Study of Gender Difference in Loneliness among Adolescents

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of the study was to observe gender difference in loneliness among adolescents. **Materials and Method:** Samples of 200 adults (100 boys and 100 girls) were selected from Guru Nanak International Public School, Ludhiana and their age ranged aged between 13 - 17 years. For data collection, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) - Revised Loneliness Scale (Version - 3) was used. **Results:** No significant difference exists between mean scores of loneliness of adolescent boys and girls. **Conclusion:** It was concluded that gender does not play a significant role in loneliness among adolescents.

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Introduction

Loneliness is defined as the negative emotional response to an experienced discrepancy between the desired and actual quality or quantity of one's relationships (Perlman & Peplau, 1981), and has been found to be particularly present in adolescence (Qualter et al., 2013). This increased prevalence of loneliness may be explained by the fact that adolescence is an important period in life in which many physical, emotional, and social changes occur (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Adolescent loneliness has been linked with the developmental changes taking place during this period. During adolescence, the individual undergoes major social and personal transformations through redefining their social network which making them more susceptible to develop mental health problems. As suggested by some studies, the risk of psychiatric problems develops when an adolescent has repeatedly experienced loneliness (Van Rode, V. et al., 2015). Adolescents feel lonely and depressed when they perceive a low level of social support, ignored, negatively evaluated, or rejected by their family, peers, and other persons in the society, which has an adverse effect on their psychological development and wellbeing. Studies report that socioeconomic levels, peer and family relations of adolescents have an effect on their level of loneliness. Girls' friendships are generally more emotionally expressive, intimate and consist of smaller groups, while boys' friendships tend to be more active oriented and consist of larger groups; boys also usually report having fewer close friends than girls (Brown and Gilligan 1992; McLeod 2002; O'Connor 2006). When the level of loneliness is raised, the boy students' academic successes are seen to become less (Ponzetti, Gate, 1981). There are different types of loneliness such as positive, negative, emotional, social, interpersonal, cultural, intellectual, psychological, existential, no sweetheart, new situation and untrustworthy friends. There are various causes which are responsible for loneliness among adolescents. The most important reason for loneliness during adolescence is failure to maintain friend relationships. Loneliness is a risk factor for an early death, depression, physical disease as well as mentally problem among human beings. The causes of loneliness are

emotional isolation, intellectual isolation, living situations, social anxiety and fear of rejection, being unable to fit in, a broken heart or missing someone, cold communication, a changed environment, divorce, separation, unwanted singleness, old age and youthful inexperience. Sometimes spending time alone is necessary, but prolonged social isolation can have some serious health effects, for instance loneliness can increase the risk of an early death, loneliness can lead to depression, loneliness can trigger inflammation in the body, loneliness might make it harder to interact with others, loneliness increase the risk for heart disease, loneliness makes coping with stress more difficult, loneliness can mess with eating habits, it might be a sign of Alzheimer's disease, loneliness might lead to more unhealthy behaviour, muscle tension, digestive issues, decreased libido, weaker immune system, loneliness also lead to headaches and sleep troubles.Gürses, A. et al. (2011) examined to determine relation between the level of loneliness of the students who have been attended at four state high schools and the various variables such as school, sex, accommodation types and academic achievement. The sample of this study was composed with a 131 female and 136 male students from four high schools in Erzurum. UCLA loneliness scale (University of California Los Angeles Loneliness Scale) was used. A significant relation is found between the loneliness and sex at 0.05 significant levels. The levels of loneliness of girls are more than men. Between accommodation types with the emotion of loneliness of the high school is found not to be significant relation. Furthermore, between the academic achievements with the emotion of loneliness of the high school is determined not to be an expressive relation. Ronka, A. R. et al. (2013) examined to analyze the frequencies of loneliness experiences among adolescents in the Northern Finland and examined how selected social, emotional, contextual, and certain factors of health and well-being are associated with girls' and boys' loneliness experience. Studies using the University of California Loneliness Scale (UCLA) or its revised version (R-UCLA) has been used. Most (70.4%) adolescents reported not feeling lonely, 26.4% reported feeling somewhat and 3.2% reported feeling very lonely. Girls reported more loneliness than boys. Among girls, an association was found between being somewhat lonely and living in rural areas. Associated factors (not having close friends, feeling unliked, victim of bullying, avoiding company, feeling unhappy, sad, depressed, dissatisfaction with life, poor self-rated health) were similar to somewhat and very lonely, but very lonely adolescents, especially girls, experience them more strongly. Vig, P. & Gill, D. S. (2013) examined to explore loneliness among Govt. Senior Secondary School students of Chandigarh City (India). Data was collected on 400 participants. Loneliness scale adapted by Anjali Arora (2008) was used to collect data. The findings highlight that the percentages of loneliness among girls are higher than boys adolescents. Biolcati, R. & Cani, D. (2015) examined to explore the patterns of adolescents' use of Social Network Sites. The study focused on the differences between high and low level of loneliness among teenagers. Total sample of 988 participants were included in the study. Participants completed a questionnaire (56 items) that consists of three parts. This study found that "loneliness group" includes more girls, older adolescents and subjects dissatisfied with their online and offline relationships; lonely adolescents consider their online contacts less as "true friends" and meet friends less frequently in person than the "no loneliness" group; the "loneliness" group believe it is easier to relate with peers online.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted on 200 adolescents (100 boys and 100 girls) and they were selected from Guru Nanak International Public School, Ludhiana and their age ranged aged between 13 - 17 years. For data collection, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) - Revised Loneliness Scale (Version - 3) was used.

Results and Discussion

Table 1.shows that the values of mean, median and mode of the scores of adolescents (boys and girls) on the variable of loneliness was 42.49, 44.00 and 47.03 respectively and which were quite proximate to each other. The values of skewness and kurtosis in case of adolescents were 0.229 and 0.356 respectively showing the distribution as positively skewed and leptokurtic. But these distortions were quite small. Therefore the distributions can be taken as normal.

**Table 1. Mean, Median, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis scores
of Adolescents on the variable of Loneliness (N = 200)**

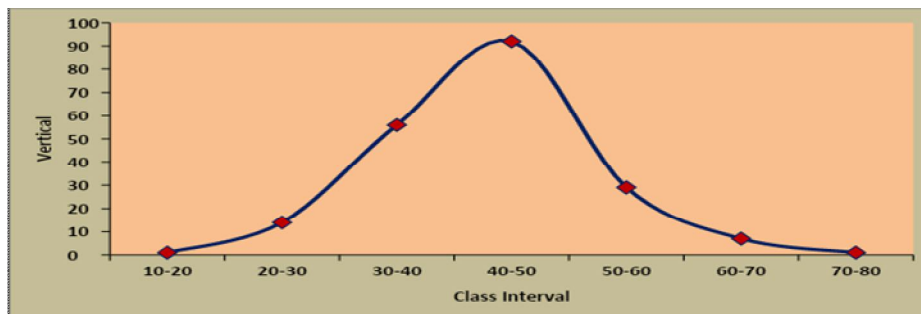| Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Adolescents (Boys & Girls)	42.49	44.00	47.03	9.02	0.229	0.356

**Figure 1. Frequency Polygon of scores of Adolescents on the variable
of Loneliness (N = 200)**

Table 2. shows that the values of mean, median and mode of the scores of adolescent boys on the variable of loneliness was 42.77, 44.00 and 46.45 respectively which were quite proximate to each other. The values of skewness and kurtosis in case of adolescent boys were -0.003 and 0.179 respectively showing the distribution as negatively skewed and leptokurtic. But these distortions were quite small. Therefore the distributions can be taken as normal.

**Table 2. Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis scores of
Adolescent Boys on the variable of Loneliness (N = 100)**

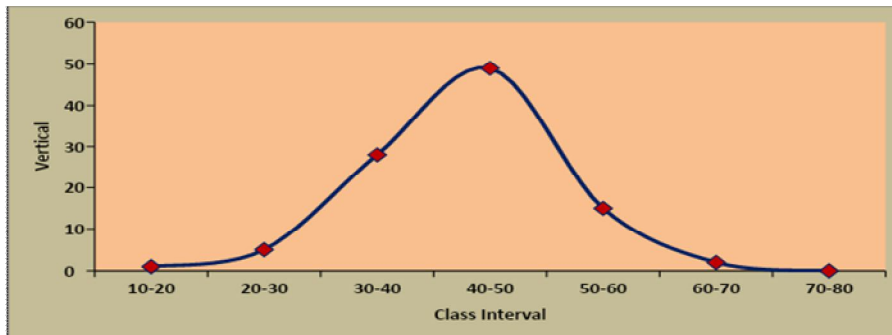| Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Adolescent Boys	42.77	44.00	46.45	8.65	-0.003	0.179

**Figure 2. Frequency Polygon of scores of Adolescent Boys on the variable
of Loneliness (N=100)**

Table 3. shows that the values of mean, median and mode of the scores of adolescent girls on the variable of loneliness as 42.06, 42.00 and 41.88 respectively which are quite proximate to each other. The values of skewness and kurtosis in case of adolescents are 0.510 and 0.648 respectively showing the distribution as positively skewed and leptokurtic. But these distortions are quite small. Therefore the distributions can be taken as normal.

**Table 3. Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis scores of
Adolescent Girls on the variable of Loneliness (N = 100)**

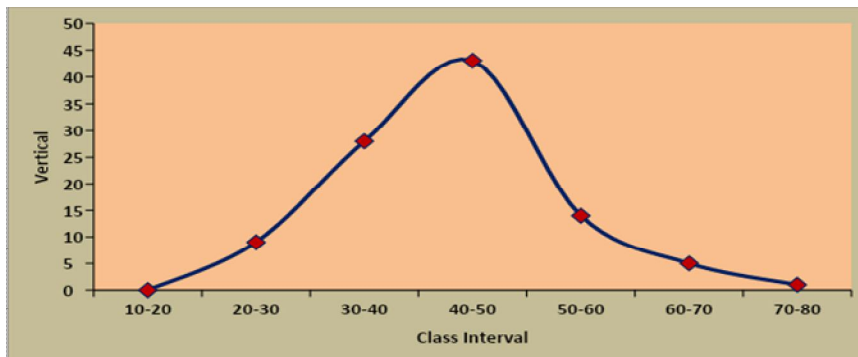| Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Adolescent Girls	42.06	42.00	41.88	9.58	0.510	0.648

**Figure 3. Frequency Polygon of scores of Adolescent girls on the variable
of Loneliness (N=100)**

Table 4. shows a comparison of difference between the mean scores of the variable of loneliness of adolescent boys and girls and it was 42.77 and 42.06 respectively. The t-ratio is calculated as 0.55 with $d_f = 198$ which is not significant at the .05 level. This revealed that no significant difference exists between the mean scores of loneliness of adolescent boys and girls. This indicates that gender does not play any role in loneliness of adolescents. As no significant difference was found between the mean scores of loneliness of adolescent boys and girls, hence hypothesis stating that 'There will be a significant gender difference in loneliness among adolescents,' is rejected.

Table 4. Comparison of Difference between the Mean Scores of Loneliness among Adolescent Boys and Girls

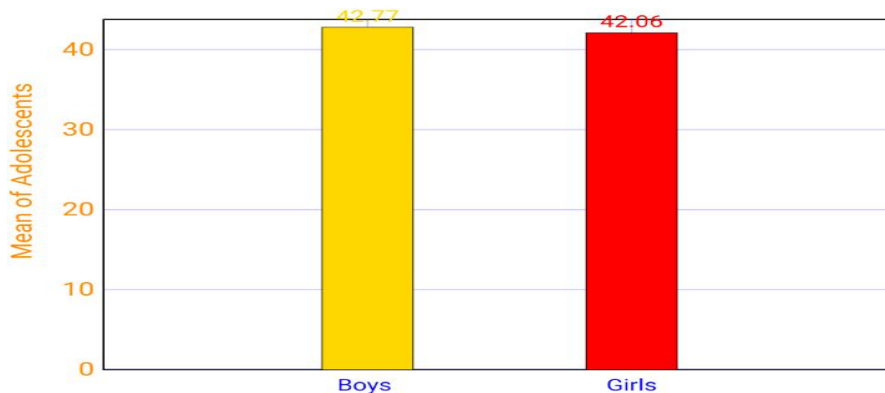| Group	Variable	N	M	S.D	SE_M	t-ratio	Sig./Not Sig.
Adolescent Boys	**Loneliness**	100	42.77	8.65	0.79	0.55	Not Sig.
Adolescent Girls		100	42.06	9.58	1.06		

Figure 4. Comparison of Difference between the Mean Scores of Loneliness among Adolescent Boys and Girls

Conclusion
The adolescents were normally distributed on the variable of loneliness irrespective of their gender. No significant difference was found between mean scores of loneliness of adolescent boys and girls. This indicates that gender does not play any role in loneliness of adolescents.

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Conflict of Interest: None declared