

A STUDY ON LONELINESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS LIVING IN HOSTELS

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Abstract

Loneliness is a strong emotional feeling that occurs when an individual feels that their social relationships are meaningless.

This study examines loneliness among college students who stays away from home for academic purposes with a focus on how a different environment influence an individual's feelings, behaviours and thoughts. The change from homely environment to hostel life often require emotional and social adjustment. Individuals might feel homesick and trouble finding companionship might lead to isolation. Loneliness Inventory (LI) developed by Uma Meenakshi under the guidance of K. Krishnan, a standardised self-report scale is used to measure perceived loneliness among the hostellers. Responses were collected from 50 students who are staying away from home in a hostel for academic purposes. It was observed that many students experience loneliness after being separated from homely environment. It was also observed that individuals gradually adjusts to hostel life over time after finding peer group. Since social interaction helps reduce isolating feelings this study also suggests the possible strategies like promoting group activities and peer support system for developing a comfortable environment in hostels.

Keywords: *Loneliness, College Students, Hostel, Living, Relationship.*

Introduction

Loneliness is a strong emotional feeling that occurs when an individual feels that their social relationships are meaningless. It doesn't mean that you are alone in a room, even when you're surrounded by people you feel that you're not being seen or heard.

Being alone is not the same as feeling lonely, being alone is an objective situation or a physical state where an individual is by themselves. But feeling lonely is a subjective condition where the individual feel that their social relationships are meaningless and they feel empty, unheard

or unseen even when they are surrounded by people.

Humans are considered as social beings. Social relationships do affect individual behaviors and thoughts. A sense of belonging is important for human beings because it provides emotional security and individuals feel heard and accepted, contributing to overall well being. For an individual who is staying away from a familiar environment it is very important to adapt to new environment and establish social connection in order to feel belonged. Starting a new chapter in life like joining a new college is one of the major transitions in a student's life. It can include new roles and responsibilities, especially for students who are staying away from home. The young adults often face common issues like role confusion, instability in relationships, mobile phone addiction and social anxiety, but some people may find it very challenging to adjust after a major life transition. For day scholars it may be less challenging because they still live with their parents in a familiar environment but for hostlers it can be really challenging because their whole routine and surrounding is being changed. Even though individuals have the same academic pressure day scholars have family to support and push them for everyday and everything, unlike day scholars they have to take care of everything for themselves in a totally

unfamiliar setting. An individual who is staying away from home may have many challenges like adapting to new environment and academics, forming friendships and accepting the existing cultural and social norms. They might also feel homesick that can affect their life.

It is a common belief that living in hostel shapes your overall lifestyle. Even though people struggle with many challenges there is also a positive side to it. Living in a hostel means staying with people who are from different cultural, social and ethical backgrounds, so it provides a platform for learning new things from different cultures gaining experiences and contributing to overall independence. But sudden transition may lead to overall distress that could end up in loneliness. It is important to understand individuals who struggle to adapt to a new setting, because it can lead to social isolation, poor academic performance and lead to anxiety, stress affecting overall mental health leading to poor physical health.

This study helps understand individuals with loneliness affecting their daily life. It also consist of some of the possible strategies like group activities, peer support groups or support circles to provide a comfortable environment for individuals to open up and share their concerns fearlessly to the authority members, which can help individuals to adapt more effortlessly.

Review of Literature

Title: Impact of Hostel Life on the Psychological Well-Being and Loneliness of Nursing Students - Rehana Batool Niazi, Margus Bibi, Nudrut Maryam

According to the study conducted by Rehana Batool Niazi, Margus Bibi, Nudrut Maryam conducted on nursing students it is observed that first year students tend to have higher level of loneliness compared to senior students because the sudden shift from familiar environment can lead to homesickness, anxiety and individuals also struggle to form new relationships .They also stated that this loneliness gradually decreases and the social adaptation increase over time. It is also stated that loneliness and psychological distress are strongly correlated to each other, hence it leads to poor academic performance and emotional distress .Even though loneliness persisted in students it was observed that many students adapt to the environment over time through establishing peer connections. They also attributed the lower level of emotional distress in senior students to improved social connection and better participation in group activities. The study mainly focuses on intervention strategies to make the initial phase in the hostel more easier through support groups and providing a confidential space to convey their concerns. The study also suggests

regular mental health workshops, peer support system to promote mutual support. This study not only suggests interventions for mental health it also states that not only hostels but the institutions should also provide strategies to handle academic stress and it also suggests that not only authority members but students also help in identifying signs of distress as some students find it difficult to express their feelings. According to this theory these interventions not only improve the present life of the students but it also help the students to adjust to their future professional life efficiently.

Title: Loneliness, Social Support, Life Satisfaction, and Internet Addiction among Day Scholars and Hostel Students

- Salma Siyana, Mrs. Ayesha Arif Zinna

The study conducted by Salma Siyana, Mrs. Ayesha Arif Zinna states how loneliness, social support, life satisfaction and use of Internet are correlated to each other. They observed how these factors influences day scholars and hostellers. Studies showed that students who spend more time in social media and avoids outgoing tend to feel more isolated comparing to others. The study indicates there is no correlation between Internet addiction and social support. Also states that Internet addiction affects life satisfaction. It is also observed that students

who feels lonely are less likely to get social support compared to others affecting overall life satisfaction and students with more social support have better life satisfaction. Through this study it is understood that there is no significant difference in the level of Internet addiction among day scholars and hostellers. Where, there is a significant difference in the level of loneliness and social support among these two groups. Day scholars are most likely to get social support from family hence they feel less lonely. Meanwhile hostellers are people who stay away from family unlike day scholars they don't get constant support and pushing from family causing higher level of loneliness than day scholars. But the overall life satisfaction of both groups are almost equal with no significant difference and both the people are having a life similar to their ideal life.

Title: Perceived Stress and Social and Emotional Loneliness among Day Scholars and Hosteller students
Dr. Saleem Abbas, Kalsoom Yasin,
Dr. Shammem Akhtar

This study aims to look into association or relationship between perceived stress and social and emotional loneliness among day scholars and hosteller students. Perceived stress refers to level of stress that occurs to a person as a response to life situation, when a person feels that they lack

emotional connection it can lead to emotional loneliness, and when a person feels isolated from peer group refers to social loneliness. This study developed hypotheses for finding relationship between these factors among day scholars and hostel students. This study also focused on how gender influence these factors, highlighting previous researches about perceived stress and loneliness. They found higher level of loneliness in migrant students from all over the world compared to native students. They also attributed this phenomenon to various reasons like cultural differences, age differences and change in relationships. This study also stated significant correlation between loneliness and perceived stress among migrant students across different universities. They also defines this phenomenon referring to previous studies and attributed these differences to emotional nature, cultural discriminations and absence of close relationships. Overall this study suggests that hosteller students face perceived stress and loneliness compared to day scholars also considering gender differences.

Title: Exploring and Understanding the Subjective Experiences of 'Home' Feeling Away Students Living In Hostel
Hafsa Khalid Awan, Dr Nida Nosheen & Noshaba Ajaz

According to the study conducted by Hafsa

Khalid Awan, Dr Nida Nosheen & Noshaba Ajaz states the subjective experiences of students who live in hostel and how they form an idea of home away from family and homely environment. By using semi-structured interview they observed that social, emotional and environmental factors influence and affect each other and overall mental health. Even though hostel life gives more opportunities for personal growth it often comes with plenty of challenges. This transition often includes emotional discomfort at the initial phase but gradually students adapt to the environment by creating a similar environment to their homes by following routines and personalising spaces with items from home. According to previous studies they do this in order to create a sense of familiar environment. Social interaction and peer relationships also contributed to coping to new environment. Doing activities together with peers helped form meaningful connections. Transition from home to hostel often comes with many other responsibilities like managing money, cooking, time management and making decision for oneself contributing to overall independence. Despite the challenges faced in the initial phase, students were found to value the exposure to different cultures and living without immediate support from family contributing to overall personal growth. It was also highlighted that in the

initial phase strict hostel rules, unavailability of facilities negatively contributed to adaptation. Considering these challenges the study suggests that institutions should provide efforts to create a comfortable environment for students through peer support groups, providing the needed privacy and freedom and also by providing the adequate facilities for students to adapt more smoothly.

Title: From Home to Hostel: The Adjustment Struggles of Freshman Female Students in University Settings
Ankita Singh

According to the study conducted by Ankita Singh on freshman female students who are staying away from home in a hostel for academic purposes. The study suggests that adjustment is a multidimensional process including academic, health, social and emotional adjustment. The study focuses on academic adjustment, health adjustment, social adjustment and emotional adjustment of female students and the responses were collected using a self constructed adjustment inventory. Transition from home to hostel is one of the major transition of a student's life in this study it is stated that a notable number of students adapted to academic, physical, social and emotional health effectively. But the other students which consist of almost the same number of students struggled to

adapt. These students faced challenges among different areas such as academic, health, social and emotional adjustment. In order to help students navigate through this transition this study suggested that universities should provide the adequate facilities such as academic assistance, health education, peer mentorship and mental health support to help students adapt to new setting contributing to overall mental well being.

Title: Relationship between Self Esteem and Loneliness Among College Hostel Students Lankala Venya, Pushparaj S

This study was conducted to look over to see if self esteem and loneliness are related. The study was conducted for college students who are staying in hostel and the responses were collected using online surveys. The study states that loneliness is one of the major problem that a student faces when they stay away from home. This loneliness is associated with negative behaviour and thoughts and it leads to lower ranges of self esteem and self efficacy considering gender differences . Low self confidence in individuals contributes to low social skills which may result in loneliness. The study also suggests that different individuals experiences different level of loneliness and interventions should be able to address it appropriately. Gender differences were also

considered to look in to the extent to which loneliness is experienced by individuals who are staying in the hostel. The previous studies also contributed to the finding that there might exist an individual difference in self esteem and loneliness. This study has also contributed to the existing theories of loneliness, self esteem and self identity. The findings not only stated the relationship between self esteem and loneliness but it also suggested that both of these are multidimensional constructs. The study also highlighted the three dimensions of loneliness which are related but separable each of them relating differently to self esteem. Overall suggesting loneliness and self esteem might be related.

Research Design

Objectives

- The main objective of the study is to asses the loneliness among college students who stays away from family in a hostel.
- The study also explore how this affect the student's social , emotional and overall well- being suggesting possible strategies for students to adjust to the new environment effortlessly and lower loneliness.

Data

Primary Data

- Survey Method

Secondary Data

- Articles
- Published Papers
- Journals

Need of the Study

This need for this study is important because the concept of being away from home is not the simple as we assume. There's a higher chance of loneliness in the initial phase. Even though it contribute to independence and overall personal growth, during the initial phase individuals struggle with emotional and social adjustment. Some individuals find it very hard to come out of their comfort zone and built social connections. If they fail to establish meaningful connections they might end up feeling lonely. Loneliness is one of the main challenge faced by hosteller students. Loneliness can lead to poor social health, emotional health, poor academic performance, which may contribute to overall future life and physical health. Previous studies already stated the effects of loneliness as stress, self esteem issues, adjustment issues, it was seen that these studies didn't attend the issues like effect of prolonged loneliness on physical health,

social adjustment and adaptability. Prolonged loneliness can lead to issues like stress, anxiety, depression affecting overall well being. Especially for students staying in hostels even though caregivers or guardians are present they don't get the constant emotional support like they used to get when they were residing at home. Hence this study highlights the need to understand loneliness among students staying in hostel for implementing the possible strategies to reduce loneliness

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on students who are staying away from home for academic purposes. This study mainly focuses on how the transition from home to hostel affects individual's emotional, social and overall mental health. Responses were collected from 50 individuals who are staying in hostel using Loneliness Inventory (LI) developed by Uma Meenakshi under the guidance of K. Krishnan. It also focuses on loneliness among hostellers and how it influences social adjustment and overall mental and physical well being.

Challenges

One of the main challenge faced during this study was time constraints. The responses were collected during a limited time. Only

a total of 50 responses were collected due to time constraints and faced trouble accessing to hostel students. Since it is a self report scale the responses may not be accurate, as participants may not always provide the honest answer.

Suggestions

Based on this study it is suggested that the authorities of the institutions and hostels should provide activities that help build social connections through promoting group activities and peer support groups. The rules and regulations should not stop students from being themselves. Group sessions for students who just shifted to hostel is recommended. It is also suggested that along with measuring loneliness, long term impact of loneliness, impact on physical, social and emotional health and social adjustment issues should also be considered with a larger sample size

Discussion

According to the scoring the level of loneliness ranges from moderate to high levels of loneliness. The scores showed that some students faces trouble adjusting while some adjust well to the hostel environment. Loneliness is a subjective experience that can be experienced by individuals when they feel unheard or unseen. The range of scores from moderate to high supports that

loneliness is a subjective experience and also proves that individuals have different levels of adaptability. Higher levels of loneliness are reported by first year students compared to senior students which were also reported in the previous studies which shows that building social connections affect adaptability. Responses also showed that individuals do experience emotional distress due to isolation and loneliness. It is already proved in the previous studies that establishing social connections helps reduce loneliness and adapt to new environment easily.

The study also indicates that individuals who fail to develop meaningful connection tend to feel more lonely affecting overall well being and it also affects self esteem and confidence which aligns to previous studies.

Overall the results indicates that the loneliness experienced while shifting from home to hostel affects overall well being and ability to adapt to new environment and building new connections. Hence the hostel faculties should promote group activities and peer support groups to help cope with the new environment better. Loneliness can also contribute to level of self esteem and stress and it is commonly seen in hostellers.

Conclusion

This study is mainly aimed to measure the loneliness among students staying away from home in a hostel for academic purposes. Loneliness is a commonly seen issue among hostellers. People who shift from home from a comfortable environment to a place where nothing and no one is familiar often experience loneliness along with emotional discomfort. Some of the individuals cope with the new environment efficiently while some struggle with adapting to new environment and establishing new connections.

The findings also show that people do experience moderate to higher level of loneliness after shifting to a hostel. Among the respondents first year students reported higher levels of loneliness compared to senior students. Senior students experience lower level of loneliness after establishing relationship with peer groups, for first year students they might not know people in a new place. This aligns with previous studies that states that social support and peer connections also help with emotional security and adjustment over time.

Even though individuals live in the same setting they experience loneliness differently some individuals tend to build connections easily some don't which aligns with the previous results that states

loneliness is subjective. Even though individuals built relationships they still feel lonely it is also seen in some senior students. Lack of adaptability leads to isolation which can. Even though individuals live in the same setting they experience loneliness differently some individuals tend to build connections easily some don't which aligns with the previous results that states loneliness is subjective. Even though individuals built relationships they still feel lonely it is also seen in some senior students. Lack of adaptability leads to isolation which can contribute to loneliness. Loneliness may also contribute to inability to adjust to environment no matter how friendly the surroundings is. Prolonged loneliness can also have larger impacts on mental health and physical health.

It can cause stress, emotional instability which can contribute to physical health.

Considering the findings it is important for the institutions to provide the needed facilities for the students. It is important to provide a comfortable environment for the students, especially for first year students. Considering they just shifted the faculties should promote more group activities for the students so that they can interact to each other and build relationships. Talking sessions for group can be organised by the faculty. Since peer support is needed in order to adapt efficiently institutions should

provide comfortable environment for the students to express their concerns freely. By providing these facilities it will be easier for the students to adapt accordingly.

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