



**Navigating the Relationship of Living Alone on Loneliness, Solitude and Life Satisfaction
among Young Adults**

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ABSTRACT

While living alone can make young adults feel lonely, some enjoy their personal space. A want for solitude is driven by loneliness and satisfaction stems from the independence and introspection that come with being by oneself. The purpose of the research was to study the effect of living alone on loneliness, solitude, and life satisfaction among young adults. The participants involved 60 young adults (30 Male, 30 Females) from Delhi NCR. Standardized measures of loneliness, solitude and life satisfaction were administered. Results showcased a significant negative correlation between loneliness and life satisfaction while positive relationship between life satisfaction and solitude as well as solitude and loneliness. The findings suggest conducting a longitudinal study would help in better understanding these relationships over time.

KEYWORDS: Solitude, Loneliness, Life Satisfaction, Living Alone, Young Adults

INTRODUCTION

“Language ...has created the word “loneliness” to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word “solitude” to express the glory of being alone.”

~ Paul Tillich

Emotions of loneliness are common to all people and are epitomized by feelings of social deprivation, isolation, and separation. This phenomenon can impact people of many ages, socio-economic origins, and scenarios, and it is not inherently linked to physical estrangement. It is a personal experience shaped by a multitude of variables such as unique characteristics, social ties, and everyday events. The phenomenon when one is detached or cut off from people, frequently voluntarily, is referred to as solitude. It's a personal experience that differs greatly from individual to individual and can be interpreted as beneficial or detrimental based on personal preferences and situational factors. Even though physical isolation is frequently linked to loneliness, it can also happen when someone feels emotionally distant or reclusive while in the middle of a crowd or with other people.

An individual's total review of their life, including all aspects like employment, interpersonal connections, physical well-being, and own contentment, is referred to as life satisfaction. It is a personal assessment of happiness and well-being that reflects how satisfied people are with their life now and their outlook for the years to come.

Young adults who live alone frequently encounter significant difficulties and obstacles as they embark on the shift to independent life. Rent, electricity, supplies and other living expenditures can quickly pile up, making budgeting challenging. Living alone, particularly for someone who is

new to a place or society can cause feelings of loneliness and social isolation. It can be quite difficult to keep up with chores at home, particularly for individuals who are balancing other commitments like job or schooling. Young adults might conquer these hurdles and succeed in their autonomous living environment by strengthening their resilience, acquiring guidance, and creating coping mechanisms. According to a survey conducted by CNN (2023) done across 142 countries, results suggests that the highest rates of loneliness were found in young adults. Young adults (19 to 29 years old) report feeling quite or extremely alone in 27% of cases.

LONELINESS

Loneliness is defined as “distressing feeling that accompanies the perception that one’s social needs are not being met by the quantity or especially the quality of one’s social relationships” (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2001; Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Wheeler et al., 1983). According to Rokach (2004), “loneliness is a dissatisfaction with the quality of one’s social relationships, and therefore may occur even when one is physically surrounded by others.”

A study on loneliness among university students in Norway was conducted by Hysing et al. (2020). The data was collected with the help of a national student health survey from 2014 and 2018. Results showcased that the youngest and oldest students who had higher levels of loneliness across all measures lead to a curvilinear relationship with loneliness. A study on the relationship between loneliness, essential needs and characteristics of university students was conducted by Özdemir and Tuncay (2008). The sample was collected from 721 students. Results confirmed the significant relationship between loneliness, essential needs, and characteristics of university students.

SOLITUDE

According to Chappell and Badger (1989) “solitude is distinguished from a closely related concept, social isolation, in part because the latter involves unwanted but unavoidable time spent alone” (Wichers, 2014). According to Larson (1990), solitude refers “strictly to a physical and virtual separation from others that eliminates immediate social and interpersonal cues.”

A study was conducted by Mayra et al. (2023) on the impact of wisdom on preference for solitude and friendship quality among young adults. The sample was collected from 250 young adults. Results showcased wisdom significantly predicted friendship quality and there existed a significant difference between wisdom and friendship quality among young adults.

A study was conducted by Chen et al. (2021) on preference for solitude and mobile phone addiction among Chinese college students. The sample was collected from 927 Chinese college students. Results showcased that there was a significantly positive relationship between preference for solitude and mobile phone addiction which was mediated by psychological distress.

LIFE SATISFACTION

According to Beutell (1996) life satisfaction is “an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one’s life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive.” According to Ellison et al. (1989), life satisfaction is “a cognitive assessment of an underlying state thought to be relatively consistent and influenced by social factors.”

A study was conducted by Roake (2012) on differences in life satisfaction among young adults in different living situations. The data was collected from 91 young adults, 58 were living independently and 33 were living with their parents. Results showcased that young adults living

with their parents had lower levels of life satisfaction compared to those who were living independently.

A study was conducted by Çakar (2012) on the relationship between the self-efficacy and life satisfaction of young adults. The sample was collected from a total of 405 young adults. Results showcased that in young adults, self-efficacy significantly predicted their life satisfaction.

PURPOSE

The purpose is to study the relationship of living alone on loneliness, preference for solitude and life satisfaction among young adults.

HYPOTHESIS

- There will be a negative relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction among young adults.
- There will be a positive relationship between life satisfaction and preference for solitude among young adults.
- There will be gender differences among males and females in loneliness, life satisfaction and preference for solitude.

METHOD

SAMPLE

A total sample of 60 young adults (30 Male, 30 Females) was collected in the age 18-25 from Delhi NCR.

MEASURES

- **The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS):** The scale was developed by Diener et al. (1985). The scale is used to measure satisfaction with the respondent's life. It is a 5-item scale designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction. The scale used a 7-point Likert scale that ranges from (7) strongly agree to (1) strongly disagree.
- **The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale-** The scale is developed by Russell et al. (1980). This scale is a revised version of the original UCLA Loneliness Scale. It is used to measure one's subjective feelings of loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation. The scale consists of 20 items, half reflecting satisfaction with social relationships and half reflecting dissatisfaction. The scale used a Likert from 1 (Never) to 4 (Often).
- **Preference for Solitude:** The scale was developed by Burger (1995). This scale is used to measure whether a person prefers to spend time alone, focusing on the positive aspect of solitude. This scale includes 12 items and a single-factor structure. In the scale two options were given for each item and the participant had to choose the one that described them the best.

PROCEDURES

The participants were given standardized scales. The data was collected through google form. The participants were assured of confidentiality & finally, the participants were thanked for their cooperation.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Results

Table 1								
<i>N, Mean and Standard Deviation</i>								
	Gender		Loneliness Scale		Preference For Solitude Scale		Satisfaction with Life scale	
N		Female		30		30		30
		Male		30		30		30
Mean		Female		41.2		7.47		20.3
		Male		44.2		6.63		21.4
Standard deviation		Female		10.6		2.53		6.64
		Male		10.8		2.80		7.98

Table 2

<i>Correlation between loneliness, preference for solitude and satisfaction with life</i>								
	Loneliness Scale		Preference For Solitude Scale		Satisfaction with Life scale			
Loneliness Scale		—						
Preference For Solitude Scale		0.122		—				
Satisfaction with Life scale		-0.403	**	0.044		—		
<i>Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001</i>								

Table 3

<i>Gender differences between Satisfaction with life, preference for solitude, Loneliness</i>							
				Statistic		df	p
Satisfaction with Life scale		Student's t		-0.545		58.0	0.588
Preference For Solitude Scale		Student's t		1.210		58.0	0.231
Loneliness Scale		Student's t		-1.087		58.0	0.281

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The objective of this research was to study the effect and relationship of living alone on loneliness, preference of solitude and life satisfaction in young adults. Correlation analysis indicated that there is a significant negative correlation between life satisfaction and loneliness ($r = -0.403$, $p < .001$). The results also found out that there is a significant positive correlation between solitude and loneliness ($r = 0.122$). Further, it was found out that there is a significant positive correlation between life satisfaction and solitude ($r = 0.044$). Additionally, after conducting the T- test, there were no significant gender differences (as no p value was less than 0.05) among males and females in loneliness, preference for solitude and life satisfaction.

The findings of the present study fail to reject the hypothesis in two out of three cases. First, there exists a significant negative correlation between life satisfaction and loneliness ($r = -0.403$, $p < .001$). Second, there is a significant positive correlation between life satisfaction and solitude ($r = 0.044$). Third, no gender differences were found among the stated variables. Whereas past researchers Ozben and Suheda (2013) had found that loneliness levels of male students were

significantly higher than the female students; although results were consistent with the claim that life satisfaction and loneliness were negatively correlated.

The findings of this research lead to the interpretation that young adults living alone from home experience loneliness on a day-to-day basis, leading to the negative relationship between life satisfaction and loneliness. Whereas solitude remains a preference for these young adults, leading to the positive relationship of solitude with life satisfaction. Lastly, no gender differences were found amongst the participants, leading to the perspective that both male and female participants experience similar amounts of loneliness, preference for solitude and satisfaction with life.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the interplay between loneliness, solitude and life satisfaction among young adults living alone. The results suggest an enhanced degree of life satisfaction may result from solitude, but an excessive amount of loneliness may have the opposite impact. These findings emphasize the necessity of intervention programs and networks that address coping with loneliness. Certain limitations that this study included were self-report bias, small sample size and a cross sectional design. Other than having a longitudinal design, relevant mediating or moderating factors that affect the relationship between loneliness, solitude and life satisfaction among young adults living alone could be potentially investigated in future research.

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