

Impact of perceived loneliness on emotional intelligence among rural and urban adolescents

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ABSTRACT

In the present investigation an attempt has been made to study the impact of perceived loneliness on emotional intelligence among rural and urban adolescents. The study was conducted on 200 adolescents (100 boys and 100 girls) in the age range of 15-18 years residing in the rural and urban areas of Ludhiana. Perceived Loneliness Scale developed by Jha was used to assess the incidence and extent of loneliness present in adolescents. The scale consisted of 36 items covering various factors relating to parental behaviour, peer relations, human need for intimacy, people's perception, evaluation of social relations, insufficient social reinforcement, physical surroundings, preference of a particular sibling, neglecting, isolating and criticizing nature of parents. Emotional Intelligence Scale by Hyde *et al.* (2002) was used to assess the emotional intelligence (EQ) of the adolescents. The scale had 34 statements under 10 dimensions of emotional intelligence *i.e.* self-awareness, empathy, self motivation, emotional stability, managing relations, integrity, self development, value orientation, commitment and altruistic behaviour. Data were analyzed using Karl Pearson's co-efficient correlation and Linear Regression. Results revealed that there is non-significant correlation between dimensions of emotional intelligence and loneliness among rural males and urban adolescents and significant correlation between dimensions of emotional intelligence and loneliness among rural females. Linear regression revealed that the feeling of loneliness was negatively significantly affecting the aspects of emotional intelligence among rural and urban adolescents.

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INTRODUCTION

Loneliness as an important personality variable in current psychological literature is of particular interest to social psychologists. Probably most people experience painful feeling of loneliness as sometime in their lives. Because life is filled with social transition that disrupt personal relationship and set the stage for loneliness. It is believed that as societies become more affluent and advanced, the quantity and intensity of loneliness tend to

increase in more proportionality (Jha, 1971).

Loneliness is more common than we may believe, is not confined to a group of odd or abnormal people, is associated with both unhappiness and illness, and can be cured. People who are lonely do not necessarily have fewer relationship or daily interactions than other people have, but they are often less satisfied with the ones they do have. Equally it is clear that experience of loneliness is not associated with total isolation and even those who are chronically lonely have a few friends too (Tornstam,

1992).

When people feel lonely, they are most likely to react in one of two ways. The first is sadness, indicated by too much time spent eating, sleeping and crying. The other response is creative solitude, where a person finds ways to deal with loneliness such as reading or watching a movie, listening to or playing music, using artistic talents to paint, crochet, quilt, weave or do ceramics, spending time in the gardens, or pursuing other interests and hobbies. When people deal with loneliness creatively, they are in fact fighting boredom and in the process, they become happier, calmer and less stressed.

We often think of loneliness as more rampant in elderly rather than younger population, but research cast a doubt on this (Schultz and Moore, 1988) and actually shows that loneliness is higher in high school students than in the elderly. It exists within every age group, however adolescent and young adults appear to be particularly vulnerable (Brennan, 1982 and Rubenstein and Shaver, 1982).

Loneliness is a multifaceted phenomenon, often characterized by an unpleasant, painful, anxious yearning for another person or persons (Hartog *et al.*, 1980).

Loneliness reflects an interpersonal deficits that exist as a result of fewer or less satisfying desires, it increases as the discrepancy between what individuals expect and what they actually experience in their relationships increases (Peplau and Perlman, 1982). Personal expectations for intimacy and companionship are influenced by many factors such as past experiences, personal needs and normative cultural prescription (Peplau *et al.*, 1982).

Most people experience disconnecting feeling of isolation and loneliness at some time or other in their lives, but it is a temporary state of mind which results from a change in an individual's social life to a chronic and enduring condition. During adolescence, loneliness might result from the absence of an intimate attachment figure, which might provided for children by their parents or for adults by a spouse or an intimate friend. Loneliness also results when a person lacks a sense of social integration or community that might be provided by a network of friends or co workers, interpersonal problems are much more likely among those who never acquired appropriate social skills during childhood (Rubin, 1982).

Adolescent live through loneliness experienced in different ways, at times loneliness may be painted by

feelings of boredom, futility, and loss of meaningfulness and the meaning of emptiness may be so heavy as to be totally overpowering (Kernberg, 1975). When adolescent move to college they all tend to experience loneliness but some cope better with it then do others. Interestingly, male who are lonely tend to form a more negative view of themselves than do females, since they attribute it to personal failure rather than to focus over which they have no control (Schultz and Moore, 1988). Loneliness is to be considered an integral part of human development which makes the various stages in process of acquisition and individuation of the self and the gradual separation from the parents (Mahler *et al.*, 1975).

According to Brennan (1982) 'a typical adolescent experience' is a sense of loneliness that may be so overwhelming as to cause estrangement and isolation. It may also be defined as response to the absence of an adequate positive relationship to persons, places or things. Loneliness is caused not by being alone but by being without some definite needed relationship (Weiss, 1973). Loneliness is a state of mind relating to lack of companionship or separation from others. It is different from being alone, which is a question of choice. It is this lack of choice that makes loneliness so filled with anxiety. It comes at no surprise that adolescence has been identified as the peak period of risk as some young people who experienced loneliness may consider it to be persistent and painful. Loneliness is a barrier to social development and consequently can have an impact on mental and therefore physical health.

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to influence, understand and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, connection and influence (Cooper and Sawaf, 1997). Mayer and Salovey (1993) define emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action. People who have a control over their life can manage and know their feelings well and read and deal effectively with other people's feeling. While the people who cannot have control over their emotional life fight inner battles that sabotage their ability to focus on work and think clearly (Goleman, 1998). In the words of Goleman (1998) the term emotional intelligence mean "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our

relationship". Emotional Intelligence means comprising many personality traits like motivation, persistence, warmth, empathy and social skills. Emotional Intelligence appears to be an important set of psychological abilities that relate to life success. People with high emotional intelligence generally have successful relationship with family, friends and fellow workers. They are also successful because they persist in the face of setbacks and channel their emotional energies towards achieving their goals (Raninga, 2009).

Emotional intelligence is a way of recognizing, understanding and choosing how we think, feel and act. It shapes our interactions with others and our understanding of ourselves. It defines how and what we learn; it allows us to set priorities; it determines the majority of our daily action. Therefore, we are now being judged by new yardstick not just how smart we are or by our training and expertise, but also by how well we handle others and ourselves (Goleman, 2001). Emotional intelligence has, in recent years been popularized and the research into its many components has multiplied.

Emotional intelligence has, in recent years been popularized and the research into its many components has multiplied. Emotional intelligence is the latest development in understanding the relation between reason and emotion. The concept has its roots in the concept of "social intelligence". Thorndike (1920) defined it as "the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls- to act wisely in human relations"

Emotional intelligence is a dynamic construct influenced by diverse biological, psychological and social factors. A good deal of research has been conducted on emotional intelligence and it was found to be appearing as an important factors in the prediction of personal, academic and career success. Studies on emotional intelligence with respect to various psychosocial correlates have been found in a variety of fields. Several authors (Elias, 1993; Goleman, 1995 and Jensen, 1998) have advocated emotional intelligence as an important factor in predicting success and capacity to solve problems. Emotional intelligence has as much to do with knowing when and how to express emotion as it do with controlling it. An emotional intelligent person would seek mature and rational solutions to problems. Emotional intelligence is a distinguishable cluster of skills namely self-awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Empirical studies investigating the relationship

of emotional intelligence with numerous psychological and psychosocial factors were reported by several researchers and simultaneously revealing the significance of emotional intelligence and its beneficial aspects with remarkable contribution in the field of interpersonal relationship success in work and personal life, health psychology, enhancing performance and more positive behaviour patterns. Emotional intelligence addresses the emotional, personal, social and survival dimensions of intelligence, which are often more important for daily functioning that the more cognitive or mental aspect of intelligence. It is in many ways a predictor of emotional and personal success in the future. Emotional intelligence measures characteristics such as empathy, social responsibility, impulse control and the ability to relate to others in an age appropriate and responsible manner. Emotional intelligence measures the skills one has to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures.

Emotional intelligence enables the adolescent to develop very good inter-personal relationship and to have better social support. It is highly desirable and personally valuable attribute to be possessed (Kaur and Singh, 2008). It appears to be a core ingredient that, when developed and well employed has wide ranging benefits for learning, relationship, and wellness (Balamurugan and Gowahaman, 2009).

Adolescence is a transitional period involving many biological, psychological, mental and social developments and changes (Eccles *et al.*, 1993). This period initially starts with sudden physical development and change, followed by psychological and social changes. The earliest changes include psychological changes caused directly or indirectly by physical changes (Manju, 2011). While undergoing these changes, adolescents seek the answer to the question "Who am I?" and strive to find out how their emotions, thoughts and behaviour differ from that of their parents, what different values they hold to those of their family, how other people view them and how they view other people in return. Owing to these thoughts, adolescents need to make a huge effort to accept who they are, find themselves, make new friends and reach their aims (Niebuhr, 1995). Owing again to these psychological changes, happy, harmonious, balanced children turn into worried, anxious, unstable, and unfit adolescents. This period of struggle and indecisiveness changes their emotions and interests and, as a result, they

swing between careless, limitless and unbalanced excitements (Manju, 2011).

Adolescence is considered as the most important transitional period of life, as adolescents face an intense turmoil because of the cognitive, biological and social changes taking place in this period. This is also the period of psychological transition from a child who has to live in a family to an adult who has to live in a society. Adolescence is that period of development in human beings that begins when the individual feels that adult privileges which are due to him are not accorded to him and that ends when the full power and social status of the adult are accorded to the individual by his society. According to Jerslid (1961) Adolescence is that period during which boys and girls move from childhood to adulthood physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. Keeping above discussion in mind present study was framed with following objective to assess the impact of perceived loneliness on emotional intelligence among rural and urban adolescents.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was carried out in Ludhiana district of Punjab state. The sample for the study consisted of 200 school children, equally distributed over both the sexes (100 boys and 100 girls) and locale (100 rural and 100 urban) in the age range of 15-18 years from various co-educational rural and urban Government High and Senior Secondary Schools.

Perceived Loneliness Scale developed by Jha (1971) was used to assess the incidence and extent of loneliness present in adolescents. The scale consisted of 36 items covering various factors relating to parental behaviour, peer relations, human need for intimacy, people's perception, evaluation of social relations, insufficient social reinforcement, physical surroundings, preference of a particular sibling, neglecting, isolating and criticizing nature of parents.

Emotional Intelligence Scale by Hyde *et al.* (2002) was used to assess the emotional intelligence (EQ) of the adolescents. This scale consists of 34 statements representing 10 dimensions of emotional intelligence like self awareness, empathy, self motivation, emotional stability, managing relations, integrity, self development, value orientation, commitment and altruistic behaviour. Scoring was done as per instructions given in the manual of the scale.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows that there existed a non-significant correlation between dimensions of emotional intelligence and loneliness. Dimensions of self awareness ($r = -0.229$), managing relations ($r = -0.118$) and commitment ($r = -0.027$) had non-significant negative correlation with loneliness among rural male respondents. Overall emotional intelligence was non-significantly and negatively correlated with loneliness ($r = -0.020$), which means if loneliness increases, emotional intelligence decreases.

Table 1 : Correlation between loneliness and emotional intelligence among rural males

Emotional intelligence	Boys (r)
Self awareness	-0.229
Empathy	0.061
Self motivation	0.016
Emotional stability	0.052
Managing relations	-0.118
Integrity	0.163
Self-development	0.076
Value orientation	0.077
Commitment	-0.027
Altruistic behaviour	0.203
Total EI	-0.020

Table 2 shows that there was significant correlation between dimensions of emotional intelligence and loneliness. Dimensions of managing relations ($r = -0.018$), integrity ($r = -0.017$), emotional stability ($r = -0.264$), self-development ($r = -0.347$), value orientation ($r = -0.317$) and commitment ($r = -0.263$) had significant negative correlation with loneliness. Overall emotional intelligence

Table 2 : Correlation between loneliness and emotional intelligence among rural females

Emotional intelligence	Girls (r)
Self awareness	0.201
Empathy	0.208
Self motivation	0.197
Emotional stability	-0.264**
Managing relations	-0.018
Integrity	-0.017
Self-development	-0.347**
Value orientation	-0.317**
Commitment	-0.263**
Altruistic behaviour	0.043
Total EI	-0.278**

**indicates significance of value at $P=0.01$

was significantly negatively correlated with loneliness among rural females ($r = -0.278$), which means if loneliness increases, emotional intelligence decreases.

Table 3 shows that there was non-significant correlation between dimensions of emotional intelligence and loneliness in case of urban males. Emotional stability ($r = -0.30$), had significant negative correlation with loneliness. Whereas self motivation, self development, commitment and altruistic behaviour had non-significantly and negatively correlated with loneliness. Overall emotional intelligence had non-significant negative correlation with loneliness among urban males ($r = -0.150$).

Emotional intelligence	Boys (r)
Self awareness	0.149
Empathy	0.098
Self motivation	-0.042
Emotional stability	-0.30**
Managing relations	0.038
Integrity	0.145
Self-development	-0.095
Value orientation	0.041
Commitment	-0.086
Altruistic behaviour	-0.058
Total EI	-0.150

** indicates significance of value at $P=0.01$

Table 4 highlights that non-significant correlation existed between dimensions of emotional intelligence and loneliness, while emotional stability ($r = -0.297$), had significant negative correlation with loneliness. Further empathy and commitment had non-significant negative correlation with loneliness. Overall emotional intelligence

Table 4 : Correlation between loneliness and emotional intelligence among urban females

Emotional intelligence	Girls (r)
Self awareness	0.205
Empathy	-0.158
Self motivation	0.163
Emotional stability	-0.297**
Managing relations	0.071
Integrity	0.167
Self-development	0.192
Value orientation	0.117
Commitment	-0.018
Altruistic behaviour	0.180
Total EI	-0.151

**indicates significance of value at $P=0.01$

was non-significantly and negatively correlated with loneliness among urban females ($r = -0.151$).

Table 5 represents the estimates of linear regression of perceived loneliness among rural male respondents. It is clear from the table that the feeling of loneliness was negatively significantly affecting the aspects of emotional intelligence such as emotional stability ($t = -1.71$; $p \leq 0.01$), managing relations ($t = -1.94$; $p \leq 0.05$), self-development ($t = 2.23$; $p \leq 0.05$) and commitment ($t = -1.81$; $p \leq 0.01$). R^2 value shows that there is a significant impact of loneliness on emotional intelligence hence the model is fit for the variables.

Table 6 represents the estimates of linear regression of perceived loneliness among rural female respondents. It is clear from the table that the feeling of loneliness was negatively significantly affecting the aspects of emotional intelligence such as self motivation ($t = -2.67$; $p \leq 0.01$), emotional stability ($t = -3.17$; $p \leq 0.01$), managing relations ($t = -2.79$; $p \leq 0.05$), self development ($t = -1.70$;

Dimensions of emotional intelligence	B	SE	t-value	R^2	f-ratio	
Self awareness	-0.02	0.03	-0.11	-0.82	0.001	0.27
Empathy	0.02	0.02	0.16	1.14	0.02	1.31
Self motivation	0.005	0.01	0.07	0.52	0.006	0.27
Emotional stability	-0.05	0.02	-0.07	-2.93**	0.08	4.28**
Managing relations	-0.03	0.02	-0.02	-1.98*	0.03	2.23*
Integrity	-0.003	0.022	-0.017	-0.118	0.01	0.01
Self-development	-0.03	0.02	-0.03	-1.72*	0.03	2.04*
Value orientation	0.02	0.02	0.02	1.26	0.008	1.58
Commitment	-0.04	0.02	-0.01	-2.18**	0.03	2.93*
Altruistic behaviour	0.007	0.01	0.02	0.77	0.003	0.06

* and ** indicate significance of value at $P=0.05$ and 0.01 , respectively

$p \leq 0.01$), value orientation ($t = -2.23$; $p \leq 0.01$) and commitment ($t = -2.46$; $p \leq 0.01$). R^2 value shows that there is a significant impact of loneliness on emotional intelligence hence the model is fit for the variables.

Table 7 represents the estimates of linear regression of perceived loneliness among urban male respondents. It is clear from the table that the feeling of loneliness was negatively significantly affecting the aspects of

emotional intelligence such as empathy ($t = -1.89$; $p \leq 0.01$), self development ($t = -2.33$; $p \leq 0.01$) and commitment ($t = -2.16$; $p \leq 0.01$). R^2 value shows that there is a significant impact of loneliness on emotional intelligence hence the model is fit for the variables.

From the above result it is clear that as the loneliness increases it affects the aspects of emotional intelligence. It is also highlighted in the table that loneliness affects

Table 6: Linear regression of perceived loneliness on emotional intelligence among rural females

Dimensions of emotional intelligence	B	SE	t-value	R ²	f-ratio
Self awareness	0.035	0.025	0.201	1.42	0.09
Empathy	-0.003	0.026	-0.018	-0.127	0.01
Self motivation	-0.57	0.035	-0.197	-2.94**	0.08
Emotional stability	-0.06	0.030	-0.264	-2.31**	0.07
Managing relations	-0.06	0.031	-0.208	-1.98*	0.04
Integrity	-0.003	0.026	-0.018	-0.127	0.01
Self-development	-0.05	0.021	-0.203	-2.43**	0.20
Value orientation	-0.04	0.015	-0.317	-2.79**	0.06
Commitment	-0.03	0.017	-0.263	-2.18**	0.05
Altruistic behaviour	0.004	0.015	0.043	0.300	0.765

* and ** indicate significance of values at $P=0.05$ and 0.01 , respectively

Table 7 : Linear regression of perceived loneliness on emotional intelligence among urban males

Dimensions of emotional intelligence	B	SE	t-value	R ²	f-ratio
Self awareness	0.040	0.042	0.183	0.966	0.03
Empathy	-0.21	0.056	-0.337	-3.85**	0.11
Self motivation	0.021	0.020	0.200	1.06	0.04
Emotional stability	0.022	0.035	0.116	0.609	0.01
Managing relations	0.009	0.044	0.039	0.203	0.002
Integrity	0.007	0.026	0.052	0.270	0.003
Self-development	-0.10	0.036	-0.268	-2.94**	0.07
Value orientation	0.009	0.029	0.071	0.496	0.005
Commitment	-0.03	0.018	-0.221	-2.17**	0.04
Altruistic behaviour	0.017	0.023	0.141	0.741	0.02

** indicates significance of value at $P=0.01$

Table 8 : Linear regression of perceived loneliness on emotional intelligence among urban females

Dimensions of emotional intelligence	B	SE	t-value	R ²	f-ratio
Self awareness	-0.03	0.033	-0.158	-1.107	0.02
Empathy	-0.044	0.020	-0.297	-2.15**	0.08
Self motivation	0.03	0.037	0.163	1.144	0.02
Emotional stability	-0.02	0.025	-0.205	-1.45*	0.03
Managing relations	-0.03	0.024	-0.202	-1.65*	0.03
Integrity	-0.04	0.021	-0.167	-2.08**	0.04
Self-development	-0.02	0.015	0.192	-1.53*	0.03
Value orientation	0.014	0.017	0.117	0.816	0.01
Commitment	-0.022	0.018	-0.180	-1.27*	0.03
Altruistic behaviour	-0.002	0.015	-0.018	-0.125	0.01

* and ** indicate significance of values and $P=0.05$ and 0.01 , respectively

the other dimensions of emotional intelligence such as managing relations and altruistic behaviour, although its affect was found to be non-significant.

Table 8 represents the estimates of linear regression of perceived loneliness among urban female respondents. It is clear from the table that the feeling of loneliness was negatively significantly affecting the aspects of emotional intelligence such as empathy ($t = -2.06$; $p \leq 0.01$), emotional stability ($t = -1.85$; $p \leq 0.05$), managing relations ($t = -1.79$; $p \leq 0.05$), integrity ($t = -2.08$; $p \leq 0.01$), self development ($t = -1.85$; $p \leq 0.05$) and commitment ($t = -2.76$; $p \leq 0.05$). R^2 value shows that there is a significant impact of loneliness on emotional intelligence hence the model is fit for the variables.

From the above results it is clear that as the loneliness increases, it affects the aspects of emotional intelligence. It is also depicted that loneliness affects the other dimensions of emotional intelligence such as self awareness, self motivation, integrity, value orientation and altruistic behaviour. Loneliness is damaging for the emotional intelligence of the adolescents because as they feel lonely they also manifest poor emotional stability, poor management in relations, self-development and commitment.

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