

Putting Research to Work for Families



Focus:
Civilian

Rumination and Moderators of Multifinality: Predicting Internalizing Symptoms and Alcohol Use During Adolescence

Hilt, L. M., Armstrong, J. A., & Essex, M. J. (2017). Rumination and moderators of multifinality: Predicting internalizing symptoms and alcohol use during adolescence. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 46(5), 746-753.
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SUMMARY: Rumination is the process of thinking repeatedly about negative emotions and is a risk factor for many mental health concerns. This study examined possible influences in the lives of youth who experience rumination and how they might end up experiencing depression, anxiety, and alcohol use. Rumination during 9th grade was found to be related to internalizing symptoms (i.e., depression and anxiety symptoms) as well as alcohol use in 11th grade based on distinct factors.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Girls reported higher levels of rumination and internalizing symptoms than boys, and overall the participants' scores reflected non-elevated levels of risk for these symptoms.
- Rumination in 9th grade was associated with greater internalizing symptoms in 11th grade when youth experienced higher perceived peer rejection, and those with low rumination in 9th grade reported lower internalizing symptoms in 11th grade.
- Rumination in 9th grade was associated with greater alcohol use in 11th grade when youth had more friends who used alcohol, and those with fewer friends who used alcohol had less alcohol use.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS:

- Facilitate support groups for youth in schools and other common settings regarding awareness of rumination and skills to address it
- Collaborate with youth development professionals regarding programming to reduce perceived peer rejection, risk for internalizing symptoms, and alcohol use

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM LEADERS:

- Disseminate information to caregivers and educational professionals regarding the impact of rumination on internalizing symptoms and alcohol use
- Provide education to youth regarding rumination and the impacts it can have on internalizing symptoms and alcohol use

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS:

- Promote positive peer relationship building in schools and other settings in which youth spend time
- Continue to provide support for programs that aim to reduce youth alcohol use

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited from families participating in a larger longitudinal study who were recruited from medical clinics when mothers were pregnant with the youth.
- Participants completed self-reports of rumination, internalizing symptoms, alcohol use, perceived peer rejection, and friends' alcohol use.
- The researchers tested whether peer rejection changed the relationship between rumination and internalizing symptoms and whether having friends' alcohol use changed the relationship between rumination and participants' alcohol use.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 388 youth (52% female) surveyed when they were in 9th grade (mean age 15.26 years old) and again in 11th grade (mean age 17.22 years old).
- Most (96%) of the participants' parents were married and 90% were White; the other races/ethnicities were not described.
- Family income averaged \$47,750 with a range of \$10,000-\$200,000.

LIMITATIONS

- The study was testing a previously developed model but did not test all aspects of the model, which limits the validation of the full model.
- All measures were self-report data, which potentially limits their validity.
- The sample was a typical-risk sample in terms of symptoms so the conclusions may not be applicable to higher-risk or lower-risk populations.
- The sample was mostly White with married parents, therefore conclusions may not be applicable to youth of other races/ethnicities or with different family configurations.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Repeat the study with different youth populations, such as with more ethnically/racially diverse samples
- Use reports from other people besides youth self-report, such as peer reports or parent reports, for some measures to increase validity
- Continue to examine the relationships between rumination and the outcomes of alcohol use and internalizing symptoms, but with other potential influencing factors

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