a style of responding to distress that involves repetitive thoughts and passively focusing on symptoms of distress and on the possible causes and consequences of these symptoms (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). There are two kinds of rumination: brooding and reflection rumination. One with brooding rumination tends to passively compare the current situation to their unmet expectations, while one with reflection rumination tends to actively deal with and overcome their problems and difficulties (Treynor et al., 2003). Brooding rumination was reported to be closely related to depression and negative attention bias (Alleva et al., 2014; Treynor et al., 2003). However, reflection rumination is used to improve mood and relieve depression symptoms (Satyshur et al., 2018; Treynor et al., 2003).

Enduring stressful events added to rumination would retain and prolong the distress that emerging adults experience (Wrape et al., 2016). Therefore, after repetitively thinking about the stressful event, emerging adults would have a second appraisal regarding their romantic breakup and would choose the coping strategy that they could use. There are three common categories of coping strategy, i.e., problem-focused coping (Lazarus et al., 1984 in Scheier et al., 1986), and dysfunctional coping (Carver et al., 1989). Problem-focused coping focuses on eliminating or resolving the stressor (Lazarus et al., 1984 in Scheier et al., 1984 in Scheier et al., 1986). Dysfunctional coping is a coping tendency that is less useful and less effective in dealing with stressors, ranging from using substances, emotional splurging, self-blame, etc. Engaging in dysfunctional coping may not effectively reduce the stress

that one experiences (Carver et al., 1989). Failure to regulate stress could lead to prolonged stress, predicting problems in mental health such as sadness, jealousy, loss of self-esteem, anxiety, depression, self-harm, and overall mental health outcomes (Carter et al., 2019; Mirsu-Paun & Oliver, 2017).

A previous study reports that rumination after a breakup was related to slower recovery and chronic distress (Verhallen et al., 2022). Specifically, former studies found that reflection rumination was related to active coping (solution-or problem-focused) and better post-traumatic growth, while brooding rumination was related to passive coping (dysfunctional coping) (Liu et al., 2020; Michl et al., 2013; Platte et al., 2022; Satyshur et al., 2018; Zieba et al., 2022). However, there were past studies that also found the opposite result which report that brooding rumination was related to post-traumatic growth (Del Palacio-González et al., 2017). These different results of past studies indicate that there have to be more studies relating to the nature of rumination and its outcome in the context of relationship breakup. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between rumination types and coping strategies in emerging adults who went through a romantic breakup. The findings of this study can be used in literature work on rumination, especially in the context of romantic relationship breakup in emerging adults. This study hopes to answer the paradox result of previous studies' results. Other than that, romantic relationship breakup has many negative impacts on emerging adults. The results of this study may contribute to helping counseling centers or psychologists concerned with young adults to design specific interventions that can help emerging adults endure their romantic breakup, especially to intervene in their rumination pattern so that they might have better outcomes after a breakup.

Based on the nature of the two styles of rumination, we hypothesized that both types of rumination were associated with different coping strategies. Reflection rumination will be correlated with active coping strategies (problem-focused), while brooding rumination will be correlated with passive coping strategies (dysfunctional coping strategies).

METHOD

This was a quantitative, cross-sectional study. The Ethics Committee of Universitas Padjadjaran has registered this study under registration number 1033/UN6.KEP/EC/2022. The participants of this study were college students registered in a university in Indonesia, ages 18-25 years old, who had been through a romantic relationship breakup in the past 12 months (Lukacs & Quan-Haase, 2015). The participants were recruited using convenience sampling. Online questionnaires were shared across social media, and suitable participants were asked for their consent and invited to participate in the study.

In this study, there was an instrument employed for each variable. The first variable is the rumination style, which refers to a style of responding to distress that involves repetitive thoughts and passively focusing on symptoms of distress. To measure rumination in emerging adults, the Ruminative Response Scale (RRS-10) was used (Treynor et al., 2003). This scale has been adapted from English to Bahasa Indonesia by Yusainy (2017). This instrument consisted of two dimensions: brooding (5 items) and reflecting (5 items).

The sample of items of RRS-10 are "Think 'Why do I always react this way?" for brooding dimension and "Write down what you are thinking and analyze it," for reflecting dimension. The reliability scores that are reported in this study were 0.607 (brooding) and 0.720 (reflecting) (Yusainy, 2017).

The second variable is the coping stress strategy, which refers to cognitive and behavioral strategy to manage stressors. Brief-COPE was used to assess emerging adults' coping strategies (Carver, 1997). This instrument was adapted by Raden Diva Karina Nurhidayah from English to Bahasa Indonesia (Nurhidayah, 2020). After being adapted, this instrument consisted of 26 items, divided into three dimensions; problemfocused coping, emotion-focused coping, and dysfunctional coping strategies. The sample items of Brief-COPE are "I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in" for problemfocused coping, "I've been getting emotional support from others" for emotion-focused coping, and "I've been giving up trying to deal with it" for dysfunctional coping strategy. The reliability scores that are reported in this study are 0.700 (problem-focused coping), 0.712 (emotion-focused coping), and 0.736 (dysfunctional coping). The validity of Brief-COPE was assessed using evidence based on content and evidence based on internal structure. Validity evidence based on content was measured with an S-CVI score during adaptation. The S-CVI score that was gained through the adaptation process was 1.00. Validity evidence based on internal structure was measured with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The CFA result showed the instrument has a good fit to measure coping strategies (χ^2 = 1079.42, df= 259, CFI= 0.94, TLI = 0.91, PNFI= 0.59, RMSEA = 0.04) (Nurhidayah, 2020). Both instruments used in this study use a Likert scale, with 1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, and 4 = very often.

The statistics tests were conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 26.0 (IBM Corp, 2018). The demographic characteristics of the subjects and the overall scores for each instrument were described using descriptive statistics. We conducted a normality test on the data set to prove that the data were normally distributed (p-value > 0.05) before conducting hypotheses testing. To test the hypotheses about the correlation between rumination and coping stress strategies in emerging adults who went through breakups, we used the Pearson correlation test. A p-value of < 0.05 in the statistical analysis was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 141 participants (101 women and 40 men) completed the survey. Most of them were 21 years old (44.0%), with a romantic relationship duration of 1-12 months (51.1%). The breakup happened in the past 1-6 months (58.9%), and the breakup was initiated by their ex-partner (38.3%).

Demographics	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
Sex	Men	40	28.4%
	Women	101	71.6%
Age	18 years old	12	8.5%
0	19 years old	31	22.0%
	20 years old	23	16.3%
	21 years old	62	44.0%
	22 years old	9	6.4%
	23 years old	3	2.1%
	24 years old	1	0.7%
Relationship duration	1-12 months	72	51.1%
-	13-24 months	31	22.0%
	25-36 months	20	14.2%
	37-48 months	8	5.7%
	>49 months	11	7.0%
Duration since breakup	0-6 months	83	58.9%
-	7-12 months	58	41.1%
Breakup initiator	Mutual agreement	37	26.2%
*	Participant	50	35.5%
	Ex-partner	54	38.3%

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between rumination styles and coping strategies used by emerging adults who went through breakups. Table 1 shows the result of the Pearson correlation test between rumination, rumination styles, and each coping strategy. Based on the results, it is shown that rumination is mainly correlated with problem-focused coping and dysfunctional coping. This result is consistent with a previous study that reported that rumination was related to the coping strategy one would use (Liu et al., 2020).

Table 2. Correlation Coefficient & Descriptive Statistics									
	Rumination	Brooding	Reflection	Problem-	Emotion-	Dysfunctional			
				Focused	Focused	Coping			
Rumination				0.450**	0.137	0.550**			
Brooding				0.311**	-0.002	0.523**			
Reflection				0.463**	0.224*	0.442**			
Μ	30.19	15.10	15.09	19.55	31.59	24.06			
SD	5.560	2.974	3.408	3.090	4.525	5.174			

*p-value < 0.05; **p-value < 0.000

It was found that rumination has a positive relationship with problem-focused coping, both in total and in each type. It was also discovered that reflection rumination has a higher correlation with problem-focused coping than brooding rumination. Reflection rumination involves actively seeking information to help one have a better understanding of the distress they are experiencing (Tucker et al., 2013). Emerging adults who went through breakups with reflection rumination would consciously engage in cognitive processes and appraise distress from a much more objective perspective (Kross et al., 2012; Treynor et al., 2003). Emerging adults who do reflective rumination might have an opportunity to reflect on their growth and try to

understand and evaluate their relationships that lead to posttraumatic growth (Yang & Ha, 2019). Reflective rumination involves the process of comparing current distress with one's memory in order to alleviate current distress (Satyshur et al., 2018). Therefore, this process is consistent with problem-focused coping, which focuses on behaviors related to information gathering, problem-solving, or doing something to change or alleviate distress (Carver, 1997; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Using problem-focused coping means a person might be actively thinking and focusing on the issue, making positive reinterpretations about the issue, and making plans for what they would do in the future (Yang & Ha, 2019). Reflection rumination in emerging adults who went through a romantic breakup will lead them to a better problem-solving process and encourage the use of problem-focused coping. This may result in alleviating negative mood and negative symptoms, decreasing depression symptoms, and acting as protective factor from posttrauma stress (Brennan et al., 2015; Studley & Chung, 2015; Treynor et al., 2003).

Although brooding rumination is found to be lower, it is also found to be correlated with problemfocused coping. While brooding rumination usually leads a person to focus too much on negative aspects and hinders problem-solving, it can also trigger the cognitive process towards positive changes and encourage reflection rumination (Kamijo & Yukawa, 2018; Wu et al., 2015). Emerging adults who do brooding rumination may feel uncomfortable and frightened by their repetitive thoughts, but this condition drives them to find a solution to their problem (von der Ahe, 2023). It could depend on how deep the brooding rumination is to not drown the emerging adults in their negative experiences.

We hypothesized that there would be a relationship between emotion-focused coping and rumination. However, the results showed that it rejected this hypothesis. Only reflection rumination was found weakly correlated with emotion-focused coping. Reflection rumination involves deliberate thinking to analyze events and their implications (Del Palacio-González et al., 2017). It encourages emerging adults to reframe their stressful events to be more meaningful or positive so that it can facilitate the goals of emotion-focused coping, which are to reduce emotional distress (Hanley et al., 2017; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emerging adults with brooding rumination will focus on the negative impact of the stressful event, namely the romantic breakup (Lyubomirsky & Tkach, 2003). They would try to make sense of the romantic relationship breakup, whether to learn from it or perhaps just seek validation that this should not have happened (Michl et al., 2013). However, brooding rumination would make emerging adults repetitively think about the romantic relationship breakup. Hence, it prolonged the stress and negative mindset that they had regarding the event and convinced them that they lacked the ability to engage in constructive behavior (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008). This process contradicts the purpose of emotion-focused coping, which is to reduce the existing stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The results of this study show that there is a significant relationship between rumination and dysfunctional coping. Rumination, especially brooding rumination, will make emerging adults focus on their negative thoughts, increase memory of previous events, lead to negative expectations in the future, and activate negative self-schemas (Michl et al., 2013). Emerging adults with brooding rumination may be

trapped in thoughts and feelings of their past (Rofi'atin et al., 2021). Brooding rumination is also associated with negative and self-critical agitation (Satyshur et al., 2018). Hence, brooding rumination and prolonged distress enhance the negative meaning of their experience. This is highly associated with self-blame, guilt, and shame, which includes dysfunctional coping (Kamijo & Yukawa, 2018). Even though reflection rumination is usually associated with a better problem-solving, it could also trigger the use of brooding rumination (Lyubomirsky & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1993). Reflection rumination increases the possibility of negative thoughts coming back; therefore, it is related to dysfunctional coping strategies.

It is interesting that the result of this study shows the duality of rumination. Overall rumination, including brooding rumination, was found to be positively correlated with both problem-focused coping which was known for positive outcomes (Satyshur et al., 2018; Treynor et al., 2003) and dysfunctional coping which was associated with negative outcomes (Alleva et al., 2014; Treynor et al., 2003). This result shares similarities with a previous study that found rumination positively correlated with both post-breakup distress and post-breakup growth (Del Palacio-González et al., 2017). This shows that rumination paradoxically leads to positive outcomes if it leads to problem-solving process. This might happen because rumination types occur in a serial pattern. When emerging adults engage in one type of rumination, they also engage in the other type of rumination (Del Palacio-González et al., 2017; Kim & Kang, 2022). This result shows that even though rumination occurred in a serial pattern, different types of rumination tend to be related to different coping strategies.

These results have some practical implications. For example, intervention for emerging adults who experience breakups could be done by directing their rumination to be reflective rumination. Doing rumination with a mindful and a compassionate attitude could help emerging adults focus on analyzing, understanding, and solving their problems without the emotional impacts of rumination (Brennan et al., 2015; Soltani & Fatehizade, 2020). Ruminating about their past relationship could make emerging adults fall into a series of distorted cognitive processes (Beecraft, 2014). Other therapies such as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) or cognitive behavior therapy could be taught to help emerging adults have more structure to their repetitive thoughts (Gozan & Menaldi, 2020; Medina-Reina & Ruiz, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the relationship between rumination types and coping strategies in emerging adults who went through a breakup. Based on the results and discussion of the study, it can be concluded that different types of rumination are associated with different coping strategies. Reflective rumination would lead to problem-focused coping, and brooding rumination tends to encourage emerging adults to choose dysfunctional coping. While emotion-focused coping has the lowest correlation with rumination regarding its opposite aim, emotion-focused coping has the purpose of reducing stress, while rumination tends to prolong it. From this study, practitioners could help emerging adults who went through romantic breakups. Such a stressful event could lead emerging adults to engage in rumination. Practitioners

could help emerging adults navigate their rumination toward the reflective type so that they could have a more objective perspective on the event and resolve the situation effectively. Practitioners could also help emerging adults detect and regulate brooding rumination so they are not driven to do dysfunctional coping. A more functional coping strategy could result in a better outcome for emerging adults adjusting to their new situation. For future research, we recommend exploring more about the nature of the relationship between rumination and coping strategies, such as using a regression or mediation model, to deepen our understanding. A more comprehensive model including cognitive processing factors or mindfulness could be explored to get a better understanding of the paradoxical nature of rumination. Future research could also include mental health measurement to see the outcome of rumination and coping strategies.

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