

Research Paper

Rumination, Procrastination and Self-esteem among Working and Non-Working Women

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the relationship among rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem among working and non-working women. These psychological constructs are important in understanding how individuals think, behave, and evaluate themselves in everyday life. Rumination refers to repetitive thinking about negative experiences, which may increase emotional distress and interfere with problem-solving. Procrastination involves delaying tasks despite knowing the possible negative consequences and reflects difficulties in self-regulation. Self-esteem represents an individual's evaluation of self-worth and is generally considered a protective factor; however, its role in relation to maladaptive thinking and behaviour appears to be more complex. The study was conducted on a sample of 337 adult women selected using a non-probability purposive sampling method. Participants were categorized into working and non-working groups. Data were collected through an online survey using Google Forms. Standardized tools were used, including the Ruminative Response Scale (RRS), the General Procrastination Scale (GPS), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Ethical guidelines were followed, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, normality analysis, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and independent samples t-test. The findings showed a significant positive relationship between rumination and procrastination, suggesting that individuals who engage in repetitive thinking are more likely to delay their tasks. However, self-esteem showed a positive relationship with both rumination and procrastination, which was not in line with the initial assumptions. This indicates that self-esteem may function differently depending on individual or situational factors. Further, no significant differences were found between working and non-working women in terms of rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem. This suggests that employment status alone may not have a strong influence on these psychological variables, and that other personal or environmental factors may play a role. Overall, the study highlights the connection between thinking patterns and behaviour and emphasizes the need to understand these variables together. The findings provide useful insights into psychological functioning among women and suggest the importance of addressing maladaptive thinking and behavioural tendencies. Future research can explore additional factors such as personality traits, coping strategies, and socio-cultural influences to better understand these relationships.

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This study also highlights the importance of understanding psychological patterns in everyday functioning, particularly among women managing different life roles. The findings suggest that both cognitive and behavioural tendencies should be addressed together while designing interventions. Such understanding can be useful for counsellors, educators, and mental health professionals in developing strategies to improve emotional well-being and productivity.

Keywords: *Rumination, Procrastination, Self-Esteem, Working Women, Non-Working Women, Psychological Factors*

Human thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are deeply linked, shaping the way people navigate everyday life. The way we think, how we respond emotionally, and the way we see ourselves all influence how we handle challenges, responsibilities, and decisions. Within this context, rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem have drawn significant attention in psychological research because of their strong influence on emotional health and daily functioning. Examining these factors together offers a clearer understanding of how individuals manage their inner experiences and regulate their actions.

Rumination can be understood as the tendency to dwell repeatedly on distressing thoughts, emotions, or past experiences. Nolen-Hoeksema (1991) described it as a process in which individuals remain focused on their feelings of distress and its possible causes or outcomes, rather than shifting toward constructive problem-solving. This cycle of repetitive thinking often amplifies negative emotions and prevents people from moving beyond stressful circumstances. Studies have consistently linked high levels of rumination to difficulties such as anxiety, depression, and diminished psychological well-being (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008). In this way, rumination functions as a cognitive obstacle that disrupts effective coping and sound decision-making.

Procrastination is commonly understood as the intentional postponement of tasks, even when individuals are aware that such delays may bring undesirable consequences. Steel (2007) characterized it as a breakdown in self-regulation, where people defer important responsibilities in favour of short-term relief or avoidance. Rather than being a simple issue of time management, procrastination is closely tied to emotional and cognitive factors such as fear of failure, diminished motivation, and negative thought patterns. Research suggests that those who ruminate excessively are more prone to procrastination, since persistent overthinking can hinder action and make it harder to initiate tasks (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013). This underscores the strong interplay between cognitive tendencies and behavioural outcomes.

Self-esteem can be described as a person's overall judgment of their own worth, abilities, and value. Rosenberg (1965) framed it as a broad sense of self-acceptance and respect for oneself. Traditionally, self-esteem has been viewed as a protective resource that enables individuals to manage stress, sustain confidence, and engage in adaptive behaviours. Higher levels of self-esteem are often linked with greater resilience, emotional stability, and positive self-perceptions (Orth & Robins, 2014). More recent studies, however, indicate that the connection between self-esteem and behavioural tendencies such as rumination and procrastination is complex and may shift depending on personal and situational factors. These three constructs like rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem are not isolated but interact closely. Rumination can foster procrastination by overwhelming cognitive resources and delaying task initiation, while procrastination may intensify rumination through feelings

of guilt and stress. Self-esteem shapes how individuals interpret their abilities and respond to challenges, influencing both rumination and procrastination. Examining these variables together offers valuable insight into the dynamic interplay between thought patterns, behaviour, and self-perception.

The present study focuses on adult women, with a particular emphasis on comparing those who are employed with those who are not. Women often juggle multiple responsibilities across professional, family, and social domains, which can shape their psychological experiences. Working women may encounter pressures related to workload, time management, and role conflict, while non-working women may face stressors tied to social expectations and identity. Previous research has reported mixed findings on how employment status influences psychological factors such as self-esteem and stress (Geethika et al., 2021; Machhi, 2024). This makes it important to explore whether differences exist between working and non-working women in relation to rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem. Although these constructs have been studied extensively, few investigations have examined their combined influence, particularly within the context of women's employment status. Much of the existing work has considered these variables separately, offering only a partial view of psychological functioning. The present study seeks to address this gap by analysing both the interrelationships among these constructs and the differences that may arise based on employment status. Drawing on prior research and theoretical perspectives, the present study seeks to examine the relationships among rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem, as well as to determine whether these constructs differ between working and non-working women. Gaining clarity on these connections is expected to offer meaningful insights into cognitive and behavioural patterns and to inform the design of psychological strategies aimed at enhancing well-being and productivity.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship of rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem
2. To compare rumination between working and non-working women.
3. To compare procrastination between working and non-working women.
4. To compare self-esteem between working and non-working women.
5. To examine the relationship of rumination and procrastination with self-esteem.

Hypotheses

1. Rumination will be positively correlated with procrastination.
2. Rumination will be negatively correlated with self-esteem.
3. Procrastination will be negatively correlated with self-esteem.
4. There will be a significant difference in rumination among working women.
5. There will be a significant difference in rumination among non-working women.
6. There will be a significant difference in procrastination among working women.
7. There will be a significant difference in procrastination among non-working women.
8. There will be a significant difference in self-esteem among working women.
9. There will be a significant difference in self-esteem among non-working women.

Participants

The study was carried out with a sample of 337 adult women, selected through purposive non-probability sampling. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 55 years and were divided into two groups: working women (n = 165) and non-working women (n = 172). Recruitment

took place via social media, community networks, workplaces, and public settings. To be included, participants had to identify as women, fall within the specified age range, have at least a 10th standard level of education, demonstrate the ability to understand English comprehensively, and provide informed consent. Those who reported severe psychiatric conditions or cognitive impairments were excluded from participation

Research Design

The study will follow a quantitative, correlational and comparative design, as it shows the relationship between rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem, while also comparing working and non-working women.

Tools

- **Personal Data Sheet** which includes demographic details: name, age, education, occupation, working status
- **Ruminative Response Scale** (RRS; Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991), which assesses the tendency to engage in repetitive and passive thought patterns focused on negative emotions and experiences. The instrument contains 22 items that ask participants how often they concentrate on their thoughts when feeling sad or distressed. Responses were recorded on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Almost never to 4 = Almost always), with higher scores reflecting greater rumination.
- **General Procrastination Scale** (GPS; Lay, 1986), designed to capture the tendency to postpone tasks in everyday life. The scale includes 20 items addressing delays in work and difficulties in completing tasks. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never to 5 = Always), where higher scores indicate stronger procrastination tendencies.
- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale** (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), a widely recognized measure of global self-worth. The scale consists of 10 items reflecting both positive and negative self-perceptions. Responses were recorded on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly agree to 4 = Strongly disagree), with higher scores representing greater self-esteem.
- In addition, a demographic information sheet was used to collect details such as age, education level, and employment status of participants.

Reliability of Tools

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to ensure internal consistency within the sample. Results showed strong reliability across all measures: Rumination Scale ($\alpha = .88$), Procrastination Scale ($\alpha = .90$), and Self-Esteem Scale ($\alpha = .85$). The Cronbach's alpha values obtained for all three variables are above 0.70, which indicates that the scales used in this study are reliable.

Procedure

Prior approval to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant authorities. The research objectives and psychological measures were finalized before data collection began. An online survey was created using Google Forms, which included four sections: informed consent, demographic information, standardized scales, and a closing note thanking participants for their involvement. The survey link was shared through social media, email, QR codes, and messaging apps to reach a diverse sample of working and non-working women. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Participation

was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before completing the questionnaire. A pilot study with 60 participants was conducted to test the clarity and feasibility of the tools, and adjustments were made based on the feedback before administering the final survey to 337 participants. Responses were automatically compiled in Excel and screened for accuracy and completeness prior to analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The dataset was examined using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, regression analysis, and independent samples t-tests. Preliminary checks were carried out to assess normality and reliability, and the findings confirmed that the data were suitable for further statistical procedures.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem. The mean score for rumination was 53.43 (SD = 13.488), procrastination averaged 64.92 (SD = 19.858), and self-esteem had a mean of 23.18 (SD = 6.781). Skewness and kurtosis values fell within acceptable ranges, indicating that the distribution of scores was approximately normal.

Table No 1: Descriptive Statistics for Rumination, procrastination and self-esteem in working and non-working women

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Rumination	337	53.43	13.488	0.005	-0.173
Procrastination	337	64.92	19.858	0.055	-0.347
Self-esteem	337	23.18	6.781	0.024	-0.492

Correlation analysis (Table No: 2) was carried out to explore the relationships among rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem. As shown in Table 2, rumination was significantly and positively correlated with procrastination ($r = .660$, $p < .01$), suggesting that individuals who engage more in repetitive thinking are also more likely to postpone tasks. This finding supports Hypothesis 1, which predicted a positive link between rumination and procrastination. Rumination also demonstrated a significant positive correlation with self-esteem ($r = .525$, $p < .01$). Since Hypothesis 2 anticipated a negative association, this result contradicts the expectation, leading to its rejection. Likewise, procrastination was positively correlated with self-esteem ($r = .668$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 3 proposed a negative relationship, but the observed positive correlation requires its rejection as well.

Table No: 2 Correlation Analysis for Rumination, procrastination and self-esteem

Variables	Rumination	Procrastination	Self-esteem
Rumination	1		
Procrastination	.729**	1	
Self-esteem	.582**	.691**	1

In Group Comparison (Table No: 3), the study examined whether working and non-working women differ in rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem. Hypothesis 4, expected that there would be a significant difference in rumination among working women. The results showed that working women had a slightly higher mean score ($M = 54.55$) compared to

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non-working women ($M = 52.36$). However, this difference was very small and not meaningful. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is not supported. Similarly, Hypothesis 5 stated that there would be a significant difference in rumination among non-working women. Although non-working women showed slightly lower scores, the difference was minimal and did not indicate any substantial variation. Hence, this hypothesis is also not supported. Hypothesis 6, proposed that there would be a significant difference in procrastination among working women. The findings showed that working women had a slightly higher mean score ($M = 65.64$) compared to non-working women ($M = 64.23$). However, this difference was very small, indicating no meaningful variation. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 is not supported. Hypothesis 7 stated that there would be a significant difference in procrastination among non-working women. Although a slight difference was observed, it was not substantial. Hence, this hypothesis is also not supported. Hypothesis 8 proposed that there would be a significant difference in self-esteem among working women. The results showed that working women had slightly lower self-esteem ($M = 22.92$) compared to non-working women ($M = 23.43$). However, the difference was minimal and not meaningful. Therefore, this hypothesis is not supported. Finally, Hypothesis 9 proposed that there would be a significant difference in self-esteem among non-working women. Although non-working women showed slightly higher scores, the difference was very small. Hence, this hypothesis is also not supported.

Overall, the findings indicate that there are no meaningful differences between working and non-working women in terms of rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem. This suggests that employment status alone may not significantly influence these psychological variables.

Table No: 3 Group Analysis among Working and Non-Working Women

Variable	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rumination	Working Women	165	54.55	11.90
	Non-working Women	172	52.36	14.81
Procrastination	Working Women	165	65.64	17.05
	Non-working Women	172	64.23	22.24
Self-esteem	Working Women	165	22.92	6.14
	Non-working Women	172	23.43	7.35

Later Regression analysis (Table no: 4) was conducted in which, Hypothesis 2, which proposed that rumination would be negatively related to self-esteem, was not supported. The results showed a positive relationship instead, indicating that higher rumination was associated with higher self-esteem, which is opposite to the expected direction. Similarly, Hypothesis 3, which stated that procrastination would be negatively related to self-esteem, was also not supported. A positive relationship was found, suggesting that individuals who procrastinate more tend to report higher self-esteem.

Table No: 4 Regression Coefficients Predicting Self-Esteem

Predictor Variable	(Coefficient ▼)	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)
Intercept	5.082	1.108	4.586	.000
Procrastination	0.204	0.020	10.457	.000
Rumination	0.088	0.029	3.034	.003

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem among working and non-working women, as well as to explore differences between these two groups. Descriptive findings indicated that participants reported moderate scores on rumination, procrastination, and self-esteem. The data were approximately normally distributed, confirming consistency in responses and suitability for further statistical analysis. The correlation results revealed that rumination was positively related to procrastination, suggesting that individuals who engage in repetitive thinking are more likely to delay tasks. In addition, both rumination and procrastination showed positive relationships with self-esteem, which was contrary to the initial expectations of the study. Group comparison results indicated only slight differences between working and non-working women, suggesting that employment status does not substantially influence these variables. Regression analysis further supported these findings, showing that both rumination and procrastination significantly predicted self-esteem, with procrastination emerging as the stronger predictor.

The present findings are partially consistent with prior research. In terms of correlation, the positive link between rumination and procrastination supports earlier work such as Hajloo (2014), who noted that procrastination is tied to cognitive and emotional factors, including repetitive thinking. However, the positive relationships between self-esteem and both rumination and procrastination diverge from studies like Raes and Hermans (2008), who found low self-esteem associated with higher rumination, and Klassen et al. (2008), who reported no significant link between procrastination and self-esteem. Regarding group comparisons, the absence of significant differences between working and non-working women aligns with Geethika, Archana, and Thomas (2021), though Machhi (2024) reported higher self-esteem among working women, suggesting mixed evidence and the influence of contextual factors such as social support. Finally, regression analysis echoed Sirois (2014) in showing that repetitive negative thinking interferes with effective action, yet the positive predictive effects of rumination and procrastination on self-esteem contrast with earlier findings (Raes & Hermans, 2008; Hajloo, 2014), underscoring the complexity of these relationships and the need for further investigation.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that rumination and procrastination are strongly interconnected, with repetitive thinking contributing to task delays. Interestingly, self-esteem shows a positive association with both rumination and procrastination, challenging the assumption that higher self-esteem reduces negative cognitive and behavioural tendencies. This suggests that self-esteem may operate differently depending on individual or contextual factors. Moreover, no significant differences were found between working and non-working women, indicating that employment status does not substantially influence these psychological patterns. Overall, the findings emphasize the complex interplay between cognitive processes and behavioural tendencies, underscoring the need for further research to better understand women's psychological functioning. The study later may contribute to practical implications for counselling and psychological interventions, particularly in addressing procrastination and maladaptive thinking patterns among women.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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