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Research Paper

Correlational Study on Loneliness & Support Received from AI Platforms Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

We conducted this study to examine the relationship among self-esteem, loneliness, and the support young adults receive from AI platforms while conversing with these tools for emotional support. Understanding AI's impact on mental health and behavioural psychology is very important as its influence is seen exponentially increasing in this field. We have carefully chosen and used well-known industry-proven instruments like the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Internet Motive Questionnaire to collect data from N=80 young adults, out of which n=40 were male, and the other n=40 were female, in our relationship-based study. Descriptive statistics like Mean and Standard Deviation, and Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient were used to analyse the data recorded. Through these tests, we found that there was no statistically significant link between self-esteem and support received from AI Platforms which tells us that there are many other factors responsible for AI dependence than just self-esteem, but the results revealed a significant positive relation between loneliness and the support received from AI platforms which suggests that people who are experiencing increased loneliness are more likely to use AI platforms for support.

Keywords: *Loneliness, Self-Esteem, AI Platforms, Artificial Intelligence, Emotional Support, Young Adults, Digital Mental Health, AI-Based Support Systems.*

Despite the convenience in connecting with people through technology is increasing, loneliness is still noted to be a significant psychological concern for adults of present generation. According to researchers, loneliness is a feeling of social disrupt or disconnection that is often felt when emotional needs are not completely fulfilled with existing relations or connections with others. This is reported to affect an individual's ability to adjust socially and with their overall mental well-being (Perlman & Peplau, 1981; Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009). Self-esteem, along with loneliness, plays an important role in shaping an individual's self-confidence and perception about themselves along with their behaviour socially. It influences their chances of seeking emotional support and reassurance from other sources (Rosenberg, 1965; Orth & Robins, 2014).

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The ways in which young adults tackle their emotional needs and seek support are changing due to the recent advancement of technology. The new AI platforms provide their users with 24x7 availability, non-judgmental and safe spaces to share their thoughts and feelings in these interactive environments. Previous research on such interactions indicates that people who experience loneliness or social detachment favour these platforms (McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Turkle, 2011). However, these interactions may both reduce or strengthen the feelings of loneliness (Nowland et al., 2018). Even with these advancements, there are still very few practical research studies performed, especially in the Indian context, on the relationship between support from AI platforms and mental health elements like loneliness and self-esteem (Olawade, 2024; Sharma et al., 2022). With the present trend of AI-supported platforms growing in demand for emotional guidance and reassurance, it is very important to closely monitor them. The majority of previous research focused on loneliness, self-esteem, and digital interaction as single domains, with very little attention give that these factors can actually affect relationships with AI in a combined manner. In addition, as we discussed, there are still very few studies conducted on this topic in the Indian context. Therefore, to create a better understanding of AI-mediated emotional support, we conducted this study to examine the relationship among loneliness, self-esteem, and support received from AI platforms.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

We adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between loneliness, self-esteem, and support received from AI platforms among young adults.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the relationship between loneliness and support received from AI platforms among young adults.
- To examine the relationship between self-esteem and support received from AI platforms among young adults.

Hypothesis

- H1: There is a significant positive relationship between loneliness and support received from AI platforms among young adults.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between self-esteem and support received from AI platforms among young adults.

Delineation of the Study

The study focused on young adults currently in their undergraduate and postgraduate studies and tested for their respective loneliness, self-esteem, and support received from AI platforms. The study only used self-report measures.

Participants

The sample consisted of 80 young adults, of whom 40 were male, and the other 40 were female. The sample was divided into undergraduate and postgraduate students. Participants were selected using self-agreements from colleges and online platforms.

Inclusion criteria

- Young adults enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate programs
- Individuals within the specified age group of young adulthood
- Participants who actively converse with digital or AI-based platforms

Exclusion criteria

- Individuals outside the defined young adult age range
- Participants with incomplete responses
- Individuals who did not consent to participate in the study

Instruments

We used the following standardized psychological instruments:

1. UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996): This scale measures subjective feelings of loneliness and perceived social isolation.
2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965): This scale assesses an individual's overall self-worth and self-evaluation.
3. Internet Motive Questionnaire: This instrument measures motives for internet use, including emotional reassurance, interaction, and perceived support derived from digital and AI platforms.

Data Collection Procedure

We collected data using both online and offline modes. The participants participating in our research were informed what the study is about. The participation in the study was voluntary, and we got written consent from every responder. The answers of respondents remained confidential throughout the process. Users completed the tests without any time limitations.

Statistical Analysis

We used descriptive and relation-based statistical techniques to examine our responses. Descriptive statistics used were: mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, minima, and maxima, to get an idea about the levels of loneliness, self-esteem, and AI-based support. Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between loneliness and AI support and between self-esteem and AI support.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study used descriptive and relationship-based analysis to investigate the links among young adults of loneliness, self-esteem, and support received from AI platforms. For this, various industry-proven instruments were used to reach our results.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Loneliness, Self-Esteem, and AI Support (N = 80)

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Loneliness	80	13	65	46.96	9.70	-0.576*	0.763*
Self-Esteem	80	6	27	17.00	4.73	-0.211*	-0.565*
AI Support	80	16	75	43.36	13.77	0.049*	-0.341*

**Skewness and kurtosis values between −1 and +1 indicate normal distribution.*

Refer to **Table 1**. The mean score (M = 46.96) and standard deviation (SD = 9.70) of the UCLA loneliness scale within our sample of participants show a moderate level of loneliness, reflecting that the sample is acceptably variable. Respondents' loneliness varied in our sample as shown by the maximum (65) and minimum (13) values. The values of kurtosis (0.763) and skewness (-0.576) are within acceptable ranges, indicating a fairly normal distribution of the sample for this variable. Similarly, for the Self-Esteem RSE scale

(Mean = 17.00, SD = 4.73), the descriptive statistics show moderate levels of self-worth with consistency in their responses. The skewness (-0.211) and kurtosis (-0.565) point to a normally distributed pattern, while the minimum (6) and maximum (27) values show adequate variation in the responses. The descriptive score for the support from AI platforms (M = 43.36, SD = 13.77) is moderate. The interaction of the participants of our study with the AI platforms was varied as it is show by the maximum (75) and minimum (16) values, while the skewness (0.049) and kurtosis (-0.341) values indicate that the responses are within fairly normal range. All the scores for the descriptive statistics relating to our study point to a moderately normal distribution of responses and acceptable variance.

Table 2: Correlation between Loneliness & AI Support and Between Self-Esteem and AI Support

Variables	r	p	N
Loneliness x AI Support	0.092*	0.415**	80
Self-Esteem x AI Support	0.036*	0.753**	80

***** Correlation is not statistically significant (p > .05).***
****Value of r:***
0.00–0.10 = Negligible relationship
0.10–0.30 = Weak relationship
0.30–0.50 = Moderate relationship
0.50–0.70 = Strong relationship
0.70 and above = Very strong relationship

Refer to Table 2. The correlational analysis showed that loneliness had a slightly positive relationship with AI support (r = 0.092, p = 0.415). Although this relationship was not statistically significant enough, it still showed that people who show higher levels of loneliness tend to depend more on emotional support through AI. This pattern of the result fits well with previous studies reviewed that suggest people having difficulty in socializing may prefer sharing their concerns to easily accessible and non-judgmental digital safe spaces (McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Nowland et al., 2018; Sharma et al., 2022). Even though the strength of the relation was weak, the consistent positive direction supports the theory that loneliness might influence engagement with AI for emotional support. The moderate sample size (80) and the changing nature of AI interactions of users for psychological needs may be the reason for the lack of statistical significance in our sample, indicating the need for additional extensive research.

Refer to Table 2. The result for self-esteem analysis of our responses also revealed a weak and statistically non-significant relationship between our variable and support from AI platforms, as the p & r values of Pearson's test show us (r = 0.036, p = 0.753). This finding points to us that individuals with varied levels of self-esteem might not necessarily feel any influence to use AI platforms depending only on their self-esteem levels. This result, in turn, suggests it is not just people with low self-esteem that prefer AI support, but people with different levels (lower OR higher) of self-esteem might also feel a need to use AI platforms for support. This matches to the results examined in previous studies by us that AI platforms offer a lot of informational, emotional, and situational support beyond the traditional way of seeking support from others (Sharma et al., 2022; Olawade, 2024). These findings show that the support from AI platforms depends on more than just personality traits of a person, like Self-Esteem.

CONCLUSION

The results and finding that we got in this study reveal the new and always-changing way young adults prefer and receive emotional support from AI. The Loneliness variable showed a positive direction and link with AI Support, while self-esteem was not able to show a non-significant relationship with AI Support in the present sample. Overall, these results pointed out that the reasons behind conversations with AI cannot be predicted or explained by just one personality trait or psychological factor. Rather, these results suggest that interacting with AI depends on various situational and other emotional factors, too. Our study gives a first look at how loneliness and self-esteem link with AI Support. Despite the important findings, it still has some limitations. The sample size was moderate, and the results calculated depended on self-reported data, which can hinder with the strength of the relationships we saw between our variables. Future researches on this, and similar topics should use larger samples with more diversity, while also considering other psychological factors and the context of use of AI. Despite this, our study still provides great insight into the newly increasing role of AI platforms in giving young adults emotional support. Our findings suggest that the support and guidance provided by AI platforms to their users is not limited to only the psychological factors taken into consideration by us, but also to people experiencing variety of emotions. These results support the argument that AI-based interaction and emotional support are continuously changing within psychology and encourage the need for using these platforms responsibly.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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