

## CONSTRUCT VALIDITY AND PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE RESPONSES TO POSITIVE AFFECT (RPA) QUESTIONNAIRE

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### Abstract

Previous studies confirm the role of depressive rumination in the exacerbation of negative mood. However, less is known about rumination in relation to positive affect. We present the construct validity and psychometric properties of the Responses to Positive Affect (RAP) questionnaire in a sample of 302 people from the general population (55.2% female), aged 18-68 years ( $M= 28.6$ ,  $SD= 12.0$ ). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses indicate a two-factor structure: emotion- and person-centered positive rumination ( $\alpha= .88$ ) and buffering ( $\alpha= .83$ ), both with adequate configural, metric and scalar invariance by sex. The two factors present adequate convergent, discriminant and incremental validity with constructs related to negative and positive affect. The results are discussed according to the studies reviewed and the RAP is proposed as an assessment instrument in therapeutic procedures that seek to enhance positive affect and psychological well-being.

KEY WORDS: *positive rumination, dampening, depression, life satisfaction, distress endurance.*

### Resumen

Los estudios constatan el papel de la rumia depresiva como un amplificador del estado de ánimo negativo, sin embargo, se conoce menos sobre la rumia relacionada con el afecto positivo. Presentamos la validez de constructo y propiedades psicométricas del cuestionario "Respuestas al afecto positivo" (RAP) en una muestra de 302 personas de la población general (55,2% mujeres), con edades entre los 18 y 68 años ( $M= 28,6$ ;  $DT= 12,0$ ). Los análisis factorial exploratorio y confirmatorio indican una estructura de dos factores: rumia positiva centrada en la emoción y en la persona ( $\alpha= 0,88$ ) y amortiguación ( $\alpha= 0,83$ ), ambos con una adecuada invarianza configural, métrica y escalar por sexo. Los dos factores presentan una adecuada validez convergente, discriminante e incremental con constructos relacionados con el afecto negativo y positivo. Los resultados se discuten atendiendo a los estudios revisados y se propone el RAP como instrumento de evaluación en procedimientos terapéuticos que tratan de potenciar el afecto positivo y el bienestar psicológico.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *rumiación positiva, amortiguación, depresión, satisfacción con la vida, resistencia al malestar.*

## Introduction

Repetitive negative thinking (RNT) is defined as “repetitive thinking about one or more negative topics that is experienced as difficult to control” (Ehring & Watkins, 2008, p. 193). It increases individuals’ vulnerability to various emotional disorders and is considered a factor of cognitive vulnerability and a common or transdiagnostic risk factor for various emotional disorders (Cludius et al., 2020; Ferrer et al., 2018; González, Ramírez, et al., 2017; McEvoy et al., 2018; 2021; Wahl et al., 2019). RNT can be of a constructive or unconstructive nature. The former includes rumination related to positive affect, while the latter comprises depressive rumination (Feldman et al., 2008; Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991).

According to the response styles theory of depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2004), depressive rumination is a response to negative affect (NA). Negative affect is defined as a way of responding to feelings of anguish by focusing repetitively and passively on negative symptoms and their possible causes and consequences (Nolen-Hoeksema & Watkins, 2011; Watkins & Roberts, 2020). This conceptualization distinguishes between two types of rumination: brooding and reflection (Treyner et al., 2003). Brooding is considered a less adaptive form of rumination characterized by passive and negative comparison of oneself with an unattained standard; by contrast, reflection is a more adaptive form of rumination that implies intentional involvement in problem-solving to improve depressive symptoms (Treyner et al., 2003; for a review, see, e.g., González, Ramírez, et al., 2017). Rumination on NA amplifies it and leads to worsened anxiety and depression symptoms (Aldao et al., 2010; González, Ibáñez, et al., 2017; Mennies et al., 2020).

Depressive rumination is considered to be a transdiagnostic construct of multiple emotional disorders (Aldao et al., 2010), but much less is known about the role of rumination related to positive affect (PA) (Abasi et al., 2023; Feldman et al., 2008). Both constructs share a similar cognitive process, since they have a repetitive focus, but differ in their valence: depressive rumination has a negative valence, while rumination on PA is characterized by its positive valence (Mennies et al., 2020).

The broaden and build theory of positive emotions postulates that positive emotions broaden people’s thought-action repertoires, undo persistent negative emotions, maintain psychological resilience and trigger upward spirals toward better emotional wellbeing and life satisfaction (Fredrickson, 2004). Positive emotions are inherently pleasant. Yet, studies have shown that some people apprehend experiencing positive emotions; this leads to fear of both positive and negative affect, which is a type of fear of emotions (Puntons et al., 2011; Williams et al., 1997). Therefore, people’s individual health and psychological wellbeing is not only affected by the amount of positive and negative emotional experiences but also by how these emotions are regulated (Gross & Jazaieri, 2014).

Emotion regulation is defined as the processes through which people influence the type of emotions they have and the way they experience and express them (Gross, 2015). This regulation process can involve downregulating negative emotions, upregulating these emotions or keeping the emotions stable; in fact, the frequent use of positive regulation strategies is associated with higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction and positive emotions (Quoidbach et al., 2010).

Similarly to the responses to negative affect, mentioned above, two types of cognitive responses to positive affect seem especially relevant: 1) positive rumination or amplification, defined as “the tendency to respond to positive affective states with recurrent thoughts about positive self-qualities, positive affective experience, and one’s favorable life circumstances” (Feldman et al., 2008, p. 509); and 2) dampening, defined as the tendency to respond to positive mood states with mental strategies aimed at reducing their intensity and duration (Feldman et al., 2008). Unlike amplifying responses, dampening ones are not characterized by repetitiveness but rather on their focus on the negative aspects of a situation, thus attenuating positive affect (Mennies et al., 2020). In short, positive rumination is a more adaptive form of rumination that amplifies PA, while dampening is a less adaptive strategy that decreases PA (Gilbert et al., 2013; for a meta-analysis, see, e.g., Bean et al., 2022).

Depressed and anxious individuals dwell on repetitive negative thoughts as a response to negative emotions (Aldao et al., 2010; González, Ramírez, et al., 2017); they are also more likely to dampen their emotional responses to positive emotions compared to people without problems (Feldman et al., 2008; Raes et al., 2009). The tendency to respond to positive emotions by dampening them predicts future levels of depressive symptoms and is associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression (McEvoy et al., 2018, 2021). In addition, an increase in the tendency to dampen positive emotions and a decrease in the tendency to amplify them worsens the symptoms of mood disorders; specifically, positive rumination and depressive rumination can have a dual effect on positive affect and negative affect, respectively: positive rumination amplifies PA and decreases NA whereas depressive rumination amplifies NA and reduces PA (Harding & Mezulis 2017).

An instrument that assesses the regulation of positive affect is the Responses to Positive Affect questionnaire (RPA; Feldman et al., 2008). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses have identified a three-factor structure comprised of the factors “emotion-focused rumination”, “self-focused rumination”, and “dampening” (Dempsey et al., 2011; Feldman et al., 2008; Olofsson et al., 2014). These three factors have been replicated in several samples from different countries such as Sweden, China, the Netherlands and Spain (Hidalgo-García et al., 2019; Kraiss et al., 2019; Olofsson et al., 2014; Raes et al., 2009; Yang & Guo 2014). Studies have found correlations ranging from 0.44 to 0.90 between emotion-focused

rumination and self-focused rumination (Hidalgo-García et al., 2019; McEvoy et al., 2018, 2021; Mennies et al., 2020).

Internal consistency coefficients range from 0.73 to 0.79 for the three-factor structure (Felman et al., 2008) and are slightly higher for the two-factor structure (0.80 for positive rumination and 0.77 for dampening); 14-day test-retest reliability is 0.81 for positive rumination and 0.83 for dampening (Abasi et al., 2018; Voss et al., 2019).

As for convergent and discriminant validity, studies have shown that positive rumination is positively associated with subjective wellbeing but negatively associated with depression and anxiety. Dampening is positively associated with anxiety and depression and negatively associated with subjective wellbeing (Abasi et al., 2018; Kraiss et al., 2019; McEvoy et al., 2018, 2021; Mennies et al., 2020; Voss et al., 2019). Although these relationships are logical to expect, a few divergent results have been observed with some constructs related to negative affect (i.e., brooding and reflection), which were not associated with positive rumination but instead with dampening in one study (Voss et al., 2019). In another study, positive rumination was associated with reflection and dampening was associated with brooding (Abasi et al., 2018). Regarding the correlation coefficients between the factors of the RPA, some studies did not find significant relationships between positive rumination and dampening (Abasi et al., 2018; Feldman et al., 2008), while others found a significant negative relationship (Kraiss et al., 2019; Olofsson et al., 2014; Voss et al., 2019); finally, three studies found positive but low relationships ( $r_{xy}=.05$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) (McEvoy et al., 2018, 2021; Mennies et al., 2020; Samtani et al., 2021).

The studies reviewed showed some conflicting results such as the following: 1) the three-factor structure of the original English version of the RPA has not been replicated in several countries in which it has been validated; specifically, the three- and two-factor structures have shown problems with at least six of the 17 items of the scale. In the studies conducted with Iranian and Dutch samples, item 17 ("Think 'This is too good to be true'") was eliminated (Abasi et al., 2018; Kraiss et al., 2019). In the study with the German sample, three items were eliminated, since two showed cross loadings greater than 0.30 in both factors, namely items 1 ("Think about how happy you feel") and 8 ("Think about how strong you feel"); moreover, the loadings of item 6 ("Savor this moment") were not large enough in either of the two factors, so the 14 remaining items were subjected to a CFA (Voss et al., 2019). In another study with a sample of patients with bipolar disorder, two items were allowed to correlate with each other ( $r_{xy}=.65$ ) to improve the proposed model (items 11 ("Remind yourself these feelings won't last") and 2 ("My streak of luck will end soon")); in addition, item 6, mentioned above, had very low loadings on the factor and was eliminated (Kraiss et al., 2019); 2) in the studies in which three factors were isolated, emotion-focused rumination and self-focused rumination showed

correlations ranging from 0.44 to 0.90 (McEvoy et al., 2018, 2021; Mennies et al., 2020) and in Spain, the correlation was 0.59 (Hidalgo-García et al., 2019); 3) perhaps due to the lack of a validated construct validity, the convergent and discriminant validity of the factors isolated by the RPA were not completely clear, particularly regarding the relationships between the two factors of the RPA and brooding and reflection, mentioned above; 4) we are not aware of any studies on the measurement invariance of the RPA regarding gender, except for one study (Hidalgo-García et al., 2019); 5) we are not aware of any studies that have explored the relationships between responses to positive affect and constructs related to positive affect, such as life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985) and distress endurance (Gámez et al., 2011).

The objectives of the present study were to analyze: 1) the construct validity and psychometric properties of the Responses to Positive Affect (RPA) questionnaire; 2) the convergent and discriminant validity of the instrument with depression, anxiety, life satisfaction and distress endurance; 3) its measurement invariance according to gender; and 4) its incremental validity to explain the variance in life satisfaction, distress endurance, anxiety and depression, after controlling for brooding and reflection.

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample was composed of 302 people from the general population with a mean age of 28.6 years ( $SD=12.0$ ) ranging from 18 to 68 and a mode of 21. The Mahalanobis distance test detected 13 (4.3%) outliers, which were eliminated. The sample was composed of 55.2% women and 44.8% men. As regards level of education, 4.5% had primary education, 47.9% had secondary education, 18.7% had a short-cycle university degree and 28.9% had a long-cycle university degree. As regards occupation, 46.5% were students, 37.6% had a paid job, 12.2% were unemployed and 3.8% were retired. As for marital status, 61.7% were single, 32.1% were married or cohabited with their partner, and 6.3% were divorced or separated. Finally, 24.2% of the sample came from a rural area and 75.8% came from an urban area.

### *Instruments*

- a) *Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scales* (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), Spanish adaptation by Bados et al. (2005). This instrument measures current symptoms of depression and anxiety, that is, "over the past week". For this study, we only used the anxiety and depression scales, each of which includes

- 7 items. Each item is answered according to the presence and intensity of symptoms on a Likert-type response scale (0 = "does not apply to me at all" to 3 = "applies to me a lot or most of the time"). The total score is calculated with the sum of the items belonging to each scale, where the items of each factor are multiplied by two. The score ranges from 0 to 42 for each scale, the higher the score the more symptoms of anxiety and depression. The internal consistency of the total scale is .95 and its test-retest reliability is .55 (Bados et al., 2005). The authors of the DASS-21 report that the items of each factor are multiplied by two. In this study, internal consistency was .85 for anxiety and .90 for depression.
- b) *Ruminative Responses Scale* (RRS; Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991). This scale assesses depressive rumination and the Spanish adaptation of Hervás (2008) was used. It is a 22-item, four-point scale (1= "almost never" to 4 = "almost always"). This is a 5-point scale with 22 items ranging from "fully disagree" to "fully agree". In this study, we used the 10 items that assess factors of brooding ( $\alpha = .80$ ) and reflection ( $\alpha = .74$ ). The items of each subscale are added, so that the higher the score, the more reproaches and/or more reflection. In this study, the internal consistency was .81 for the 10 items of the scale, .79 for brooding and .75 for reflection (Hervás, 2008).
- c) *Responses to Positive Affect questionnaire* (RPA; Feldman et al., 2008). This scale was translated by the authors of this study and revised by a graduated translator. Unlike the RRS mentioned above, the RPA evaluates rumination in relation to positive affect. The RPA consists of 17 items and isolates three factors: emotion-focus, which refers to rumination on positive moods and somatic experiences with the goal of intensifying current positive moods; self-focus, which refers to rumination on positive qualities or personally relevant goals; and dampening, focused on the negative aspects of a situation and a mood change that reduces PA. It is responded on a 4-point scale from 1 ("almost never") to 4 ("almost always"). The items of each factor are added together. Internal consistency is  $\alpha = .76$  for emotional focus,  $\alpha = .73$  for self-focus and  $\alpha = .72$  for dampening. In this study, the subscales emotional focus ( $\alpha = .88$ ) and dampening ( $\alpha = .83$ ) showed adequate internal consistency.
- d) *Multidimensional Experiential Avoidance Questionnaire* (MEAQ; Gámez et al., 2011). This is a 62-item questionnaire that provides a multidimensional assessment of experiential avoidance. In this study, we used the 11 items that assess distress endurance, which refers to effective behaviors against distress, such as "I am willing to suffer for the things that matter to me". It is responded on a 6-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 6 ("strongly agree"). The score on the scale ranges from 1 to 66, the higher the score, the greater the resistance to discomfort. Its internal consistency

- coefficient ranges from .80 to .82. The items were translated by the authors and revised by a native English speaker. In this study, internal consistency was 0.89.
- e) *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), Spanish adaptation by Atienza et al. (2003). The SWLS assesses global judgments of satisfaction with one's life. It is a 5-item scale with response options ranging from 1 to 5 (1= "totally agree"; 5= "totally disagree"). Scores range from 5 to 25, the higher the score, the higher the life satisfaction. The Spanish version of the SWLS has shown good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .84$ ) (Atienza et al., 2003). In this study, internal consistency was .76.

### *Procedure*

A total of 15 students who were working on their end-of-degree project received training to administer questionnaires with roleplay procedures in which a student played the role of the interviewer while another played the role of the respondent. They were asked to select a group of 8 to 10 adults over 18 years old from their close environment through the snowball procedure, which is widely used to collect information from populations that are difficult to sample (Thomson, 2002), such as community samples. Participants received an envelope containing the instructions to respond to each questionnaire, a contact telephone number and an informed consent form to sign; a great importance was given to anonymity and data protection. The envelopes were to be handed over to the students closed and sealed the next day. This research was reviewed favorably by the Research Ethics and Animal Welfare Committee of the University of La Laguna.

### *Data analysis*

First of all, Little's MCAR test for the detection of missing values was performed. These values are detected with the Mahalanobis Distance Test with a criterion of  $p \leq 0.001$  (Brereton, 2015). To calculate the construct validity of the RPA, we performed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) according to the number of factors extracted in the EFA, which were contrasted with three of the studies reviewed: the three-factor model of the original sample (Feldman et al., 2008) and two two-factor models - one with an Iranian sample and one with a German sample (Abasi et al., 2018; Voss et al., 2019). Model fit was assessed with the chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ), in which lower values indicate a better fit of the model and the relationship between  $\chi^2$  and the degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ) must be  $< 3$  for acceptable fit (Kline, 2015). Moreover, the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were calculated to determine the fit of the model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Values  $\geq .90$  were

considered to indicate acceptable fit and values  $\geq .95$  were considered to show good fit of the model in the CFI and the TLI; RMSEA values  $\leq .80$  and  $\leq .50$  were considered to indicate acceptable and good fit of the model, respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1999). After developing the model with best fit to the data, we conducted a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (MCFA) nested according to gender.

We calculated the correlation coefficient (Pearson's  $r$ ) to estimate zero-order correlations and to determine the correlations between the factors isolated by the RPA and the criterion variables brooding, reflection, anxiety, depression, life satisfaction and distress endurance; we also estimated partial correlations, controlling for brooding and reflection. The reliability of the RPA was calculated with an internal consistency analysis (with Cronbach's alpha coefficient). To determine the incremental validity of the factors of the RPA, we conducted multiple hierarchical regression analyses. These analyses assessed whether the subscales of the RPA were able to explain a significant amount of variability in symptoms of depression and anxiety, life satisfaction and distress endurance, after controlling for brooding and reflection. We entered brooding and reflection in the first step and the RPA subscales in the second step. The significant changes in the variance explained after the second step ( $p < .05$ ) were considered to show incremental validity.

## Results

Little's MCAR test showed that missing data were not distributed completely at random ( $\chi^2_{[48]} = 89.16, p \leq .001$ ). Thirteen outliers (4.3%) were detected with the Mahalanobis distance test with a criterion of  $p \leq .001$  (Brereton, 2015) and were removed from the database.

### *Exploratory factor analysis*

To explore the factor structure of the Responses to Positive Affect questionnaire (RPA), we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) by extracting the main factors with promax rotation and loadings  $\geq .30$  and eigenvalues  $\geq 1$ . The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index ( $KMO = .892, p < .001$ ) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $\chi^2_{[136]} = 3898, p < .001$ ) confirmed the fit of the data for conducting a factor analysis (Bartlett, 1954; Kaiser, 1974). We performed Horn's Parallel Analysis (1969), which suggested keeping to factors that explained 49.5% of the variance. The first was called "positive emotion- and person-focused rumination" (PEPFR) and the second was called "dampening" (DAM). Table 1 shows the item-total coefficients, means and standard deviations of each item as well as the item loadings, which ranged between .47 and .78.

**Table 1**

Exploratory factor analysis with promax rotation of the Responses to Positive Affect (RPA) questionnaire

Factors / items	Factor loadings	h <sup>2</sup>	M	SD	r <sub>i-t</sub>
<i>Positive emotion- and person-focused rumination</i> (eigenvalue= 5.40; VE= 30.8)					
8. Think about how strong you feel	.76	.43	2.51	.92	.44
14. Think about how proud you are of yourself	.73	.44	2.50	.99	.37
10. Notice how you feel full of energy	.72	.42	2.66	.94	.36
5. Think "I am achieving everything"	.71	.47	2.38	.91	.40
13. Think "I am living up to my potential"	.66	.57	2.66	.88	.36
1. Think about how happy you feel	.62	.52	2.57	.85	.39
3. Think about how you feel up to doing everything	.59	.64	2.01	.92	.46
6. Savor this moment	.55	.63	3.08	.88	.26
16. Think "I am getting everything done"	.47	.77	1.85	.89	.41
<i>Dampening</i> (eigenvalue= 2.94; VE= 18.7)					
11. Remind yourself these feelings won't last	.78	.39	1.81	.85	.30
17. Think "This is too good to be true"	.67	.57	1.93	.89	.38
7. Think about things that could go wrong	.65	.50	1.77	.89	.26
4. Think "I don't deserve this"	.63	.53	1.76	.93	.14
2. Think "My streak of luck is going to end soon"	.60	.63	2.38	.93	.12
9. Think about things that have not gone well for you	.59	.59	2.29	.88	.18
12. Think about how hard it is to concentrate	.55	.66	2.13	.96	.17
15. Think "people will think I'm bragging"	.49	.76	1.75	.88	.34

Note: VE= variance explained; r<sub>i-t</sub>= item-total correlation.

### Confirmatory factor analysis

We performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the two-factor model of the EFA. Table 2 shows the comparison between the two-factor models of this study (Md) and three models: the first was the three-factor model of the original study (Ma) (Feldman et al., 2008); the second was that of the study with the Iranian sample (Mb) (Abasi et al., 2018); and the third was that of study with the German sample (Mc) (Voss et al., 2019).

We found that the three-factor model (Ma) and the two-factor models (Mb and Mc) had acceptable fit indices, but the  $\chi^2/df$  difference was greater than 3. This indicated low fit, even though CFI values were .90. TLI values were lower than .90. As regards general indices, the model with the best fit was that of this study (Md); it was therefore considered adequate, as it had a  $\chi^2/df= 2.29$ , a CFI= .914 and a TLI= .901. Table 2, which displays the comparison between the three models (Mb, Mc and Md), did not show significant differences between the chi-square statistics. The

**Table 2**  
Goodness-of-fit indices of the three-factor model vs. competing models

Model	F	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	Compared model	$\Delta$ SRMR	$\Delta$ RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2(\Delta df)$	$p(\Delta df)$	$\Delta$ CFI
Ma	3	435	116	3.75	.908	.892	.067	.070						
Mb	2	399	103	3.87	.907	.892	.066	.072						
Mc	2	312	76	4.10	.904	.885	.073	.075	Mb-Mc	.007	.003	87(27)	.498	.003
Md	2	271	118	2.29	.914	.901	.065	.067	Mc-Md	.008	.008	41(42)	.515	.01
Mdc	2	399	236	1.69	.908	.894	.078	.069	Mdc-Md	.013	.002	128(118)	.249	.006
Mdm	2	416	251	1.65	.907	.899	.083	.068	Mdc-Mdm	.005	.001	17(15)	.318	.001
Mds	2	435	266	1.63	.905	.903	.080	.066	Mdm-Mdes	.003	.002	19(15)	.213	.003
MdSt		457	283	1.72	.902	.906	.083	.065	Mdes-Mdst	.003	.001	22(17)	.184	.003

Note: F= isolated factors; Ma= three-factor model (Feldman et al., 2008); Mb= two-factor model (Abasi et al., 2017); Mc= two-factor model (Voss et al., 2019); Md= two-factor model of this study; Mdc= two factor model, configural; Mdm= two factor model, metric; Mds= two factor model, scalar; MdSt= two factor model, strict; CFI= comparative fit index; TLI= Tucker-Lewis index; SRMR= standardized root mean squared residual; RMSEA= root mean square error of approximation.

difference between Mb and Mc was  $p\Delta\chi^2 = .498$  and the difference between Mc and Md was  $p\Delta\chi^2 = .515$ . In addition, the differences in the incremental fit indices were below the established levels, so the two-factor models compared can be considered equivalent.

We assessed measurement invariance across gender. As regards configural invariance (Mdc), no significant differences were observed when comparing the differences in the chi-square statistic ( $p\Delta\chi^2 = .171$ ); moreover, the differences in the incremental fit indices were below the established criteria to consider non-equivalence. Hence, we can conclude that the structure of the RPA is similar for men and women, on the basis of a  $\Delta CFI = .001$ , an  $\Delta RMSEA = .001$  and an  $\Delta SRMR = .005$ . Considering these results, the model fits the data and configural invariance across gender is assumed. Metric invariance (Mdm) across gender is also assumed, since the chi-square statistic was not significant ( $\Delta\chi^2[\Delta df] = (20, 15), p < .318$ ) and the  $\Delta CFI = .001$ , that is, lower than .01. As for scalar invariance, when the model was compared to the factor loadings restricted to being the same as the most restrictive model, in which equality in the intercepts was assumed, results revealed the following: the chi-square statistic ( $p\Delta\chi^2 = .184$ ) was not significant and the differences in the incremental fit indices were below the established criteria to support non-equivalence. Consequently, we can state that the RPA has strict invariance.

#### *Convergent and discriminant validity: Correlation analyses*

Table 3 shows the zero-order and partial  $r$  correlation coefficients. As regards the former, the two factors of the scale<sup>1</sup> were negatively correlated with each other ( $r_{xy} = -.27$ ). Positive emotion- and person-focused rumination (PEPFR) was positively correlated with life satisfaction, with coefficients above .40, and with reflection and distress endurance, although with lower coefficients. By contrast, PEPFR was negatively correlated with brooding, anxiety and depression. Dampening showed the highest correlation coefficients with brooding, anxiety and depression, had a lower correlation with reflection, and was negatively correlated with life satisfaction, but was not correlated with distress endurance. Brooding and reflection showed a correlation coefficient of .45; the former had a higher correlation with depression and no correlation with distress endurance, whereas reflection was correlated with distress endurance but not with life satisfaction. Finally, distress endurance was positively correlated with life satisfaction and negatively correlated with anxiety and depression, which shared 59% of the variance explained (Abdi & Pak, 2019). As

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<sup>1</sup> We performed a correlation analysis considering the three factors identified by the original authors (Feldman et al., 2008) and found that positive emotion-focused rumination and self-focused rumination were correlated ( $r_{xy} = .72, p \leq .001$ ). The former was correlated ( $r_{xy} = -.29, p \leq .001$ ) with dampening, which was correlated ( $r_{xy} = -.16, p \leq .005$ ) with self-focused rumination.

regards partial correlations, significant differences were found between dampening and anxiety ( $z = 2.70, p < .007$ ) and also between dampening and depression ( $z = 3.38, p < .0008$ ).

To sum up, PEPFR was positively correlated with reflection, distress endurance and life satisfaction, and negatively correlated with brooding, anxiety and depression. Dampening had correlation values above .40 with brooding, anxiety and depression.

**Table 3**

Correlation coefficients between the variables evaluated, above the diagonal zero-order coefficients and below the diagonal partial correlation

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. PEPFR	--	-.27***	-.13***	.15***	.23***	.43***	-.20***	-.33***
2. DAM	-.18***	--	.52***	.21***	-.09	-.32***	<b>.44***</b>	<b>.49***</b>
3. BRO			--	.45***	-.04	-.27***	.35***	.42***
4. REF				--	.05	-.09	.27***	.26***
5. DE	.22***	-.08			--	.27***	-.13*	-.18**
6. LS	.41***	-.21***			.26***	--	-.27***	-.37***
7. ANX	-.21***	<b>.33***</b>			-.14***	-.20***	--	.77***
8. DEP	-.34***	<b>.34***</b>			-.20***	-.30***	.73***	--
M (SD)	22.7 (5.7)	15.6 (4.8)	10.4 (2.9)	10.4 (3.2)	51.5 (8.8)	19.6 (5.1)	7.5 (7.9)	7.8 (8.6)

Notes: PEPFR= positive emotion- and person-focused rumination; DAM= dampening; BRO= brooding, REF= reflection; DE= distress endurance; LS= life satisfaction; ANX= anxiety, DEP= depression. In bold, statistically significant z-differences. \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

### *Incremental validity: Regression analysis*

Table 4 shows that anxiety was predicted in step 1 by brooding and reflection, which explained 16% of the variance, and in step 2, with 25% of the variance explained by positive emotion- and person-focused rumination and 36% of the variance explained by dampening. The last two variables added 9% to the variance explained. Dampening had a higher  $\beta$  coefficient ( $\beta = .30$ ) and was followed by reflection ( $\beta = .16$ ) and brooding ( $\beta = .14$ ). Depression was predicted in step 1 by brooding and reflection, which explained 22% of the variance, and in step 2 by PEPFR and dampening, which explained 34% of the variance; again, dampening obtained the highest  $\beta$  coefficient ( $\beta = .29$ ), followed by positive rumination ( $\beta = -.23$ ) and brooding. As regards life satisfaction, the two factors of the RPA explained an additional 23% of the variance, above brooding and reflection, which only explained 6%. Hence, only PEPFR had a significant contribution, explaining 17% of the variance. Distress endurance was predicted by 6% of the variance, and the highest  $\beta$  coefficients were obtained by PEPFR ( $\beta = .20$ ) and reflection ( $\beta = .14$ ).

**Table 4**  
Regression analysis between the variables evaluated

Criterion variables	Model	Predictor variables	B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup> aj	SE B	t
Anxiety	1	Constant	-5.22			1.89	-2.75**
		BRO	.37	.14		.13	2.82**
		REF	.42	.16	.16	.11	3.92***
	2	PEPFR	-.15	-.11		.05	4.39***
		DAM	.41	.30	.25	.07	-2.78**
Depression	1	Constant	-3.10			1.92	6.62***
		BRO	.60	.20		.13	4.52***
		REF	.41	.15	.22	.11	3.83***
	2	PEPFR	-.35	-.23		.05	-6.29***
		DAM	.52	.29	.34	.07	6.72***
Life satisfaction	1	Constant	17.31			1.70	10.14***
		BRO	-.22	-.12		.12	-1.85
		REF	-.10	-.07	.06	.09	-1.09
	2	PEPFR	.34	.39		.05	7.14***
		DAM	-.12	-.11	.23	.06	-1.86
Distress endurance	1	Constant	43.05			2.34	13.36***
		BRO	-.13	-.04		.16	-.79
		REF	.38	.14	.03	.13	2.94**
	2	PEPFR	.30	.20		.07	4.45***
		DAM	-.07	-.04	.06	.09	-.71

Notes: R<sup>2</sup>= coefficient of determination, R<sup>2</sup>aj = adjusted; BRO = brooding; REF = reflection; PEPFR = person- and emotion-focused positive rumination; DAM= dampening. \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

## Discussion

In this study, we analyzed the factor structure and psychometric properties of the Responses to Positive Affect (RPA) questionnaire (Feldman et al., 2008). Results showed that the two-factor structure had better fit in all the analyses, with adequate indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015). Measurement invariance tests showed total configural, metric, scalar and strict invariance across gender (Hidalgo-García et al., 2019).

In this study we isolated two factors in the RPA compared to the three factors extracted in the studies reviewed (Feldman et al., 2008; Hidalgo-García et al., 2019; Kraiss et al., 2019; Olofsson et al., 2014; Raes et al., 2009; Yang & Guo 2014). This is consistent with other studies (Abasi et al., 2018; Voss et al., 2019). However, in this study we maintained the 17 items of the questionnaire, in contrast with the study with the Iranian sample, in which an item was eliminated (Abasi et al., 2018), and the study with the German sample, in which three items were eliminated (Voss et al., 2019). In addition, item 17 ("Think, 'this is too good to be true'") had loadings of .67 in dampening but did not reach loadings of .35 in two studies and was

eliminated, as it was considered a non-dampening item (Krais et al., 2019; Nelis et al., 2016).

The two factors were called “positive emotion- and person-focused rumination” (PEPFR) and “dampening of positive affect” (DAM). They were negatively correlated with each other (Kraiss et al., 2019; Voss et al., 2019), in contrast with the results of some studies reviewed (Abasi et al., 2018; McEvoy et al., 2018, 2021; Mennies et al., 2020; Nelis et al., 2016; Samtani et al., 2021). Internal consistency coefficients (PEPFR;  $\alpha=.88$ , DAM;  $\alpha=.83$ ) were slightly higher than those of reviewed studies (Abasi et al., 2018; Voss et al., 2019).

As for convergent and discriminant validity, positive emotion- and person-focused rumination was positively correlated with life satisfaction, distress endurance and reflection, and negatively correlated with brooding, depression and anxiety (Abasi et al., 2018; Gilbert et al., 2013; Kraiss et al., 2019; McEvoy et al., 2018, 2021; Mennies et al., 2020; Voss et al., 2019). Dampening was completely the opposite, except for the fact that it was not correlated with distress endurance but with reflection instead (Abasi et al., 2018; Nelis et al., 2016; Voss et al., 2019).

As regards the partial correlation, in which brooding and reflection were controlled for, we found statistically significant differences between the correlation coefficients of dampening and anxiety and depression. In fact, dampening is a shared factor with anxiety and depression (Eisner et al., 2009) that may somehow explain the comorbidity between these disorders. As regards incremental validity, after controlling for brooding and reflection, we found the following: positive emotion- and person-focused rumination explained the unique variation in life satisfaction and also, jointly with reflection, explained distress endurance. Dampening explained the variance in symptoms of depression and anxiety, in line with previous studies (Abasi et al., 2018; Raes et al., 2009; Voss et al., 2019).

Brooding and dampening shared 27% of the variance; both were negatively associated with life satisfaction and did not show any associations with distress endurance. We considered the definition of brooding and dampening, according to which brooding is passively focused on negative feelings and increases negative affect (NA), and dampening attenuates positive affect (PA). Overall, these results confirm the dual process through which positive rumination amplifies PA and reduces NA while depressive rumination amplifies NA and decreases PA (Harding & Mezulis, 2017).

The situation was different regarding reflection, since it was associated with distress endurance but not with life satisfaction, which was predicted by positive emotion- and person-focused rumination (PEPFR); by contrast, distress endurance was predicted by reflection and PEPFR. An explanation of these results could be that reflection may very well be involved in the resolution of cognitive problems to alleviate negative affect (Trenor et al., 2003). In this regard, it is likely that people with distress endurance have experienced greater NA and that reflection as an

emotional regulation strategy helps them cope with the distress it generates. This is in line with some studies, which have shown that reflection is related to focusing on planning and cognitive reappraisal (González, Ramírez, et al., 2017). As regards life satisfaction, these individuals scored high in positive rumination as an amplifier of the positive affect that they already had; in turn, this decreases negative affect, as postulated by the Broaden and Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2004), according to which positive emotions trigger upward spirals toward better emotional wellbeing and life satisfaction, as mentioned above.

In this study, we analyzed a few divergent results in the studies reviewed on the construct and discriminant validity of the RPA. Regarding construct validity, the structure of two factors negatively associated with each other proposed by the authors of the scale (Abasi et al., 2018) is more parsimonious and conceptually and methodologically more coherent or feasible (Kraiss et al., 2019; Voss et al., 2019). By contrast, previous studies have found an absence of relations or positive relations (Abasi et al., 2018; McEvoy et al., 2018, 2021; Samtani et al., 2021). We calculated the convergent and discriminant validity of the two factors isolated: specifically, positive emotion- and person-focused rumination was positively associated with distress endurance, life satisfaction and reflection, and negatively associated with brooding, anxiety and depression. Amplification was positively associated with those three factors. Therefore, these results suggest that the RPA assesses a more adaptive regulation strategy (i.e., positive emotion- and person-focused rumination) and a less adaptive one (i.e., dampening); the former amplifies positive affect while the second attenuates positive affect and increases negative affect (Abasi et al., 2018; Kraiss et al., 2019; McEvoy et al., 2018, 2021; Mennies et al., 2020; Voss et al., 2019). As a result, it is plausible to expect dampening to have a bidirectional relationship between depression symptoms and dampening (Bean et al., 2022).

Therefore, considering the fear of emotions experienced by people regarding both PA and NA (Puntons et al., 2011; Williams et al., 1997), our results have clinical relevance for programming the pleasant activities proposed in some psychological therapies, such as behavioral activation therapy (Martell et al., 2010). If depressed or anxious individuals make dampening assessments when they start to experience positive affect by taking part in a pleasant activity and experience fear of PA at the same time, this may lead the activity to reduce levels of PA and increase levels of negative affect (Bean et al., 2022). Therefore, an important objective in interventions aimed at improving emotion regulation, such as transdiagnostic or unified programs (Carlucci et al., 2021; Osmá et al., 2015), would be to inform individuals about the counterproductive effects of dampening assessments and fear of emotions. Given that depressive rumination and rumination related to positive affect share a repetitive focus, strategies focused on repetitive negative thinking (Watkins, 2016) and positive cognitive reappraisal (Purdon, 2021) are relevant. The explanation is the following: in the short term, reappraisal leads to a decrease of negative emotions

and an increase of positive ones (Denny & Ochsner, 2014); in the long term, this generates greater psychological wellbeing and fewer symptoms (Cludius et al., 2020, for a review, see, e.g., Watkins & Roberts, 2020).

This study has some limitations, such as sample size; moreover, it is a cross-sectional study that cannot be used to make any inferences on causality or directionality. For future research, we propose studying two broad samples - a community sample and a clinical sample - as well as a longitudinal sample.

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