



**SOCIAL ANXIETY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION AMONG YOUTH:  
MEDIATING ROLE OF RUMINATIVE THINKING**

**A Research Project**

**Presented to**

**The School of Professional Psychology**

**Bahria University Islamabad Campus**

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**BS Psychology**

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**By**

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICATION

We certify that the research work presented in this research project, to the best of our knowledge, is our own. All the sources used, and any help received in the preparation of this thesis have been acknowledged. We hereby declare that we have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for any other degree at this or any institution.

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## **DEDICATION**

*We wholeheartedly dedicating our thesis to our **PARENTS***

*Who always believe us and support us throughout the journey of achieving  
our dream! Anything that we have achieve now is because of our parent's support,  
prayers and believe in us.*

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Iqra Saghir

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## THESIS REVISION CERTIFICATE

It is certified that Iqra Saghir and Samra Ashfaq, Enrollment No. 01-171192-015 and 01-171192-109 respectively, Session Fall 2019 from School of Professional Psychology Bahria University Islamabad, conducted their undergraduate thesis entitled “Social Anxiety and Social Exclusion among youth: Mediating role of Ruminative Thinking” under my supervision. They have been revised their thesis in the light of the examiners' suggestions, and to my satisfaction and to the best of my belief, its standard is appropriate for acceptance. Moreover, this thesis is an excellent work in terms of scope and quality for the award of the degree of BS Psychology.

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## ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to explore the relationship between Social Anxiety and Social Exclusion with the mediating role of Ruminative Thinking among youth. Sample included 300 university students (Males= 157 and Females= 143). For the measurement of social anxiety SIAS-6 & SPS-6 (Peter et al., 2012) was administered, Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire (Brinker & Dozois, 2009) was used for ruminative thinking and Social Exclusion Scale (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013) was used for the measurement of social exclusion. 1) It was hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth. 2) It was hypothesized that the relationship between social anxiety and social exclusion will be mediated by ruminative thinking among youth. 3) It was also hypothesized that there is a gender difference on social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth. Research findings revealed that the social anxiety is significantly positively correlated with ruminative thinking whereas ruminative thinking is negatively significantly correlated with limited social participation, lack of normative integration, inadequate access to basic social rights and material deprivation among youth. It was found that the relationship between the social anxiety (social interaction anxiety and social phobia) and social exclusion (limited social participation, lack of normative integration, inadequate access to basic social rights and material deprivation) is mediated by ruminative thinking among youth. It was also found that females have significantly higher level of social anxiety, social interaction anxiety and social phobia whereas males have significantly low social participation than females. Results of the present research are beneficial in improving the academic functioning, social interactions, and quality of life of young people.

**Keywords:** Youth, Social Anxiety, Ruminative Thinking, Social Exclusion

### INTRODUCTION

Human beings are social animals, they survive through social interactions. Some of them develops social anxiety due to the fear related to social situations. It is a most concerning and fast-growing issue not in Pakistan but everywhere in the world that is affecting the young people. A large number of young individuals are facing difficulties in functioning and well-being in their daily lives. It was investigated that the prevalence rate of social anxiety among adolescence was 10% and 90% of young people at the age of 23 was experiencing social anxiety (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020).

Youth age ranging from 15-24 years (UN, 1985) is the transitional period from childhood to adulthood, is very important for developing the social interactions and social relationships but hindrance in social relationships creates social anxiety patterns and maladaptive cognitions that leads toward social withdrawal, it sustains or persist throughout their lives (Campbell et al., 2016).

For young individuals when it is challenging to develop social relations then the failure in social interaction may lead towards withdrawal which ends up into more complications in social interactions (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020) because social relationships are a very critical in individual's lives, that's why their quantity and quality matters for that individual (Teo et al., 2013). As the social life greatly influences the psychological as well as the physical health of the individuals so, without positive and durable relationships and social interactions human beings can't live a normal, healthy and satisfactory life because human life is linked with depending on others (caregivers). Humans always have a desire for community and belonging needs because social interaction helps the individuals to build communication skills, supportive connections, feelings of being connected with others and acceptance (Mcleod, 2023) as Maslow (1943) explained that individuals have emotional and belonging needs for affiliation, social relationships and feeling of connectedness. But the individuals with social anxiety have problems in developing the close relationships with others (Hebert et al., 2013).

Individuals who exclude themselves they lack sense of social connectedness which leads towards anxiety, self-worthlessness, feeling of inferiority, self-doubt and has psychological distress. It was identified that social exclusion is positively related to the feeling of inferiority among youths. Therefore, the youth's excluding behavior from the society shows high level of denial and with the passage of time it produces many problematic social behaviors that includes the negative reactions towards other people due to the fear of rejection by others as well as the negative and distressing emotions like anxiety and depression (Shen et al., 2022).

### **Social Anxiety**

In 400 B.C. Hippocrates first time used the term Social Anxiety as "Shyness". All the Individuals who like darkness and think that other people always evaluate them fall into this term (Thomas, 2021). Trait social anxiety is related to the anxious feelings about social situations and during social interactions in which individuals perceive the social cues as threatening and embarrassing. These individuals limit their interactions and social engagements which effects their relationships, work as well as their mental wellbeing. Although everyone experiences social anxiety in his life but the people with trait social anxiety are highly disposed to social fear related to social situations. Trait social anxiety is highly linked with the anxiety of social interaction and social performance (Karasewich & Kuhlmeier, 2020).

Heller et al. (2013) explained that trait anxiety is the part of personality which is related to the negative emotions including worry and fear across social situations in which individuals perceive the environmental cues as threatening. This perception leads toward the negative cognition like rumination and negative interpretation of the social events. Similarly, individuals with high level of trait social anxiety have more anxious and stressful feelings in every social situation even though not every situation is threatening but these people have fear related to evaluation, rejection and embarrassment in social situations and during social interactions (Raypole, 2021). Similarly, individuals with high trait anxiety are more engaged in fear related feelings in social situations as compare to those having low trait anxiety because low trait anxiety is linked with the state anxiety in specific situations. Trait anxiety is a part of individual's personality that describes how the individual thinks, feels and responds (West, 2022).

Gregory (2022) explained that "Social anxiety is an extreme fear of embarrassment, disgrace and rejection when exposed to social interactions, public performance and negative

evaluation by other people. The other name of Social Anxiety is “Social Phobia”. It is a serious mental health condition that is related to the fear of encountering social situations that maintain over time. It can be explained as mutism in which individual refuse to participate or speak in social situations (Thomas, 2021).

Socially anxious youngsters always have anxiety of doing something that could be embarrassing, being noticed and judged by others and they have difficulty to do things in front of others because they interpret all the social cues as threatening (Caouette & Guyer, 2014) that’s why they demonstrate many problematic behaviors including fear, worry, nervousness and their self-esteem is negatively affected when they encounter the social situations or during social interactions (Murad, 2020).

Anxiety related to the negative evaluation is the key feature of social anxiety and these individuals anticipate an excessive fear of rejection related to the social interactions and also the relationships with romantic partners (Afram & Kashdan, 2015). Similarly, social anxiety causes when these individuals encounter social situations and anticipates that their presence is not comfortable for others by interpreting the facial expressions of other people and thinks that these people will negatively evaluate them (Tsuji & Shimada, 2018) because social fear is highly related to the threat of rejection by other people while performing or speaking in front of others that’s why these individuals demonstrate high level of depression, social restrictions, avoidance, suicidal thoughts and attempts, substances abuse and have difficulties in their academic areas (McKiernan, 2023).

In Pakistan, the most serious and prevailing psychological problems are anxiety and depression specially in adolescence years in which individual’s academic life is badly affecting by stress, depression and anxiety. Results revealed that students are experiencing high level of anxiety and depression in which females have high level of anxiety as compare to males (Ibbad et al., 2022). Similarly, Pakistani study revealed that late adolescent students showed social anxiety as 21.16% whereas the early adolescents scored 21.43% and middle adolescents scored 25.5%. More social anxiety was reported in middle adolescents because it is very critical time for growth and social interactions. So, in conclusion social anxiety was found most prevalent psychological distress among adolescents and its alarm is increasing in youths (Bano et al., 2019).



Socially anxious people anticipate that openly expressing emotions is likely to have negative consequences, that's why they avoid. Women are more likely to suppress their emotions because they think that expressing affects will lead towards negative consequences (Juretic & Zivcic-Becirevic, 2013) that's why these individuals always have trouble in identifying, maintaining and regulating their emotions and feelings and have a low confidence to express their emotions (Suveg & Zeman, 2004) because socially anxious people always tend to draw a negative conclusion related to their performance in front of others and about other's reactions even not every social event is threatening. But they interpret the social events unambiguously in more negative way because negative cognition like rumination plays a great role in maintaining the social anxiety (Mobini et al., 2013).

Biases in the interpretation of social events are highly contributing in maintaining the social anxiety and safety behaviors like avoidance in which individuals negatively and unambiguously interpret the social events (Prieto-Fidalgo & Calvete, 2023) because they negatively interpret themselves that they cannot handle the social situations and overestimate the threatening outcomes of social interactions. Besides this there are many factors that are affecting the anxious individuals include negative thinking patterns, extreme avoidance of social encounters, overly safety measures or withdrawal behaviors and continuous ruminative thinking which leads towards apprehension in future (Hofmann, 2007).

### **Ruminative Thinking**

Rumination term was first used by Nolen-Hoeksema in 1991. It is defined as “a reaction to distressing events that includes repetitive and negative thinking and focus on the elements of distressing events, on the possible causes and outcomes related to that element rather than to solve the problem” (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008). Similarly, it is associated with the initiation and maintenance of emotional distress like depression and anxiety due to the negative cognitive processes because individuals avoid positive things. Rumination and worry are highly associated with each other, anyone who will experience the social anxiety will be engaged in ruminative thinking that affects their emotions negatively (Lewis et al., 2019). There are many factors that cause rumination involves any kind of phobia, traumatic events, abuse, uncontrollable stressors, false interpretation of events and attention biases (Cirino, 2019).

Negative thinking develops when the socially anxious individual encounter social events and it has been concluded that the more the individual faces the social events, he/she will end up in developing the negative cognitions which leads toward depression. It was investigated that females have high negative cognition that leads toward higher level of rumination and depression as compare to males (Perveen et al., 2023)

Schmitz et al. (2010) explained that negative post event processing of social events is highly linked with the social anxiety. When socially anxious individuals encounter distressing social situations, they always view the negative aspects of interactions and also their own performance, that causes depression among these individuals. Since adolescence is a transitional period for the development of social avoidance among youths in later life, social anxiety and negative post event rumination was recognized as the common risk factor that is contributing in avoidance of social situations among adolescence (Miers et al., 2014). These individuals ruminate all the past threatening or traumatic experiences again and again because anxious people cannot get off from these types of thoughts that ultimately causes high level of anxiety and with the passage of time it will lead towards panic attacks (Lebow, 2021).

When the socially anxious individual negatively perceives his own performance and about the evaluations by other people then it leads toward post event negative ruminative thinking because these negative thinking and inappropriate over attention towards own performance contribute to social anxiety (Chen et al., 2013) because rumination is considered the way of responding to any traumatic or stressful life event that changes over time from emotional distress to feeling depressed (Connolly & Alloy, 2017). Furthermore, post event processing is highly associated with repetitive negative thoughts related to individual's own social performance and also when an anxious individuals focus on the negative aspects of previous events and social failures such as "I am loser I always ashamed in social situations". They always exaggerate their past failures and that anticipation and negative processing of social events are the key cognitive phenomena in sustaining the social anxiety (Brozovich & Gross, 2008).

Rumination is considered as a main factor that is responsible for initiation and maintenance of emotional distress which means whenever a person is in painful situation, he always engages in negative emotions rather than of taking the active measures to solve these painful problems (Teismann et al., 2014).

Researchers defined the rumination as a deep-rooted risk factor that contributes in anxiety and depression in adolescences and adults. When these individuals encounter any stressful life event they ruminate negatively because distressing life events are highly linked with rumination (Michl et al., 2013). These individuals are engaged in two types of thinking like abstract thinking and concrete thinking. Abstract thinking reduces the individual's ability of problem solving and causes psychological discomfort whereas the concrete thinking is associated with the feeling of inferiority like person thinks that he is a loser or he is unable to do things in a right way. Negative effects of both thinking causes psychological discomfort (Watkins & Moulds, 2005).

Treynor et al. (2003) explained two types of ruminations like reflection and brooding. Reflection is considered the adaptive form of rumination in which individual engage in problem solving behavior for improving his negative emotions like depression and anxiety whereas the brooding is considered as a maladaptive form in which an individual compares himself with others. By this Treynor concluded that the higher level of brooding shows more depressed thinking in future whereas the higher level of reflection shows low depressed feelings in future.

Rumination is also linked with the struggling for switched over from the negative stimulus that cause negative emotions and less struggling towards positive stimulus that are not causing the negative emotions (Genet et al., 2013). Whenever an individual experiences social fear, rumination occurs automatically without any conscious effort. This emotional distress develops when the individual tries to cope with the contradiction between the ideal state and real state. Ruminative thinking and mood deteriorate when these contradictions not meet and the individual constantly engaged in ruminative thinking to cope with such contradictions that persists with the passage of time and then ruminative thinking becomes habitual (Hjartarson et al., 2021).

Rumination creates depression, anxiety, self-harms, reduces the ability of problem solving, problematic behaviors like avoidance and give rise to negative thinking. Similarly ruminative thinking due to negative experience causing negative mood and problematic or negative cognition which leads toward dysphoric emotions among young individuals (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008) because these individuals cannot positively regulate their emotions and

excessive use of such strategy leads toward more depressive mood and problematic behaviors like avoidance among adolescences (Silk et al., 2003).

Loneliness is highly associated with the depressive or negative emotional thinking among young adults because social relationships play a very important role in human's life and failure in social relationship causes social isolation and loneliness. It is a subjective feeling of any individual related to the failure in social connections (Matthews et al., 2016). Similarly, the social exclusion of young people is mainly associated with the ruminative thinking that increases their feelings of inferiority and has a serious effect on their mental wellbeing and their physical health (Shen et al., 2022).

### **Social Exclusion**

Social Exclusion is most concerning issue throughout the world because as a social species human beings have innate need to feel connected to other people and feeling of belongingness. Youth's time period is very important when they start to develop an intimate relationship with others because youths spend most of the time with their friends rather than their family members so their feeling of belongingness increases (London & Ingram, 2018). Loneliness is considered as a prevention from social threat that's why an individual isolates himself from social participation and that feeling of loneliness affects his sleep pattern, mental as well as physical health (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014).

A generalized strain theory explains that social anxiety is the main cause of some non-adaptive behaviors like social exclusion and the individuals have difficulties in developing and maintaining the interpersonal relationships because of social exclusion, anxiety and stress. When a community youths exclude themselves socially then they are more likely to engage in ruminative thinking. Furthermore, rumination is a positive predictor of feeling of inferiority and social exclusion (Shen et al., 2022).

Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon that is defined by four dimensions in which two dimensions are related to socio-cultural exclusion like limited social participation and lack of normative integration. Limited social participation refers to the individuals who have limited social links and social participation, they develop very few relations with other people and have very low social involvement. A lack of normative integration defined as a failure to

follow or compliance with the standard norms and values of the society in which individual is living. Other two dimensions are related to the structure of economics in which inadequate access to basic social

rights refer to the individuals who do not get adequate health facilities, proper education and peaceful environment whereas material deprivation related to the deficits that individuals are experiencing, having not proper and basic goods and services for their financial support (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013).

Young people are experiencing social, emotional, material deprivation and health related difficulties because these processes increased the risk of exclusion. This social exclusion phenomenon is related to the four components including economic, institutional, social and culture exclusion. As social isolation or social exclusion is a complex process that explains lack of resources, services, related to the lack of social interactions and lack of participation in social activities whether in social, cultural, economic and political aspect. In 2014-20 high rates of social and material deprivation were reported between the age of 16 to 29 years old young individuals (Dai, 2022).

Social exclusion not only defined by lack of resources or material but it is an inability to participate in social relationships and activities whether related to the social, economic, political and cultural domains. It is a multidimensional phenomenon and a complex process that is affecting the individual's social as well as economic life. It is affecting the person individually and socially (Sianes, 2021). Similarly, Drew (2022) defined the Self-Exclusion as "the practice of intentionally excluding yourself from society and from other social services or activities" that's why these individuals isolate themselves due to social anxiety and feel alone, they have low self-esteem, lack close friends and lack social connections, they feel anxious when thinks about social interactions and participation in social activities and have limited social contacts (Shannonhouse, 2022).

Social exclusion is a debatable term throughout the world. It is not just a phenomenon of poverty and hardships but it also defines the wide variety of excluded individuals and the area of exclusion in which individuals exclude themselves (Peace, 2015) because young people experience social isolation in which they limit social interactions for long period of time. They voluntary withdraw from interactions with others due to the social anxiety, bullying and social stress (Wong et al., 2020). Furthermore, isolation causes due to the stress, depression and anxiety in which individuals use their own self-induced coping strategy to manage with extreme worry

related to social interactions. People who feel very alone, who have faced any abuse, those who has not proper health support system and the people who are facing depression and anxiety in their daily lives, they exclude themselves socially (Brown et al., 2021).

As social exclusion is a multidimensional process, that's why different researchers, practitioners and policy makers perceived it in different ways like some explained it as a process of lack of connection and belongingness to other people. That's why its complex nature may creating the confusion related to its assessment and definitions but researchers explained it according to their research context (Pervaiz et al., 2021).

Human beings are intrinsically social animal, they feel successful and satisfy by developing an enduring relationships and interaction with others. So, failures in interpersonal relations are greatly affecting the individuals (Williams, 2005). Individuals who exclude themselves on daily basis their mental wellbeing as well as physical health affected badly (Hawkley & Capitano, 2015) because social isolation is considered as an important antecedent related to the number of mental and physical health consequences (London & Ingram, 2018).

### **Cognitive theory of Social Anxiety**

Clark and Wells (1995) developed the cognitive theory of social anxiety in which they explained that the social anxiety develops by overestimating the negative aspects of social interactions and underestimating the positive aspects. Socially anxious individuals always tend to overestimate the threat of social interactions because they are afraid of negative consequences. These individuals also tend to devalue their ability to handle social engagements when they encounter social situations. Due to this, negative thoughts (rumination) and beliefs develop that lead towards social anxiety and individuals avoid social interactions (Clark & Wells, 1995).

According to cognitive theory of social anxiety when an individual interacts with others, he more focuses on how other people perceive or evaluate him rather than on social engagement itself. So, the youths who overestimate the threat of social interaction and its consequences of negative evaluation have social anxiety which lead towards negative thinking and social isolation, in which youths withdraw themselves from social situations or don't want to interact with others. These individuals more focus on their own actions that their performance is very distracting for others and other people will give them the negative comments. This attention

leads them towards negative aspects of their performance that how they are performing and interacting with others. This overly attention lead towards the social anxiety and they remember all their past painful experiences related to the encountering social situations and performance that's why they always try to improve their performance and try to hide their anxiety in front of others (Clark & Wells, 1995).

### **Cognitive Behavioral Model of Social Phobia**

Cognitive Behavioral Model of Social Phobia (Clark & Wells, 1995) explains that socially anxious people who are dealing with social anxiety (originally called social phobia) experiencing continuous fear related to the social situations or interactions that reaches beyond the actual danger or threat. People excessively worry about other's evaluation before and after event. People have common fears like speaking and performing in front of others and anticipate that they will be trembling, looking stupid, sweating, less competent, confused and anxious that's why they try to exclude themselves socially (Clark & Wells, 1995).

When anxious individuals engaged in social situations their attention shift, they excessively observe and monitor themselves and they build their own internal thoughts related to how other people perceive them. They thought that they will lose their position, their worth, and will face rejection by others. These people feel excessive worry about social events such as trembling, sweating, mutism, rigidity, appearing stupid or less incompetent and looking anxious in front of others both prior and after social situations (Clark, 2001).

There are many components that have been explained in Cognitive Behavioral Model of Social Phobia including dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions related to the social situations like extremely high levels of social performance (e.g., "I have to look like an intellectual, calm, and confident person in front of other people"), their believes are conditioned with other's evaluation (e.g., "Other people will judge me and humiliate me if I will make a mistake") and unrealistic believes about own self (e.g., "I am not capable like others"). These beliefs and presumptions are self-designed because they activate the fear that leads toward negative feedback and maintain the schemas. The second component is perceived social danger, individual makes predictions that he will not be able to meet the expectations of other people (e.g., "I will shake", "I will be looking like a boring person for others") and poor evaluation of his or her own performance in front of others (e.g., "I am very confuse in my speech") consider him as a bored person. This cognitive



model explains that these anticipations lead towards emotional and behavioral responses (avoidance). The third component is somatic and cognitive symptoms like due to anxiety many bodily sensations will arouse including trembling, sweating, fade down and unstable voice. The fourth component is behavioral symptoms like individual in social situations performs some actions to overcome the risk of negative evaluation in which they try to hide shaking and also, they increase their self-focused attention (Clark & Wells, 1995).

Socially anxious individuals develop a poor self-impression and think that this is an accurate depiction of what other people observe and think about them. These individuals view themselves from the eyes of other people like whenever these individuals encounter the triggering situation then their center of attention transfers on themselves and they start to monitor their own performance in detailed manner which develops negative feelings. Sometimes prior life experiences interfere with their present conditions. These traumatic experiences involve bullying, abuse, rejection by other people and degrade. That prior experiences develop negative impression of themselves, that's why these individuals start to exclude themselves socially (Clark & Wells, 1995).

### **Self-presentational Theory of Social Anxiety**

Self-presentational Theory of Social Anxiety (Leary & Kowalski, 1995) explained that social anxiety causes when the individual believe that he is not capable enough to present him in an acceptable way. An individual wants to make impression because he thinks that it is very important for how other people treat him in daily life. He thinks that other people would perceive him as he lacks efficacy and interpersonal ability. This theory states that when the individuals want to maintain a good impression on other people, but they underestimate their abilities, they avoid social interactions and exclude themselves socially. There are two factors of this theory like interpersonal factor that is related to the anxiety and individual differences in experiencing the social anxiety in social situations. The second factor is the situational factor that is linked with either elevated motivation to demonstrate good impression to others or little confidence in one's ability to make a good impression, because individuals want to present a good image of themselves and prevent unpleasant one (Catalino et al., 2012).

Low self-presentational efficacy is highly associated with social anxiety and the individuals who believe that they cannot handle the social situations are more likely to develop high level of social anxiety. Both impression motivation and impression efficacy are independently associated with social anxiety. Impression motivation is when individuals control their emotions and behavior according to the other people as other people accept them and impression efficacy is when individuals perform in an expected way (Catalino et al., 2012).

Self-presentational theory assumes that social skill deficiencies also contribute to the development of social anxiety or fear, this fear can be reduced by training and mastering social skills. The relationship between social anxiety and social skills can be explained by the viewpoint of self-presentational theory in a way that makes these people (have low social skills) doubt on their abilities to create a positive impact on others. There are certain maladaptive thought patterns, such as having high standards for oneself and having prejudiced views about oneself creates ruminative thinking and social anxiety (Catalino et al., 2012).

### **Literature review**

When the socially anxious individual encounter the social situation, then stress reactive ruminative thinking arises. Therefore, social anxiety and negative thinking is highly linked with stress reactive ruminative thinking even in the healthy individuals (Laicher et al., 2022). According to Pakistani study, negative emotions is significantly mediated the relationship between anxiety and stress as well as also mediated between ruminative and depressive thinking among the people who have faced any traumatic event (Iqbal, 2021).

People who have a fear of negative evaluation and are inclined to look for reasons for their failures and negative feelings are more likely to be overthinkers. Furthermore, rumination is also found in the people who have experienced negative parenting practices (parental rejection and overprotection) (Ying et al., 2021). Another study revealed that ruminating influences the relationship between stress and social anxiety, as well as the relationship between negative affect and social anxiety (Valenas & Szentagotai-Tatar, 2015) because the degree to which individuals with social anxiety negatively perceive their own performance and devote a significant amount of attention to their negative self-image predicts post-event rumination (Chen et al., 2013).

Individuals with more social anxiety predicts their bad performance or actions, underemphasis their real actions and involve in more post event processing as compared to the

individuals who were low socially anxious. The extent of poor post-event processing is related to the intensity of social fear and bad appraisals of performance, both soon after the conversation level and after 1 week (Dannahy & Stopa, 2007).

People who have social anxiety tend to underestimate their abilities when compared with others, resulting in varying degrees of negative emotional experience (Shen et al., 2022). Another study's result indicates that social anxiety is highly related to the higher levels of rumination and less related to higher levels of co-rumination over time. The gender difference explained that these relationships were stronger for females as compare to the males (Jose et al., 2012).

Individuals who have high social fear were more likely to anticipate bad thinking and less likely to divert when they encounter social stressors compared to those who have low social fear (Kocovski et al., 2005). Similarly, social anxiety is most serious factor of interpersonal distress that is characterized by post event processing and other factors of distress involves fear of loneliness, fear of hurting others, guilt and anger feelings (Lundh & Sperling, 2002).

There is a significant mediating role of rumination (including depression) between the cognitive emotions and loneliness, depends on the age and rumination level. Furthermore, rumination is highly associated with depression symptoms among young, middle and old aged people (Tong et al., 2021).

All the young people who are experiencing the social isolation are more engage in rumination, their level of rumination is high as compare to others. When these people feel themselves alone, they more ruminate about social interactions and their previous painful experiences. They negatively interpret the social situations and have paranoid thinking patterns about others (Yun et al., 2022).

Behavioral system can be affected by a person's state of social and mental health. Study on students of grade 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> (age ranging from 16-19 years) have shown that the scarcity of social involvement can trigger emotional and psychological discomfort, and disruptions in socialization can trigger social isolation and anxiety (Catacutan et al., 2022).

Social exclusion increases the threat of fear acquisition and negative processing about that fear by the mediating role of prefrontal cortex (Dou et al., 2020). Mostly youngsters who are depressed and experiencing loneliness, they avoid interaction with other people socially because

depressed thinking is a perpetuating factor of loneliness (Achterbergh et al., 2020) because loneliness was not related to only physiological symptoms but it is also related to the increased level of cognitive emotions related to depression and anxiety (Hwang et al., 2020).

During the bouts of social isolation, young people experience more rumination because loneliness is highly associated with the content of ruminative thinking (Fardghassemi & Joffe, 2021). Furthermore, Loneliness has an adverse effect on the well-being of individual. Research findings suggest that loneliness predicts rumination (Zawadzki et al., 2013).

Individuals who suffer from social anxiety frequently avoid social contact to relieve tension. However, as time passes, their anxiety deteriorates, and as a result, they become more excluded or separated from social situations. Furthermore, adolescence is regarded as the greatest risk time for the onset of social anxiety symptoms. This is the most sensitive period because of the fluctuations in physical and mental development, especially after puberty community youth frequently experience conflicts, pressure, and even serious psychological deviations (Shen et al., 2022).

Trait social anxiety predicts social exclusion. Research findings indicate that the latent urge to affiliate was motivated by greater curiosity and sensitivity to social benefits. Furthermore, increased social anxiety was associated with decreased motivation to attach, and this link between social anxiety and affiliation was mediated by decreased reward reactivity responsiveness. Findings showed that high level of social anxiety trait affects the social reward responsiveness and role of goal pursue (Hudd-Taylor & Moscovitch, 2022).

Social anxiety has been linked to compensatory deficiencies in pro-social behavior following exclusion as well as failing to build on social success. They discovered that individuals with high social anxiety and social isolation, their self-esteem is lower than those with low social anxiety (Friedman, 2021).

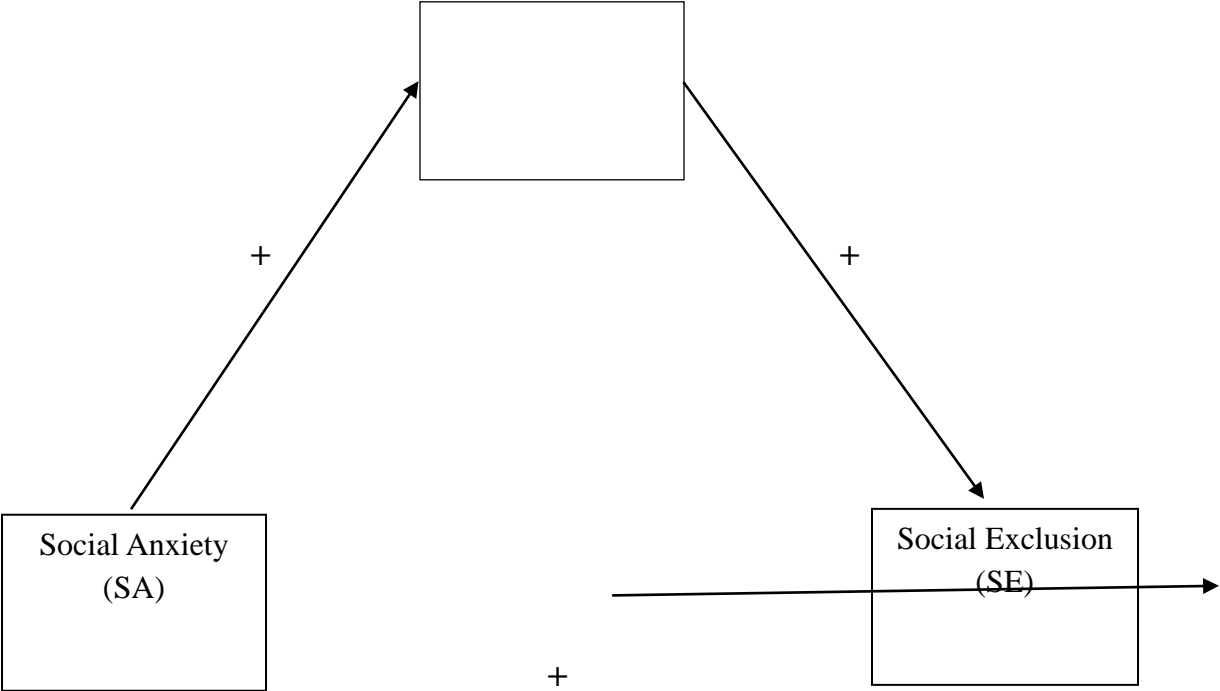
The prevalence of social anxiety worldwide was discovered to be considerably higher than previously reported. Furthermore, 18% of the young individuals perceived themselves as they have not social anxiety but still met the social anxiety disorder threshold. Social anxiety is a major issue affecting young people all over the world, but there are many people who do not recognize the difficulties they are experiencing in their lives (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020).

Loneliness is highly linked with depressive thinking among younger adults because these individuals are more likely to engage in negative thinking pattern which effects their health and life styles (Matthews et al., 2019).

Social networking sites have been found to be closely linked with social exclusion and affecting the individuals with high or low levels of social anxiety in different ways. Utilizing Social Networking Sites assisted individuals who are extremely socially anxious in recovering from social isolation and feeling a sense of meaningful existence (Lin et al., 2017).

Socially anxious individuals reported significantly higher levels of social exclusion feelings than non-anxious group. Individuals with social anxiety disorder had significantly higher activation in the left inferior frontal gyrus during the re-inclusion phase when compared to non-anxious group (Heeren et al., 2017). Similarly, human beings are an intrinsically sociable species. Humans are successful and motivated when they highly developed the ability to cooperate and interact with other people socially. That's why it is not surprising that social rejection and failure in social interactions would have an impact on the individuals (William et al., 2005).

**Conceptual Framework of the study**



**Figure 1:** *Conceptual model of the study*

## **Significance of the study**

This study emphasized the need to pay attention towards socially anxious individuals, as the social anxiety is a most serious psychological problem that is affecting the youngster's lives. This study mainly highlighted the need to address the social anxiety of young people, as they are experiencing in social situations and during social interactions. Current study explored the trait of social anxiety in youths, that is the part of youth's personality that makes them socially isolated and anxious. This study highlighted the important aspects like ruminative thinking and social exclusion that are associated with the social anxiety and also analyzed the social exclusion in multidimensional way. Results of the study will allow the psychologists and practitioners to understand the impact of social anxiety on mental health as well as on physical health of youngsters. With this regard, institutions are required to play their role, work collaboratively with mental health experts and develop interventions that can manage the social anxiety of students because students are the integral part of a country, they play a very important role in the development and the prosperity of any country.

Results of the present study provides the further information regarding social anxiety and social exclusion with respect to the role of ruminative thinking among youth. It is hoped that current study will provide the valuable information to the literature and practitioners in research field. This research knowledge is beneficial in improving the academic functioning, social interactions, and quality of life of young people.

## **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study were:

1. To find out the relationship of social anxiety and social exclusion among youth.
2. To find out the mediating role of ruminative thinking in between the relationship of social anxiety with social exclusion among youth.
3. To investigate the prediction of social exclusion through social anxiety among youth.
4. To find out the gender differences on social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth.

## **Research Hypotheses**

1. There will be a positive relationship between social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth.
2. The relationship between social anxiety and social exclusion will be mediated by ruminative thinking among youth.
3. There will be gender differences on social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth.



**METHOD****Research Design**

For the current study, cross-sectional research design was used to study the relationship between social anxiety and social exclusion with a mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth. Data was collected from Humanities & Social Sciences (Psychology and Media studies) and Engineering Sciences (Software and Electrical Engineering).

**Participants**

The sample size was determined through G-power. The sample comprised of 300 university students ranging in age between 15-24 years according to United Nation (UN, 1985). The convenient sampling technique was used to select the participants for current study.

***Inclusion Criteria***

University students were included in this study.

***Exclusion Criteria***

The participants who were diagnosed with any psychological disorder or having any physiological disease were not included in the study.

**Operational definitions*****Social Anxiety***

Social Anxiety is defined as a fear related to social interaction like initiating and maintaining the conversation with others and the fear of being observed, evaluate and during performance like eating and giving speech in front of others (Zsido et al., 2021).

### ***Ruminative Thinking***

Ruminative Thinking refers to the negative thinking style that is intrusive, monotonous, recurring and uncontrollable in nature. Ruminative thoughts are negative in content, related to depressed mood, anxiety and the global rumination that includes positive, negative and neutral thinking that is unbiased by depressive symptoms (Brinker & Dozois, 2009).

### ***Social Exclusion***

Exclusion can be described as isolated from other, being household, having no social connections, refusing to let anyone into your life, being uninterested in anything and having no regard for others. Social exclusion is defined by four dimensions including limited social participation, lack of normative integration, inadequate access to basic social rights and material deprivation (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013).

### **Measures**

Measures include Demographic Sheet, Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS-6) and Social Phobia Scale (SPS-6), Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire (RTS) and Social Exclusion Scale (SES).

### **Demographic Data Sheet**

Demographic data sheet was prepared for gathering information related to participant's gender, age, current semester, department, institution, marital status, birth order, family income, parent's education, occupation and housing type.

### ***Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS-6) and Social Phobia Scale (SPS-6)***

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale-6 & Social Phobia Scale-6 (Peter et al., 2012) are short and revised versions. It has two subscales including Social Interaction Anxiety Scale-6 and Social Phobia Scale-6 that together measures social anxiety. More specifically SIAS-6 is a self-report measure that is based on the 6-items (1-6), it evaluates the anxiety linked with starting and sustaining the social interactions. Whereas SPS-6 is also a self-report measure that has 6-items (7-12) measures the experience of anxiety linked to the performance of numerous actions while being monitored or evaluate by other people. All the items of both scales were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the range of 0 = Not at all characteristic or true of me, 1 = Slightly

characteristics or true of me, 2 = Moderately characteristic or true of me, 3 = Very characteristic or true of me and 4 = Extremely characteristic or true of me (Zsido et al., 2021).

To explore the psychometric properties of these scales, authors used the item response theory. These scales have magnificent convergent and divergent validity with respect to anxiety, cognitive emotional regulation and depression. The internal consistency of SIAS-6 and SPS-6 is from .79 to .85. These scale's items have very high power of discrimination regarding anxious and non-anxious individuals and extensively measure the latent trait in individuals. This scale is appropriate for research and clinical setting as well. Test-retest reliability is also high, that is .90 for SIAS-6 and .92 for SPS-6. This scale's author used a two-factor model to designed these short forms that collectively measure the two different dimensions of social anxiety. The reliability and validity of both scales monitored to be internally consistent. Psychometric characteristics of these scales are satisfactory on the community sample of adolescent in relations to adults because adolescence or young people experience more social anxiety as compared to other age groups (Zsido et al., 2021).

The scoring of these scales was calculated by adding all the items. Total range of the scores is from 0-48. Higher scores indicate the higher social anxiety and lower score indicates the lower social anxiety among individuals. These items have not reverse scoring (Peters et al., 2012).

### ***Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire (RTS)***

Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire was developed by Brinker and Dozois (2009). It has 20 items. It is 7-point Likert type scale with the range of 1 = not at all description of me to 7= describes me very well. It has great internal consistency with the .89 to .92 Cronbach alpha reliability and has high test-retest reliability that is .80. The convergent validity of this scale is .64 which shows strong correlation. It has no subscales (Kovacs et al., 2021).

The scoring of this scale was calculated by just adding all the item's scores in which higher scores indicates high ruminative thinking and low scores indicate low ruminative thinking among individuals. Total range of the scores is from 0-140. This scale has not any reverse scoring (Brinker & Dozois, 2009).

### ***Social Exclusion Scale***

Social Exclusion Scale was developed by Vrooman and Hoff (2013). It is a latest version that consists of 15 items that were used to measure the social exclusion. This scale consists of four subscales like Limited social participation, Lack of normative integration, Inadequate access to basic social rights and Material deprivation. Each subscale has three to four items in question set like in Limited social participation has four items (1-4), Lack of normative integration has four items (5-8), Inadequate access to basic rights has three items (9-11) and Material deprivation has four items (12-15) (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013).

For the psychometric properties (reliability), the correlation was computed. The range is 0.28–0.44 because each subscale explains a different theoretical aspect of social exclusion so it is not surprising because very high correlations between the subsets would have been a contraindication of social exclusion because it is a multidimensional phenomenon (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013).

The scoring was calculated by adding the items of each subscale separately. On scoring higher scores indicate high social exclusion whereas lower scores indicate low social exclusion among individuals (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013).

### **Procedure**

The current study was approved and reviewed by the University's research committee. Permission for the scales was taken from the respective authors. After getting permission, data collection was started. The data was collected from four departments (Psychology, Media Science, Software Engineering and Electrical Engineering) of Bahria University Islamabad. The participants were briefed about the purpose of the study. The participants were given an informed consent form, a demographic sheet, and questionnaires as well as directions to complete the questionnaire as honestly as possible and leave no item unchecked. There was no time limit for the participant to complete the questionnaire. Once the participants were done with questionnaire, the questionnaire was collected from the participant and the participant were recognized and appreciated for their participation.

## **Ethical Considerations**

All the scales in the current study were used after getting permission from their respective authors. The participant's confidentiality was also ensured that the information will only be used for research purpose. At first the participant had to sign the informed consent in which all the information was given, that their participation in the research is voluntarily and there is no risk of physical or psychological harm to participants. Moreover, they were informed that their identity would not be revealed, and it would remain confidential and that their responses would only be used for research purposes. They were also told about their right to leave research at any point in time.

**RESULTS**

After data collection it was entered and analyzed through SPSS (IBM Version 27). Descriptive statistics were calculated for demographic characteristics. Cronbach alpha reliability was also computed for scales and their respective subscales. Correlation analysis was carried out for scales and subscales. Mediation analysis was carried out to measure whether ruminative thinking is playing a mediating role in between social anxiety and social exclusion among youth. Regression analysis and Independent samples t-test were also carried out.

**Table 1***Sociodemographic characteristics of sample (N= 300)*

Characteristics	f	%	M	SD
Gender				
Male	157	52.3		
Female	143	47.7		
Age			20.84	1.62
Departments				
Psychology	81	27		
Media Science	78	26		
Software Engineering	70	23.3		
Electrical Engineering	71	23.7		
Semesters				
1st Semester	37	12.3		
2nd Semester	61	20.3		
3rd Semester	13	4.3		
4th Semester	35	11.7		
5th Semester	5	1.7		
6th Semester	70	23.3		
7th Semester	18	6		
8th Semester	61	20.3		
Family system				
Joint	71	23.7		
Nuclear	229	76.3		
Family income			171476.67	157549.08
Father's education				
Matric	30	10		
Intermediate	54	18		
Undergraduate	112	37.4		
Post graduate	96	32		
PHD	7	2.3		
Uneducated	1	0.3		
Father's occupation				
Private	105	35		
Government	167	55.7		
Deceased	4	1.3		
Retired	24	8		
Mother's education				
Matric	48	16		

Intermediate	70	23.3
Undergraduate	93	31
Post graduate	49	16.3
PHD	6	2
Uneducated	34	11.3
Mother's occupation		
House wife	243	81
Working	57	19
Housing type		
Hostelite	62	20.7
Day Scholar	238	79.3

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This table shows the Socio-demographic characteristics of sample (N=300).



**Table 2**

*Psychometric properties of SIAS-6 & SPS-6 and Ruminative Thought Style Scale among youth (N=300)*

Scales	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's $\alpha$
SIAS-6 & SPS-6	13.43	9.71	0-42	.88
Social Interaction Anxiety Scale	6.92	5.15	0-21	.78
Social Phobia Scale	6.5	5.42	0-23	.83
Ruminative Thought Style	84.07	28.60	20-140	.94

*Note:* SIAS-6 and SPS-6: Social Interaction Anxiety Scale-6 and Social Phobia Scale-6.

Table 2 shows the psychometric properties of measures, SIAS-6 & SPS-6 whole scale and its respective subscales including social interaction anxiety scale and social phobia scale and the whole scale of ruminative thought style. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the SIAS-6 and SPS-6 whole scale is 0.88 and its subscales has 0.78 and 0.83 respectively which indicates high internal consistency. The scale of ruminative thought style also has high Cronbach alpha reliability with 0.94 range.

**Table 3***Item total correlation of Social Interaction Anxiety Scale and Social Phobia Scale (N=300)*

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale		Social Phobia Scale	
Items	r	Items	r
Item 1	.65**	Item 7	.76**
Item 2	.69**	Item 8	.80**
Item 3	.73**	Item 9	.77**
Item 4	.72**	Item 10	.69**
Item 5	.75**	Item 11	.75**
Item 6	.61**	Item 12	.66**

*Note:* \*\*p<.01

Table 3 shows the Item total correlation of SIAS-6 & SPS-6's subscales (Social interaction anxiety scale and social phobia scale) in which all the items are significantly correlated with the total score of their respective subscales.

**Table 4***Item total correlation of Ruminative Thought Style Scale (N=300)*

Items	r	Items	r
Item 1	.66**	Item 11	.66**
Item 2	.79**	Item 12	.68**
Item 3	.76**	Item 13	.59**
Item 4	.75**	Item 14	.73**
Item 5	.68**	Item 15	.73**
Item 6	.72**	Item 16	.61**
Item 7	.71**	Item 17	.66**
Item 8	.69**	Item 18	.70**
Item 9	.58**	Item 19	.73**
Item 10	.69**	Item 20	.73**

Note: \*\*p<.01

Table 4 shows the item total correlation of Ruminative Thought Style Scale in which all the items are significantly correlated with the total score of scale.

**Table 5***Item total correlation of the subscales of Social Exclusion (N=300)*

Limited Social Participation		Lack of normative integration	
Items	r	Items	r
Item 1	.41**	Item 5	.25**
Item 2	.54**	Item 6	.46**
Item 3	.58**	Item 7	.48**
Item 4	.74**	Item 8	.72**
Inadequate access to basic social rights		Material deprivation	
Items	r	Items	r
Item 9	.29**	Item 12	.63**
Item 10	.76**	Item 13	.64**
Item 11	.70**	Item 14	.60**
		Item 15	.86**

*Note:* \*\*p<.01

Table 5 shows the item total correlation of social exclusion's subscales (Limited social participation, Lack of normative integration, Inadequate access to basic social rights and Material deprivation) in which all the items are significantly correlated with the total score of their respective subscales.

**Table 6***Correlational analysis between the study variables of Social Anxiety, Ruminative Thinking and Social Exclusion (N=300)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1- SIAS-6 & SPS-6	-	.91**	.92**	.43**	-.19**	-.18**	-.05	-.02
2- Social interaction anxiety		-	.69**	.35**	-.18**	-.20**	-.04	-.03
3- Social phobia			-	.44**	-.16**	-.14**	-.05	.004
4- Ruminative thought style				-	-.23**	-.17**	-.19**	-.12*
5- Limited social participation					-	.27**	.32**	.13**
6- Lack of normative integration						-	.18**	.07
7- Inadequate access to basic social rights							-	.18**
8- Material deprivation								-

*Note: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, SIAS-6: Social Interaction Anxiety Scale-6, SPS-6: Social Phobia Scale-6.*

Table 6 illustrates the inter scale correlation between the scales and subscales of Social Anxiety, Ruminative Thinking and Social Exclusion (N= 300). The results indicate that the SIAS-6 & SPS-6 whole scale and its subscales (social interaction anxiety and social phobia) are significantly positively correlated with ruminative thinking among youth whereas they are negatively significantly correlated with limited social participation and lack of normative integration and negatively insignificantly correlated with inadequate access to basic social rights and material deprivation. Social phobia is insignificantly correlated with material deprivation among youth.

Additionally, Ruminative thought style is negatively significantly correlated with all the subscales of social exclusion (limited social participation, lack of normative integration, inadequate basic right social rights and material deprivation) whereas all the social exclusion's subscales are positively significantly correlated with each other but lack of normative integration is insignificantly correlated with material deprivation.

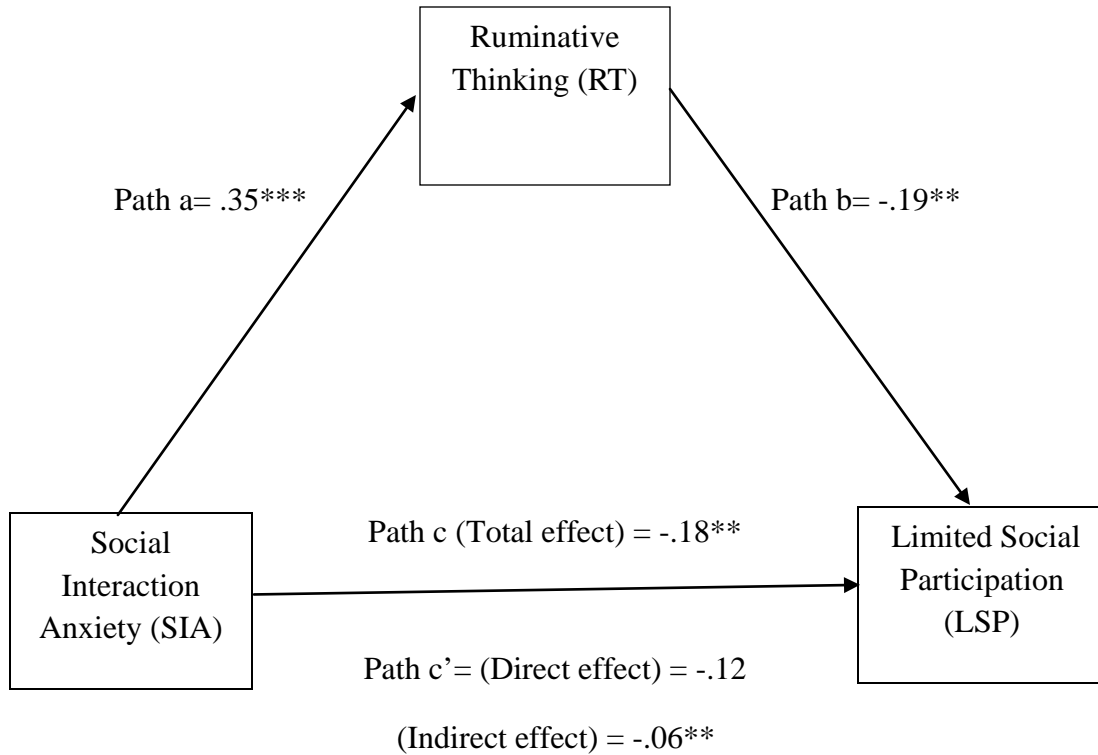
**Table 7**

*Relationship between Social Interaction Anxiety and Limited Social Participation with the mediating role of Ruminative Thinking among youth (N= 300)*

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	95% CI	
						LL	UL
<b>Direct effect</b>							
SIA→RT	.35	.30	6.34	.000	.12	1.32	2.51
RT→LSP	-.19	.004	3.09	.002		-.02	-.004
SIA→LSP	-.12	.02	1.96	.05	.06	-.08	.000
<b>Indirect effect</b>							
SIA→ RT→LSP	-.06	.02				-.11	-.02
<b>Total effect</b>							
SIA→LSP	-.18	.02	3.18	.002	.03	-.10	-.02

*Note:* SIA: Social Interaction Anxiety, LSP: Limited Social Participation, RT: Ruminative Thinking,  $\beta$ : Standardized beta, SE: Standard Error

This table shows the mediation analysis among the variables of social interaction anxiety, ruminative thinking and limited social participation among youth in which social interaction anxiety was found to be positively significant predictor of ruminative thinking and ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant predictor of limited social participation among youth. Indirect effect and total effect were found to be negatively significant. In conclusion, results indicate that ruminative thinking was mediating the relationship between social interaction anxiety and limited social participation among youth.



Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ,

**Figure 2:** Pathway model of mediation process for Social Interaction Anxiety and Limited Social Participation

This model shows the mediating effect of ruminative thinking on the relationship between social interaction anxiety and limited social participation among youth. According to this model, social interaction anxiety is significantly predicting limited social participation with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth.



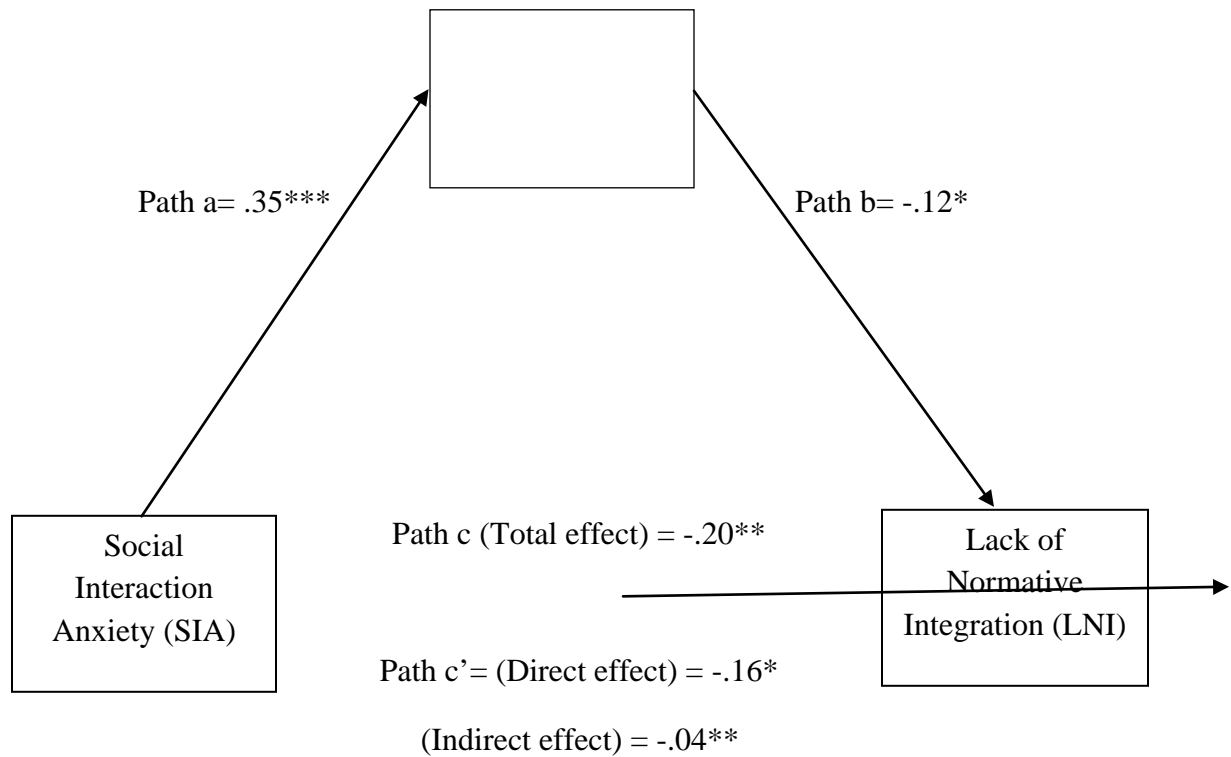
**Table 8**

*Relationship between Social Interaction Anxiety and Lack of Normative Integration with the mediating role of Ruminative Thinking among youth (N= 300)*

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	95% CI	
						LL	UL
Direct effect							
SIA→RT	.35	.30	6.34	.000	.12	1.42	2.41
RT→LNI	-.12	.003	1.94	.05	.05	-.01	-.001
SIA→LNI	-.16	.02	2.64	.01		-.07	-.02
Indirect effect							
SIA→RT→LNI	-.04	.02				-.07	-.01
Total effect							
SIA→LNI	-.2	.02	3.51	.001	.04	-.08	-.03

*Note:* SIA: Social Interaction Anxiety, LNI: Lack of Normative Integration, RT: Ruminative Thinking,  $\beta$ : Standardized beta, SE: Standard Error

This table shows the mediation analysis among the variables of social interaction anxiety, ruminative thinking and lack of normative integration among youth in which direct, indirect and total effect between the social interaction anxiety and lack of normative integration was found to be negatively significant whereas social interaction anxiety was found to be positively significant predictor of ruminative thinking and ruminative thinking was found to be negative significant predictor of lack of normative integration among youth. In conclusion, results indicate that ruminative thinking was mediating the relationship between social interaction anxiety and lack of normative integration among youth.



Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

**Figure 3:** Pathway model of mediation process for Social Interaction Anxiety and Lack of Normative Integration

This model shows the mediating effect of ruminative thinking on the relationship between social interaction anxiety and lack of normative integration among youth. According to this model, social interaction anxiety is significantly predicting lack of normative integration with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth.

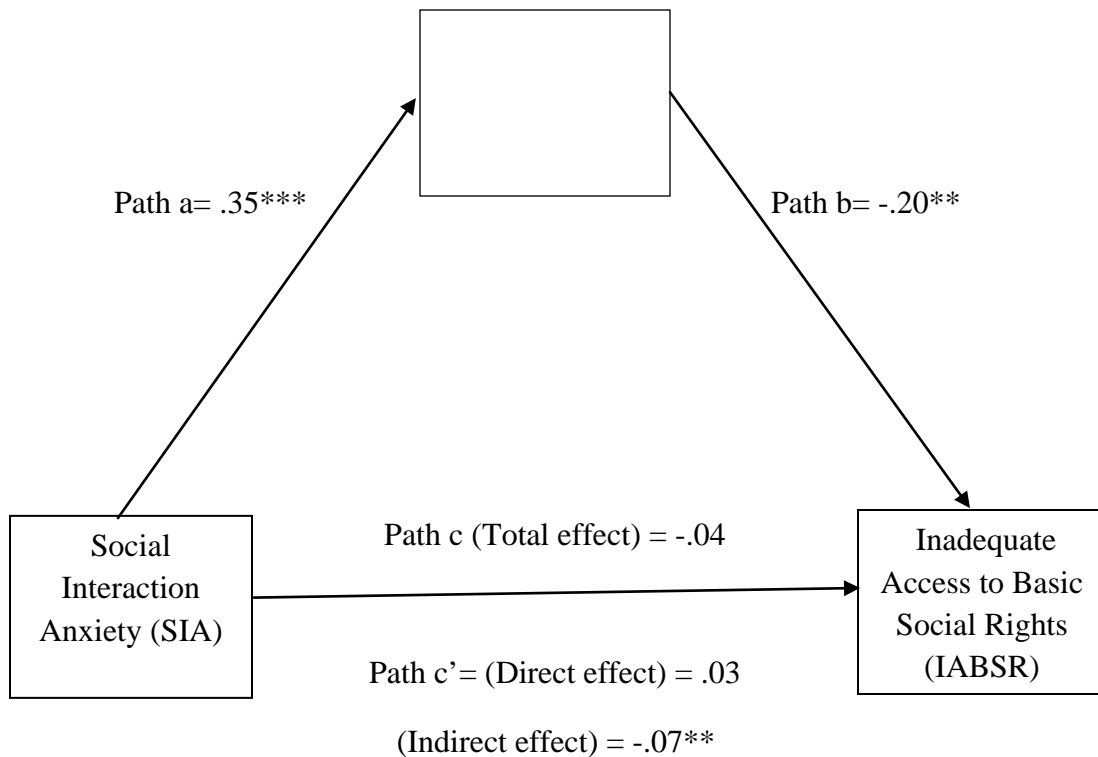
**Table 9**

*Relationship between Social Interaction Anxiety and Inadequate Access to Basic Social Rights with the mediating role of Ruminative Thinking among youth (N= 300)*

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	95% CI	
						LL	UL
<b>Direct effect</b>							
SIA→RT	.35	.30	6.34	.000	.12	1.32	2.51
RT→IABSR	-.20	.003	3.24	.001		-.02	-.004
SIA→IABSR	.03	.02	.49	.63	.04	-.02	.04
<b>Indirect effect</b>							
SIA→RT→IABSR	-.07	.03				-.12	-.02
<b>Total effect</b>							
SIA→IABSR	-.04	.02	.66	.51	.001	-.04	.02

*Note:* SIA: Social Interaction Anxiety, IABSR: Inadequate Access to Basic Social Rights, RT: Ruminative Thinking,  $\beta$ : Standardized beta, SE: Standard Error

This table shows the mediation analysis among the variables of social interaction anxiety, ruminative thinking and inadequate access to basic social rights among youth in which social interaction anxiety was found to be positively significant predictor of ruminative thinking and ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant predictor of inadequate access to basic social rights among youth. The indirect effect of ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant between social interaction anxiety and inadequate access to basic social rights. In conclusion, results indicate that ruminative thinking was mediating the relationship between social interaction anxiety and inadequate access to basic social rights among youth.



Note:  $***p < .001$ ,  $**p < .01$

**Figure 4:** Pathway model of mediation process for Social Interaction Anxiety and Inadequate Access to Basic Social Rights

This model shows the mediating effect of ruminative thinking on the relationship between social interaction anxiety and inadequate access to basic social rights among youth. According to this model, social interaction anxiety is significantly predicting inadequate access to basic social rights with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth.

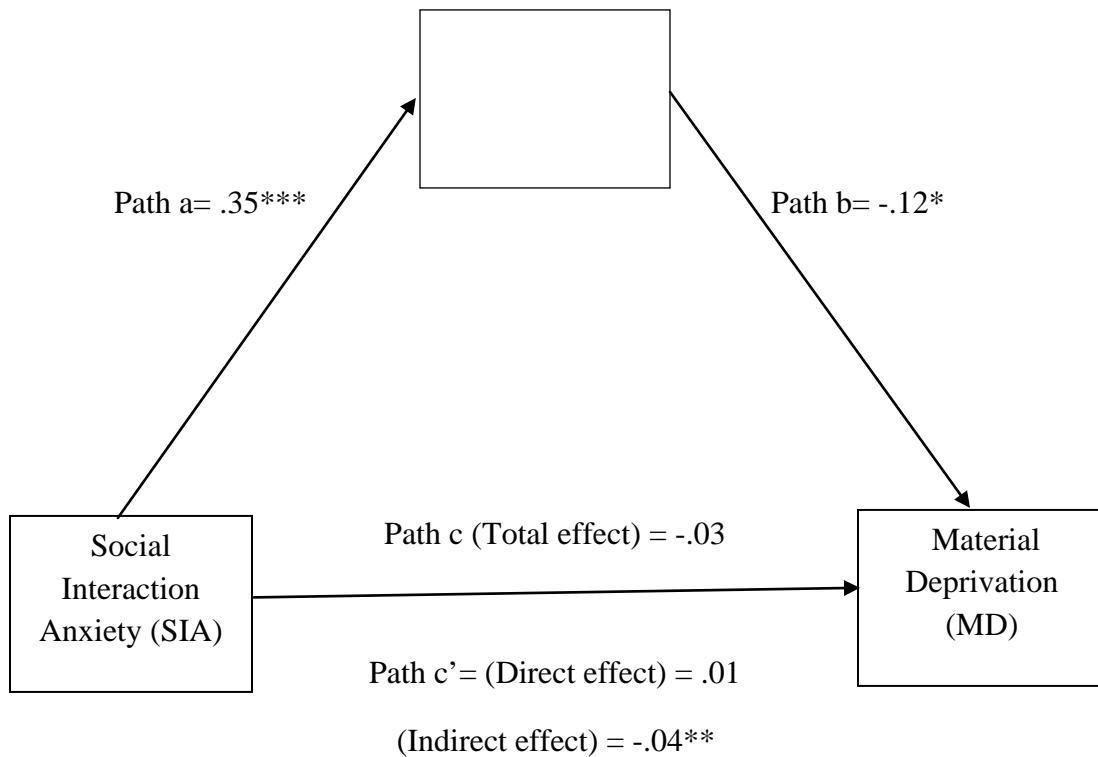
**Table 10**

*Relationship between Social Interaction Anxiety and Material Deprivation with the mediating role of Ruminative Thinking among youth (N= 300)*

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	95% CI	
						LL	UL
<b>Direct effect</b>							
SIA→RT	.35	.30	6.34	.000	.12	1.42	2.41
RT→MD	-.12	.004	2.00	.046		-.01	-.001
SIA→MD	.01	.02	.15	.88	.01	-.03	.04
<b>Indirect effect</b>							
SIA→RT→MD	-.04	.02				-.08	-.01
<b>Total effect</b>							
SIA→MD	-.03	.02	.57	.57	.001	-.05	.02

*Note:* SIA: Social Interaction Anxiety, MD: Material Deprivation, RT: Ruminative Thinking,  $\beta$ : Standardized beta, SE: Standard Error

This table shows the mediation analysis among the variables of social interaction anxiety, ruminative thinking and material deprivation among youth in which social interaction anxiety was found to be positively significant predictor of ruminative thinking and ruminative thinking was found to be negative significant predictor of material deprivation among youth. The indirect effect of ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant between social interaction anxiety and material deprivation. In conclusion, results indicate that ruminative thinking was mediating the relationship between social interaction anxiety and material deprivation among youth.



Note:  $***p < .001$ ,  $**p < .01$ ,  $*p < .05$

**Figure 5:** Pathway model of mediation process for Social Interaction Anxiety and Material Deprivation

This model shows the mediating effect of ruminative thinking on the relationship between social interaction anxiety and material deprivation among youth. According to this model, social interaction anxiety significantly predicting material deprivation with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth.

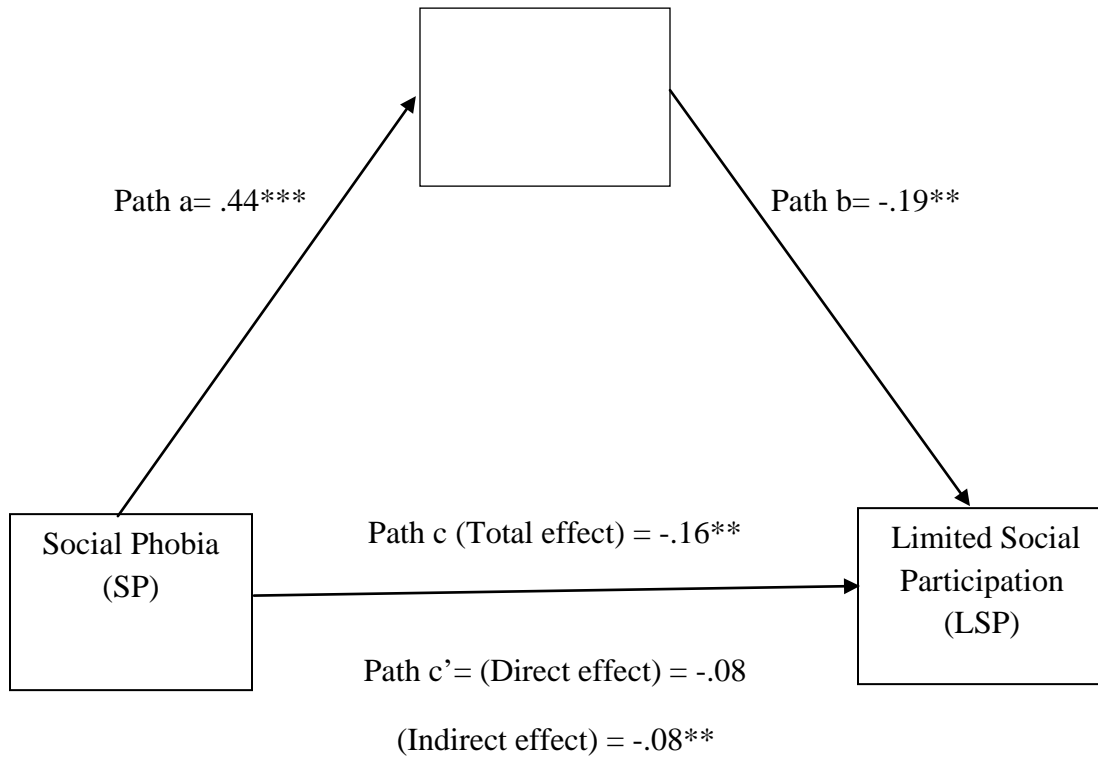
**Table 11**

*Relationship between Social Phobia and Limited Social Participation with the mediating role of Ruminative Thinking among youth (N= 300)*

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	95% CI	
						LL	UL
<b>Direct effect</b>							
SP→RT	.44	.28	8.35	.000	.19	1.75	2.84
RT→LSP	-.19	.004	3.08	.002	.06	-.02	-.004
SP→LSP	-.08	.02	1.20	.23		-.06	.02
<b>Indirect effect</b>							
SP→RT→LSP	-.08	.03				-.14	-.02
<b>Total effect</b>							
SP→LSP	-.16	.02	2.78	.006	.03	-.09	-.02

*Note:* SP: Social Phobia, LSP: Limited Social Participation, RT: Ruminative Thinking,  $\beta$ : Standardized beta, SE: Standard Error

This table shows the mediation analysis among the variables of social phobia, ruminative thinking and limited social participation among youth in which social phobia was found to be positively significant predictor of ruminative thinking and ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant predictor of limited social participation among youth. The indirect effect and total effect were found to be negatively significant. In conclusion, results indicate that ruminative thinking was mediating the relationship between social phobia and limited social participation among youth.



Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Figure 6:** Pathway model of mediation process for Social Phobia and Limited Social Participation

This model shows the mediating effect of ruminative thinking on the relationship between social phobia and limited social participation among youth. According to this model, social phobia is significantly predicting limited social participation with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth.



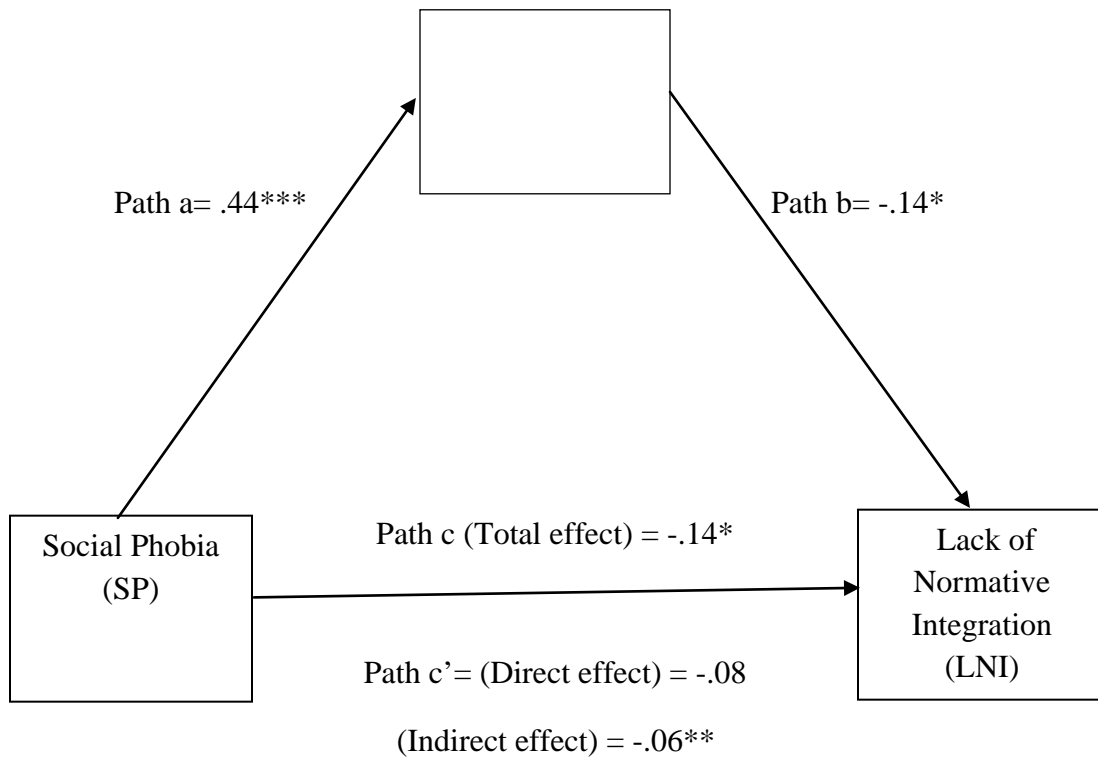
**Table 12**

*Relationship between Social Phobia and Lack of Normative Integration with the mediating role of Ruminative Thinking among youth (N= 300)*

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	95% CI	
						LL	UL
Direct effect							
SP→RT	.44	.28	8.35	.000	.19	1.75	2.84
RT→LNI	-.14	.003	2.18	.03	.03	-.01	-.001
SP→LNI	-.08	.02	1.21	.23		-.05	.01
Indirect effect							
SP→RT→LNI	-.06	.03				-.12	-.01
Total effect							
SP→LNI	-.14	.02	2.39	.02	.02	-.07	-.01

*Note:* SP: Social Phobia, LNI: Lack of Normative Integration, RT: Ruminative Thinking,  $\beta$ : Standardized beta, SE: Standard Error

This table shows the mediation analysis among the variables of social phobia, ruminative thinking and lack of normative integration among youth in which social phobia was found to be positively significant predictor of ruminative thinking and ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant predictor of lack of normative integration among youth. The indirect effect and total effect were found to be negatively significant. In conclusion, results indicate that ruminative thinking was mediating the relationship between social phobia and lack of normative integration among youth.



Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

**Figure 7:** Pathway model of mediation process for Social Phobia and Lack of Normative Integration

This model shows the mediating effect of ruminative thinking on the relationship between social phobia and lack of normative integration among youth. According to this model, social phobia is significantly predicting lack of normative integration with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth.

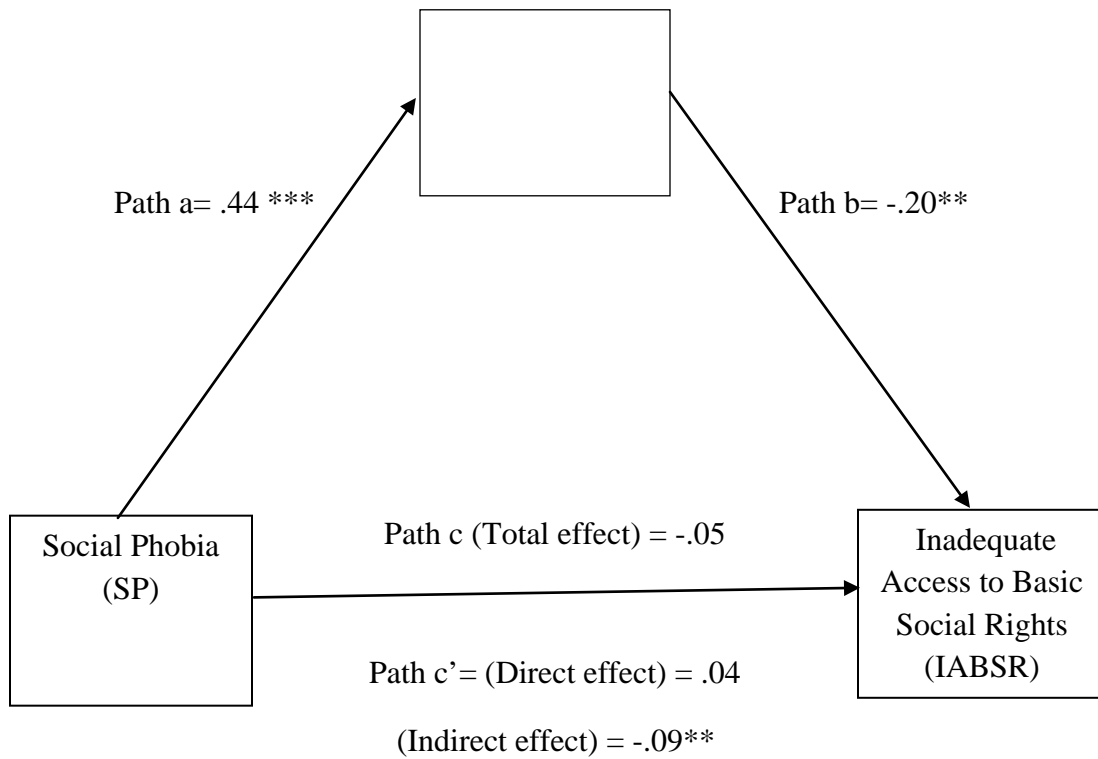
**Table 13**

*Relationship between Social Phobia and Inadequate Access to Basic Social Rights with the mediating role of Ruminative Thinking among youth (N= 300)*

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	95% CI	
						LL	UL
Direct effect							
SP→RT	.44	.28	8.35	.000	.19	1.75	2.84
RT→IABSR	-.20	.003	3.20	.002	.04	-.02	-.004
SP→IABSR	.04	.02	.58	.57		-.02	.04
Indirect effect							
SP→RT→IABSR	-.09	.03				-.15	-.03
Total effect							
SP→IABSR	-.05	.01	.90	.37	.003	-.04	.02

*Note:* SP: Social Phobia, IABSR: Inadequate Access to Basic Social Rights, RT: Ruminative Thinking,  $\beta$ : Standardized beta, SE: Standard Error

This table shows the mediation analysis among the variables of social phobia, ruminative thinking and inadequate access to basic social rights among youth in which social phobia was found to be positively significant predictor of ruminative thinking and ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant predictor of inadequate access to basic social rights among youth. The indirect effect of ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant between social phobia and inadequate access to basic social rights. In conclusion, results indicate that ruminative thinking was mediating the relationship between social phobia and inadequate access to basic social rights among youth.



Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Figure 8:** Pathway model of mediation process for Social Phobia and Inadequate Access to Basic Social Rights

This model shows the mediating effect of ruminative thinking on the relationship between social phobia and inadequate access to basic social rights among youth. According to this model, social phobia is significantly predicting inadequate access to basic social rights with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth.

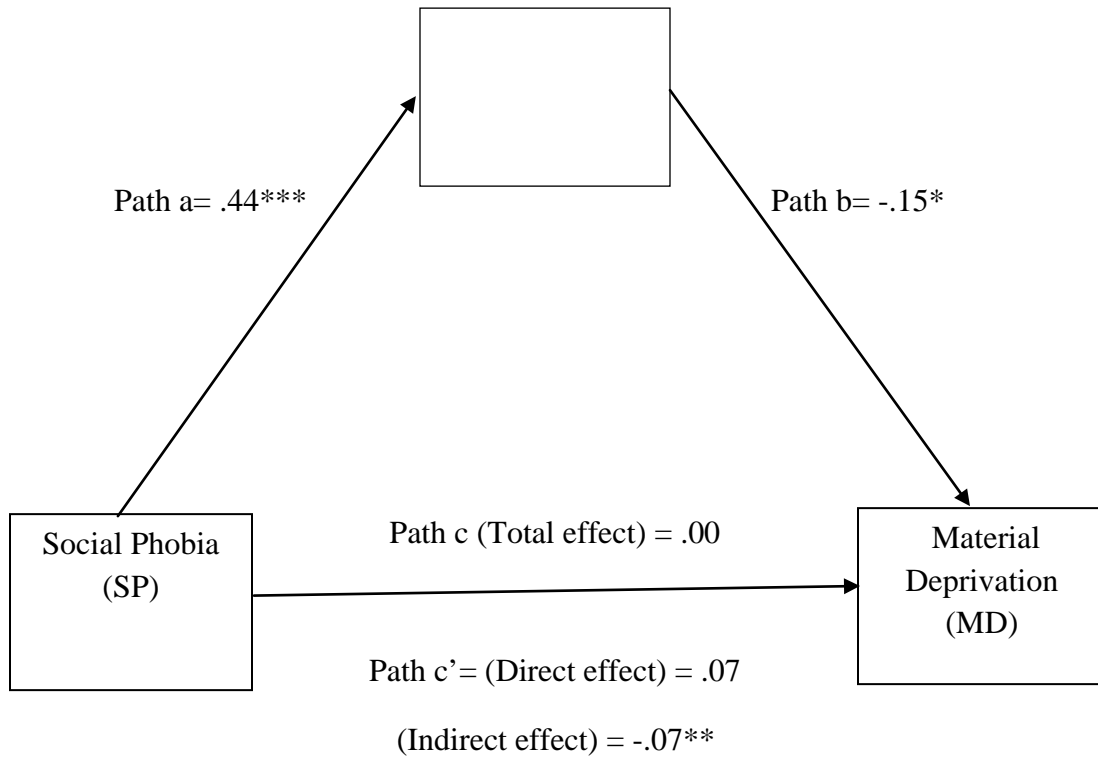
**Table 14**

*Relationship between Social Phobia and Material Deprivation with the mediating role of Ruminative Thinking among youth (N= 300)*

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>	95% CI	
						LL	UL
<b>Direct effect</b>							
SP→RT	.44	.28	8.35	.000	.19	1.75	2.84
RT→MD	-.15	.004	2.35	.02		-.02	-.002
SP→MD	.07	.02	1.09	.28	.02	-.02	.07
<b>Indirect effect</b>							
SP→RT→MD	-.07	.03				-.13	-.01
<b>Total effect</b>							
SP→MD	.004	.02	.07	.94	.000	-.04	.04

*Note:* SP: Social Phobia, MD: Material Deprivation, RT: Ruminative Thinking,  $\beta$ : Standardized beta, SE: Standard Error

This table shows the mediation analysis among the variables of social phobia, ruminative thinking and material deprivation among youth in which social phobia was found to be positively significant predictor of ruminative thinking and ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant predictor of material deprivation among youth. The indirect effect of ruminative thinking was found to be negatively significant between social phobia and material deprivation. In conclusion, results indicate that ruminative thinking was mediating the relationship between social phobia and material deprivation among youth.



Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

**Figure 9:** Pathway model of mediation process for Social Phobia and Material Deprivation

This model shows the mediating effect of ruminative thinking on the relationship between social phobia and material deprivation among youth. According to this model, social phobia is significantly predicting material deprivation with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth.

**Table 15***Independent sample t-test analysis between gender on the study variables among youth (N=300)*

Variables	Male (N=157)		Female (N=143)		t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
SIAS-6 & SPS-6	11.5	9.07	15.55	9.98	3.68	<.00	.42
SIA	5.96	4.83	7.98	5.29	3.45	<.00	.40
SP	5.54	5.10	7.57	5.59	3.29	0.00	.38
RTS	83.12	28.86	85.1	28.38	0.60	0.55	.07
LSP	10.38	1.69	9.87	1.79	2.50	0.01	.29
LNI	7.76	1.46	7.85	1.40	0.54	0.59	.06
IABSR	9.6	1.41	9.71	1.29	0.73	0.47	.08
MD	8.35	1.82	8.54	1.79	0.90	0.37	.11

*Note:* SA: Social Anxiety, SIA: Social Interaction Anxiety, SP: Social Phobia, RTS: Ruminative Thought Style, LSP: Limited Social Participation, LNI: Lack of Normative Integration, IABSR: Inadequate Access to Basic Social Rights and MD: Material Deprivation.

This table shows the results of independent sample t-test analysis between gender on the variables of social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth (N=300). Results indicate that females have significantly higher levels of social anxiety, social interaction anxiety and social phobia as compare to males whereas males have high level of limited social participation as compare to the females.

## Additional Analysis

**Table 16**

*Independent sample t-test analysis between family system on the study variables (N=300)*

Variables	Joint (71)		Nuclear (229)		t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
SIAS-6 & SPS-6	13.85	10.65	13.3	9.42	0.42	0.68	.05
SIA	7.31	5.65	6.8	4.99	0.72	0.47	.09
SP	6.54	5.7	6.49	5.35	0.06	0.96	.01
RTS	83.48	29.19	84.25	28.48	0.20	0.84	.02
LSP	10.46	1.66	10.03	1.77	1.81	0.07	.25
LNI	7.96	1.63	7.76	1.36	1.02	0.3	.13
IABSR	9.8	1.5	9.61	1.31	1.07	0.29	.13
MD	8.56	1.78	8.4	1.81	0.66	0.51	.08

*Note:* SA: Social Anxiety, SIA: Social Interaction Anxiety, SP: Social Phobia, RTS: Ruminative Thought Style, LSP: Limited Social Participation, LNI: Lack of Normative Integration, IABSR: Inadequate Access to Basic Social Rights and MD: Material Deprivation.

This table shows the result of independent sample t-test analysis between family system on the variables of social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth (N=300). All the variables showed insignificant values in the above table. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion with joint and nuclear family system.



**Table 17***Linear Regression analysis of social interaction anxiety on Social Exclusion among youth**(N=300)*

Variables	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI	
						LL	UL
Limited social participation							
Constant	10.56	0.17		63.12	<0.00	10.24	10.89
SIA	-0.06	0.02	-0.18	3.18	0.00	-0.10	-0.02
<i>R=.18, R<sup>2</sup>=.03, <math>\Delta R^2</math>=.033, F=10.11, p=.00</i>							
Lack of normative integration							
Constant	8.19	0.14		60.35	<0.00	7.92	8.46
SIA	-0.06	0.02	-0.20	3.51	<0.00	-0.09	-0.02
<i>R=.20, R<sup>2</sup>=.04, <math>\Delta R^2</math>=.04, F=12.32, p=.00</i>							
Inadequate access to basic social rights							
Constant	9.72	0.13		74.07	<0.00	9.47	9.98
SIA	-0.01	0.02	-0.04	0.66	0.51	-0.04	0.02
<i>R=.04, R<sup>2</sup>=.00, <math>\Delta R^2</math>=.00, F=.44, p=.51</i>							
Material deprivation							
Constant	8.52	0.18		48.78	<0.00	8.18	8.86
SIA	-0.01	0.02	-0.03	0.57	0.57	-0.05	0.03
<i>R=.03, R<sup>2</sup>=.00, <math>\Delta R^2</math>=.00, F=.33, p=.57</i>							

*Note: SIA: Social Interaction Anxiety.*

This table shows Linear Regression analysis on the social interaction anxiety subscale predicting social exclusion (N=300). The result indicates that social interaction anxiety is significantly enhancing/predicting the limited social participation among youth and its model is fit (F=10.11, p=.00). Similarly, social interaction anxiety is also significantly predicting lack of normative integration among youth and its model is fit (F=12.32, p=.00).

**Table 18***Linear Regression analysis of social Phobia on Social Exclusion among youth (N=300)*

Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI	
						LL	UL
<b>Limited Social Participation</b>							
Constant	10.47	0.16		66.92	<.00	10.16	10.78
Social Phobia	-0.05	0.02	-0.16	2.78	0.00	-0.09	-0.02
<i>R=.16, R<sup>2</sup>=.03, <math>\Delta R^2</math>=.03, F=.74, p=.00</i>							
<b>Lack of normative integration</b>							
Constant	8.04	0.13		62.94	<.00	7.79	8.29
Social Phobia	-0.04	0.02	-0.14	2.39	0.01	-0.07	-0.01
<i>R=.14, R<sup>2</sup>=.02, <math>\Delta R^2</math>=.02, F=5.69, p=.01</i>							
<b>Inadequate access to basic social rights</b>							
Constant	9.74	0.12		79.69	<.00	9.50	9.98
Social Phobia	-0.01	0.01	-0.05	0.90	0.37	-0.04	0.02
<i>R=.05, R<sup>2</sup>=.00, <math>\Delta R^2</math>=.00, F=.80, p=.37</i>							
<b>Material deprivation</b>							
Constant	8.43	0.16		51.79	<.00	8.11	8.75
Social Phobia	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.07	0.94	-0.04	0.04
<i>R=.004, R<sup>2</sup>=.00, <math>\Delta R^2</math>=.00, F=.00, p=.94</i>							

This table shows Linear Regression analysis on the social phobia subscale predicting social exclusion (N=300). The result indicates that social phobia is significantly enhancing/predicting the limited social participation among youth and its model is fit (F=.74, p=.00). Similarly, social phobia is also significantly predicting lack of normative integration among youth and its model is fit (F=5.69, p=.01).

**Table 19***Correlation of age and family income with the study variables among youth (N=300)*

Variables	Age	Family income
SIAS-6 & SPS-6	-.15*	-.11
Social interaction anxiety	-.17**	-.08
Social phobia	-.10	-.11*
Ruminative thought style	-.04	-.24
Limited social participation	.07	.10
Lack of normative Integration	.00	-.09
Inadequate access to basic social rights	.08	-.06
Material deprivation	.05	.17**

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SIAS-6: Social Interaction Anxiety Scale-6, SPS-6: Social Phobia Scale-6, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05

This table show the results of correlation of age and family income with the study variables (social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion). The results revealed that age is significantly negatively correlating with the whole scale of SIAS-6 and SPS-6 and with social interaction anxiety. Whereas family income is significantly negatively correlating with social phobia and significantly positively correlating with material deprivation among youth.

**DISCUSSION**

The aim of present study was to explore the relationship between social anxiety and social exclusion with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth. Furthermore, to investigated the relationship between social anxiety and social exclusion among youth. This study also aimed to investigate the gender differences on social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth.

In present study psychometric properties and items total correlation of all the scales and their subscales were computed in which social anxiety was measured through SIAS-6 & SPS-6. The item total correlation of SIAS-6 & SPS-6 is significant in which all its items are significantly correlated with their respective subscales with the range from 0.61-0.80 (Table 3). SIAS-6 & SPS-6 whole scale has 0.88 Cronbach alpha reliability and its subscales (social interaction anxiety and social phobia) have 0.78 and 0.83 respectively (Table 2) whereas in previous literature SIAS-6 & SPS-6 whole scale's reliability was reported ranging from .79 to .85 and its subscale's alpha reliability was .90 for social interaction anxiety subscale and .92 for social phobia subscale (Zsido et al., 2021). Another study reported the alpha reliability of SIAS-6 & SPS-6 whole scale and its subscales from .74 to .92 (Blanc et al., 2014).

In current study, alpha reliability and item total correlation of Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire were computed. The item total correlation of Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire is also significant in which all its items are significantly correlated with the range from 0.58-0.79 (Table 4). The alpha reliability of Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire was reported as .94 which is considered high reliability (Table 2) whereas in previous literature this scale's alpha reliability was .89 to .92 and it has high test-retest reliability that is .80 in range (Kovacs et al., 2021). Another study reported the alpha reliability of Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire as .92 which shows great internal consistency (Brinker & Dozois, 2009).

Current study also analyzed the item total correlation of Social Exclusion Scale in which all its items are significantly correlated with their respective subscales with the range from 0.29-0.86 (Table 5) whereas in previous literature the range was reported as from 0.28–0.44 because each subscale explains a different theoretical aspect of social exclusion (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013).

The first hypothesis was to explore the relationship between social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth. The results indicated that the social anxiety is significantly positively correlated with ruminative thinking and negatively significantly correlated with limited social participation and lack of normative integration except inadequate access to basic social rights and material deprivation (Table 6). As existing literature explained that whenever socially anxious people encounter social situations then stress reactive ruminative thinking arises and these people try to avoid the social situations and social interactions (Laicher et al., 2022). Another study revealed that people who have a fear of negative evaluation, they more ruminate about the failures in social encounter and that negative thinking leads toward overthinking about social situations (Ying et al., 2021).

Additionally, it was also found that ruminative thinking is negatively significantly correlated with limited social participation, lack of normative integration, inadequate basic right social rights and material deprivation (Table 6). These findings are also consistent with existing literature that loneliness is highly linked with depressive thinking among younger adults because these individuals are more likely to engage in negative thinking pattern which effects their health and life styles (Mattews et al., 2019). Another study investigated that most of the depressed individuals are experiencing loneliness in which they avoid social interactions because depressed thinking is highly related to withdrawal behavior of individual (Achterbergh et al., 2020). Loneliness is highly related to the negative cognitive emotions related to depression and anxiety and also has some physiological symptoms that are affecting the individuals (Hwang et al., 2020).

The second hypothesis of present study was to find out the relationship between social anxiety and social exclusion with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth. Mediation analysis indicates that ruminative thinking is mediating the relationship between social anxiety (social interaction anxiety) and social exclusion (limited social participation, Lack of normative integration, inadequate access to basic social rights and material deprivation)

among youth (Table 7-10). These findings are consistent with previous literature that social interaction anxiety is related to rumination and high rumination leads toward excessive avoidance behaviors in which individual escape from painful emotions (Guneri, 2018). Socially anxious individuals frequently avoid social contact to relieve tension and with the passage of time their anxiety deteriorates and they exclude themselves socially (Shen et al., 2022). A study showed that avoidance from social engagement causes emotional and psychological problems and also disruptions in socialization, that trigger social isolation and anxiety (Catacutan et al., 2022).

Mediation analysis further indicated that ruminative thinking is mediating the relationship between social anxiety (social phobia) and social exclusion (limited social participation, Lack of normative integration, inadequate access to basic social rights and material deprivation) among youth (Table 11-14). These findings are also consistent with the previous literature that all the individuals who are experiencing the social isolation are more engaged in rumination, their level of rumination is high as compare to others. When these people feel themselves alone, they more ruminate about social interactions and about their previous painful experiences (Yun et al., 2022). Another study investigated that most of the young individuals who are depressed and experiencing loneliness are more likely to avoid social interactions because the negative and depressed thinking is causing loneliness among these individuals (Achterbergh et al., 2020). Youths that are facing problems in developing social relationships have social anxiety patterns and maladaptive cognitions like rumination that leads toward social withdrawal, it sustains or persists throughout their lives (Campbell et al., 2016).

The third hypothesis of the present study was to find the gender differences in terms of social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth. Results of this study revealed that there are significant gender differences in the social anxiety, social interaction anxiety, social phobia and limited social participation in which females have significantly higher levels of social anxiety, social interaction anxiety and social phobia as compare to males (Table 15). This finding is consistent with the existing literatures which have also found the similar results as Gomez-Baya et al. (2022) noted that females have high anxiety as compare to males because of lower scores in their positive identity and higher scores in positive values. Another study revealed that females reported high level of social anxiety as compare to males (Zentner et

al., 2022). Females have more panic symptoms in social situations as compare to males because they overly anticipate predictable and even unpredictable threats (Burani & Nelson, 2020). Anxiety is most serious and prevalent issue for female students while depression was high among male students (Gao et al., 2020). Another study investigated the gender differences among severity of anxiety, stress and ability of resilience in stressful situations. It was indicated that females have high level of stress and anxiety while males have resilience to stress in stressful situations (Hou et al., 2020). A Pakistani study reported that females have high level of anxiety and depression as compare to males (Ibbad et al., 2022).

Results further revealed that males have lower levels of social participation than females, this finding is also consistent to existing literature that females have high level of social participation than males, females are more involved in social groups and sports activities (Xiao et al., 2021). In smaller communities it was reported that males have limited social participation or engagements as compare to the females (Naud et al., 2019). Another study revealed that females have high social participation level as compare to males (Cicognani et al., 2012).

### **Additional Findings**

Independent sample t-test analysis was also carried out between family system on the social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth. It was analyzed that there is no significant difference in the social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion with joint and nuclear family system (Table 16). Mak et al. (2018) explained that family system is very important in developing the social attitudes and social relationships but the individuals who are facing neglect and rejection from family may have avoidance behaviors.

In this research regression analysis was done on the study variables to find out the influence of social anxiety on social exclusion among youth. Results indicated that social interaction anxiety is significantly enhancing/predicting the limited social participation and lack of normative integration among youth (Table 17). These findings are consistent with existing literature that socially anxious people avoid social interactions. As the time passes their anxiety increases then they become more isolated and excluded (Shen et al., 2022). Furthermore, it was also analyzed that people feel motivated when they corporate and interact with others. It

indicates that social rejection and failure in social interactions would have an impact on the individuals (William et al., 2005).



Research further explored that social phobia is significantly enhancing/predicting the limited social participation and lack of normative integration among youth (Table 18). These findings are also consistent to existing literature that social anxiety predicts social exclusion. The latent urge to affiliate was motivated by greater curiosity and sensitivity to social benefits. Furthermore, increased social anxiety was associated with decreased motivation to attach (Hudd-Taylor & Moscovitch, 2022). Another study revealed that social anxiety is related to the compensatory deficiencies in pro-social behaviors following exclusion as well as failing to build on social success. It was investigated that high social anxiety and social isolation is linked with the low self-esteem as compare to low socially anxious individuals (Friedman, 2021).

In current research correlation of age and family income with the study variables (social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion) was also carried out which shows that age is significantly negatively correlated with the social anxiety and social interaction anxiety (Table 19). Previous studies showed that the level of anxiety decreases with the passage of age as the individual grows older his level of anxiety gradually decreases (Flint et al., 2010). Further findings of current study revealed that family income is significantly negatively correlated with social phobia and significantly positively correlated with material deprivation among youth (Table 19). This result is also proved by previous literature that there is an association between the family income and anxiety. Individuals who belonged to low socioeconomic class have more mental and physical health problems because economic hardships are highly linked with anxiety (Vine et al., 2012).

## **Conclusion**

The current study was conducted to investigate the relationship between social anxiety and social exclusion with the mediating role of ruminative thinking among youth. Furthermore, this study explored the relationship between social anxiety and social exclusion and also investigated the gender differences between the social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion among youth. Research findings revealed that social anxiety is positively significantly correlated with ruminative thinking whereas ruminative thinking is negatively significantly correlated with limited social participation, lack of normative integration, inadequate access to basic social rights and material deprivation among youth. The results also indicated that the relationship between the social anxiety (social interaction anxiety and social phobia) and social exclusion (limited social participation, lack of normative integration, inadequate access to basic social rights and material deprivation) is mediated by ruminative thinking among youth. Moreover, it was also investigated that females have significantly higher levels of social anxiety, social interaction anxiety and social phobia as compare to males whereas males have high level of limited social participation as compare to the females. This research knowledge is beneficial in improving the academic functioning, social interactions and quality of life of young people.

## **Limitations of the study**

There are few limitations of this study in which the sample included university students with limited age range from 15-24 years old, so results cannot be generalized on younger children and older adults. In this study, data was collected from four different departments (psychology media sciences, software and electric engineering). Furthermore, this study was conducted in Islamabad so it cannot be generalized on other areas.

### **Implications of the study**

The findings of this study are helpful in developing the protective measures against social anxiety, ruminative thinking and social exclusion which are badly affecting the young individual's life because social anxiety is serious and prevailing issue not only in Pakistan but everywhere in the world. So, institutions can take the measures for making the student's life better. Social workers, psychologists and counselors can take an effective measure in preventing this issue because if severity of social anxiety increases it can become a social anxiety disorder so it is very alarming condition for young people.

As current study revealed, social anxiety leads toward social exclusion in which individual exclude himself socially so if social anxiety will be treated at early stage, it will not lead towards social withdrawal among youth. This study will be helpful in creating awareness among the parents and teachers regarding social anxiety that is affecting the social relationships as well as the academic life of youth.

### **Recommendations**

The present study has some gaps that can be fulfilled by future researchers. Firstly, in present study only youth age range from 15-24 years was included so it can also be conducted on other age group individuals. In this study cross sectional research design was used so it can also be conducted through longitudinal studies in order to explore the further details about variables. It was quantitative study in which data was collected through self-report measures or survey method was used so in future qualitative method can be useful for data collection. In this research university students were involved. So, in future this study can be conducted on school, college and on other institutions for further details. Current study was conducted on Pakistani youth so it can be conducted on other countries as well.

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## **APPENDICES**



**APPENDIX A**

**(Permission from concerned authors)**

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8 of 47

## Permission for Social Interaction Anxiety Scale-6 and Social Phobia Scale-6 Inbox x

**IQRA SAGHIR** <iqrasaghir43@gmail.com> Fri, Dec 30, 2022, 3:38 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮  
 to Lorna.Peters ▾

Dear Sir,

Hope you are keeping well. I am a student of BS ( Professional Psychology) Semester VII at Bahria University Islamabad, Pakistan. As a part of my final year thesis, I am currently working on Research Project under the supervision of Dr. Shazia Yousaf ( Assistant Professor). I have found the scale " Social Interaction Anxiety Scale -6 and Social Phobia Scale-6" developed by Lorna Peters, Matthew Sunderland, Gavin Andrews, Ronald M Rapee, Richard P Mattick (2011) to be very relevant for my current research project. I request you to grant me permission to use this tool for my current research project and send me the original scale. I would be highly obliged and grateful for this act of kindness. Due to limited time, it is humbly requested that you reply as soon as possible.

Thanking you in anticipation, waiting your reply,

Regards,  
 Iqra Saghir

Search mail

8 of 47

**Lorna Peters** <lorna.peters@mq.edu.au> Jan 8, 2023, 4:23 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮  
 to me ▾

Please find information about use of the SIAS-6 and SPS-6 and a PDF copy of the scales here: <https://www.mq.edu.au/research/research-centres-groups-and-facilities/healthy-people/centres/centre-for-emotional-health-ceh/resources>

All the best,

Lorna

**Lorna Peters, PhD**  
 Senior Lecturer  
 Psychology PhD Director  
 Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Co-ordinator  
*Pronouns: she/her*  
**Centre for Emotional Health |**  
**School of Psychological Sciences |**  
 Room 3.812, Australian Hearing Hub  
 Faculty of Medicine, Health, and Human Sciences

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## Permission for Ruminative thought style questionnaire Inbox x

**IQRA SAGHIR** <iqrasaghir43@gmail.com> to ddozois

Sun, Feb 26, 2:31AM

Dear Sir,  
 Hope you are keeping well. I am a student of BS ( Professional Psychology) Semester VIII at Bahria University Islamabad, Pakistan. As a part of my final year thesis, I am currently working on Research Project under the supervision of Dr. Shazia Yousaf ( Assistant Professor). I have found the scale " Ruminative thought style questionnaire developed by Brinker & Dozois (2008)" to be very relevant for my current research project. I request you to grant me permission to use this tool for my current research project and send me the original scale. I would be highly obliged and grateful for this act of kindness. Due to limited time, it is humbly requested that you reply as soon as possible. Thanking you in anticipation, waiting your reply,  
 Regards,  
 Iqra Saghir

Search mail


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**David Dozois** <ddozois@uwo.ca> to me

Mon, Feb 27, 2:23 PM

Thanks for your message and your interest in the scale. You are certainly welcome to use this measure for your research. The questionnaire items and format are located in the Appendix of the attached article.

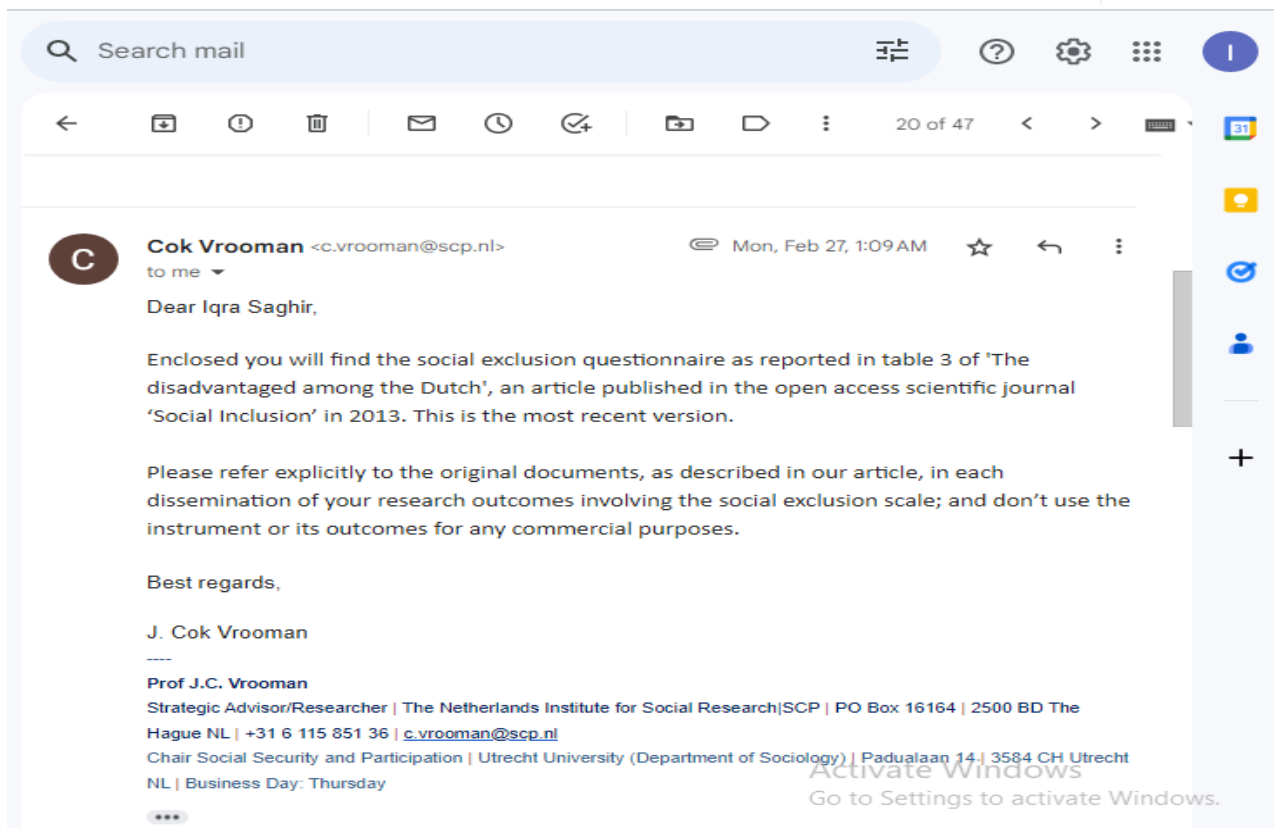
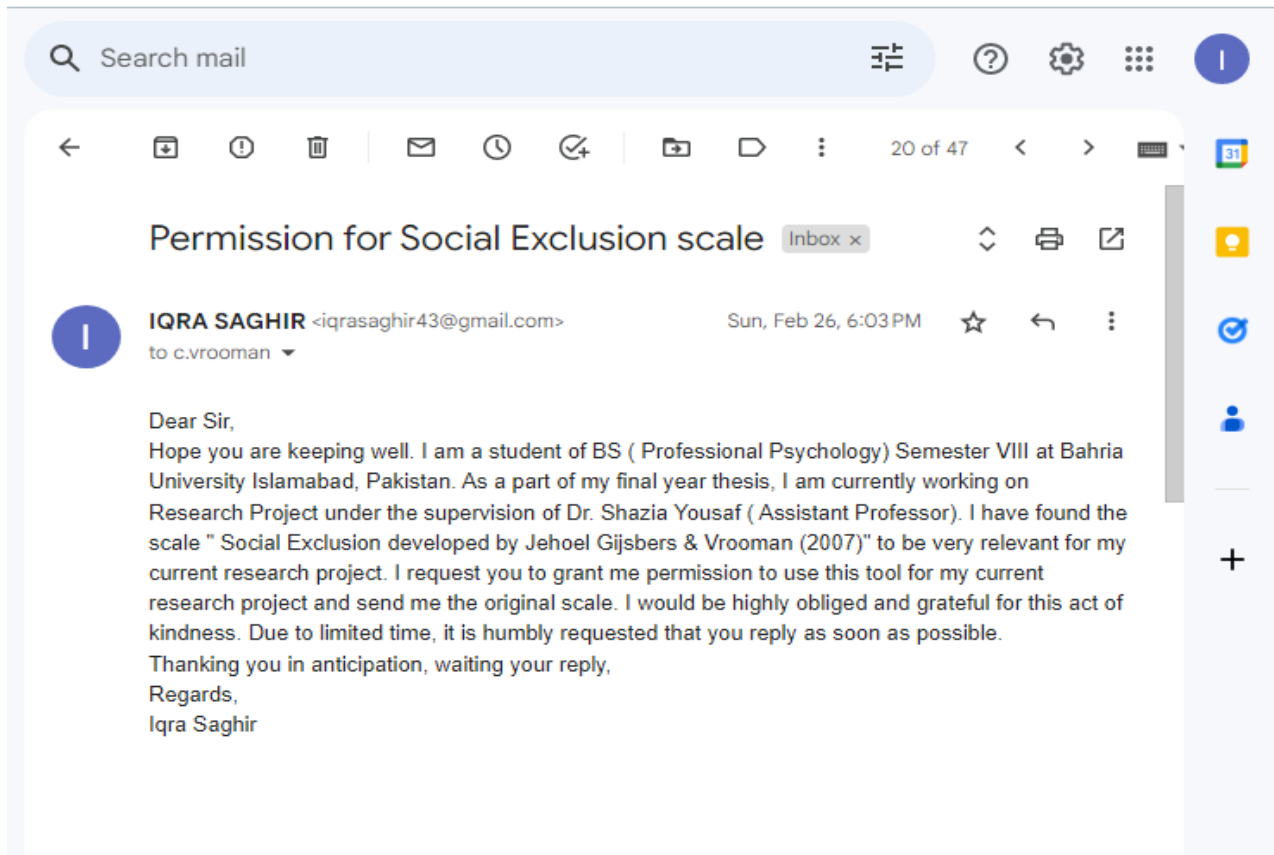
Best wishes for your research.

**Western** 

David J. A. Dozois, Ph.D., C.Psych. (he/him)  
 Professor and Director  
 Clinical Psychology Graduate Program  
 Department of Psychology  
 University of Western Ontario  
 Westminster Hall, Rm. 313E  
 London, Ontario, Canada  
 N6A 3K7

e. [ddozois@uwo.ca](mailto:ddozois@uwo.ca)

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## **APPENDIX B**

**(Permission letter from university for data collection)**





**Bahria University**  
Discovering Knowledge

02-Mar-2023

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

### REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION

It is stated that **Ms. Samra Ashfaq** Enrollment No. 01-171192-109 is a student of BS Psychology (8<sup>th</sup> Semester) Bahria University Islamabad Campus conducting research on "Social anxiety and social exclusion: mediating role of the ruminative thinking among youth" under supervision of undersigned. It is requested that kindly allow her to collect the data from your esteemed institution.

Regards,

**Dr. Shazia Yusuf**  
Head of Department  
Professional Psychology  
Bahria University  
H-II Islamabad

Department of Professional Psychology Shangrilla Road E-8 Islamabad  
Tel: 051-9260002 Ext. No. 1406 Fax: 051-9260889

**APPENDIX C**  
**(Informed Consent)**



## **CONSENT FORM**

We Iqra Saghir and Samra Ashfaq are the students of Department of Professional Psychology, Bahria University Islamabad, conducting research on youth. So, requesting you to participate in this research study. Involvement in this study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. All the information will be kept confidential. There will be no risk or harm during data collection, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

For any information you can contact us at [iqrasaghir43@gmail.com](mailto:iqrasaghir43@gmail.com).

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D**  
**(Demographic data sheet)**

**Demographic Data Sheet**

**Gender** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age** \_\_\_\_\_

**Education** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department** \_\_\_\_\_

**Institution** \_\_\_\_\_

**Marital status** \_\_\_\_\_

**Family system:**

- Joint
- Nuclear

**Birth order** \_\_\_\_\_

**Family monthly income** \_\_\_\_\_

**Father's education** \_\_\_\_\_ **Father's occupation** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mother's education** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mother's occupation** \_\_\_\_\_

**Housing type:**

- Hostel
- Day scholar

**Physical illness:**

- Yes
- No

**Diagnosed Psychological Illness:**

- Yes
- No

**APPENDIX E**

**(Social Interaction Anxiety Scale-6 & Social Phobia Scale-6)**

*Instruction:* For each question, please circle a number to indicate the degree to which you feel the statement is characteristics or true of you. The rating scale is as follows:

<b>Items</b>	<b>Not at all characteristics or true of me</b>	<b>Slightly characteristics or true of me</b>	<b>Moderately characteristics or true of me</b>	<b>Very characteristics or true of me</b>	<b>Extremely characteristics or true of me</b>
1. I have difficulty making eye contact with others.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I find it difficult mixing comfortably with the people I work with.	0	1	2	3	4
3. I tense up if I meet an acquaintance on the street.	0	1	2	3	4
4. I feel tense if I am alone with just one person.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I have difficulty talking with other people.	0	1	2	3	4
6. I find it difficult to disagree with another's point of view.	0	1	2	3	4
7. I get nervous that people are staring at me as I walk down the street.	0	1	2	3	4
8. I worry about shaking or trembling when I'm watched by other people.	0	1	2	3	4
9. I would get tense if I had to sit facing other people on a bus or train.	0	1	2	3	4
10. I worry I might do something to attract the attention of other people.	0	1	2	3	4
11. When in an elevator, I am tense if people look at me.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I can feel conspicuous standing in a line.	0	1	2	3	4

**APPENDIX F**  
**(Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire)**

For each of the items below, please rate how well the item describes you.

<b>Items</b>	<b>Not at all</b>						<b>Very well</b>
1. I find that my mind often goes over things again and again.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. When I have a problem, it will gnaw on my mind for a long time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I find that some thoughts come to mind over and over throughout the day.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I can't stop thinking about some things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. When I am anticipating an interaction, I will imagine every possible scenario and conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I tend to replay past events as I would have liked them to happen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I find myself daydreaming about things I wish I had done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. When I feel I have had a bad interaction with someone, I tend to imagine various scenarios where I would have acted differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. When trying to solve a complicated problem, I find that I just keep coming back to the beginning without ever finding a solution.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. If there is an important event coming up, I think about it so much that I work myself up.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. I have never been able to distract myself from unwanted thoughts.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Even if I think about a problem for hours, I still have a hard time coming to a clear understanding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. It is very difficult for me to come to a clear conclusion about some problems, no matter how much I think about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Sometimes I realize I have been sitting and thinking about something for hours.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. When I am trying to work out a problem, it is like I have a long debate in my mind where I keep going over different points.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I like to sit and reminisce about pleasant events from the past.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. When I am looking forward to an exciting event, thoughts of it interfere with what I am working on.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Sometimes even during a conversation, I find unrelated thoughts popping into my head.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. When I have an important conversation coming up, I tend to go over it in my mind again and again.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. If I have an important event coming up, I can't stop thinking about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



**APPENDIX G**  
**(Social Exclusion Scale)**

<b>Items</b>					
Which of the following applies for you:					
1-There are people with whom I can have a good conversation.	Yes	Sometimes	No		
2- I feel cut off from other people.	Yes	Sometimes	No		
3- There are people who genuinely understand me.	Yes	Sometimes	No		
4- I have contact with neighbors.	At least once a week	1-3 times a month	A few times a year	Never	
Which of the following applies for you:					
5- I give to good causes.	Yes	No			
6- I sometimes do something for my neighbors.	Yes	No			
Which of the following applies for you:					
7- I put glass items in the bottle bank.	Yes, always	sometimes	Never		
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:					
8- Work is just a way of earning money.	Very much agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Very much disagree
9- I didn't receive a medical or dental treatment.	Yes	No			
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:					
10- We all get on well in our neighborhood.	Very much agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Very much disagree
11- I am satisfied with the quality of my home.	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
12- I have enough money to heat my home.	Yes	No			

13- I have enough money for club memberships.	Yes	No			
14- I have enough money to visit others.	Yes	No			
15- I have enough money to meet unexpected expenses.	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Usually not	Never

**APPENDIX H**  
**(Plagiarism Report)**

## Social anxiety and social exclusion among youth: Mediating role of ruminative thinking

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