

The Relationship Between Psychological Flexibility and Loneliness Among Young Adults

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Abstract -Young adults are the driving force of innovation and change. With boundless energy, creativity, and optimism, they embrace challenges with a fresh perspective and an unwavering determination to make a difference. Their adaptability and enthusiasm for learning propel society forward, as they effortlessly blend tradition with modernity. Experiences value people's ability to adjust to shifting conditions. Psychological flexibility is the try to overcome a circumstance or issue by evaluating it and acting on it, whether by ignoring it or confronting it in such a way that it has no negative impact on our mental health or everyday life. Loneliness is a person's incapacity to connect with their peer group, engage, or participate actively in conversations or discussions while doing nothing. This study investigates the relationship between psychological flexibility and loneliness among young adults (18-24 years). A survey method was adopted to collect participants' data using standardized questionnaires: the UCLA Loneliness Scale Version-3 (UCLA-20) and the Psy-Flex Questionnaire (PFQ-6). Results revealed a negative correlation between psychological flexibility and loneliness, indicating that higher levels of psychological flexibility are associated with reduced loneliness. The results and findings of the study are comprehensively detailed in the following sections, offering an in-depth analysis of the relationship between psychological flexibility and loneliness among young adults. These insights provide valuable perspectives on the role of adaptive coping mechanisms in mitigating loneliness and enhancing psychological flexibility in this population.

Index Terms- Loneliness, Psychological Flexibility, Young Adults.

I. INTRODUCTION

Young adults are energetic and passionate, and their interactions with people or objects create situations. Not only do meetings matter, but so do their needs, desires, and life domains. When faced with situations that require action or reaction, many young people become trapped in the moment or are affected by their mental state. It could be caused by the individuals or themselves, such as loneliness or other circumstances. Robert Weiss created the phrase loneliness in 1973. People who are lonely are mentally unstable, and their current status is determined by their interactions. Flexibility towards individuals or the environment is necessary to handle the way of the period. The person's mental health may be adaptable for determining or escaping from timely or non-affectively cognitive situations. likes accepting the circumstance, letting go of present idea, seeing yourself as more than simply your thoughts and feelings, acting in a way that aligns with your values, realizing what's important to you, and being aware of what's going on right now. Loneliness can significantly impact young adults, leading to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression. This can affect their academic performance, work productivity, and overall well-being. However, psychological flexibility, a key component of mental resilience, can help them navigate these challenges. By adopting an open, adaptive mindset and accepting their emotions without judgment, young adults can better cope with loneliness. They can engage in activities that align with their values, build supportive relationships, and find purpose and meaning in their experiences. Nowadays, young adults face an array of challenges, but their ability to handle them contributes to their loneliness. This study looks at the association between psychological flexibility and loneliness among young adults. The subsequent sections of this article provide more findings.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Most of the studies reviewed related to loneliness and psychological flexibility. Very few researches were found using the variable loneliness correlate with other variable and also psychological flexibility correlate with other variable. For understanding the relationship between loneliness and psychological flexibility, here some studies are mentioned related to loneliness and psychological flexibility. Akkaya et al. (2024) conducted a study to explore the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on loneliness among young adults in China, focusing on psychological flexibility and wellness. Participants are 498 university students (395 females, 103 males). The survey method was adopted in this study and three scales to assess various psychological constructs. The Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA) is a 15-item scale that measures social and emotional loneliness in adults. The Well Star Scale, comprising 24 items, evaluates overall well-being and wellness. Additionally, the Psychological Flexibility Scale, a 28-item measure, assesses psychological flexibility, including acceptance, values-consistent behavior, and cognitive flexibility. The findings revealed that key factors of loneliness like emotional loneliness affect psychological flexibility. Akdenish et al. (2023) conducted a cross-sectional study to investigate the roles of hope and cognitive flexibility in the relationship between loneliness and psychological adjustment problems during the COVID-19 pandemic curfew in Turkey. The study, which involved 512 Turkish students and young adults who completed UCLA Loneliness Scale, Brief Psychological Adjustment Scale, Dispositional Hope Scale, and Cognitive Flexibility Inventory, found that loneliness positively predicted psychological adjustment problems, with hope serving as a mediator.

These findings suggest the indirect effect of loneliness on psychological adjustment problems, highlighting the importance of hope and cognitive flexibility in mitigating the negative impacts of loneliness. **Dehghani (2019)** investigated the role of psychological capital and psychological flexibility in predicting loneliness among the elderly in a correlational descriptive study involving 253 participants in Isfahan, Iran selected through a convenience sampling method. The loneliness Scale (Russell), the Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (Denish and Vanderwal), and the questionnaire of Psychological Capitals (Lotantz and Olio) were used to collect data. Findings revealed significant relationships between psychological capital, psychological flexibility, and loneliness. Both psychological capital (e.g., optimism, resilience) and psychological flexibility were identified as significant predictors of loneliness. The study highlights the importance of enhancing psychological flexibility through targeted training to reduce loneliness in the elderly population. **Indra et, al (2021)** explored the impact of stress, psychological flexibility, and loneliness on the well-being of higher education students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey method adopted in this study. Among 945 participants the Perceived Stress Scale(Cohen et al), Mental Health Continuum(Ryff), Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (Bond et al), and UCLA Loneliness Scale version-3 were used in this study. The study found that stress negatively impacted well-being both directly and indirectly through psychological inflexibility and loneliness. High stress combined with low psychological flexibility heightened loneliness, leading to decreased well-being. These findings highlight the importance of interventions aimed at enhancing psychological flexibility to improve coping strategies and overall well-being during loneliness. After reviewing most of the studies use the psychological flexibility questionnaire to measure the level of psychological flexibility, and the loneliness scale (version 3) is used to measure the level of loneliness.

III. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Cacioppo(2008) defined Loneliness is a mental state characterized by a disconnect between what a person wants or expects from a connection and what he or she actually gets. Loneliness operationally defined as a person's incapacity to connect with their peer group, engage, or participate actively in conversations or discussions while doing nothing.

Hayes (2012) defined as the ability to be aware of and open to internal and external stimuli as they occur while choosing to respond in ways that are compatible with what a person really cares about. Psychological flexibility operationally defined as attempting to overcome a situation or issue by analyzing it and acting on it, either by ignoring it or confronting it in such a way that it does not affect our mental well-being or our daily life in any way.

IV. OBJECTIVES

To assess the level of loneliness among young adults.

To assess the level of psychological flexibility among young adults.

To find out the relationship between loneliness and psychological flexibility among young adults.

V. HYPOTHESES

There is no difference in the level of loneliness among young adults.

There is no difference in the level of psychological flexibility among young adults.

There is no significant relationship between loneliness and psychological flexibility among young adults.

VI. METHODOLOGY

In this study, descriptive research design was used. The samples were chosen used to select simple random sampling technique. 62 Participants were involved in this study that was in the young adults (18-24).

TOOLS USED IN THE STUDY

UCLA Loneliness Scale -3 (UCLA-20)

Measurement of loneliness using the UCLA Loneliness Scale-3 has been developed by Russell (1996). Initially, the UCLA Loneliness Scale-3 amounts to 20 items, this 20-item tool assesses each item on a 4-point Likert scale, and it evaluates one's subjective feelings of loneliness and social isolation. For estimating the prevalence, 3 out of the 20 items are used. The three items include lack of companionship, being left out in life, and being isolated from others. Each of the three items is rated as often, sometimes, rarely, and never indicating the presence of loneliness. Psychometric properties for the scale are good with high coefficient α (0.89–0.94), and test-retest reliability ($r = 0.73$). The scale has adequate construct and convergent validity.

Psy-Flex Questionnaire (PFQ - 6)

The updated Psy-Flex Questionnaire (PFQ-6) by Andrew Gloster is a concise, six-item scale designed to measure psychological flexibility comprehensively and efficiently. The items assess key components of flexibility; being present, being open to experience, leaving thoughts be, steady self, awareness of one's values, and being engaged. The PFQ-6 is rated on a Likert scale ranging from Very Often to Very Seldom, making it sensitive to nuanced changes over time. Its context-sensitive nature enables repeated use, making it suitable for tracking changes in flexibility due to interventions or over different life contexts. The PFQ-6 demonstrated robust psychometric validity. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) confirmed a one-factor structure, indicating that

the items collectively measure a single construct of psychological flexibility. The scale also showed excellent reliability ($r = 0.91$), underscoring its consistency and precision in capturing flexibility.

PROCEDURE

In this study, the survey method was used to evaluate young individuals aged between 18 to 24. 62 participants were selected by using the simple random sampling technique. Data was gathered to the participants. To assess psychological flexibility and loneliness, the UCLA Loneliness Scale-3 (UCLA-20) and Psy-Flex Questionnaire (PFQ-6) were utilized. To analyze central tendencies, statistical analyses were performed, which included mean, median, mode, and standard deviation. Participants were divided into three categories based on their psychological flexibility and loneliness: low, moderate, and high. Furthermore, Pearson's correlation analysis was used to investigate the possible association between these two variables. This strategy provides a thorough way to interpreting the data and investigating the relationships between psychological flexibility and loneliness among young adults.

VII. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS - MEAN, MEDIAN, MODE, SD, SKEWNESS, AND KURTOSIS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY AND LONELINESS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Variables	No of samples	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Psychological Flexibility	62	20.14	20	18	4.57	-0.04	-0.08
Loneliness		27.11	29	33	12.75	0.07	-0.34

The descriptive statistics for the variables are as follows: The mean, median, mode, and SD of loneliness are 27.11, 29, 33, and 12.75 respectively. The skewness of loneliness is 0.07 which represents positively skewed and kurtosis is -0.34 which represents platykurtic. For Psychological flexibility, the mean, median, mode, and SD are 20.14, 20, 18, and 4.57 respectively. The skewness of psychological flexibility is -0.04 which represents negatively skewed and kurtosis is -0.08 which represents platykurtic. The descriptive statistics adherence to the normal distribution allows the study to continue.

TABLE 2: LEVEL OF LONELINESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Variables	No. of samples	Low	Medium	High
Psychological Flexibility	62	9	40	13
Loneliness		9	44	9

The levels of psychological flexibility and loneliness among young adults were calculated using Mean $\pm$ SD respectively. In psychological flexibility, the participants who scored 25 & above denotes a high level of psychological flexibility, the participants who scored 15 & below denotes a low level of psychological flexibility, and the participants who scored between 16 to 24 denotes moderate levels of psychological flexibility. In loneliness, the participants who scored 40 & above denotes a high level of loneliness, and the participants who scored 14 & below denotes a low level of loneliness. Participants who scored between 15 to 39 denote moderate level of loneliness.

According to Table 2, for psychological flexibility, 9 participant falls under a low level of psychological flexibility, 40 participant falls under a moderate level of psychological flexibility, and 13 participant falls under a high level of psychological flexibility. Hence the stated hypothesis "There is no difference in the level of psychological flexibility among young adults" is rejected. To sum up there is a significant difference in the level of psychological flexibility among young adults is accepted.

For loneliness, 9 participants fall under a low level of loneliness, 44 participants fall under a moderate level of loneliness, and 9 participants fall under a high level of loneliness. Hence the stated hypothesis "There is no difference in the level of loneliness among young adults" is rejected. To sum up there is a significant difference in the level of loneliness among young adults is accepted.

TABLE 3: CORRELATION BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY AND LONELINESS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Variables	Correlation
Psychological Flexibility	(r= 0.340**)
Loneliness	

**correlation significant at the level 0.001

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a negative correlation between psychological flexibility and loneliness among young adults $r = 0.340$. This indicates that higher levels of psychological flexibility are associated with lower levels of loneliness.

Hence the stated hypothesis “There is no significant relationship between loneliness and psychological flexibility among young adults” is rejected. To sum up there is a significant relationship between the psychological flexibility and loneliness among young adults is accepted. Being psychologically flexible is a good thing, necessary for mental health, and inversely connected to loneliness. One way to improve wellbeing is to reduce loneliness.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The study highlights a negative correlation between psychological flexibility and loneliness among young adults. The findings reveal that most participants demonstrated moderate levels of both variables, with a clear pattern indicating that greater psychological flexibility is associated with reduced loneliness. This underscores the importance of psychological flexibility as a potential protective factor against loneliness, suggesting its relevance for developing interventions aimed at enhancing coping mechanisms and emotional resilience in this population. Enhance your ability to adapt to changing circumstances and situations from different perspectives. Regular meditation or deep breathing helps to live present, change and reframe negative thoughts by alternative thinking, tolerate discomfort, try new behaviors and observe the outcomes, and be kind young adults to reduce the level of loneliness.

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