

## Perceived Loneliness and Personality among Only Children: A Correlational Research

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### ABSTRACT

The main aim of this current research was to assess the relationship between Perceived loneliness and Personality of Only children. For this purpose, 52 only children aged 18 to 35 were selected. The tools used were Perceived Loneliness Scale (PLS) developed by Praveen Kumar Jha in 1997 and The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) 60 item scale developed by Paul T. Costa Jr. and Robert R. McCrae in 1989. The results found that the majority of only children were with high levels of perceived loneliness. It also shows that the personality dimension Neuroticism is highly related to perceived loneliness. Meanwhile, the personality dimension Extraversion has negative relationship with the perceived loneliness. Therefore, this research highlights a better understanding of perceived loneliness and personality of only children.

**Keywords:** *Perceived Loneliness, Personality, Only Children*

Being an only child may lead to more attention from parents, the absence of siblings could impact the variety of social interactions, potentially leading to the feelings of loneliness. Perceived Loneliness is the subjective experience of feeling alone or isolated, regardless of one's actual social connections. It can be influenced by various factors, including social interactions, relationships, and individual perceptions. Chronic loneliness is associated with adverse mental and physical health outcomes, highlighting the significance of addressing this subjective experience. Research suggests that the quality of parent-child relationships and the availability of supportive friendships are vital in shaping the perceived loneliness of only child. Emphasizing social skills development and creating opportunities for social engagement can contribute to a more fulfilling social life for only child, reducing the likelihood of experiencing loneliness.

Personality refers to enduring characteristics and behavior that comprise a person's unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities and emotional patterns. It further includes behavioral characteristics, both inherent and acquired, that distinguish one person from another and that can be observed in people's relations to the environment and to the social group. It is the characteristic way of thinking, feeling and

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behaving. Personality embraces moods, attitudes and opinions and is most clearly expressed in interactions with other people.

*“Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his/her characteristics behavior and thought” -Gordon Allport (1961)*

Only child often possesses a unique set of characteristics shaped by their singular upbringing. The personality of only child can vary widely, but some common traits include independence, mature demeanor, strong self-esteem, self-reliance, and a comfort with solitude. They may also exhibit a tendency to be mature and responsible, as they often receive more individual attention from their parents. However, it's essential to recognize that personality is influenced by various factors, and individuals can differ greatly regardless of their birth order.

Only children were found to be more egocentric when compared to children with siblings (Jiao S., et al., 1986). Growing up without siblings, only child often become adept at entertaining themselves and are comfortable with solitude. Their close relationships with parents may foster a strong sense of responsibility and a preference for adult conversations. It is crucial to remember that personality is shaped by various factors, and individual differences exist within the groups.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Objectives:**

- To assess the level of perceived loneliness among only children.
- To determine the personality of only children.
- To examine the relationship between perceived loneliness and personality dimensions of only children.

#### **Hypotheses:**

- H<sub>0</sub>1: There will be no statistically significant relationship between perceived loneliness and personality Openness of only children.
- H<sub>0</sub>2: There will be no statistically significant relationship between perceived loneliness and personality Extroversion of only children.
- H<sub>1</sub>1: There will be a statistically significant relationship between perceived loneliness and personality Conscientiousness of only children.
- H<sub>1</sub>2: There will be a statistically significant relationship between perceived loneliness and personality Agreeableness of only children.
- H<sub>1</sub>3: There will be a statistically significant relationship between perceived loneliness and personality Neuroticism of only children.

#### **Sample:**

The sample of this research comprises of 52 only children in their families within the age range from 18 to 35 years. The data was collected from in and around Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. Purposive sampling method was used to collect the samples for this research.

#### **Tools:**

- **Perceived Loneliness Scale (PLS):** The Perceived Loneliness Scale is a widely used measure for loneliness developed by Dr. Praveen Kumar Jha. It is a uni-dimensional

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self-report research tool which gives a holistic estimate of loneliness of an individual in a five point Likert format. The test-retest reliability of this scale was found to be .84 and .82 respectively. It also holds content, predictive and concurrent validity. Hence, the PLS is a reliable and valid tool for assessing loneliness.

- **NEO FFI Personality Inventory:** The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) is a concise personality assessment tool derived from the longer NEO Personality Inventory- Revised (NEO-PI-R). It measures five major dimensions of personality, known as the “Big Five” personality traits. The NEO-FFI consists of 60 items, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .68 to .86. The test retest reliability was found to be .75 and .85. This scale has a strong construct, convergent, discriminant and criterion-related validity.

### RESULTS

*Table I: The frequency distribution of the sample for the Level of Perceived loneliness of only children.*

N (52)	Perceived loneliness (%)
Low	0
Moderate	44
High	55

*Table II: The frequency distribution of the sample for the dimensions of personality of only children.*

N (52)	Neuroticism (%)	Extraversion (%)	Openness (%)	Agreeableness (%)	Conscientiousness (%)
Very Low	0	0	0	25	9
Low	0	3	21	36	56
Average	34	85	69	25	27
High	37	10	6	6	4
Very High	29	2	4	8	4

*Table III: Mean, Standard Deviation, r-value and Level of Significance of Perceived Loneliness and Personality Openness.*

Perceived Loneliness	N	Mean	SD	r- value	Level of Significance
Personality-Openness	52	47.75	7.673	.133	.312

The table III shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between Perceived loneliness and Personality dimension of Openness (.133). This means that, the level of openness is not influenced by the level of perceived loneliness among only children. Hence, the hypothesis H<sub>01</sub> is accepted in Perceived loneliness and Personality Openness to Experience.

*Table IV: Mean, Standard Deviation, r- value and Level of Significance of Perceived Loneliness and Personality Extraversion.*

Perceived Loneliness	N	Mean	SD	r- value	Level of Significance
Personality-Extraversion	52	52.50	7.010	-.249	.056

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The table IV shows that there will be a negative relationship between Perceived loneliness and Personality dimension of Extraversion (-.249), which is not statistically significant. This means that, if the personality trait Extraversion of an individual increases, the level of perceived loneliness decreases and vice versa. A research by Kao (2012) found that Loneliness have significant negative relationship with the personality trait Extraversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. Hence, the hypothesis H<sub>01</sub> is rejected in Perceived loneliness and Personality Extraversion as there exist a negative relationship between the two.

**Table V: Mean, Standard Deviation, r- value and Level of Significance of Perceived Loneliness and Personality Conscientiousness.**

Perceived Loneliness	N	Mean	SD	r- value	Level of Significance
Personality-Conscientiousness	52	43.10	8.925	-.146	.267

The table V shows that there will be no statistically significant relationship between Perceived loneliness and Personality Conscientiousness (.267), among only children, which is not significant at any levels. Hence, the hypothesis H<sub>11</sub> is rejected in Perceived loneliness and Personality Conscientiousness.

**Table VI: Mean, Standard Deviation, r- value and Level of Significance of Perceived Loneliness and Personality Agreeableness.**

Perceived Loneliness	N	Mean	SD	r- value	Level of Significance
Personality-Agreeableness	52	40.62	10.958	-.332**	.010

*\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The table shows that there will be a moderate negative relationship between Perceived loneliness and Personality dimension of Agreeableness (-.332), which is significant at the 0.05 level. This means that, Individuals who have scored higher in agreeableness tends to have lower levels of loneliness. Hence, the hypothesis H<sub>12</sub> is rejected in Perceived loneliness and Personality Agreeableness.

**Table VII: Mean, Standard Deviation, r- value and Level of Significance of Perceived Loneliness and Personality Neuroticism.**

Perceived Loneliness	N	Mean	SD	r- value	Level of Significance
Personality-Neuroticism	52	58.58	7.454	.573**	.000

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

The table V shows that there will be a strong positive relationship between Perceived loneliness and Personality dimension of Neuroticism (.573\*\*), which is highly significant. This means that, in only children, the absence of siblings may lead to heightened perception of loneliness despite social environment. Atak (2009), in his research on “The association between Big five personality traits and loneliness among Turkish emerging adults” concluded that, Neuroticism is positively correlated with loneliness. Hence, the hypothesis H<sub>13</sub> is accepted in Perceived loneliness and Personality Neuroticism.

## DISCUSSION

This research aims to assess the level of perceived loneliness of only children and to evaluate the personality of only children. Liu et al., (2019) suggests that, only children may experience higher levels of loneliness due to the absence of sibling companionship, which can limit early socialization opportunities.

The correlation between perceived loneliness and personality traits in only children has been a topic of interest in psychological research. Zhao et al., (2003) noted a tendency for higher introversion and sensitivity among only children, potentially due to fewer opportunities for peer negotiation and sibling rivalry experiences. While specific correlation values can vary depending on the research, this research shows that higher levels of neuroticism are associated with increased perceived loneliness. Simultaneously, only children who scored higher in Extraversion showed lower levels of perceived loneliness.

## CONCLUSION

- The findings showed that majority of the only children had higher levels of Perceived loneliness.
- Majority of the only children had higher levels of Neuroticism and average levels of Extraversion and Openness.
- Only children also showed lower levels of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.
- There was no statistically significant relationship between Perceived loneliness with Openness and Conscientiousness among only children.
- There was a negative relationship between Perceived loneliness and Extraversion among only children.
- There was a moderate negative relationship between Perceived loneliness and Agreeableness among only children.
- Only children showed a strong positive relationship between Perceived loneliness and Neuroticism.

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

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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