

Aged People's Tolerance Level and Loneliness

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ABSTRACT

The present study attempted an empirical investigation to explore the tolerance level and loneliness of aged people as a function of age, living area and present living status. The sample of the study consisted of 120 aged people of whom 60 people were 60-69 years old in (30 urban and 30 rural) and remaining 60 people were aged above 70 (30 urban and 30 rural). Each group again consisted of 15 living with their son/grandson and 15 living without their son/grandson. A Bengali version of tolerance level scale developed by Mark (2007) and an adapted Bengali version (Praveen, 2007) of loneliness scale were used. Data were analyzed by mean, standard deviation, t-test and Pearson Product Moment correlation. The findings of the present study showed that there is no significant difference of tolerance level or loneliness according to age. Urban people have more tolerance level and also less loneliness than rural people. Those Aged people live with their son/grandson is less lonely than the people live without their son/grandson. There is no difference in tolerance level between them. Results also showed that tolerance level was negatively correlated with loneliness.

Keywords: *Tolerance, Loneliness, Aged People.*

Tolerance can be defined as the power or capacity of an organism to tolerate unfavorable environmental conditions. For a person or group to be tolerant, three conditions must be mandatory. First, there must be some conduct about which one disapproves, even if only minimally or potentially; second, although such a person or group has power to act coercively against, or interfere to prevent, that of which they disapprove, they do not and third, not interfering coercively must result from more than acquiescence, resignation, indifference or a balance of power. One does not tolerate that which one is not concerned about; nor is it tolerance

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simply to accept what one cannot, or is not willing to, change (either because one lacks power to effect change or because, for whatever reason, one fears to use one's power) (Luke, 2004).

Loneliness is an unpleasant feeling in which a person feels a strong sense of emptiness and solitude resulting from inadequate levels of social relationships. However, it is a subjective experience (Peplau, and Perlman, 1982). Loneliness has also been described as social pain—a psychological mechanism meant to alert an individual of isolation and motivate him or her to seek social connection (Cacioppo et al., 2008). A broad definition of loneliness would be that it involves a sense of deprivation in one's social relationships (Murphy and Kupshik, 1992). Loneliness is a negative and unpleasant experience that occur when a person's network of social relations is deficient in some important way, either qualitatively or quantitatively (Canary and Spitzberg, 1993; Murphy and Kupshik, 1992; Perlman and Peplau, 1981).

Old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the life expectancy of human beings, and thus the end of the human life cycle. Euphemisms and terms for old people include, old people (worldwide usage), seniors (American usage), senior citizens (British and American usage), and older adults (in the social sciences, the elderly, and elders (in many cultures— including the cultures of aboriginal people)

As far back as 1875, in Britain, the Friendly Societies Act, enacted the definition of old age as, "any age after 50", yet pension schemes mostly used age 60 or 65 years for eligibility. (Roebuck, 1979). The UN has not adopted a standard criterion, but generally uses 60+ years to refer to the older population (personal correspondence, 2001).

Mark (2007) worked on tolerance as a function of sex and age of respondents in Dhaka city. He developed a "Tolerance Level Scale" in Bengali format to assess the tolerance of the respondents of Dhaka city. He found that the main effect of tolerance according to age and sex were not significant but their interaction effect was significant where it is seen that the gradual increases of age, female seem to be more tolerant than males.

Kenneth et al., (1972) studied on the nature and extent of group differences in pain tolerance according of age, sex and race. He found that on average, pain tolerance decreases with age than his Orientals; while blacks occupy an intermediate position.

Johnson (1976) researched on 65+ old and they found that tolerant individuals should perform well in new and complex learning situations. However, intolerant learners may tend to avoid or give up when encountering ambiguous situations.

Baskin et al., (2010) in their study examines the effects of belongingness in relation to low peer acceptance and loneliness. Ratings of peers and self-reported survey data were analyzed and the

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results indicated that belongingness was a significant moderator of the influence of peer acceptance on loneliness and of loneliness on depression. This suggests that belongingness is a potentially important buffer against the negative effects of low peer acceptance and high loneliness and to develop a positive self acceptance.

Borys and Perlman (1985) found differentiated results of gender differences in loneliness using different measures. When loneliness was measured using the direct self-labeling measurement (e.g., "do you often feel lonely?"), females reported higher level of loneliness, but males were lonelier when the UCLA Loneliness Scale was used. As Lau and Gruen (1992) suggested, this may be because "the negative connotations and social consequences of being lonely may inhibit people from admitting that they are lonely, and this may be more so for men".

Rationale of the study

Loneliness can impact on stress, health and immunity system on old people. Loneliness is connected to genetics, physical isolation, moving to a new place and divorce. Old aged people are considered as paramount senior citizen for a country. And the number of them is increasing rapidly in Bangladesh. They are facing some problems like loneliness, depression, frustration etc. Problems of old aged come in three forms: emotional, physical and financial. Research on old age has resembled a burning issue in our country. No mentionable study has conducted by any researchers in Chittagong, Dhaka and Tangail district in Bangladesh. That's why, to know the level of tolerance and impact on loneliness among the old age people in these areas, the author conducts this study. This research may be effective and helpful for NGOs; governmental agencies to overcome the loneliness problem of old age people. So, it is urgency to measure the tolerance in association with loneliness among Aged people.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are categorized below.

1. To investigate whether tolerance level of aged people varies according to age, living area and present living status.
2. To see whether the loneliness of Aged people varies according to age, living area and present living status.
3. To find out whether there is any relation between tolerance level and loneliness of Aged people.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Target Population

The population of the present study was the aged people of Chittagong, Dhaka & Tangail districts.

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Sample

The sample of the present study consists of 120 aged people. Among them 60 were aged in between 60-69 and 60 were aged over 70. In both category 30 were selected from urban area (among them 15 were living with their son/grandson, rest of 15 were living without their son/grandson) and 30 were selected from rural area (among them 15 were living with their son/grandson, rest of 15 were living without their son/grandson). The participants of urban area were selected purposively from the different part of Chittagong & Dhaka city. The participants of rural area were mostly selected from the rural part of Chittagong district & from Tangail district. Their socioeconomic status was mixed with High, Middle & lower middle class.

Measuring Instruments

In the present research the following two questionnaire were used such as

Tolerance Scale The Bangla Version of the tolerance level scale was developed and used by Margaret N Mark (2007). This scale is comprised of 29 items. 20 items were positive and 9 were negative. The positive items were 2,3,5,6,10,11,13,14,16,17,18,19,20,21,24,25,26,27,28 and 29 of the questionnaire. And the negative items were 1, 4,7,8,9,12,15,22 and 23. Each of the item have four levels, as, 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree". To reach of the positive ileum, the respondent will get 1 point if his/her answer is 'Strongly Disagree'; if the answer is 'Disagree' the respondent will get 2 points; if the answer is 'Agree' the respondent will get 3 points; and if the answer is 'Strongly Agree' the respondents will get 4 points. For negative items the scoring will be reversed, that is, if the response is 'Strongly Disagree' the respondent will get 4 points; for 'Disagree' 3 points; for 'Agree' 2 points; and for 'Strongly Agree" 1 point. The summation of points will indicate the Tolerance Level of the respondents. Higher score indicates higher tolerance level. Cranach's alpha was computed as a measure of the reliability for the test. The value of alpha was 0.84, which is highly significant. Split half reliability value of 0.24 was also found for the test. The face validity of the scale was checked by and judge by the teachers of different departments (Sociology, Psychology, Social Welfare, political Science etc.).

Loneliness scale The UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) Loneliness Scale was originally developed by Russell (1978). It was then revised by Russell et al.,(1980).The revised UCLA was translated into Bengali and adapted within the socioeconomic and cultural context of Bangladesh by Parveen (2007).The scale were comprised of 20 items. 10 were positive items and 10 were negative items. Positive items were 1,4,5,6,9,10,15,16,19 and 20th of the questionnaire. The negative items were 2, 3,7,8,11,12,13,14,17 & 18th of the questionnaire. Each item has 4 options (never, rarely, sometimes, and often). For positive items answers never get 4 points, rarely get 3 points, sometimes get 2 points & often get 1 point. For the negative items are scored in reversed order. A person on the scale can yield a score between 20 to 80.A higher score indicates high level of loneliness and a lower score indicates low level of loneliness .The revised UCLA loneliness Scale has high internal consistency, with a coefficient of .94.The English and Bengali versions were administered to 50 subjects with a gap of 7 days. Significant correlation

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($r_{48}=0.88$, $p<.01$) between the scores of Bengali and English versions indicated translation reliability of the scale that measured the same thing on two versions. Concurrent validity for the revised scale was indicated by demonstrating that lonely people report experiencing emotions theoretically linked to loneliness do not report. Scores on the scales were also found to be correlated more highly with other measures of loneliness than with the measures of mood and personality variables that were examined. The revised Loneliness scale passed a very stringent discriminated validity test, with the demonstration that relationships between loneliness and concurrent validity criteria were independent of the other mood and personality variables on loneliness (Russell et al., 1980).

Design

A cross-sectional survey research design was followed for conducting present study.

Procedure

At first we were going to the residence of aged people in different areas in Chittagong and Dhaka districts. Then we requested them to cooperate with us for conducting the research. After convincing them to conduct the research, the selected people were then supplied with a set of questionnaires. The respondents were requested to read each statements & express their feelings by putting on tick mark (✓) on the appropriate point. Respondents fulfill their questionnaires but there was no limit condition. Respondents were assured that it was purely an academic research & that their personal information would be kept secret. After the questionnaires were filled in by the respondents, they were thanked for their cooperation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data were analyzed by using mean, standard deviation, t- test and Pearson product moment correlation. All statistical analyses were carried out using the statistical program SPSS version 16.0 for windows.

Table 1: Tolerance Level score according to Age, Present Living Status and Living Area.

Variables	Group	N	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	df	t
Age	60-69	60	84.97	5.508	118	1.901
	70+	60	82.68	7.500		
Living Area	Urban	30	85.68	5.967	118	3.175*
	Rural	30	81.97	6.827		
Present Living Status	With son	15	83.12	7.110	118	-1.168
	Without son	15	84.53	6.138		

* $p<.01$

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Table 1 shows that, the mean tolerance score of aged people (60-69) was 84.97 (SD=5.508) and aged people (70+) was 82.68 (SD=7.500). Mean tolerance score of urban people was 85.68 (SD=5.967) and rural people was 81.97 (SD=6.827). That means urban aged people have more tolerance level than rural aged people. Mean tolerance score of Aged people (with son) was 83.12 (SD=7.110) and without son was 84.53 (SD=6.138).

Table 2: Loneliness score according to Age, Present Living Status and Living Area.

Variables	Group	N	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	df	T
Age	60-69	60	41.22	7.479	118	.438
	70+	60	40.55	9.121		
Living Area	Urban	30	37.92	8.056	118	-4.170*
	Rural	30	43.85	7.52		
Present Living Status	With son	15	39.23	8.697	118	-2.210**
	Without son	15	42.53	7.628		

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

Table 2 shows that, the mean loneliness score of aged people (60-69) was 41.22 (SD=7.47) and aged people (70+) was 40.55 (SD=9.121). Mean loneliness score of urban people was 37.92 (SD=8.056) and rural people was 43.85 (SD=7.521). That means rural aged people have more loneliness than urban aged people. Mean loneliness score of present living people (with son) was 39.23(SD=8.697) and without son was 42.53 (SD=7.628). That means aged people who don't live with their son have more loneliness than aged people who live with their son.

Finally, to find out whether there is any relation between tolerance level and loneliness of aged people. Pearson product moment correlation was conducted. Negative correlation ($r = -.384$) was found between tolerance level and loneliness in Aged people with an alpha level of $p < 0.01$. That means the increase of tolerance level, loneliness decrease.

The present study has focused on to found out relations between tolerance level and loneliness among Aged people as a function of age, living area and present living status. The first objective of the present study was to investigate whether tolerance level of Aged people varies according to age, living area and present living status. The result indicates that the scores of tolerance level of two different aged groups are close. The mean score of 60-69 age group was 84.97(SD=5.508) and 70+ age group was 82.68(SD=7.500). It means that people of 60-69 age group has more tolerance level than the 70+ age group people. It could indicate that higher age level could decrease the tolerance level. Moreover the score of those two groups are very much similar.

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From the result we see that the mean scores of urban group was 85.68 (SD=5.968) and the mean score of rural group was 81.97(SD=6.8270). The t-score of this variable was 3.175 which were statistically significant ($p<.01$). That means, urban Aged people has more tolerance level than the rural Aged people. In urban area the people have less interaction with each other than the rural areas. The isolation characteristics of urban nuclear family may play a part in high tolerance level. Beside modern facilities of urban life ensure the healthy well-being of a person. The safety of life can contribute higher tolerance level. Persell et al., (2001) suggest that the fabric of civil society and economic conditions may contribute somewhat to espoused tolerance. Greater economic security, together with the attitudes fostered by a vibrant civil society including greater trust and less anomie, appear to increase espoused social tolerance.

Again the results reveal that the mean scores of the group with son/grandson was 83.12 (SD=7.110) and the scores of the group without son/grand son was 84.53 (SD=6.138). From the t-test results, it was not statistically significant. That means, we cannot differentiate the tolerance level in according to the present living status. There can be several reasons behind that. In modern age, technology makes the world smaller. Mobile, telephone, internet has reduced the distance. As a result people can contact anytime with anyone. They don't feel the absence of close people like before. The adaptive human nature can also play a part of it. In another way the sample size was not enough to distinguish the difference in this variable.

The second objective of the present study was that, to see whether loneliness of Aged people varies according to age, living area and present living status. The result shows that there was no significant relation between loneliness with age. The mean scores of 60-69 age group was 41.22(SD=7.479) and the 70+ aged group was 40.66(SD=9.121). This result is almost similar and seems like that there is no relation between loneliness and age. Marx et al., (1995) conducted a study to find out if there is any relation between loneliness and age. They could not find any relation.

The result reveals that there is significant difference in loneliness among aged people in according to living area. The mean scores of urban aged people was 37.92(SD=8.056) and the rural aged people was 43.85(SD=7.521). The t-score for this variable is -4.170 with an alpha level of $p<.01$. This means that, the rural Aged people are lonelier than the urban aged people. The people of our country are city centered. For better life and living they left the rural life and contaminated with urban life. Very few aged people can do that energetic adaptive task. Aged people are left behind or stay behind in rural life. As a result a gap between Aged people with their son/daughter created. This gap between rural aged people and their own son/daughter makes them lonelier. On the other hand, in urban life with lots of people around the Aged people, the social interaction makes the urban aged people less lonely. Avery, 1982; Russell et al., 1980; Schultz and Moore, 1986; Parish et al., 1982; Stokes and Levin, 1986, they all conducted study

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on loneliness and found that males are more lonely than females. In our study a lot of urban participants are male. It also can play a part to make the urban people lonelier.

Again the result shows there is significant difference in loneliness according to present living status. The mean scores of the group with son/grandsons was 39.23(SD=8.697) and the group of without son/grandsons was 42.53(SD=7.628). t-score for this variable is -2.210 with an alpha level of $p < .05$. It indicates that the people who don't live with their son/grandsons are lonelier than the people who live with their son/grandsons. In old age, people have less companions than the young age. Death of spouse, older siblings, relatives, close friends and same age mates leave them companionless. They wanted to talk with others, share their feelings or simply pass their vast retired time. With sons/grandsons around them they can do that easily. When there are no son/grandsons around them, they can't do that and become lonelier. Weiss (1973) found in a study that, emotional loneliness is related to absence of close, intimate emotional attachment, whereas social loneliness results from a lack of an engaging social network (such as meaningful friendships, collegial relationships, or other linkages to a coherent community). Some studies have provided empirical support for Weiss's typology through principle components analyses of loneliness (DiTommaso and Spinner, 1993; Best et al., 2004).

The Third and final objective of our present study was to find out whether there is any relation between tolerance level and loneliness of Aged people. The Pearson product moment correlation shows, that negative correlation ($r = -.384$) was found between tolerance level and loneliness in Aged people with an alpha level of $p < 0.01$. It reveals moderately significant negative relationship between tolerance level and loneliness among Aged people. That means the increase of tolerance level, loneliness decrease. When people have high tolerance level, they can easily interact with other people. They can talk, share their interest, being part of social work and more importantly take other's views even if they don't agree with it. Other people can also take them cordially. As a result a social bond is being made between them and they don't feel lonely. In this way high tolerance level play partial part to reduce loneliness. On the other hand when people have low tolerance level they gradually become reactive, interact with other people decrease. They often found themselves arguing with others, sometimes misbehaving. As a result distance between them increase and they started to become lonelier. So, we can say that tolerance levels have a clear impact on loneliness and it must be opposite.

This study may have important recommendations. Further studies in this dimension should carry out analysis on education, family type, specific behavior, social or physical health problems of Aged people. Aged people are very important part of our life. So, we should take care of them very carefully. Always remain aware about their health. Try to give them some times regularly. Keep talking with them, try to understand their feelings. In case extreme low tolerance level or high loneliness, support them with proper guidance and counseling.

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Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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