

Impact of Loneliness on Life Satisfaction Among Students

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Abstract

Loneliness is an unpleasant emotional response to lack of connectedness or communality with others, both in the present and in the future. It is serious issues among students that make them feel hollow or empty inside that further affect their life satisfaction. The sample of the study involved 100 students (male = 50 and female = 50) from 18 to 25 yrs. The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale and Satisfaction with Life Scale was used to measured loneliness and life satisfaction. The Pearson's product-moment of correlation and independent t-test was calculated and the result shows a significant negative association for loneliness and satisfaction with life among both male and female.

Keywords: Loneliness, Life-Satisfaction

Introduction

Loneliness is an uncomfortable emotional reaction to being alone and low connectedness. It intakes anxiousness for low feelings of communality with other persons but it can prevail even when we are around lots of people. There are various causes of loneliness, including psychological, emotional, and social aspects.

Studies have indicated that loneliness affects a large percentage of people, like 'marriages', 'relationships', 'families', 'veterans' and 'successful careers' (Peplau and Perlman, 1984). Another way to think of loneliness is as a psychological phenomenon which provokes a person to seek social connections. Now a days, lonely feelings prevails among every group of children. Students usually go through the feeling of loneliness when they get less social support and ignorance by their near and dear ones, negatively evaluated by others, and when faces rejection from their families, friends or by other individuals. Due to these they faces low level of life satisfaction and degraded general well-being. All such evaluations adversely affect their life satisfaction which makes them to feel low. Research indicates that among adolescents, both male and female, loneliness is a more common and severe issue than it is in any other age group (Pretty, Andrews, & Collett; 1994).

Loneliness

Leonard in 1979 have given several definitions of loneliness as, "When a person lives alone- concrete loneliness", "The loneliness as a result of being deserted (or being felt deserted)", "The loneliness as one's own preference since he/she relationships with the environment (this is the positive side of the loneliness with the aim of the constructivism and productivity)", and "This is the unpleasant and

psychological situation coming out of the difference of one's actual social relationship and his/her desired social relationship" (Peplau & Perlman, 1984).

According to related literature, it is an unpleasing and agitating feeling that every one of us wants to neglect. This also results in 'anxiety', 'anger', 'sorrow' and 'the feeling of being different from others that causes lack of life satisfaction. Loneliness is a common issue faced by university students who seek assistance at the guidance unit. A study conducted in the USA in 1992 revealed that 30% of university students visiting the guidance unit reported feelings of loneliness, with 6% indicating that their experience of loneliness was particularly intense. Loneliness, as defined by Peplau and Perlman (1982), is the sensation of being devoid of a network of social relationships.

A study conducted by Hawkey et al. (2003), indicated that loneliness is associated with a decrease in positive emotions and an increase in negative feelings during social interactions. A recent study by Mami and Ghanbaran (2014) involving undergraduate students revealed a notable negative correlation between feelings of loneliness and mental health. Research studies have indicated that loneliness in adolescents is associated with elevated levels of social anxiety and depression (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006), "low self-esteem" (McWhirter, Besett-Alesch, Horibata, & Gat, 2002), "poor social skills" (Inderbitzen-Pisaruk, Clark, & Solano, 1992), "poor self-rated health" (Page & Suwanteerangkul, 2009). In extreme situations, there may be instances of intentional self-injury, along with thoughts of suicide and actual attempts (Schinka, Van Dulmen, Bossarte, & Swahn, 2012; and Schinka, van Dulmen, Mata, Bossarte, & Swahn, 2013). It is also indicated that the patterns of loneliness were associated with self-reported deficiencies in social skills, as well as increased levels of depression, aggression, and suicidal thoughts by the age of 15.

Loneliness is a significant factor in epidemiological and social research due to its direct connection to human health and overall well-being (Cattan et al., 2005). Research indicates that loneliness is associated not only with age but also with various social and demographic factors, including "gender", "socio-economic status", "marital status", "the quality of social networks", and "interactions with friends" (Pinquart and Sorensen, 2001).

Loneliness is characterized as a psychologically distressing condition that impacts an individual's psychological well-being, as well as their emotional and physiological traits (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1999). The studies have also indicated a negative correlation between 'loneliness' and 'unhappiness' (Booth, Bartlett & Bohnsock, 1992), between 'loneliness' and 'life satisfaction' (Riggio, Watring & Throckmorton, 1993). Therefore, feeling of loneliness decreases the life satisfaction. An investigation of students' life satisfaction and loneliness at the cognitive level can be listed as: "one's own negative feeling about himself/herself, the increase of the irrational opinions, not being able to control the life, and fatalism" (McWhirter, 1997).

Life satisfaction

For the purpose of defining the term 'life satisfaction', it is indispensable to know about the word 'satisfaction' and in 1961, Neugarten introduced the term 'satisfaction' for the first time. The term 'satisfaction' refers to the achievement of an individual's 'needs', 'desires', 'wishes', and 'wants'. Life satisfaction arises from the evaluation of personal expectations—what an individual desires—against their current possessions—what they actually have. It also reflects a state of happiness, encompassing feelings such as joy and optimism (Vara, 1999).

Life satisfaction is influenced by an individual's cognitive assessment and personal perceptions about the different situations and conditions of life. It represents an individual's overall assessment of various dimensions of their life quality, including factors like family, education, and friendships, based on their personal standards (Christopher, 1999).

Suh et al. (1998) proposed that individuals with individualistic and collectivistic orientations utilize distinct types of information when assessing their life satisfaction. In general, lonely people report lower rates of life satisfaction (Kim, 1997). The interplay between culture, loneliness, and life satisfaction is intricate, encompassing not just the actual social interactions individual experiences but also due to the cultural norms that are prevalent in a society (van Tilburg, de Jong Gierveld, Lecchini, & Marsiglia, 1998). Chipuer, Bramston, and Pretty (2003) identified loneliness as a significant predictor of life satisfaction among adolescents.

A review of the literature indicates a positive correlation between 'life satisfaction and self-esteem' (Chow, 2005), 'family structure' (Evans and Kelley; 2004), 'family relations' (Huebner et al.; 1999), 'social support' (Edwards and Lopez, 2006), 'happiness' (Neto, 2001) and 'optimism' (Acun-Kapikiran 2012), 'parent attachment in early adolescents and peer attachment' (Nickerson and Nagle, 2004). A review of the literature indicates a positive correlation between 'life satisfaction and self-esteem' (Goodwin et al.; 2001) and 'depression' (Wong and Lim; 2009).

Loneliness is experienced across various age groups and eras, but it is predominantly felt among adolescents (Frisen, 2007). Adolescents often have a strong desire for familiarity, which can explain this phenomenon. When they experience rejection from peers, they faces negative evaluations, or are overlooked, they may feel a profound sense of loneliness and social isolation (Frisen, 2007). Research indicates that life satisfaction tends to decline during the initial years of secondary school (Leung et al., 2004).

Research indicates that loneliness significantly correlates with lower levels of life satisfaction (Mellor et al.; 2008). Studies have shown that loneliness serves as a detrimental predictor of life satisfaction among 'young people' (Tzonichaki and Kleftaras, 2002), 'university students' (Akhunlar, 2010), 'adults and elderly people' (Mellor et al.; 2008). Adolescent boys seem to experience greater feelings of loneliness compared to girls (Uruk and Demir, 2003). Friendships among girls are typically characterized by greater emotional expression, intimacy, and smaller group sizes. In contrast, boys often engage in friendships that are more activity-focused and involve larger groups. Additionally, boys generally indicate having fewer close friends compared to girls (O'Connor, 2006). A recent investigation by Panicker and Sachdev (2014) in India reveals an elevated degree of loneliness among male adolescents.

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction among students. The research aims to understand how feelings of loneliness affect students' overall satisfaction with life.

The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the difference between male and female students on the feelings of loneliness.
2. To examine the difference between male and female students on the feelings of life satisfaction.
3. To examine the relationship between feelings of loneliness and life satisfaction among students.

Hypothesis:

1. There is no difference between the male and female students on the feelings of loneliness.
2. There is no difference between the male and female students on the feelings of life satisfaction.

3. There is no relationship between the feelings of loneliness and life satisfaction among students.

METHOD

Sample: The sample consisted of 100 students (male = 50 and female = 50) between the age group of 18 to 23 yrs. All subjects were drawn randomly from different departments of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Tools: The tools employed to accomplish the goals of this study are as follows.

1. The Revised UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) Loneliness Scale:

Loneliness was measured by using the revised form of UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) Loneliness scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), which contains 20 items (e.g., “I have nobody to talk to”), including 10 reversed items (e.g., “I can find companionship when I want it”). The loneliness scale utilized a coding system from 1 to 4, incorporating reverse scoring for specific items, which were rated from 4 down to 1. Scores on this scale can vary between 20, which denotes the least amount of loneliness, and 80, indicating the greatest degree of loneliness. Internal consistency for the test was identified within a range of .83 to .92, and the test-retest reliability was recorded at .65. Furthermore, the validity of the test was assessed to be .60.

2. The Satisfaction with Life Scale:

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is an assessment tool for evaluating life satisfaction, created by Ed Diener and his associates (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin, 1985). Life satisfaction serves as a key component within the broader framework of subjective well-being. The SWLS includes five questions that the individual evaluates to measure their life satisfaction. Responses are scored on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 indicating "strongly agree" and 7 indicating "strongly disagree." By adding the items together, a total score is obtained that varies from 5 to 35, with elevated scores representing increased satisfaction with life. The SWLS demonstrated a high internal consistency with a coefficient of .96, while the test-retest correlation was recorded at .73.

Data Analysis

The statistical analysis conducted in this study comprised the calculation of descriptive statistics, which included means and standard deviations, along with inferential statistics like the independent samples t-test and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Results

Table 1: the mean, standard deviation, and t-value for both male and female students are displayed. on the feeling of loneliness and life satisfaction.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	Df
Loneliness	Male	50	44.16	8.090	.096	98
	Female	50	44.00	8.583		
Life satisfaction	Male	50	22.74	6.220	-1.512	98
	Female	50	24.54	5.676		

As illustrated in Table 1, the results reveal the mean difference along with the standard deviation between male and female students on the feeling of loneliness was found to be 44.16 and 8.090; and

44.00 and 8.583 respectively is very low which means that there is little variation in the sense of loneliness felt by male and female students. The derived values for the mean and standard deviation of male and female students on the feeling of life satisfaction were 22.74 and 6.220; and 24.54 and 5.676 respectively which shows that the females are high on life satisfaction as compared to male students as the derived value of both the statistics of females are higher than that of males.

The obtained t-value for the male and female students on the feeling of loneliness was found to be .096 and the t-value for the male and female students on the feeling of life satisfaction was found to be -1.512 which shows that there is insignificant difference between male and female students on the feeling of loneliness and life satisfaction.

Table 2: Presenting the value of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation that examines the relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction among students.

Pearson Product Moment of Correlation	Life satisfaction
Loneliness	-.233

*correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 illustrates the value obtained for the Pearson Product Moment Correlation in relation to the perception of loneliness and life satisfaction was -.233 which shows that there is significant negative relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction.

Interpretation

From table 1, as there is negligible difference between the mean value of both male and female students (44.16 and 44.00 respectively) This demonstrates that there is minimal variation between the feeling of loneliness and life satisfaction because the feeling of loneliness is a growing and serious concern impacting young males and females alike (Pretty, Andrews, and Collett;1994). Among adolescents it has been found that loneliness is one of the most important feeling that affects the life satisfaction. The obtained value of mean for male and female students for life satisfaction was 22.74 and 24.54, demonstrating that females have more life satisfaction as compared to male students.

So, the adolescent males usually have lower rates of life satisfaction while the females are more satisfied may be because of the nature of friendships among girls tends to be characterized by greater emotional expressiveness, intimacy, and the formation of smaller groups due to which they are more expressive in nature and they are also very social due to which they feel less lonely. On the contrary boys' friendship usually inclined more towards action and they have large groups' of friends and they have few close friends so, they are less emotionally expressive due to which they experience lower rates of life satisfaction and faces loneliness; as they do not have close companionship to share their feelings and keep everything within themselves which makes them hollow and a sense of unrest occurs that can make them to feel lonely.

The obtained t-value of both the students on the feeling of loneliness was found to be .096 and the t-value of both the students on the feeling of life satisfaction was -1.512 which shows that there is insignificant relationship between the feeling of loneliness and life satisfaction because as the feeling of loneliness among the students increases their life satisfaction decreases. It has been also found that the loneliness serves as a significant adverse factor influencing life satisfaction (Grey et.al., 1992). As the feeling of loneliness is more prominent among adolescents due to which they faces greater life dissatisfaction. Loneliness is a kind of a feeling that enhances negativity about everyday life situations

and makes an individual to feel bad which makes them to feel lonelier. The loneliness can be felt both as a feeling as well as a situation and this depends on how an individual evaluates the happenings. And the students usually feel low when they perceive 'less social support', 'ignored', 'rejected' or 'negatively evaluated' by their near and dear ones which impart an adverse affect on their life satisfaction and hence impart loneliness on to them.

From table 2, as the value of correlation between loneliness and life satisfaction has been discovered i.e., -.233 which shows that there is significant negative relationship between the two, therefore the feeling of loneliness decreases life satisfaction among students. This shows that as the feeling of loneliness among the adolescents increases their life satisfaction decreases. This happens may be because of the feeling of loneliness makes an individual unhappy and an unhappy individual evaluates everything negatively and hence faces a sort of life dissatisfaction. As it can be seen that the loneliness feeling occurs with different dimensions and intensity levels; it significantly correlates with 'less intimacy', 'poor understanding and comfort', and 'more caution', 'distrust' and 'conflict' which can be associated with depression, anxiety, suicide ideation, deliberate self-harm which can make an individual dissatisfied with life to a much greater extent.

Conclusion

The feeling of loneliness makes an individual aloof and apart from every day situation of life that makes them to feel low and hollow from inside, gets the sense of unhappiness; and a feeling of uneasiness prevails through his or her thoughts. So this feeling of loneliness generates dissatisfaction mostly among students when they encounter less attention as it is the most distressing experience. It is seen as the inevitable direct consequence of failure to satisfy one self. So in order to remain satisfied with life it is important to avoid the feeling of loneliness.