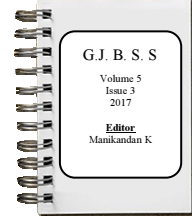




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Loneliness, Shyness and Perceived Social Support among Adolescents

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Abstract

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Adolescent's experience different kind of psychological states in their daily life. Some of them may be the product of the situation and some other may be related to their personality. Child rearing practices, socio-perceptual factors may be one reason for this. Loneliness and shyness are the two variables which plays prominent roles in the lives of adolescents. Shyness has been defined as the experience of wariness with unknown people and in new social encounters and novel places. Loneliness is an enduring condition of emotional distress that arises when a person feels estranged from, misunderstood, or rejected by others.

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Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being and also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health and well being should be considered an important factor for the social functioning of the individual. Adolescence is a critical period of major physical, physiological, psychological, and behavioral changes with changing patterns of social interactions and relationships. Achieving social relationships are vital for good and physical health. Individuals are social by nature and possess a need to belong which constitutes a driving force for thoughts, emotions, and interpersonal behavior. The need for belongingness consists of a pervasive desire to form and maintain a minimum quantity of positive and significant interpersonal relationships. People who experience persistent difficulties in establishing and maintaining satisfying relationships with others may thus have difficulty in satisfying their belongingness need. They experience a sense of deprivation, manifested in disturbances such as loneliness, shyness, depression, anxiety, and anger. These types of people in a workforce may makes little contribution and in turn experience low job satisfaction, poor commitment etc.

Shyness has been defined as the experience of wariness with unknown people and in new social encounters and novel places. It overlaps conceptually with constructs such as behavioral inhibition, social anxiety, social withdrawal, and social reticence because they all involve social fears. Like behaviorally inhibited children, shy children get distressed when meeting new people, are hesitant when approaching unknown adults, and tend to hover around other children without joining in play.

Loneliness is an enduring condition of emotional distress that arises when a person feels estranged from, misunderstood, or rejected by others and/or lacks appropriate social partners for desired activities, particularly activities that provide a sense of social integration and opportunities for emotional intimacy. Theory of loneliness holds that deficiencies in specific provisions of social relationships contribute to specific types of lonely feelings. Another theory holds that loneliness arises from social skill deficits and personality traits that impair the formation and maintenance of social relationships.

Numerous characteristics of modern society contribute to shyness, and loneliness. The high mobility in society makes it difficult to develop and maintain close interpersonal relationships, even within families. Similarly, the loss of intergenerational ties and the rise of single-parent families contribute to the social isolation that underlies many of the problems in



living. These characteristics of modern society, and of most industrial societies, in conjunction with traditional values of individualism, have contributed to the development of an unhealthy focus on the self, the individual, and the “me” perspective.

Social support as the perception or knowledge of life that an individual feels loved and cared for, and valued, and part of a social network of reciprocal assistance and obligations. Perceived social support is defined as the perception or experience that social support is available if someone liked to reach the support of another person and as cognitive variable influencing interactions with other people. It has an important effect on physical and psychological well-being. Family, friends and significant others plays a vital role for maintaining good social support.

People lack attachment, living in a nuclear family, much involvement in computer and internet (social media), the deprivation of social relationship, competitive demands placed on individuals has created them to be more individualistic and lead to mental health issues. To build strong relationships, adapt to change and deal with life’s challenges seems to be difficult nowadays as people are not easy to adjust with the emotional demands. In this scenario the study has much more importance.

Objectives

1. To find out the relationship of Loneliness, Shyness and Perceived Social Support among adolescents.
2. To find out the influence of Certain Demographic Variables on Loneliness, Shyness and Perceived Social Support.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant correlation between Shyness, Loneliness and Perceived Social Support among PG students.
2. Demographic variables like sex, religion, stream of study and birth order will significantly influence the variables under study.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 200 post graduate students studying at Teaching and Research Departments of University of Calicut, Kerala India. Among the total participants 100 (50.0%) were boys and 100 (50.0%) girls. Out of 200 participants, 89 (44.5%) were first born, 74 (37.0%) second born and 37 (18.5%) were later born. The average age of participants ranges from 20 to 24. Simple random sampling method was used for data collection.

Instruments

1. The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale: To measure shyness of the participants, Shyness scale developed by Cheek and Buss (1981) was used. This scale consists of 13 items in a five point Likert scale. The authors of the scale claimed that the instrument has good reliability and it was estimated and reported as $\alpha = .90$, and test-retest reliability = .88. The authors also claimed that the scale has validity.
2. UCLA Loneliness Scale: Loneliness scale developed by Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1986) was used to measure the level of loneliness experienced by the individual participants. This scale is a 5 point Likert type scale consists of 10 items. The reliability coefficient ranging from .89 to .96, and test retest reliability over one year period was reported as .73. The convergent validity for the scale was indicated by significant correlations with other measures of loneliness.
3. Perceived Social Support Scale: This scale was developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet and Farley (1988) for measuring perceived social support of students. The scale measure three types of social support from Friends, Family, and Significant others. It is a 5 point

Likert type scale consists of 12 items. The reliability of the scale was estimated using Cronbach Alpha and it was found to be .83. Since the scale is based on theoretical assumption, the authors claims construct validity.

4. Personal Information Schedule: The demographic data such as sex, age, religion, birth order, steam of study of the participants were collected using Personal Information Schedule.

Procedure

The participants were directly contacted by the investigators and requested to cooperate in the study by responding the booklet containing the Cheek and Buss shyness scale, UCLA Loneliness Scale, and Perceived Social Support Scale. The investigators also requested their consent after explaining the objective, nature and method of study. After obtaining the participants informed consent, the research instruments were distributed among them. After completion, the instruments were collected back and checked for incomplete or omission. Then the instruments were scored as per the scoring scheme and entered in to a spread sheet for further statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion

The first objective of the study was to find out the relationship of Loneliness, Shyness and Perceived Social Support among adolescents. To know how Loneliness, Shyness, Perceived Social Support and its components are related Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated and the results are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Correlation of Loneliness, Shyness and Perceived Social Support

Variables	Loneliness	Shyness	Significant others	Family	Friends	Perceived Social Support
Loneliness	-					
Shyness	.446**	-				
Significant Others	-.204**	-.163*	-			
Family	-.270**	-.182**	.289**	-		
Friends	-.288**	-.200**	.272**	.473**	-	.
Perceived Social Support	-.332**	-.240**	.751**	.772**	.718**	-

**p< .01

From table 1, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between loneliness and shyness ($r = .446, p < .01$). Jones, Rose and Russell (1990) in a study reported that there is positive correlation between loneliness and shyness, and also commented that shyness and loneliness are distinct constructs, they tend to overlap, in as much as measures of each typically correlate.

From this table it is clear that there was a negative significant correlation between loneliness and perceived social support ($r = -.332, p < .01$) and it is also same for the variable shyness ($r = -.240, p < .01$). These results indicate that a person can reduce loneliness and shyness if he or she increases the social support system. Coyne and Early (1996) in their study revealed that people who experience persistent difficulties in establishing and maintaining satisfying relationships with others, and thus have difficulty satisfying their belongingness needs, are likely to experience a sense of deprivation, manifested in disturbances such as loneliness, and anxiety.

Jackson, et al. (2002) measures indicative of a protective self-presentation style and reductions in social support predicted increases in loneliness. However, shyness and loneliness had a significant association, even after controlling for the influence of self-presentation and

social support. Findings suggest that although features of protective self-presentation and social support may partially explain the association between shyness and loneliness, shyness and loneliness are also directly related

The table also suggests the importance of sub dimension significant others, family, and friends in a social support system. The correlation coefficient for significant others, family, and friends are .751, .772, .718 respectively. These three sub variables are positively correlated with perceived social support.

Influence of Certain Demographic Variables on Loneliness, Shyness and Perceived Social Support

To know the role of demographic variables such as sex, religion, stream of study etc., on the study variables 't' test, one-way ANOVA etc., were computed and the results are presented in following tables.

Table 2

Mean, SD, and 't' value of Loneliness, Shyness, and Perceived Social Support by Sex

Variables	Sex	N	Mean	SD	't' value
Loneliness	Male	100	22.23	5.239	0.79
	Female	100	21.62	5.640	
Shyness	Male	100	32.56	8.825	3.62**
	Female	100	36.41	5.914	
Significant Others	Male	100	13.98	3.640	1.78
	Female	100	14.95	4.051	
Family	Male	100	15.06	3.097	2.97**
	Female	100	16.43	3.412	
Friends	Male	100	15.38	2.481	2.09*
	Female	100	16.17	2.861	
Perceived Social Support	Male	100	44.42	6.803	3.08**
	Female	100	47.55	7.694	

*p< .05, **p< .01

The 't' value of loneliness is 0.79. It is found to be less than the table value. This shows there is no sex difference exists in loneliness but the mean score of male is slightly higher than females.

In the case of shyness 't' value is 3.62 and it is found to be significant at 0.01 level of significance and the mean score of females is very high. Bas (2010) examined on the relationship between shyness and loneliness level of elementary students in a Turkish sample. The aim of this research was to analyze the shyness and loneliness levels of elementary students. In this study it was found that female students feel more loneliness than male students and shyness levels of male students were found to be higher than the female students. The result of this study is opposite to the present study.

The 't' value of perceived social support is found to be 3.08 and which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The 't' values for significant others, family, and friends was found to be 1.78, 2.97, and 2.09 respectively. The sub variable family support and friends support are significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level respectively. The variable significant others have no significant difference with regard to sex.

Table 3

One-Way ANOVA of Loneliness, Shyness, and Perceived Social Support by Religion

Variables	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Loneliness	Between Groups	9.036	2	4.518	0.151
	Within Groups	5876.839	197	29.832	
	Total	5885.875	199		
Shyness	Between Groups	7.849	2	3.925	0.065
	Within Groups	11906.106	197	60.437	
	Total	11913.955	199		
Significant Others	Between Groups	65.717	2	32.859	2.218
	Within Groups	2918.038	197	14.812	
	Total	2983.755	199		
Family	Between Groups	7.640	2	3.820	0.344
	Within Groups	2188.355	197	11.108	
	Total	2195.995	199		
Friends	Between Groups	2.276	2	1.138	0.155
	Within Groups	1448.599	197	7.353	
	Total	1450.875	199		
Perceived Social Support	Between Groups	134.581	2	67.291	1.23
	Within Groups	10798.374	197	54.814	
	Total	10932.955	199		

The 'F' value for loneliness, shyness, significant others, family, friends, and perceived social support by religion was found to be 0.151, 0.065, 2.218, 0.344, 0.155 and 1.23 respectively. The 'F' value of all the variables was found to be less than table value of corresponding variable. So the above mentioned variables were not significantly influenced by religion. This may be due to the cultural difference and also may be due to the secular mind of inhabitants of Kerala. In Kerala religion based practices are in low level when compared with other states in India.

Table 4

One-Way ANOVA of Loneliness, Shyness, and Perceived Social Support by Stream of Study

Variables	Source of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Loneliness	Between Groups	29.686	2	14.843	0.499
	Within Groups	5856.189	197	29.727	
	Total	5885.875	199		
Shyness	Between Groups	118.638	2	59.319	0.991
	Within Groups	11795.317	197	59.875	
	Total	11913.955	199		
Significant Others	Between Groups	108.970	2	54.485	3.73*
	Within Groups	2874.785	197	14.593	
	Total	2983.755	199		
Family	Between Groups	51.327	2	25.663	2.357
	Within Groups	2144.668	197	10.887	
	Total	2195.995	199		
Friends	Between Groups	11.037	2	5.519	0.755
	Within Groups	1439.838	197	7.309	
	Total	1450.875	199		
Perceived Social Support	Between Groups	432.934	2	216.467	4.06*
	Within Groups	10500.021	197	53.300	
	Total	10932.955	199		

* $p < .05$

Table 4 gives the results of one-way ANOVA of study variables by the participant's stream of study. The calculated 'F' value of loneliness ($F = 0.499$), shyness ($F = 0.991$) were revealed that there is no significant difference exist between the different streams of study. The 'F' value of significant others was found to be 3.73 ($p < .05$). The 'F' value of the variables family and friends was found to be not significant. But social support was found to be significantly different among stream of study. The results of one-way ANOVA revealed mixed results, hence the investigators decided to calculate the cell mean of each variable and the results are presented in table 5.

Table 5

Mean, Sd, and N of Loneliness, Shyness, and Perceived Social Support by Stream of Study

Stream of Study	Statistics	Loneliness	Shyness	Significant others	Family	Friends	Perceived Social Support
Science	Mean	22.15	34.70	15.07	16.13	15.94	47.14
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110
	S D	5.266	8.091	3.684	2.968	2.553	6.893
Commerce	Mean	21.95	33.45	13.40	14.98	15.42	43.80
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
	S D	6.242	8.152	3.854	3.721	2.818	7.246
Humanities	Mean	21.03	35.77	14.37	15.87	15.90	46.13
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30
	S D	4.295	5.049	4.230	3.560	2.998	8.756
Total	Mean	21.92	34.49	14.46	15.74	15.77	45.98
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
	S D	5.438	7.738	3.872	3.322	2.700	7.412

From table 5, it is clear that mean score of the individuals in loneliness is almost equal. Only a slight difference was seen. But mean score of science students is compared with other streams of study. This may be because of tight schedule of science students and they can't properly make a good contact with partners and others.

The table shows a tendency for humanities students to become shy. Perceived social support is higher for science students. Support from significant others and family is higher for these students. It may be due to the increased acceptance of the professional course, because parents give more importance to science groups. So they provide more support for their students. Teachers also provide good technical and emotional support for their students to achieve more from the course.

Table 6

One-way ANOVA of Loneliness, Shyness, and Perceived Social Support by Birth order

Variables	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Loneliness	Between Groups	77.520	2	38.760	1.315
	Within Groups	5808.355	197	29.484	
	Total	5885.875	199		
Shyness	Between Groups	36.930	2	18.465	0.306
	Within Groups	11877.025	197	60.289	
	Total	11913.955	199		
Significant others	Between Groups	5.242	2	2.621	0.173
	Within Groups	2978.513	197	15.119	
	Total	2983.755	199		
Family	Between Groups	50.797	2	25.399	2.332
	Within Groups	2145.198	197	10.889	
	Total	2195.995	199		
Friends	Between Groups	15.015	2	7.508	1.030
	Within Groups	1435.860	197	7.289	
	Total	1450.875	199		
Perceived Social Support	Between Groups	159.078	2	79.539	1.454
	Within Groups	10773.877	197	54.690	
	Total	10932.955	199		

The 'F' value for loneliness, shyness, significant others, family, friends, and perceived social support by birth order is found to be 1.315, 0.306, 0.173, 2.332, 1.030 and 1.454 respectively. The 'F' value of all the variables is found to be less than table value. So the above mentioned variables were not significantly influenced by their birth order.

Table 7

Mean, Sd, and N of Loneliness, Shyness, and Perceived Social Support by Birth order

Birth order	Statistics	Loneliness	Shyness	Significant others	Family	Friends	Perceived Social Support
1 st Born (n=89)	Mean	22.47	34.62	14.29	15.48	15.52	45.29
	S D	5.199	8.008	3.814	3.198	2.710	6.736
2 nd Born (n=74)	Mean	21.85	33.99	14.65	16.38	16.12	47.15
	S.D	5.651	7.823	4.182	3.152	2.694	7.938
Later Born (n=37)	Mean	20.76	35.16	14.51	15.11	15.70	45.32
	S.D	5.525	7.006	3.421	3.799	2.686	7.786
Total (N=200)	Mean	21.92	34.49	14.46	15.74	15.77	45.98
	S.D	5.438	7.738	3.872	3.322	2.700	7.412

From the above table it is clear that the mean score of loneliness in relation to birth order is almost same. Mean score shows a tendency for first born to become lonely. In the case of shyness, the mean scores are approximately equal. Mean score is high for later born individuals. This shows a tendency for later born individuals to become shy.

In the case of perceived social support and family support second born individuals mean score is high. It indicates that second born individuals try to make good relationship with others so the level of loneliness and shyness are comparatively less.

The study revealed that, there exists a positive correlation between loneliness and shyness, significant negative correlation between loneliness and perceived social support, between shyness and perceived social support. But no significant sex difference exists in loneliness, but the mean score of male is slightly higher than females. In the case of shyness there is significant sex difference and females scored high mean score. Similarly there exists significant sex difference on perceived social support female score scored higher mean score than males.

Shyness, loneliness, and perceived social support is not significantly influenced by religion. Regarding the stream of study a component of perceived social support - significant others - found to be significantly different. Students belong to science subjects perceived that significant others support better than others. Information regarding their ordinal position were collected but it has no significant role in perceived social support.

Conclusion

Mental health is essential for individuals to survive. Satisfying social relationships are vital for good mental health. Individuals who experience persistent difficulties in establishing and maintaining satisfying relationships with others, are likely to experience manifested disturbances such as loneliness and shyness. There is a close relationship between shyness and loneliness. Perceived social support play a vital role in reducing shyness and loneliness. Males seem to be lonelier and females seem to be shyer. Second born child does not showed much shyness and loneliness comparing with first and later born child because of more perceived social support.

In an educational environment, teacher's role in giving social support to adolescents is important and that can minimize shyness and loneliness. Adequate teacher behavior is essential to minimize the shyness and loneliness of the adolescents. Teachers may be trained in such way



that they can render various psycho-social supports to the needy pupil. For achieving this especially in school setup teaching methodologies and curriculum planning can be shaped accordingly and give more emphasis to social interactions and group activities. The other groups such as peer group and social media can take a lead role in creating social support to the individual. Appropriate social training and intervention is needed for teachers, students and parents to build social skills especially communication and inter personal skills.

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