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The Mediating Role of Rumination in the Relationship Between Interpersonal Mindfulness or Differentiation of Self and Forgiveness in Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

The present study explores the possible mediating role of rumination in the relationship between forgiveness and interpersonal mindfulness or differentiation of self in romantic relationships. A total of 662 young adults participated in the study. The mediating role of rumination was tested using both Structural Equation Modeling and the Sobel Test. Results revealed that forgiveness showed a significant positive correlation with both differentiation of self and interpersonal mindfulness, whereas it correlated negatively with rumination. It was found that differentiation of self, interpersonal mindfulness, and rumination significantly predicted forgiveness. Differentiation of self and interpersonal mindfulness were also significant predictors of rumination. Moreover, results yielded partial mediation of rumination regarding the relationships between differentiation of self-forgiveness and interpersonal mindfulness-forgiveness. The results of the present study were discussed in the light of the literature, and suggestions were made for future studies. It was considered that the findings of the present study would be beneficial for the experts of both individual psychotherapy and family-couple therapy to determine the dynamics that they need to focus on/prioritize in the process of case assessment, formulation, and psychotherapy while working on interpersonal relationships, specifically romantic relationships. Regarding preventive mental health services, practices that increase interpersonal mindfulness and support the differentiation of self would promote individual well-being and strengthen interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: Differentiation of Self, Forgiveness, Interpersonal Mindfulness, Rumination, Romantic Relationships

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Romantik İlişkilerde Kişilerarası Bilinçli Farkındalık ve Benlik Farklılaşması ile Affedicilik Arasındaki İlişkide Ruminasyonun Aracı Rolü

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı romantik ilişki bağlamında, kişilerarası bilinçli farkındalık ve benlik farklılaşması ile affedicilik arasındaki ilişkide ruminasyonun olası aracılık rolünün incelenmesidir. Çalışmaya toplam 662 genç yetişkin birey katılmıştır. Ruminasyonun aracılık rolü hem Yapısal Eşitlik Modeli hem de Sobel Test ile test edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre affedicilik, benlik farklılaşması ve kişilerarası bilinçli farkındalık ile pozitif, ruminasyon ile ise negatif korelasyon göstermiştir. Benlik farklılaşması, kişilerarası bilinçli farkındalık ve ruminasyonun affediciliği; benlik farklılaşması ve kişilerarası bilinçli farkındalığın da ruminasyonu anlamlı olarak yordadığı görülmüştür. Elde edilen sonuçlar literatür bulguları ışığında tartışılmış ve gelecek çalışmalar için önerilerde bulunulmuştur. Bu çalışmanın sonuçlarının, hem bireysel terapi hem de çift-aile terapisi uzmanlarının kişilerarası ilişkiler, özellikle de romantik ilişkiler üzerine çalışırken, vaka formülasyonu ve psikoterapi sürecinde hangi dinamikleri önceliklendirmeleri gerektiğini tespit etmelerine yardımcı olabileceği düşünülmüştür. Koruyucu ruh sağlığı hizmetleri kapsamında kişilerarası bilinçli farkındalığı arttıran ve benlik farklılaşmasını destekleyen uygulamalar hem kişisel iyi oluşu hem de kişilerarası ilişkileri güçlendirecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Benlik Farklılaşması, Affedicilik, Kişilerarası Bilinçli Farkındalık, Ruminasyon, Romantik ilişkiler

1. Introduction

Thompson et al. (2005) defined forgiveness as converting one's reactions from negative to neutral or positive towards the perpetrator, the crime, the consequences of the crime, and framing the perceived violation. The source of a violation, and thus the object of forgiveness, could be the person himself, another person(s), or a situation beyond the individual's control, such as illness, disasters, or other unforeseen events (Thompson et al., 2005; Hall & Fincham, 2005). Studies in the psychology literature have generally focused on forgiving others. Situations that are out of human control are still considered within the scope of forgiving others, and the concept of forgiving the situation is not used (e.g., Bugay & Demir, 2010; Wade et al., 2005). However, it would be an incomplete definition not to include the "forgiving situation" dimension into the equation while determining the general tendency of an individual's forgiveness (Bugay & Demir, 2010).

Forgiveness has become a frequently studied concept in the clinical field and practice (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Several researchers have suggested that psychotherapists should focus on forgiveness in the psychotherapy process, regardless of their theoretical orientation, to increase the efficacy of the process (e.g., Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Freedman & Zarifkar, 2016; Lin et al., 2004).

Similarities and differences of individuals in different cultures regarding forgiveness and how they experience it were also examined (Williamson et al., 2007; Worthington & Wade, 2019). Notably, most of the forgiveness studies compared collectivistic and individualistic societies (Hook, 2007; Sandage & Watson Wiens, 2001). Related research results showed that in collectivist cultures, the tendency of individuals to protect and maintain relationships due to the collectivistic concern about social ties outweighed individualistic thinking, and this increased the individual's forgiveness in interpersonal relationships (Hook et al., 2012; Watkins et al., 2011; Worthington & Wade, 2019). Considering that Turkish culture possesses

both individualistic and collectivistic cultural features, it seemed important to explore the mentioned factors related to forgiveness in a Turkish sample.

Differentiation of self, one of the basic concepts of Bowen's (1978) Family Systems Theory, is explained concerning both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Intrapersonal level refers to the individual's ability for distinguishing his/her feelings and thoughts, whereas the interpersonal level mentions a balance between autonomy and closeness, the individual is expected to maintain his individuality while establishing close relationships and take the "I" position whenever it is necessary (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Titelman, 1998). Differentiation of self is defined within the framework of four basic concepts: "I position," "emotional reactivity," "fusion with others," and "emotional cutoff" (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998).

The "I position" is the individual's ability to maintain their existence in relationships and to express their feelings and thoughts. It is the state of being able to defend his/her values, express his/her thoughts, and act on his/her behalf even when he/she is under pressure (Bowen, 1978). "Emotional reactivity" is a behavioral or physiological expression of anxiety (Titelman, 2014) with reactions against himself/herself or others, such as denial, attack, alienation, and accusation (Titelman, 1998, 2012). "Fusion with others" is the fusion of emotional boundaries in the relationship, the inability to separate the self from the other, yielding unclear boundaries in interpersonal relations (Bowen, 1978). "Emotional cutoff" is the tendency of the individual to avoid physical or emotional involvement/closeness. Since the individual cannot cope with the anxiety in the system, he/she isolates himself/herself and avoids intimacy in the relationship (Bowen, 1978; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Bowen (1978) defined differentiation on a continuum, with one pole having the highest possible differentiation level of self, and the other pole having the lowest. In summary, differentiation of self is the individual's awareness of the dysfunctional patterns /characteristics he/she has adopted from his/her nuclear family, such as emotional reactivity, fusion-type relationships, or a tendency to cutoff in relationships and the ability to maintain close relationships in which autonomy would be preserved as well, by avoiding those adapted dysfunctional patterns (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Titelman, 1998; 2012; 2014).

Rumination might be defined as a cyclical way of thinking that prevents problem-solving steps, formed by focusing on and generating negative thoughts (Conway et al., 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Rumination was also considered an important concept in psychotherapy. Various studies yielded that working on ruminations in therapy would contribute to the individual's recovery process, whereas ignoring ruminations would weaken therapy results (Ciesla & Roberts, 2002; Kertz et al., 2015).

Mindfulness might be effective in two areas: intrapersonal and interpersonal. Intrapersonal mindfulness is related to the "here and now" physical and cognitive processes of the individual (Duncan, 2007; Kohlenberg et al., 2015). It includes perception, evaluation, and acceptance of the experiences of the individual at the moment instead of the past or the future, and focuses on not acting reactively and accepting them with compassion and without judgment (Duncan, 2007; Pratscher et al., 2018). The definition and measurability of interpersonal mindfulness is a relatively new phenomenon (Gördesli et al., 2018; Duncan,

2007; Erus & Tekel, 2020), The studies carried out for mindfulness in the literature have primarily focused on intrapersonal mindfulness. Within the last 10-15 years, it has been understood that intrapersonal mindfulness was not adequate enough to cover the whole mindfulness process (Duncan, 2007; Erus, 2019), and interpersonal mindfulness, which includes interactions in interpersonal relationships, has become a topic of interest in the field (Duncan, 2007; Karremans et al., 2017; Pratscher et al., 2018; Pratscher et al., 2019).

Interpersonal mindfulness is a state in which the individual realizes his/her own feelings and thoughts, bodily sensations, and purpose in interpersonal interactions as well as noticing the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of the other person, accepting them unconditionally and not giving uncontrolled reactions to them (Duncan, 2007; Pratscher et al., 2018; Pratscher et al., 2019). It is the state of being able to actively listen to what the other person says at the moment, to recognize his/her emotions and bodily cues from his/her gestures and mimics, and to respond to them without judging, but with compassion (K. W. Brown & Ryan, 2003; Duncan, 2007). In addition, the individual should be aware of his own internal processes, regulate his emotions, and not be reactive towards others (Duncan, 2007; Frank et al., 2016).

Duncan (2007; Duncan et al., 2009) is among the first names in studying interpersonal mindfulness. Interpersonal mindfulness was explored with respect to parent-child relationships (Duncan, 2007; Duncan et al., 2009), friendships (Pratscher et al., 2019), relationships between sports professionals such as athletes, trainers, and sports psychologists (Mannion & Andersen, 2016), teacher-student relationships (Frank et al., 2016; Moyano et al., 2021), married couples (Deniz et al., 2020; Sipahi, 2020), and leadership (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2021). As it was the case regarding intrapersonal mindfulness (Christopher et al., 2009; Neff et al., 2008; Özyeşil, 2012; Zubair & Artemeva, 2018), it was considered that culture might also affect interpersonal mindfulness. Therefore, in recent years, studies on interpersonal mindfulness have also been carried out in countries such as China (e.g., Pan et al., 2019), Korea (e.g., Kim et al., 2019), and Portugal (e.g., Moreira & Canavarro, 2018). It was thought that addressing interpersonal mindfulness with a Turkish sample would contribute to the growing literature.

Forgiveness and mindfulness have been conceptualized as interrelated constructs in several studies. It has been suggested that the fundamental components of mindfulness—such as gaining perspective, regulating emotions, and reducing preoccupation with anger—may facilitate the process of forgiveness by fostering emotional transformation (Rye et al., 2001). The mindful attitude of approaching others with nonjudgmental acceptance is considered helpful in letting go of resentment and cultivating compassion. Several empirical studies have supported this theoretical connection, demonstrating a positive association between mindfulness and forgiveness (e.g., Lewis, 2017; Oman et al., 2008; Webb et al., 2013). Forgiveness, in turn, is significantly related to relationship quality and satisfaction within interpersonal contexts (Paleari et al., 2005; Bono et al., 2007; Thompson et al., 2005). Moreover, mindfulness practices have been shown to increase forgiveness by influencing individuals' evaluations of interpersonal situations and the behaviors of others (e.g., Foulk et al., 2017). Despite this expanding literature focusing on the link between intrapersonal

mindfulness and forgiveness, to the best of our knowledge, no study has directly examined the association between interpersonal mindfulness and forgiveness.

It was suggested that a high level of differentiation of self would yield an increased ability to face anxiety, to regulate emotions, to express thoughts and to evaluate others more comprehensively; enhance maintaining satisfactory relationships and all of these would support the forgiveness process in return (Sandage & Jankowski, 2010; Shults & Sandage, 2003). In line with those suggestions, a couple of studies revealed a positive relationship between differentiation of self and forgiveness (e.g., Shults & Sandage, 2003; Sandage & Jankowski, 2010; Heintzelman et al., 2014; Holeman et al., 2011; Telli & Yavuz Güler, 2021; Yıldız, 2020), and some studies also found that differentiation of self predicted forgiveness (e.g., Heintzelman et al., 2014; Holeman et al., 2011).

The relationship between forgiveness and rumination, which is defined as a passive coping mechanism, also aroused curiosity in the field. Several studies indicated that rumination is negatively related to forgiveness levels (e.g., Yalçın & Aşçıoğlu-Önal, 2017; McCullough et al., 1998; Oral, 2016; Wu et al., 2019; Thompson & Snyder, 2003). There are also a number of studies showing that rumination predicts self-forgiveness (e.g., Önal, 2014) and forgiveness of others (e.g., Oral, 2016; Suchday et al., 2006) as well. Furthermore, the relationship between rumination and forgiveness has also been the subject of a couple of studies within the context of romantic relationships (e.g., Chung, 2014; Bono et al., 2007; Paleari et al., 2005), and it was found that rumination inhibited forgiveness in the individual's relationship (e.g., Paleari et al., 2005), and forgiveness was a precursor to the reduction of rumination (e.g., Bono et al., 2007). For example, Kachadourian et al. (2005) showed that there was no significant relationship between the ambivalent situation and forgiveness unless rumination existed. Aligning with this, results also revealed that frequently thinking about the partner's mistakes was associated with a decrease in the level of forgiveness regarding the individuals who had both positive and negative feelings about their partners.

Differentiation of self has only recently become a topic of study in quantitative research, and rumination and differentiation of self are not frequently studied together in the literature. As far as we know, there is only one international (Asadollahinia & Ghahari, 2018) and two national (Yavuz Güler & Karaca, 2021; Yıldız, 2020) studies that focused on the relationship between rumination and differentiation of self. In their study with 350 adolescents aged 14–17 years in an Iranian sample, Asadollahinia and Ghahari (2018) found that differentiation of self, rumination, and schema mode predicted compulsive behavior in adolescents. In the study conducted by Yavuz Güler and Karaca (2021), rumination showed significant negative correlations with emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion sub-dimensions, but it was positively correlated with the I position sub-dimension of differentiation of self. Furthermore, the results revealed that the differentiation of self predicted rumination negatively. Yıldız (2020), focused on the differentiation of self, forgiveness, and rumination together. Results of the mentioned study indicated a moderate positive relationship between differentiation of self and forgiveness and a significant predictive role of differentiation of self regarding the change in rumination. However, it was also found that the effect of forgiveness

on rumination was not statistically significant, and forgiveness did not contribute significantly to the relationship between differentiation and rumination in the related model.

The present study is one of the first to examine the relationships among differentiation of self, rumination, and forgiveness within romantic relationships. Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge, no prior research has simultaneously investigated the associations between interpersonal mindfulness, forgiveness, and rumination, making this study a novel contribution to the field. The present study aims to reveal the correlational and predictive relationships between these variables and examine the potential mediating role of rumination in the relationship between both differentiation of self and interpersonal mindfulness with forgiveness. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for future research and provide a helpful perspective for psychotherapists working with clients on issues related to psychological insight and romantic relationship dynamics.

Given the cultural variations in constructs such as forgiveness and interpersonal mindfulness, and considering the cultural diversity of Turkish society, it is particularly important to explore these relationships in a Turkish sample. Furthermore, while previous studies have examined mindfulness (e.g., Barnes et al., 2007; Erus, 2019; Karremans et al., 2017; Parlar & Akgün, 2018) and forgiveness (e.g., Kachadourian et al., 2005; Telli & Yavuz Güler, 2021) within romantic contexts, these studies have primarily focused on married individuals. However, studies with single individuals remain relatively scarce. Furthermore, the relational dynamics in marriage would be quite different from those of a romantic relationship between unmarried people due to legal and social responsibilities. Therefore, this study was conducted with single young adults to contribute to the literature in this area.

Moreover, research has shown that forgiveness tendencies, mindfulness capacities, and differentiation of self can vary across different life stages (Ghaemmaghami et al., 2011; Mullet et al., 1998, The current study focused specifically on young adults aged between 21 and 35) to control for the potential confounding effects of age. Overall, this study aims to examine the mediating role of rumination in the relationship between forgiveness and either interpersonal mindfulness or differentiation of self among unmarried young adults within the Turkish cultural context.

Hypotheses

1. Differentiation of self and interpersonal mindfulness will be positively correlated with forgiveness and negatively correlated with rumination.
2. Differentiation of self, interpersonal mindfulness, and rumination will significantly predict forgiveness.
3. Differentiation of self and interpersonal mindfulness will significantly predict rumination.
4. Rumination will mediate the relationship between interpersonal mindfulness and forgiveness.
5. Rumination will mediate the relationship between differentiation of self and forgiveness.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The present study was an Open Science pre-registered study (#Blinded for review) carried out with the permission of the (#Blinded for review) University Ethics Committee (07/03, 09.09.2021). Data were collected online based on availability and volunteerism, between February and April 2022. 667 single, young adults (aged 21–35) who have been in a romantic relationship for at least 6 months, participated in the study. Data of five participants were excluded from the study due to the results of univariate and multivariate outlier analyses as explained in the results.

The study sample consisted of 495 (74.8%) female and 167 (25.2%) male participants. The average age of the participants was 25.49 (SD = 4.016). Table 1 presents the distribution of the participants' education, relationship, occupation characteristics, and income status.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	495	74,8
	Male	167	25,2
Age	21-25	405	61,2
	26-30	162	24,4
	31-35	95	14,4
	6-12 months	227	34,3
Current relationship	1-3 years	204	30,8
	More than 3 years	231	34,9
	High school or less	144	21,8
Education	Associate degree	101	15,3
	Undergraduate	353	53,3
	Master's degree	56	8,5
	PhD	8	1,2
Income	Very bad	24	3,6
	Bad	71	10,7
	Average	370	55,9
	Good	171	25,8
Occupation	Very good	26	3,9
	Student	211	31,9
	Teacher/Academician	60	9,1
	Health	60	9,1
	Psychologist/Psychiatrist/Mental health worker	56	8,5
	Worker	29	4,4
	Engineer	27	4,1
	Government employee	18	2,7
	Finance/Bank	18	2,7
	HR	17	2,6
Occupation	Law	14	2,1
	Sport	11	1,7
	Other	141	21,1
Total		662	100

2.2 Materials

2.2.1 Personal Information Form

In the personal information form created by the researchers, the participants were asked demographic questions about gender, age, duration of current relationship, education level, income status and occupation.

2.2.2 Heartland Forgiveness Scale

The Heartland Forgiveness Scale was developed by Thompson et al. (2005) to measure individuals' tendency to forgive. It is an 18-item scale. The scale has three sub-dimensions: forgiveness of self, others, and the situation, and each subscale consists of 6 items. The higher the score on the seven-point Likert scale, the higher is the individual's level of forgiveness. The Turkish adaptation of the Heartland Forgiveness Scale was conducted by Bugay and Demir (2010). In their study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total scale was reported as 0.81. The coefficients for the subscales ranged between 0.64 and 0.79. An example item from the scale is: 'Although I feel bad at first when I mess up, over time I can relax myself' (İşleri berbat ettiğimde önce kötü hissetmeme rağmen zamanla kendimi rahatlatabilirim). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total scale was found to be 0.85, demonstrating high internal consistency.

2.2.3 Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire

This scale, developed by Brinker and Dozois (2009), consists of 20 items. The scale considers ruminative thinking as a cognitive process rather than a psychopathology symptom. The scale does not have a cut-off point; high scores indicate a high level of ruminative thinking. Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Karatepe et al. (2013). In their study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total scale was reported as 0.90. An example item from the scale is: 'I recognize that my mind often goes over some issues again and again' (Zihnimin sürekli bazı şeyleri tekrar tekrar gözden geçirdiğini fark ederim). The total Cronbach alpha value of the scale for the present study was found to be 0.93.

2.2.4 Differentiation of Self Scale – Short Form (DS-SF)

Differentiation of Self Scale, measuring the differentiation of self multi-dimensionally, was first developed by Skowron and Friedlander (1998) and revised later by Skowron and Schmitt (2003) [Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised (DSI-R)]. In the 46-item DSI-R, intrapsychic dimensions were included in DSI-R as 'I Position', 'Emotional Reactivity', 'Fusion with others' and 'Emotional Cutoff'. Drake et al. (2015), developed a 20-item short form based on the 46-item DSI-R to provide a more practical measure of differentiation of self. Items are evaluated using a 6-point Likert-type scale. The higher the total or subscale score, the higher is the level of differentiation of self. Turkish adaptation was carried out by Sarıkaya et al. (2018). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total scale was found to be 0.82. For the subscales, internal consistency coefficients were 0.61 for 'I-position', 0.78 for 'emotional reactivity', 0.72 for 'fusion with others', and 0.66 for 'emotional cutoff'. An example item from the scale is: 'I

tend to remain pretty calm even under stress' (Baskı altında bile oldukça sakin kalmaya çalışırım.) .The total Cronbach alpha value of the scale for the present study was found to be 0.85.

2.2.5 Interpersonal Mindfulness Scale

The Interpersonal Mindfulness Scale was developed by Erus and Tekel (2020). The scale consists of two dimensions: "awareness" and "being in the moment". A 5-point Likert-type rating is used for scoring. Higher scores indicate a high level of interpersonal mindfulness. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the overall scale was determined as 0.83. An example item from the scale is: "I am aware how I feel while talking with someone" (Biriyle konuşurken nasıl hissettiğimin farkında olurum.). The total Cronbach alpha value of the scale for the present study was found to be 0.78.

2.3 Procedure

Informed consent was obtained from all of the participants. Afterwards, participants filled out the "Personal Information Form", "Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire", "Heartland Forgiveness Scale", "Differentiation of Self Scale Short Form (DS-SF)", and the "Interpersonal Mindfulness Scale" respectively.

3. Results

The scores of the predictors and the outcome variable were analyzed to check the skewness and kurtosis distribution of the results. The skewness-kurtosis values in the -1/+1 range determined as a condition for the normality test. Skewness and kurtosis problems were detected in the total score distributions of the Interpersonal Mindfulness Scale. These scores were further analyzed according to their standard z-scores in order to detect univariate outliers. Data of three participants whose z scores were outside the range of $<+3$, <-3 were excluded from the data. Data were further analyzed for multivariate outliers. Two multivariate outliers were identified and excluded from the data ($df= 4$, Mahalanobis cut off= 18.46, $p= .001$).

3.1 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

Descriptive statistics of the scales used in the present study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Scales

Variables	Min	Max	$\bar{x}$	sd
Interpersonal Mindfulness Scale Total Score	30	65	50,08	6,48
Differentiation of Self Scale Short Form Total Score	8	30	18,31	3,85
Heartland Forgiveness Scale Total Score	26	126	79,55	17,39
Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire Total Score	25	140	100,09	23,53

3.2 Correlational Analysis

The results indicated that rumination negatively correlated with forgiveness, differentiation of self, and interpersonal mindfulness, while a significant positive relationship was found between forgiveness and both differentiation of self and interpersonal mindfulness. (Table 3).

Table 3

Correlations among the Study Variables

	Ruminative Thought Style	Forgiveness	Differentiation of Self	Interpersonal Mindfulness
Ruminative Thought Style	-			
Forgiveness	-0.520**	-		
Differentiation of Self	-0.666**	0,516**	-	
Interpersonal Mindfulness	-0,247**	0,313**	0,339**	-

3.3 Mediation Analyses

The mediating role of rumination in the relationships between forgiveness-differentiation of self and forgiveness-interpersonal mindfulness were tested via the Structural Equation Model (SEM) (by using the lavaan package) with two separate models (differentiation of self-rumination-forgiveness and interpersonal mindfulness-rumination-forgiveness). Although the results indicated a partial mediating role of rumination in both models, both structural models were found to have perfect fit values with a df value of zero in both standard and bootstrap methods (see Supplementary Materials). As this occurred probably due to the saturated nature of the mentioned models rather than a real perfect fit, the mentioned mediation analyses were re-performed via Linear Regression analyses (by using SPSS) and sobel test as explained below.

3.3.1 Mediating Role of Rumination in the Relationship between Differentiation of Self and Forgiveness

In order to explore the mediating role of rumination in the relationship between differentiation of self and forgiveness; predictive power of differentiation of self on both forgiveness and rumination was tested via two separate Simple Linear Regression Analyses, and then a Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted to find out whether differentiation of self and rumination together predicted forgiveness. In the relevant regression analyses, it was seen that there was no collinearity between the predictor and predicted variables, (the VIF values were below 2.5), and the results of the analysis were decided to be valid. The respective results were presented in Tables 4, 5 and 6. Finally, whether the change in the relationship between differentiation of self and forgiveness after including rumination in the model was statistically significant or not, was examined by using the Sobel Test. Furthermore, the model representing the mediating role of rumination in the relationship between differentiation of self and forgiveness was presented in Figure 1.

Table 4

Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results regarding the Predictive Power of Differentiation of Self on Forgiveness

DV	IV	B	SE of B	β	%95 CI Min.	%95 CI Max.	Part CC	t	p
Forgiveness	Constant	36,903	2,816	-	31,374	42,432		13,106	,00
	DS	2,329	0,150	0,516	2,034	2,625	0,516	15,480	,00

Adj. R²=0,266 ;F(1,660)=239,616 ; p=,000 , n=662 * DV= Dependent variable, IV= Independent variable,SE= Standard error, DF= Differentiation of self, CI= Confidence interval, CC= Correlation coefficient

It was found that differentiation of self significantly predicted forgiveness and accounted for approximately 27% of the variance (Table 4).

Table 5

Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results regarding the Predictive Power of Differentiation of Self on Rumination

DV	IV	B	SE of B	β	%95 CI Min	%95 CI Max.	Part CC	t	p
R	C	174,606	3,316		168,096	181,116		52,662	,00
	DS	-4,069	0,177	-0,666	-4,417	-3,721	-0,666	22,964	,00

Adj. R²=0,444 ;F(1,660)=17,562 ; p=,000 , n=662 * DV= Dependent variable, IV= Independent variable, R= rumination, C= Constant, SE= Standard error, DF= Differentiation of self, CI= Confidence interval, CC= Correlation coefficient

Results revealed that differentiation of self significantly predicted rumination and accounted for 44% of the total variance (Table 5).

Table 6

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results regarding the Prediction of Forgiveness by Differentiation of Self and Rumination

DV	IV	B	SE of B	β	%95 CI Min	%95 CIMax	Part CC	t	p
Forgiveness	C	77,738	6,179		65,606	89,870		12,582	,00
	DS	1,378	0,194	0,305	0,996	1,759	0,228	7,095	,00
	R	-0,234	0,032	-0,316	-0,296	-0,171	-0,236	-7,353	,00

Adj. R²=0,322 ;F(2,659)=156,479; p=,000 , n=662 DV= Dependent variable, IV= Independent variable, R= rumination, C= Constant, SE= Standard error, DF= Differentiation of self, CI= Confidence interval, CC= Correlation coefficient

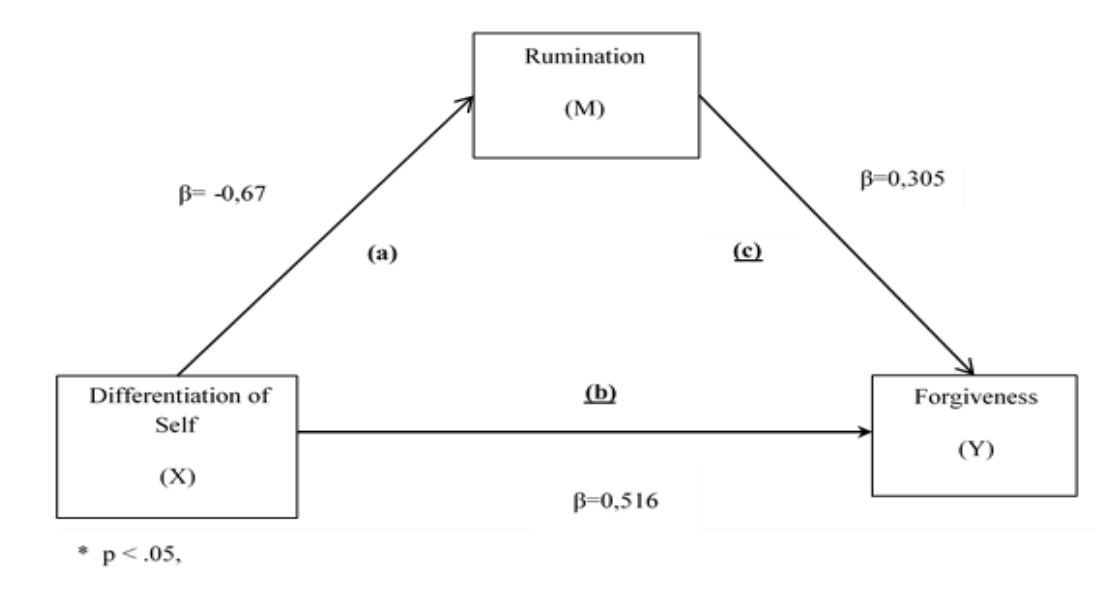
Results revealed that the two-predictor model was able to account for the 32 % of the total variance in forgiveness, and both differentiation of self and rumination significantly predicted forgiveness. Differentiation of self explained about 5.2% of the variance in forgiveness which could not be explained by the other predictor whereas the related explained variance of forgiveness by rumination was found out to be 5.6% (Table 6).

As seen in Table 5 and Table 6 and modeled in Figure 1, with the inclusion of rumination in the relationship between differentiation of self and forgiveness, the beta value decreased to 0.30 from 0.52 Sobel test result confirmed the significance of this mentioned decline and

revealed that rumination had a partial mediating role in the differentiation of self-forgiveness relationship ($z=6,968$, $p<.01$).

Figure 1

Model of the Mediating Role of Rumination in the Relationship Between Differentiation of Self and Forgiveness



3.3.2 The Mediating Role of Rumination in the Relationship between Interpersonal Mindfulness and Forgiveness

In order to explore the mediating role of rumination in the relationship between interpersonal mindfulness and forgiveness, the predictive power of interpersonal mindfulness on both forgiveness and rumination was tested via two separate Simple Linear Regression Analyses, and then a Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted to find out whether interpersonal mindfulness and rumination together predicted forgiveness. In the relevant regression analyses, it was seen that there was no collinearity between the predictor and predicted variables and the VIF value was below 2.5, and the results of the analysis were decided to be valid. The respective results were presented in Tables 7, 8, and 9. Finally, whether the change in the relationship between interpersonal mindfulness and forgiveness after including rumination in the model was statistically significant or not, was examined by using the Sobel Test. Furthermore, the model representing the mediating role of rumination in the relationship between interpersonal mindfulness and forgiveness was presented in Figure 2.

Table 7

Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results regarding the Predictive Power of Interpersonal Mindfulness on Forgiveness

DV	IV	B	SE of B	β	%95 CI Min.	%95 CI Max.	Part CC	t	p
Forgiveness	C	37,503	5,008	-	27,669	47,337		7,488	,00
	IM	0,840	0,099	0,313	0,645	1,034	0,313	8,467	,00

Adj. R²=0,098; F(1,660)=71,692; p=,000, n=662 *DV= Dependent variable, IV= Independent variable,, C= Constant, SE= Standard error, IM= Interpersonal mindfulness, CI= Confidence interval, CC= Correlation coefficient

It was found that interpersonal mindfulness significantly predicted forgiveness and was able to account for 10% of the variance (Table 7).

Table 8

Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results regarding the Predictive Power of Interpersonal Mindfulness on Rumination

DV	IV	B	SE of B	β	%95 CI Min.	%95 CI Max.	Part CC	t	p
Rumination	C	144,94	6,91	-	131,37	158,51		20,967	,00
	IM	-0,895	0,14	-0,247	-1,16	-0,63	-0,247	-6,541	,00

Adj. R²=0,061; F(1,660)=42,786; p=,000, n=662 *DV= Dependent variable, IV= Independent variable,, C= Constant, SE= Standard error, IM= Interpersonal mindfulness, CI= Confidence interval, CC= Correlation coefficient

Results yielded interpersonal mindfulness significantly predicted rumination and was able to account for 6% of the variance (Table 8).

Table 9

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results regarding the Prediction of Forgiveness by Interpersonal Mindfulness and Rumination

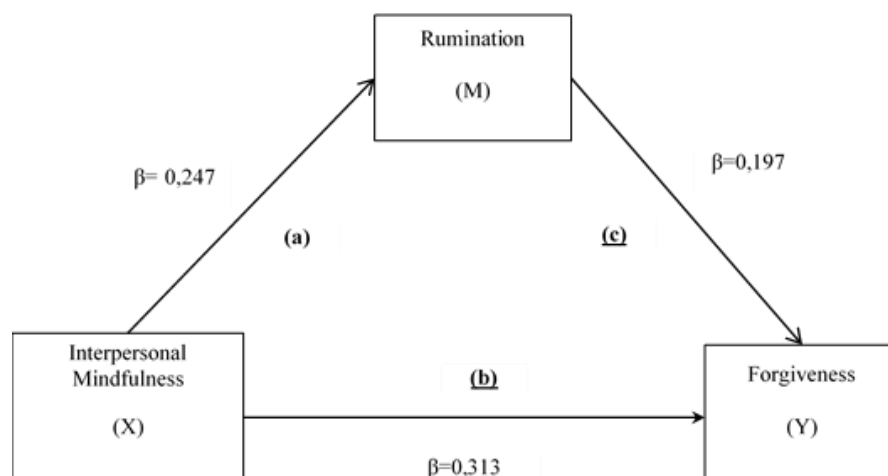
DV	IV	B	SE of B	β	%95 CI Min.	%95 CI Max.	Part CC	t	p
F	C	87,996	5,672		76,858	99,134		15,513	,00
	IM	0,528	0,090	0,197	0,351	0,704	0,191	5,877	,00
	R	-0,348	0,025	-0,471	-0,397	-0,300	-0,457	-14,078	,00

Adj. R²=0,307 ; F(2,659)=145,655; p=,000, n=662, *DV= Dependent variable, IV= Independent variable,, C= Constant, SE= Standard error, F= forgiveness, R= rumination, IM= Interpersonal mindfulness, CI= Confidence interval, CC= Correlation coefficient

Results revealed that two predictor model was able to account for the 31 % of the total variance in forgiveness, and both interpersonal mindfulness and rumination significantly predicted forgiveness. Interpersonal mindfulness explained about 4% of the variance in forgiveness which could not be explained by the other predictor, whereas the related explained variance of forgiveness by rumination was found out to be 21% (Table 9).

Figure 2

Model of the Mediating Role of Rumination in the Relationship Between Interpersonal Mindfulness and Forgiveness



* $p < .05$.

As seen in Table 8 and Table 9 and modeled in Figure 2, with the inclusion of rumination in the relationship between interpersonal mindfulness and forgiveness, the beta coefficient decreased to 0.20 from 0.31. Sobel test result confirmed the significance of this mentioned decline and revealed that rumination had a partial mediating role in the differentiation of self-forgiveness relationship ($z=-2.3281$, $p<.01$).

4. Discussion

Forgiveness has become a focus of interest in the psychology literature for more than 30 years due to its critical importance in terms of the individual's reactions to the problem, managing the problem, and maintaining psychological well-being (Lazarus, 1993). The way an individual chooses to solve a problem is affected by many individual and relational variables (Barnes et al., 2007; Conway et al., 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991; Skowron et al., 2009). However, differentiation of self and interpersonal mindfulness have only recently become a topic of interest in the literature as individual variables that affect the individual's problem-solving attitudes, specifically within the context of relationships. Although there are a number of studies that explored the correlational and/or predictive relationship between forgiveness-differentiation of self-intrapersonal mindfulness-rumination in separate subgroups, as far as we know, there was no study that examined the mediating role of rumination in either forgiveness-differentiation of self or forgiveness-interpersonal mindfulness relationships. Considering this as a significant gap in the relevant literature, the present study explored the mediating role of rumination in the relationship between forgiveness and both differentiation of self and interpersonal mindfulness. Furthermore, the present study also brought together these four variables in a single model, allowing for a more integrated understanding of their interrelations in romantic relationships.

Compatible with Hypothesis 2 and the relevant research findings (e.g., Heintzelman et al., 2014; Holeman et al., 2011; Yıldız, 2020), findings of the present study revealed that differentiation of self significantly predicted forgiveness. On the other hand, although there were a couple of studies that demonstrated the positive relationship between intrapersonal mindfulness and forgiveness (Barnes et al., 2007; Harvey Knowles et al., 2015), as far as we know, there was not a single study that explored the relationship between interpersonal mindfulness and forgiveness. Align with the conceptualization of interpersonal mindfulness, stating that thoughts about the situation or people would be more controlled, it was suggested that increased control would enhance objectivity and forgiveness in return (Hypothesis 1 & 2). In line with this suggestion, it was found that interpersonal mindfulness significantly predicted forgiveness. This result may indicate that being fully aware of one's and the other party's emotions and thoughts during interpersonal interactions can prevent impulsive negative reactions and pave the way for forgiveness.

Rumination appears to be a powerful individual variable frequently discussed within the framework of clinical psychology. A couple of studies indicated that rumination had a negative impact on forgiveness (Bugay & Demir, 2010; Bugay et al., 2012; Burnette et al., 2007; Strelan, 2007) and was a significant predictor of forgiveness (Oral, 2016; Önal, 2014; Suchday et al., 2006). In the present study, in line with Hypothesis 2 and the findings of the mentioned studies, it was found that rumination significantly predicted forgiveness. This supports the view that individuals who have difficulty getting over negative thoughts and relive painful experiences are less likely to forgive.

Some studies revealed that rumination negatively correlated with interpersonal mindfulness (e.g., Moreira & Canavarro, 2018; Ottavi et al., 2019; Tarrasch et al., 2020). Furthermore, differentiation of self was a significant predictor of rumination (e.g., Asadollahinia & Ghahari, 2018; Yavuz Güler & Karaca, 2021; Yıldız, 2020). In line with the findings of the mentioned studies and Hypotheses 1 and 3, the present study found that both interpersonal mindfulness and differentiation of self significantly predicted rumination.

The findings of the present study revealed a partial mediating role of rumination in the relationship between both the differentiation of self-forgiveness and interpersonal mindfulness-forgiveness. This last finding was considered unique because, as far as we know, this was the first study to explore the mentioned mediating relationships. These findings indicated that low levels of self differentiation and interpersonal mindfulness would increase rumination and increased rumination in return would lead to decrease in forgiveness. This finding is particularly valuable, as it suggests that therapeutic interventions to increase forgiveness might be more effective when these direct and indirect relationships with respect to differentiation of self, rumination and interpersonal mindfulness are also addressed.

Interpersonal mindfulness, forgiveness, and differentiation of self, all three psychological structures, are among the concepts that were recommended to be studied in different cultures due to the possible cultural variations. For example, differentiation of self was explored in different cultures by a couple of international studies (e.g., Skowron, 2004), and the number of these studies have recently started to increase in the Turkish literature (e.g., Sarıkaya et al., 2018; Süloğlu and Güler, 2021; Telli & Yavuz Güler, 2021; Yavuz Güler &

Karaca, 2021; Yıldız, 2020). Moreover, by the development of the Interpersonal Mindfulness Scale (Erus & Tekel, 2020) on a Turkish sample, which was also used in the present study, it was expected that the number of studies on this topic would increase as well. Considering the cultural dynamics of Turkish society, which has both collectivist and individualistic cultural characteristics (Göregenli, 1997) and involves a wide range of socio-cultural diversity in terms of subcultures, it was suggested that studies with the participation of Turkish samples would be an important source for cultural comparisons of these variables. Furthermore, being one of the pioneering studies in the newly developing literature on interpersonal mindfulness was considered an important feature of the present study. The determined relationships between forgiveness-differentiation of self-interpersonal mindfulness and rumination in the present study were compatible with the findings of the relevant international studies as explained above. However, those findings of the present study are still important with respect to cultural comparisons indicating similarities of these relationships despite the cultural differences.

Various studies revealed that differentiation of self, interpersonal mindfulness, forgiveness, and rumination were all associated with a number of positive and negative mental health variables (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Deniz et al., 2020; Jankowski & Hooper, 2012; Skowron et al., 2009; Thompson et al., 2005). Therefore, the relationships among these variables were considered important in terms of ensuring individual and social well-being. It was considered that the findings of the present study would be beneficial for the experts of both individual psychotherapy and family-couple therapy to determine the dynamics that they need to focus on/prioritize in the process of case assessment, formulation, and psychotherapy while working on interpersonal relationships, specifically romantic relationships. The results underscore the importance of working with clients' rumination tendencies in conjunction with efforts to enhance forgiveness, interpersonal mindfulness, and differentiation of self, especially in romantic dynamics based on emotionality.

Regarding preventive mental health services, practices that increase interpersonal mindfulness and support the differentiation of self would promote individual well-being and strengthen interpersonal relationships. Considering the consistently demonstrated role of rumination in stress, anxiety, and depression by a couple of studies, it seemed possible to support individual and relational well-being by working with rumination for a variety of psychotherapy approaches such as cognitive therapy, mindfulness-based psychotherapies, and systemic therapies.

Such an integrative approach would target not only the content of cognition (as in CBT) but also the process of thinking (as in mindfulness) and relational functioning (as in systemic therapies), thereby offering a comprehensive framework for enhancing forgiveness and well-being.

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ETHICS

The authors declare that this article complies with ethical standards and rules. Approval was received from the Mehmet Vakıf University Ethics Committee for this study (Decision Date: 09/09/2021, Decision No. 2021-07/03)

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Elif Bayraktar  I Concept; Design; Literature review; Data collection/analysis; Interpretation of data/findings; Drafting; Critical; Supervising; Final approval and accountability. General contribution rate: 60%.

Filiz Kumova  I Concept; Design; Literature review; Supervising; Final approval and accountability; Critical. General contribution rate: 40%

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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