



## **Co-Rumination and Depressive Symptoms Among Healthcare Workers in a Selected Tertiary Public Hospital in Metro Manila: A Review**

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### **ABSTRACT—**

Healthcare workers are important members of the workforce that are prone to extreme working conditions and developing mental health issues as a result of physical and emotional stressors in the health industry. When faced with such a predicament, there is the tendency to participate in various coping strategies, such as talking about their issues with friends and coworkers. Published literature mostly on children and adolescents have established that repeated discussion of problems with peers, a practice called co-rumination, may lead to negative outcomes such as depression. This literature review was conducted because there is limited information about co-rumination and its association with depression among healthcare workers, much less healthcare workers in the Philippines. Summary of the review findings show that there is observational evidence that co-rumination poses negative impacts in the workplace in regard to the development and/or worsening of depressive symptoms.

**Keywords—***Co-rumination; depression; healthcare workers, Philippines*

### **Introduction**

Healthcare workers are becoming vulnerable to developing mental health problems due to the innately physically taxing work that comes with it, specific demands resulting from interactions with employers, patients and their caregivers, and the frequent exposure to death and human suffering (CDC, 2022). For healthcare personnel, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has added new dimensions of exhaustion, strain, stress, and bereavement (CDC, 2022). Published literature has revealed that there was a significant frequency of reported stress, anxiety, and depression among healthcare personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic (Aly et al, 2021).

In order to lessen stress and burnout, workers may turn to social support in the form of co-rumination. In a dyadic relationship, co-rumination is defined as the excessive sharing of personal problems. It involves repeated problem-talk, encouraging one another to do so, and emphasizing unpleasant emotions brought on by problems (Rose, 2002). Most articles on co-rumination focus on children and adolescents and its relationship with depression. An earlier study by Rose et al (2007) found out that co-rumination in females indicated a rise in depressive and anxiety symptoms over time, as well as an improvement in the quality of their friendships. In line with earlier developmental research by Rose (2002), depressed symptoms are anticipated to be brought on by the inability to deal with the issue and the accompanying unpleasant emotions. We anticipate that this important observation, which has been made in developmental studies on co-rumination, will hold true in adulthood, particularly in adult healthcare workers. Co-rumination entails repeatedly thinking back on unpleasant experiences and emotions, which could make work issues more apparent.

### **Methods**

A literature search was made across various scholarly search engines and online journal databases based on important keywords such as co-rumination, depression, healthcare worker. The Internet has provided a practical and convenient resource in retrieving related articles during the literature search, which commenced on January 11, 2023. Many items of literature were found through the search. Yet only the literature that was pertinent and helpful to the study was taken into account. Only four (4) studies were included in the review (*see Table 1*).

## Results and discussion

There is lack of published scientific studies on the association of co-rumination and depression among adults and healthcare workers. In 2012, however, an article about co-rumination in adults was published by Landphair and Preddy. They tackled about co-rumination among college students and its occurrence. Accordingly, co-rumination has been linked to a disruption of the typical, beneficial cycle of problem identification and remedy, resulting in many unfavorable effects for college students. The study illustrated a procedure that could assist educators in supporting students as they transition to more positive conversational and problem-solving strategies.

In 2008, a cross sectional study investigated how co-rumination affects how undergraduate college students behave emotionally and socially. The said research specifically looked at co-rumination in several close relationships, such as those with same-sex acquaintances, romantic partners, roommates, and parents. According to the findings, co-rumination in friendships is a complicated process that can help with both favourable and unfavorable results. While continuously discussing about problems is linked to stronger feelings of friendship satisfaction, it is also connected with a higher scores of depressive symptoms.

The first study about co-rumination at work was published in 2011 (Haggard et al, 2011). The study employed a survey methodology to look at how co-rumination among

TABLE I. Characteristics of included studies

Author and Year of Publication	Study Design	Location	Population	Summary of Results
Landphair J., Preddy T. (2012)	Editorial Article	USA		Co-rumination prevents college students from engaging in the typical, beneficial cycle of problem identification and solution and has been linked to a number of unfavorable outcomes.
Calmes, C. A., & Roberts, J. E. (2008)	Cross-sectional Study	USA	College students (N=345, 125 Male and 220 Female, Ages 18-45 yrs)	Females reported higher levels of co-rumination with their closest friend, which in turn, predicted their higher levels of depressive symptomatology and friendship satisfaction; Co-rumination among close peers is important in understanding the increased levels of both depression and relationship satisfaction among females.
Haggard, D. et al (2011)	Survey	USA	Working Adults (N=148)	Women co-ruminate more than men; workplace stressor, such as abusive supervision, worsens its undesirable effects for women
Boren, J.P. (2014)	Survey	USA	Working Adults (N=447, 195 Male, 235 Female, 17 decline to state sex)	Occurrence of co-rumination at work; Co-rumination prevents social support from having a positive impact on burnout and perceived global stress.

Employees affects outcomes related to adjustment, such as the quality of their relationships, emotional adjustment (e.g. depression), and workplace outcomes. The impacts of gender and workplace stressor (e.g. abusive supervision) was also studied. The conclusions in relation to depression were, however, inconsistent with the theory that increased amounts of stress would cause negative co-rumination's effects to become more pronounced. According to analyses, co-rumination did not predict depression for women under abusive supervision, either at greater or lower levels. On the other hand, for the men who received less harsh supervision, co-rumination was associated with increased depression.

In a later study conducted in 2014, a survey was conducted on adult workers that examined the connections between co-rumination, social support, stress, and burnout. Findings suggested that co-ruminating during socially helpful conversations may cause participants to lose some of the positive psychological and health impacts of the interaction. It was concluded that some forms of social support may not be as helpful as they might seem if they revolved dominantly around excessive and repetitive problem-talk, rather than actual problem solving.

## Conclusion

Collating the results of the reviewed studies, there is observational evidence that co-rumination poses negative impacts in the workplace in regard to the development and/or worsening of depressive symptoms. This observation is particularly more pronounced among the female population. This review highlights the thought that the not all coping strategies produce positive outcomes. Hopefully, the current research will be a starting point in the study of co-rumination in the healthcare workplace.

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