PREVALENCE OF LONELINESS AMONG COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS

DR. HARPAL KAUR AUJLA

Associate Professor

Akal College of Education Mastuana Sahib (Sangrur) Punjab (148001)

ABSTRACT: The present study aims to find prevalence of loneliness among college going students of three districts, Barnala, Sangrur and Patiala of Punjab. The study was delimited to 200 college going students (B.A./ B.Sc First Year) of Punjab. Data was collected by using UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3)- Russel (1996). Percentage analysis was used to check the percentage of degree of loneliness among college going students. To find gender differences in loneliness among college going students, t-value was calculated. Results of the study indicated that 39% of college going students have average level of loneliness and about 32% of college going students have high level of loneliness. 29% of college going students have been found having very high level of loneliness. Further significant gender differences in loneliness among college going students were also found. Female college going students are found to be more alone than male college going students.

INTRODUCTION

Research studies show that loneliness is more prevalent among young people. Loneliness is one of the fastest-growing psychosocial health concerns in the modern age (Cacioppo and Cacioppo, 2018; Rubin, 2017). According to a poll by Meta and Gallup in October 2023, about 17 % of people over age of 65 worldwide feel loneliness on the other hand, 27 % of the people of age group of 19–29 have the same feelings of loneliness. Loneliness is characterized by personality traits like feeling shy, social anxiety, hostility, sadness and low self-esteem that can make a person less likely to share information about themselves with their peers. According to Wikipedia, loneliness has been commonly defined as 'a state of solitude or being alone'. "Loneliness is not necessarily about being alone. Instead, "it is the perception of being alone and isolated that matters most" and is "a state of mind". Loneliness is also described as social pain – a psychological mechanism which motivates individuals to seek social connections. It is often associated with a perceived lack of connection and intimacy. Loneliness is increasingly being associated with mental health. It is worth noting that, at the end of 2020, there was still no strong evidence that indicated mean-levels of loneliness had increased or decreased globally during the COVID-19 pandemic; though certain groups (e.g. vulnerable populations) are more likely to experience loneliness than others (Killam, 2020). A meta-analysis on studies concerning the prevalence and correlates of loneliness in India found that the burden of loneliness was higher among the elderly compared to younger generations (Anil et al., 2016; Grover et al., 2018; Hossain et al., 2020).

According to The World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 10% of adolescents are lonely. Additionally, a 2021 global survey by Ipsos revealed that 4 in 10 urban Indians (43%) said they felt lonely and friendless at most times, especially after the pandemic of Covid-19. Malhotra et al. (2019) conducted a cross sectional study to investigate risk behaviour and outcomes among 836 young men aged 18-24 from rural Haryana by using semi-structured questionnaire. 28.6% of young men reported feeling of loneliness.

Loneliness showed an inverse relationship to age, education marital status, and monthly family income. Loneliness was associated with current substance abuse, premarital sexual intercourse, and serious injury.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find prevalence of loneliness among college going students.
2. To study and compare loneliness among college going students in terms of gender.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was delimited to 200 students of colleges affiliated to Punjabi University Patiala of Punjab. Students of B.A. and B.Sc. First year were randomly selected from colleges of Sangrur, Patiala and Barnala districts of Punjab.

METHODOLOGY

The investigator collected data by using UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3)- Russel (1996).

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

Percentage analysis was used to check the percentage of degree of loneliness among college going students. Mean, SD and t-value was calculated to find differences in loneliness among college going students.

LONELINESS AMONG COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS

The main objective of the present study was to have a study of the loneliness among college going students. To achieve this objective 200 college going students were selected as a sample and proper statistical treatment and their interpretation was done. UCLA Loneliness scale has been used to study loneliness among college going students.

### NORMS FOR INTERPRETATION ACCORDING TO UCLA SCALE

SCORES	LEVEL
Below 20	Average
21-30	High level
30 or Above 30	Very High level

Table- 1

PREVALENCE OF LONELINESS AMONG COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS

SCORES	LEVEL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Below 20	Average	78	39%
21-30	High level	64	32%
30 or Above 30	Very High level	58	29%

PREVALECNE OF LONELINESS AMONG COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS

■ Below 20 ■ 21-30 ■ 30 or Above 30
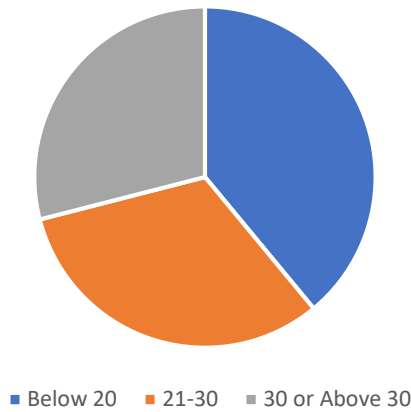
In terms of loneliness, mean of scores of loneliness of college going students is found to be 24.52 showing high level of prevalence of loneliness among college going students. Out of 200 college going students about 39% of college going students have average level of loneliness and about 32% of college going students have high level of loneliness. 29% of college going students have been found having very high level of loneliness.

LONELINESS AMONG COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS IN RELATION TO GENDER

Level of loneliness of male and female college going students has been measured. Table 2 shows the scores of mean for loneliness of male and female college going students along with their SD, SE as well as t-value indicating the significance of difference between their means.

Table-2

LONELINESS OF COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS IN RELATION TO THEIR GENDER

Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE	t-ratio
Male	102	22.92	6.83	1.10	2.92**
Female	98	26.14	8.64		

** significant at 0.01 level

Table 2 reveals that mean score of loneliness of male college going students is 22.92 whereas the mean score of loneliness of female college going students is 26.14. Standard deviation is calculated 6.83 and 8.64 respectively. The t-value signifying the difference between scores of loneliness of male and female college going students is 2.92 which is significant at 0.01 level. So it can be said that female college going students feel more alone than male college going students.

CONCLUSION

Loneliness among college going students can be attributed to various factors, including shifting to a new environment, difficulty in making friends, academic pressures, and unhealthy romantic relationships. Loneliness is a significant predictor for various adverse psychological outcomes, including depression, anxiety, stress, sleep. Loneliness should not be ignored and students having feeling of loneliness should be treated with love, empathy and compassion., Researchers have found that engaging in meaningful, challenging activities during free time can reduce people's loneliness. So, college going students should be engaged in extracurricular activities. Counselling and support services should be easily accessible.

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