

Research Paper

## A Study of Correlation Between Life Orientation, Feelings of Depression and Loneliness Among Young Adults Staying Away from Home

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### ABSTRACT

Staying away from home accompanies not just challenges to cater to but a plethora of emotions as well. This study focuses on navigating through those emotions in correlation with the well-being of an individual. Considering the challenges to be conquered, the problems to be solved, and the changes to survive, the two factors/ variables, feelings of depression and loneliness, are reckoned with to study their correlation with life orientation. The need of this present correlational study is to understand the interrelation of the factors, and how the two factors, feelings of depression and loneliness affect the life orientation or vice versa in an individual, his daily life routine. This study mainly focuses on the population of young adults living away from home in consideration of their various reasons, lifestyles and the problems they face. The current study consists of a sample size of 62 young adults living away from home. The LOT-R, CES-D, and Loneliness Inventory scales were used to administer the individuals and the data was analyzed using Pearsons' Correlation method. This further resulted in (-0.393) low correlation between life orientation and loneliness, (-0.407) moderate correlation between life orientation and depression, and (+0.725) high correlation between loneliness and depression.

**Keywords:** *Living Away from Home, Life Orientation, Depression, Loneliness, Young Adults*

In today's era, *young adults* strive hard to survive and make their place in this profound world of competition; hence, many young adults move away from home for various reasons such as higher studies, job purposes, to make a living, to be independent, etc. This further may lead to the individuals going through numerous physical and psychological problems as they try to fit in, cater to all the requirements of the people around them as well as themselves, and keep up with everyday activities. In consideration of the challenges to be conquered, the problems to be solved, and the changes to survive, the two factors/ variables, feelings of depression and loneliness, are reckoned with in order to study their correlation with *life orientation*.

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### **Depression**

According to WHO (World Health Organization)-*Depression* can be defined as a common mental disorder that involves a depressed mood or loss of pleasure or interest in day-to-day activities. (World Health Organization: WHO & World Health Organization: WHO, 2023, p. 1)

There are many different types of depression, a few caused due to various events in life, and a few caused because of chemical changes in the brain. The different types of depression are listed below (Bruce, 2023)

1. *Major Depression*: a mental condition that is characterized by a persistently depressed mood and long-term loss of pleasure or interest in life.
2. *Persistent Depressive Disorder*: depression that lasts for 2 years or longer is known as persistent depressive disorder. This term is used to describe two conditions previously known as dysthymia (low-grade persistent depression) and chronic major depression.
3. *Bipolar Disorder*: also called "manic depression," has mood episodes that range from extremes of high energy with an "up" mood to low "depressive" periods
4. *Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)*: a period of major depression that most often happens during the winter months, when the days grow short, and you get less and less sunlight. It typically goes away in the spring and summer.
5. *Psychotic Depression*: has the symptoms of major depression along with "psychotic" symptoms, such as hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia.
6. *Peripartum (Postpartum) Depression*: observed in women who have major depression in the weeks and months after childbirth.
7. *Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)*: Women with PMDD have depression and other symptoms at the start of their period apart from the usual symptoms that occur during periods.
8. *Situational' Depression*: having a depressed mood when you're having trouble managing a stressful event in your life, such as a death in your family, a divorce, or losing your job. It is also called "stress response syndrome."
9. *Atypical Depression*: It is considered to be a "specifier" that describes a pattern of depressive symptoms.
10. *Treatment Resistant Depression*: this type includes exploring multiple treatments for depression as improvement from one treatment is not to be seen.

A depressed mood or feelings of depression show symptoms such as feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness, angry outbursts, irritability or frustration, even over small matters, loss of interest or pleasure in most or all normal activities, such as sex, hobbies or sports, sleep disturbances, including insomnia or sleeping too much, tiredness and lack of energy, so even small tasks take extra effort, reduced appetite and weight loss or increased cravings for food and weight gain, anxiety, agitation, or restlessness, slowed thinking, speaking, or body movements, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, fixating on past failures or self-blame, trouble thinking, concentrating, making decisions and remembering things. (*Depression (Major Depressive Disorder) - Symptoms and Causes - Mayo Clinic, 2022*)

We can account for enormous amounts of causes for feelings of depression, especially for those living away from home such as changes in the body's balance of hormones and its levels, inherited traits, changes in the function and effect of neurotransmitters and how they

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interact with neurocircuits involved in maintaining mood stability, biological differences, early childhood trauma, substance use, stressful and chaotic events, homesickness, etc. (Higuera, 2023)

### ***Loneliness***

Another main factor that can be defined as the state of distress or discomfort that results when one perceives a gap between one's desires for social connection and actual experiences of it. (Psychology Today, 2019)

There are majorly 4 types of loneliness:

1. *Emotional Loneliness*: here, people are seen to be struggling to improve things and track down the exact cause of their social isolation.
2. *Situational Loneliness*: it usually occurs because of a situation where, making connections or developing friendships is difficult.
3. *Chronic Loneliness*: a lonely feeling that becomes extremely distressing and continues for a long period.
4. *Social Loneliness*: experienced by people who feel shy or awkward when communicating socially or have low self-esteem (Loneliness: Symptoms, Causes, Types, Effects and How to Cope, n.d.).

The symptoms of loneliness include feeling empty and sad particularly when one is left alone (Raypole, 2019). It also extends to feeling lack of companionship, feeling like nobody understands them, feeling alone even when in crowd and don't feel like socializing, they feel down and stuck in your head, the body feels off, spending most time on social media and slipping of one's health habits (Erickson, 2024). Furthermore, chronic loneliness leads to worsening of these symptoms such as inability to focus, sleeping issues, decreased energy, feeling foggy, depressed and low appetite, misuse of substance, physically low with body pains and aches, feeling sick more frequently, desiring physical warmth, desire to binge watch and spend more time on social media, anxiousness and restlessness and feelings of self-doubt, hopelessness or worthlessness (Fletcher, 2022)

These two factors, *feelings of depression* and *loneliness* are also associated with high risks of heart disease, blood pressure strokes, substance abuse, high mortality rates, and other various physical illnesses and problems.

These factors can be treated well when diagnosed early and taken care of by various prevention methods. There are also other multiple ways to treat such as; avoiding depressants, spending quality time with people you love being around and care about, getting quality sleep, engaging yourself in different energizing and fun activities, putting yourself out and engaging in social events, maintaining a healthy diet, enrolling for cognitive behavioral therapy, etc.

In a 2019 study a sample of 30 students who scored high on depression and suicidal tendencies were administered for life orientation. After which they were exposed to an eight-week programme of mindfulness based cognitive behaviour therapy, followed by a post assessment on the same measures. The pre and post test results revealed a significant enhancement in life satisfaction and life orientation as well as a reduction in depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation. This study hence concluded that enhancement in life orientation brings about a significant reduction in depressive symptoms.

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An experimental study of 2013 administered 17 students in test group and 17 students in control group for loneliness and life orientation. In which a psychological counselling in test group programme was applied. The findings of this study suggest that there was a significant difference in the pre and post analysis in the test group, the psychological programme post-test suggested increasing of optimism points and decreasing of loneliness points.

Through these references it is seen that life orientation affects the two factors, feelings of depression and loneliness significantly and vice versa. In order to understand more about the affects it is essential to understand the major variable 'Life orientation' thoroughly. Hence,

### ***Life Orientation***

*Life orientation* can be defined as an important construct in the studies of interpreting one's personality and has been described as the positive evaluation of life and a balance between positive and negative affection (Sadeghi et al., 2018b)

As an overall approach, life orientation is all about the relationship between oneself and society. Majorly focusing on the different aspects of personal growth such as physical, motor, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and social growth. It also aids in causing balanced communication between people and plays a major role in improving the quality of life. It is shown by the experimental scientists that taking an optimistic approach rather than a pessimist orientation towards life helps one in aspects such as emotional adjustment, physical health and the well-being to be increased. It is generally believed by the researchers that positive life orientation/ optimism strengthens social relationships which then aids as an important factor for decreasing stress. (Sadeghi et al., 2018)

Looking into Positive life orientation specifically, it is said to be a concept that is complex and has been defined in various ways (Peterson, 2000). Positive Life Orientation has been defined as an inclination to selectively focus attention on the positive side in any situation and thereafter to interpret reality accordingly. It is said to be closely related to optimism, positive affect, positive emotions and emotional well-being in one's life (Eloranta et al., 2012).

Researchers in their studies have established the connection between the three concepts, feelings of depression, loneliness, life orientation and how they link to each other. In a study that was conducted on 'the relationship between living alone, sense of belonging, and depressive symptoms among older men: the moderating role of sexual orientation' collected samples of 169 Australian gay men aged 65 to 93 years and 187 Australian heterosexual men aged 65 to 94 years. This study of 2018 concluded stating the result as older men who live alone are at increased risk of depressive symptoms directly and indirectly via lower levels of sense of belonging (McLaren, 2018).

In the same year another study was conducted on 'the effect of loneliness on depression: A meta-analysis was conducted on a sampling group of 40,068 individuals which resulted in stating that loneliness could be a significant variable affecting depression (Erzen & Çikrikci, 2018).

In the year 2020, another study was conducted on 'Fear of Negative Evaluation, Loneliness and Life Orientation of Never married men and women' this study sampled 100 males and 100 females which resulted indicating that there was a significant positive relationship

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between fear of negative evaluation and loneliness and a significant negative relationship between fear of negative evaluation and life orientation optimism (Yasmin et al., 2020). These few research studies on different concepts suggest that the three variables can be interrelated to one another to further study on.

The need of this present correlational study is to establish the presence of the factors, and further on to examine and understand the interrelation of the factors, how the two factors, feelings of depression and loneliness effects the life orientation or vice versa in an individual, his daily life routine. This study mainly focuses on the population of young adults living away from home in consideration of their various reasons, lifestyles and the problems they face.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

1) A study was conducted by Mara Gkioka (2024) on 53 patients of 18+ years with LV (low vision) meeting the WHO criteria. This study was conducted between May 2019 and December 2021. The variables taken into consideration were daily functionality, life orientation, depression and visual acuity. Using the quantitative, cross-sectional study method, it consisted of two assessments, the visual clinical assessment and the psychological assessment using the depression and life orientation scale. Furthermore, this study resulted in a significant negative correlation between daily functionality and depression, to the contrary of a positive correlation between daily functionality and visual activity.

2) Narges Tankamani (2019) conducted a study on 240 graduate students (144 female and 96 male) from the Imam International Khomeini in Qazvin. This study used a random cluster sampling method to respond to questionnaires of the variables considered, which included life orientation, stress, depression and anxiety. This resulted in a significant difference between types of life orientation with a magnitude of stress, depression, and anxiety. On the other hand, students with pessimistic orientation, have more stress, depression, and anxiety. In conclusion, with increasing optimism, students are less magnitude stressed, depressed, and anxious.

3) Egitim ve Bilim (2010) conducted a study on a sample size 427 students (214 females and 213 males) at Mersin University ranging from 17-33 years of age. This study considered loneliness, body image, academic achievement level and grade, faculty, gender and age as the variables. After the analysis, the results concluded that the greater the body image scores if the students, the greater the scores of life orientation where females scored greater than men on life orientation. And as the grade increased life orientation of the students decreased. Faculty, age and academic achievement did not predict the life orientation.

4) Rabia Karim, Mahwesh Arooj Naz (2017) conducted a study taking into consideration life orientation, negative evaluation and loneliness on a sample size of 90 women irrespective of age with burn, cancer and serious dermatological problems. This study used the survey method, and the results stated that life orientation, fear of negative evaluation and loneliness have a significant high relationship with each other. Further findings of the study suggested women with cancer have high life orientation and low fear of negative evaluation and loneliness while both women with burn and serious dermatological issues have low life orientation and high fear of negative evaluation and loneliness.

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5) Ahmet Caglar Ozdogan (2021) studied on subjective well-being and social and emotional loneliness with the meaning and purpose of life. It used a sample size of 477 university students, studying at the faculty of education in which 307 were females and 170 were males with the age of 18-33 years. This study used the correlational and path analyses method and concluded that there are significant relationships between the variables of subjective well-being, social and emotional loneliness and meaning and purpose of life. And the path analyses revealed that social and emotional loneliness significantly predicted subjective well-being through the meaning and purpose of life.

6) Ewa Kupcewicz (2022) studied on loneliness and life orientation with self-efficacy with a sample size of 894 students from six Polish universities using the diagnostic survey method. The analyses result in a high score on self-efficacy and a low score on the life orientation indicating that the respondents were pessimistic. The mediation analyses revealed that self-efficacy plays a partial mediatory role in correlations between dispositional optimism and loneliness, and social and emotional loneliness.

7) Rukuye Aylaz (2012) conducted a study on 913 elderly people aged 60+ registered at six Family Healthcare Centers (FHCs) in Malatya. This study considered the variables as depression and loneliness and used the correlational method for the analyses. This study resulted in finding a significant positive correlation between depression and loneliness among the elderly people.

8) Yasin Demir, Mustafa Kutlu (2016) conducted a study on 452 (241 female, 211 male) Firat university students in Turkey in consideration with the variables as loneliness and depression through internet addiction. The data was collected and analyzed with correlation analysis, regression, hierarchical regression analysis and Sobel Z test. According to the correlation analysis, the results stated a positive relation among loneliness, depression and internet addiction. The further findings of the study demonstrate a partial role of internet addiction in relation with depression and loneliness.

9) Timothy Mathews (2016) studied the association of social isolation and loneliness as well as their relationship with depression. The data collected for this study were samples of a birth cohort of 1116 same sex twin pairs born in England and Wales in 1994 and 1995, aged 18 of wave Environmental Risk Longitudinal Twin Study. Regression analyses and twin study method was used. The results concluded that social isolation and loneliness were moderately correlated, and both were associated with depression. Additionally, the further findings showed that loneliness was more associated with depression.

**NOTE:** the above studies do not correspond to the inclusion criteria of staying away from home as not many studies were available in inclusion of all the requirements for this study. Hence this study looks forward to provide results exclusively to this criterion with the available relevant studies.

### **METHODOLOGY**

**Problem:** to study the correlation between life orientation, feelings of depression and loneliness among young adults staying away from home.

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### **Research Questions:**

1. Is there any correlation between life orientation and feelings of depression among young adults staying away from home?
2. Is there any correlation between life orientation and loneliness among young adults staying away from home?
3. Is there any correlation between loneliness and feelings of depression among young adults staying away from home?

**Objective:** to understand the impact of living away from home on young adults and the effect of feelings of depression and loneliness on their life orientation.

### **Operational Definition:**

- *Life orientation*- an important construct in interpreting one's personality and is described as the positive evaluation of life and a balance between positive and negative affection (Sadeghi et al., 2018b)
- *Feelings of depression*- subjective feelings characterized by loss of interest in any activities, depressed mood (not clinically tested).
- *Loneliness*- the state of distress or discomfort that results when one perceives a gap between one's desires for social connection and actual experiences of it. (Psychology Today, 2019)
- *Young adults staying away from home*- Individuals who live away from their homes for various reasons such as education, job, etc

### **Hypothesis:**

1. There is no significant difference between life orientation and feelings of depression among young adults staying away from home.
2. There is no significant difference between life orientation and loneliness among young adults staying away from home.
3. There is no significant difference between loneliness and feelings of depression among young adults staying away from home.

### **Variables**

*Independent Variable:* Staying away from home

*Dependent Variable:*

1. Life orientation
2. Feelings of Depression
3. Loneliness

*Intervening variable:* Gender

*Control variable:* Age

### **Research Design:**

The study adopts a correlational research design where in life orientation, feelings of depression and loneliness factors are studied to know if there is any correlation.

### **Participants:**

- *Sample Size:* A sample of 62 was chosen. Both men and women within the age group of 18-35 years who are living away from home were considered for the study.

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- *Sampling technique:* Sample was selected through the method of purposive sampling.
- *Inclusion Criteria:* Individuals who are in the age group of 18-35 were selected.

Individuals who stay away from their home were only included in the study.

**Procedure:** The data for this study was collected using online mode. The forms were circulated all over to individuals within the age criteria of 18-35 years and with no geographical boundaries. The form created was inclusive of 3 scales namely, the LOT – R, Loneliness Inventory and the CES - D scale. Hence, the responses of 62 individuals were recorded and analysed to find the correlation between the variables considered.

### **Tools:**

1. Life Orientation Scale (LOT- R) by Michael Scheier, Charles Carver, and Michael Bridges
2. Loneliness inventory by Uma Meenakshi R
3. Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)

### **Statistical Analysis:**

IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS version 20 was used to conduct all the statistical computations.

### **Ethical Considerations:**

All the relevant research ethics prescribed by the American Psychological Association was followed (APA, 2010). Informed consent was taken from all the participants and they were briefed about the study prior to the process of collecting data. Non-invasive procedure of experiment design was employed and no participants were physically or psychologically harmed during the course of the study. Anonymity of the participants was maintained and also confidentiality. The responses were used only for the study purpose.

## **RESULTS**

A sample of 62 participants were considered for the current study. The data obtained by the participants on the three scales were first subjected to normality test to check if the samples were normally distributed. The normality test revealed the following results.

**Table 1: Test of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
<b>LO</b>	.121	62	.024	.986	62	.678
<b>LONELINESS</b>	.066	62	.200*	.980	62	.404
<b>DEPRESSION</b>	.115	62	.040	.953	62	.018

Table 1, Shapiro- Wilk test of normality test reveals that the sample data collected is normally distributed considering Life Orientation and Loneliness. However, Depression was not normally distributed. As Depression is a clinical disease, it is appropriate and suitable for in this data to not be normally distributed. Hence, a parameter test of Pearson's correlation test was run on SPSS to analyse the data.

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*Table 2 shows the correlation between the three variables.*

		LO	Loneliness	Depression
<b>LO</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	-.393**	-.407**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.001
<b>Loneliness</b>	Pearson Correlation	-.393**	1	.725**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		.000
<b>Depression</b>	Pearson Correlation	-.407**	.725**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	

- Low correlation is seen between Life Orientation and Loneliness
- Moderate correlation exists between Life Orientation and Depression
- High correlation is found between Loneliness and Depression

### DISCUSSION

Table 2 consists of the interpretation of the data through Pearsons' statistical correlational method.

The variables, Life Orientation and Loneliness have obtained a coefficient of  $-0.393$  at 0.01 level of significance. This is interpreted as 'Low' correlation. The negative sign here suggests that higher the Life Orientation, lower is the level of Loneliness. This result corresponds to the results of the study of Ahmet Caglar Ozdogan (2021) where emotional loneliness significantly predicted the subjective well-being and in the study of Ewa Kupcewicz (2022), where self-efficacy was said to play a mediating role in correlating optimism and loneliness.

Further on the table, also focuses on Life Orientation and Depression obtaining a coefficient score of  $-0.407$  at 0.01 level of significance which suggests that, there is 'Moderate/substantial' correlation existing between the two variables, with the negative sign indicating higher the life orientation lower is the level of depression and vice versa. The study of Narges Tankamani (2019) provided in the review of literature also shows similar results.

The third set of variables in the above table, show that a coefficient score of  $+0.725$  at 0.01 level of significance. This interprets that, Loneliness and Depression hence show 'High' level of correlation. The positive sign here suggests, increasing level of loneliness resulting in increase of depression. The studies of Rukuye Aylaz (2012), Yasin Demir, Mustafa Kutlu (2016) and Timothy Mathews (2016) provided in the review of literature also suggest a significant positive correlation between loneliness and depression.

### CONCLUSIONS

1. The present study saw a significant low correlation between Life orientation and Loneliness variables there by not validating the first hypothesis.
2. There is a significant moderate correlation between Life orientation and Feelings of Depression variables there by rejecting the second hypothesis.
3. There is a significant High correlation between Feelings of depression and Loneliness and there by rejecting the third hypothesis.

#### Limitations

The current study focused on the three variables- Life Orientation, feelings of Depression and Loneliness among young adults who are staying away from home. Certain intervening

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variables were controlled though, there were other variables which could have had an impact on the three variables that were studied. Living arrangements of the participants, Neighbourhood, friends and guardians' available in case of need, emotional attachment with the family etc are various other factors that could affect the variable at study, which are not considered. Considering these factors can yield better understanding of the impact of staying away from home on life orientation of an individual.

### **Future Directions**

1. Considering a larger sample size can reveal a clear relationship between the three variables.
2. Considering clinical population who have been diagnosed with depression who are staying away from their family may give a clear understanding of the relationship between depression and life orientation of those individuals.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

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