

## A study on relationship between emotional intelligence and loneliness among young adults during lockdown period

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and loneliness among young adults during lockdown period. This was a quantitative study in which “emotional intelligence scale and UCLA loneliness scale” was administered to 60 participants; includes 30 males and 30 females. Convenient sampling technique was used to draw samples from the population. We predicted that there will be a relationship between emotional intelligence and loneliness among young adults during lockdown period and also there will be a significant gender difference in emotional intelligence and loneliness among young adults during lockdown period. Karl Pearson correlation and independent sample ‘t’ test were used for the analysis of the data. The result showed that there was a negative moderate relationship between emotional intelligence and loneliness and also there was no significant gender difference in emotional intelligence and loneliness among young adults.

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence, Loneliness, Young Adults*

On 24<sup>th</sup> March, the Government of India ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days, limiting movement of the entire 1.3 billion population as a preventive measure against the 2020 corona virus pandemic. It was followed by enforcement of a series of regulations in the country’s COVID-19 affected regions. The lockdown was declared when the number of positive corona virus cases in India was approximately 500. Observers stated that the lockdown has slowed the growth rate of the pandemic, despite the lockdown restricts people from stepping out of their houses. All public transport services, educational institutions, industrial establishments and hospitality services were suspended except food shops and essential services.

At the outset, this situation restricts people especially young adults from doing their daily activities, which may leads to loneliness. A young adult is generally a person ranging in age from 18 to 35 years. The young adult stage in human development precedes middle adulthood, will seek freedom more than others. So they cannot follow the restrictions

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declared by the government during this lockdown period. The main intention of this study was to find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and loneliness among young adults during lockdown period.

Emotional intelligence refers to the mental processes involved in the recognition, use, understanding and management of one's and other's emotional state required in solving problems and regulating behavior (Ciccarelli & Meyer, 2006). According to Salovey and Mayer (1990) Emotional intelligence means "The ability to monitor one's own feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action". Goleman (1998) also define emotional intelligence in the same tune as "the ability of identifying our own feelings and those of others, for inspiring ourselves, and for handling emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships".

Emotional intelligence includes traits like self-awareness, social deftness, and the ability to delay gratification, to be optimistic in the face of adversity, to channel strong emotions and to show empathy towards others. The four dimensions in the scale to measure emotional intelligence are:

- a) **Understanding emotions**- An individual's capacity to identify emotions in one's and other's physical states, feelings and thoughts.
- b) **Understanding motivation**- A high achievement drive together with the tendency to be optimistic and take initiative.
- c) **Empathy**- Ability to identify oneself mentally with others and to understand a person or thing accurately and read how other people feel, understand their perspectives, develop others, leverage diversity, read the mood of a group, discern political realities and a tendency to take an interest in the lives of others.
- d) **Handling relations**- To be able to manage and handle relations with others in a better way.

While going through the studies of emotional intelligence John D Mayer and Peter Salovey (2007) conducted a study on Mayer- Salovey Caruso emotional intelligence test. Here the emotional intelligence consists of 2 parts: emotion and intelligence, as the test authors most recently defined it; Emotions refer to the feeling- reactions a person has, often in response to a real or imagines relationship. Intelligence on the other hand refers to the ability to reason validity with or about something. In the case of emotional intelligence, emotions assist one's thinking. That is, emotional intelligence, as measured by Mayer- Salovey Caruso refers to the capacity to reason with emotions and emotional signals, and to the capacity of emotion to enhance thought.

Emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to identify and manage emotions, can be a strong predictor of loneliness (Zysberg, 2011). Positive response to emotions is important in protecting us from the undesirable feeling of loneliness. This means that a person with high emotional intelligence is less prone to become lonely.

Loneliness is the inability to find meaning in one's life or it is an unpleasant emotional response to perceived isolation. According to Daniel Russel(1996) loneliness is a negative and distressing emotional state, that arises from a discrepancy between one's desired and achieved levels of social connectedness. The bodies of lonely people are markedly different from the bodies of non- lonely people because loneliness can leads to many problems such as chronic high blood pressure, reduced immunity, inflammation, poor sleep etc.

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John T Cacioppo and Louise C Hawkley (2009) conducted a study on loneliness and discussed individual differences in the propensity for loneliness. A sizeable body of research indicates that sociodemographic factors, social roles, quantity and quality of social contact, health and dispositions contribute to individual differences in feelings of loneliness. Loneliness used to be characterized as an aversive state with no redeeming features, and as a state barely different from general negativity or depressed mood. The evocation of loneliness disrupts executive functioning, increases vascular resistance, and decrease the celebrity of sleep. Loneliness not only disrupts social relationships; it also leads to increased depressive symptomatology and increases organismic wear and tear.

Emotional intelligence and loneliness are two components which are closely linked in one's life. Parul Joshi and TK Kang (2015) conducted a study on impact of perceived loneliness on emotional intelligence among rural and urban adolescents. Perceived loneliness scale developed by Jha was used to assess the incident and extent of loneliness among adolescents. The results revealed that there is non- significant correlation between dimensions of emotional intelligence and loneliness among rural males and urban adolescents and significant correlation between dimensions of emotional intelligence and loneliness among rural females. Linear regression revealed that the feeling of loneliness was negatively affecting the aspects of emotional intelligence among rural and urban adolescents.

Emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of loneliness and also, they are inversely proportional to each other. Emotional intelligence is the ability of handling emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships and loneliness is an unpleasant emotional response to perceived isolation. So, a person with low emotional intelligence may develop loneliness in difficult situation.

### ***Objectives***

1. To find out the significant gender difference in emotional intelligence among young adults during lockdown period.
2. To find out the significant gender difference in loneliness among young adults during lockdown period.
3. To find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and loneliness among young adults during lockdown period.

### ***Hypotheses***

- H1: There will be a significant gender difference in emotional intelligence among young adults during lockdown period.
- H2: There will be a significant difference in loneliness among young adults during lockdown period.
- H3: There will be a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and loneliness among young adults during lockdown period.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Participants***

The research participants of the study were young adults in India during lockdown period. This was a quantitative method and was administered to 60 participants (30 males, 30 females). Convenient sampling technique was used to draw samples from the population.

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All the participants chosen for the study were fluent with English language so as to facilitate easy comprehension of questionnaire.

### *Measures*

The measures used in the study were emotional intelligence and loneliness. Emotional intelligence scale was developed by Dr. Arun Kumar Sigh and Dr. Shruti Narain in 2014. The scale consists of 31 “yes” or “no” questions and the reliability for the items were 0.86. The concurrent validity was found to be 0.86, which was significant at 0.01 level. The answers of those items which were marked as “yes” given a score of 1. If it was “no” it was marked as 0. The items 13, 17, 20 and 21 had negative scoring.

Loneliness is a scale used to measure one’s subjective feelings of loneliness or social isolation and was developed by Daniel Russel in 1996. The scale consists of 20 items and this is a 4 point scale ranging from 0 to 3 and is highly reliable in terms of internal consistency (coefficient alpha ranging from 0.89 to 0.94). Convergent validity for the scale was indicated by significant correlations with other measures of loneliness. The scoring was like the options often rated as 3, sometimes rated as 2, rarely rated as 1 and never was rated as 0.

### *Procedure*

Informed consent was obtained and confidentially assured to the participants before commencement. The data forms were administered by Google forms.

### *Statistical analysis*

The data obtained from research participants were analyzed using different statistical techniques by using IBM SPSS version 20. Pearsons product moment correlation was used to assess the relationship between variables under the study. Independent ‘t’ test was used to assess the significant gender difference.

## **RESULT**

### *Preliminary Analysis*

Preliminary analysis includes central measures of psychological variables emotional intelligence and loneliness.

*Table 1: Mean and SD*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Emotional intelligence	60	18.70	10.556
Loneliness	60	25.42	4.358

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the study variables. It is depicted that the mean and SD of emotional intelligence are 18.70 and 10.556 respectively. The mean and SD of loneliness are 25.42 and 4.35 respectively.

### *Major Analysis*

The major analysis consists of independent ‘t’ test, product moment correlation and regression analysis.

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**Table 2: Independent sample 't' test with regard to gender.**

Variables	gender	Mean	SD	Df	t- value
Emotional intelligence	Males (30)	17.90	10.902	58	-0.5
	Females (30)	19.50	10.322		
Loneliness	Males (30)	25.87	4.216	58	0.7
	Females (30)	24.97	4.522		

Table 2 shows the t test on gender difference among emotional intelligence and loneliness. It revealed that emotional intelligence and loneliness did not show any significant gender difference among young adults during lock down period. So, the hypothesis which states, there is a significant gender difference in emotional intelligence and loneliness (H1 and H2) is rejected.

**Table 3: Correlation between emotional intelligence and loneliness.**

	Emotional intelligence	loneliness
Emotional intelligence	1	
loneliness	-0.537**	1

*\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed).*

Tables 3 shows the product moment correlation between study variables. It depicted that emotional intelligence and loneliness has a moderate negative correlation with high significance ( $r = -0.537, p < 0.01$ ).

Thus, the hypothesis H3 is accepted.

From these results, it can be concluded that the gender difference in an independent variable for emotional intelligence and loneliness. Also, when emotional intelligence increases loneliness will decrease because from the result it can be revealed that emotional intelligence and loneliness is moderately negatively correlated.

## **DISCUSSION**

The aim of the study was to find the relationship between emotional intelligence and loneliness among young adults during lockdown period. This chapter includes the description of the findings from the statistical analysis.

The result showed that, emotional intelligence and loneliness were independent to gender difference among young adults during this lockdown period. Studies reveal that males have high emotional intelligence than females. Shumails Shehzad and Nasir Mahmood had conducted a study on gender differences in emotional intelligence of university teachers in 2013. The study aimed to explore the university teacher's emotional intelligence level with regard to their gender. Here the result showed that males are emotionally stable and cool than females.

As we know generally males are emotionally stable than females but now in this lockdown situation both males and females are equal in the case of emotional intelligence because both are able to manage their emotional state and able to solve their problems. Likewise, because of the absence of gender difference in emotional intelligence there is no gender difference in

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loneliness also. The reason maybe they have high emotional intelligence to overcome their loneliness.

Another result showed that there is a negative moderate relationship between emotional intelligence and loneliness which means when emotional intelligence increases loneliness will decrease. A person with high emotional intelligence or high ability to regulate their behavior and control their emotional state can wipe out the unpleasant feeling of loneliness from their life. The young adults in this lockdown period are trying to do some extra creative activities like craft work, cooking experiments, stitching, gardening, invention of something creative and useful, making some new decisions in life etc to become productive and active in this deadly period. So, they can enhance their emotional intelligence and can make their environment fully positive and pleasant. That is why the result indicates no gender difference in loneliness among young adults. Hasan Yilmaz, Erdal Hamarta, Coskun Arslan and M Deniz(2013) had conducted a study on “An investigation of loneliness, self-esteem and emotional intelligence skills in university students”. The purpose of the study was to determine the correlation between loneliness, self- esteem and emotional intelligence skills. The result indicates that loneliness is negatively correlated with self-esteem and emotional intelligence skills.

### **CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND LIMITATIONS**

In the light of obtained results, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence and loneliness are negatively moderately related with each other. Also, gender differences have no impact on emotional intelligence and loneliness. To increase emotional intelligence, young adults have to work productively in this lockdown period. Otherwise loneliness will occur and it may lead to depression. We can make a positive pleasant environment in our life by doing creative activities like inventing something useful, cooking experiments, craft works or stitching, decorating our houses, decrease watching sad news about COVID-19, making some good decisions and the like. This will enhance our emotional state and will make us able to overcome loneliness.

Only future research will clarify the many questions around assessing and enhancing emotional intelligence and loneliness. This study is limited by a relatively small sample size and the mood states of participants. So, these limitations can be considered in further research and also different components of emotional intelligence and loneliness may be included in the study.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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