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## Study of Perceived Loneliness Among Secondary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the perceived loneliness among secondary school students of Gurdaspur district. Adolescence is a sensitive stage marked by emotional, social, academic, and psychological changes. Due to academic pressure, social media influence, and family expectations, many students experience loneliness and emotional imbalance, which may lead to depression and poor academic performance. This study examined the level of perceived loneliness among male and female secondary school students. A descriptive survey method was employed. A sample of 200 students from government and private secondary schools of Gurdaspur district was selected through random sampling, with 50 males and 50 females from each category. Standardized tools - Perceived Loneliness Scale by Parveen Kumar Jha (1997) were used. Data were analyzed using Mean, SD and t-test. Findings revealed a significant difference in perceived loneliness between males and females, with males reporting higher loneliness.

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## INTRODUCTION



Education is pivotal not only for cognitive growth but also for emotional development of adolescents. Along with academic achievement, psychological well-being is crucial for holistic growth. In the current era, students in districts like Gurdaspur face academic competition, social media pressure, nuclear family structures, and reduced outdoor interaction, leading to emotional stress and imbalance.

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage involving rapid physical, emotional, social, and psychological changes. During this phase, students actively seek peer acceptance, friendship, and emotional bonding. When these social needs remain unmet, students may experience perceived loneliness - a subjective feeling of emotional emptiness and lack of belongingness, even when surrounded by people.

Depression is another major psychological concern among adolescents, characterized by persistent sadness, hopelessness, low self-esteem, loss of interest, and reduced concentration. It adversely affects academic performance, social relationships, and overall personality.

Several studies indicate that loneliness and depression are closely linked. Students who feel socially isolated often develop negative thought patterns, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. In the context of Gurdaspur, where rapid urbanization and academic stress are rising, it becomes essential to study the relationship between perceived loneliness and depression among secondary school students to suggest timely interventions.

### **Perceived Loneliness**

(a) **Perceived:** The very first thought or sense one feel after seeing a particular thing, the thoughts that one make in own mind after sensing a thing.

(b) **Loneliness:** Loneliness is the position of being unaccompanied and sensation of sadness about it. Loneliness is a condition that is widely distributed and severely distressing. Loneliness is a throbbing understanding that makes you feel not linked any more to your dear ones.

**According to Tillich (1959)** the word - isolation displays the magnificence of staying by you, whereas the word -loneliness.

**According to Perlman & Peplau (1981)** loneliness is a discomfoting psychological feeling that an individual goes through when his/her social relationships lack is some important quantitative or qualitative aspect.



**Perlman (1982)** drafted a definition of loneliness as - the obnoxious occurrence that occurs when a person's cluster of societal associations is lacking in some vital method, either quantitatively or qualitatively

**According to James J. Ponzetti (1990)** defines loneliness as the difference in an individual's existing social relationships and what he or she views as ideal that amounts to a psychologically uncomfortable situation.

**According to Pinquart and Sorensen (2001)** loneliness is depicted as a upsetting sentiment that escort the insight that one 's societal desires are not being quenched by the amount or particularly the quality of one 's social relationships.

**Arnett (2007)** Loneliness is considered to be a common psychological problem caused by a lack of socialization competence.

**Rokach (2012)** Loneliness is considered to be an unwanted and distressing experience that is a part of one's personality and social experience.

**According to Pantic (2014)** grave operators of the Internet and social media sites are inclined to possess extra approach towards depression and loneliness.

### **Causes of Perceived Loneliness**

1. **Social isolation:** lack of social connections and relationships.
2. **Mental health issues:** depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions.
3. **Trauma:** experiences of trauma, such as bullying or abuse.
4. **Life transitions:** significant life changes, such as moving to a new home or starting a new job.

### **Consequences of Perceived Loneliness**

1. **Mental health problems:** depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions.
2. **Physical health problems:** cardiovascular disease, obesity, and other physical health conditions.
3. **Cognitive impairment:** decreased cognitive function and increased risk of dementia.
4. **Social isolation:** further social isolation and disconnection from others.

### **Theories of Perceived Loneliness**

Several theories have been proposed to explain the concept of perceived loneliness. These include

#### **1. Attachment Theory**



This theory proposes that perceived loneliness is related to insecure attachment styles, such as anxious or avoidant attachment (Bowlby, 1969).

## 2. Social Support Theory

This theory suggests that perceived loneliness is related to a lack of social support or connection (Cohen et al., 2015).

## 3. Cognitive-Behavioral Theory

This theory proposes that perceived loneliness is related to negative thought patterns and behaviors, such as social withdrawal or avoidance (Beck, 1977).

### Factors Affecting Perceived Loneliness:

- **Psychological and Mental Health**

Poor mental health, particularly depression and anxiety, is a major predictor and outcome of loneliness. High levels of neuroticism and low self-esteem increase vulnerability.

- **Social and Interpersonal Connections**

Fewer close social contacts, lack of social support, and low social connectedness are direct causes. The perception of a lack of belonging is more significant than objective isolation.

- **Life Transitions and Circumstances**

Significant changes such as retirement, bereavement, or moving to a new area can trigger loneliness. Living alone, particularly for those with low quality of life, increases risk.

- **Physical Health and Disability**

Long-term illness, reduced mobility, and poor physical health are strong contributors to feeling isolated.

- **Biological/Genetic Factors**

Chronic loneliness is linked to increased stress responses, such as elevated cortisol levels, affecting brain regions responsible for emotion.

- **Environmental and Structural Factors**

Lower socio-economic status, high debt, and living in disadvantaged neighborhoods contribute to loneliness.



- **Protective Factors (Lowering Risk)**

Strong community belonging, good sleep, being married, and participating in community activities help mitigate loneliness

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

**Russell (1996)** this study developed the UCLA Loneliness Scale, which has been widely used to measure perceived loneliness among adolescents. The study used a survey design to collect data from a large sample of participants. The sample consisted of 353 undergraduate students and 191 community residents. The study identified a two-factor structure for the ULS, consisting of "Social Isolation" and "Emotional Isolation" subscales. The study found that loneliness was associated with lower social support, higher depression, and higher anxiety. By using a combination of survey design, self-report measures, and statistical analyses, Russell et al. (1996) were able to develop and validate the UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS), providing a reliable and valid measure of loneliness.

**Rokasch (2002)** examined the influence of cultural background on the causes of adolescent loneliness. Youth adolescents formed the participant pool. A questionnaire was used which was composed of five subscales mainly personal inadequacy, developing deficiency, unfulfilling intimate relationships, significant separations, and social marginality. Results revealed a mixed pattern of differences between the two cultures. The youth had lower mean scores on personal inadequacies and developmental deficits but scored higher on social marginality

**Asher (2003)** examined that loneliness is a normative experience and found that there is an urgent need to be concerned about children's relationship that is chronically lonely in school. Research indicated that loneliness in children is influenced by the conditions that how well they are accepted by their peers, whether they are overtly victimized or bullied by friends.

**Dunn (2007)** examined the relationship and perceived strong competence, peer acceptance, and loneliness in school children. It was found that loneliness in childhood and adolescence is associated with many psychological and emotional problems. Lonely children are not physically active and fit. They experience more tension and anxiety than their non-lonely friends. There is a negative impact of loneliness on a child's well-being

**Deniz (2010)** organized investigation on undue internet use and loneliness among high educate pupils. The alliance connecting loneliness and extreme internet engagement in high schooling scholars was evaluated.



167 student samples were admitted a feedback form for some demographic queries and UCLA for understanding and calculating their loneliness rank. The consequences displayed that the school learners who found to have great hours deployed on the internet had more of loneliness height than the normal operators.

**Bhardwaj and Ashok (2015)** investigated on Mobile Phone obsession and Loneliness among adolescents of Mumbai city in Maharashtra. The sample was chosen by means of random sampling Method. 100 adolescents (50 Boys and 50 Girls) were elected of age 13-17 yrs who ranked lofty on mobile phone addiction scale. Consequences showed that mobile phone addiction was drastically connected with loneliness. In addition, no considerable sexual category differences were discovered in requisites of loneliness and mobile phone addiction.

**Singh, Khess, Mathew, Ali, Maruti (2020)** examined the loneliness, social anxiety, and social hold can be the reason behind extreme employment of internet addiction among college goers. The study was just a shot to demonstrate an association stuck between loneliness, social anxiety, social support, and internet addiction among college goers. Cross-sectional study intend was taken to decide on trial done on four departments (History, Philosophy, Hindi, and English) of Ranchi University by implying simple random sampling A sum total of 100 graduates were there and well-versed yes were chosen for additional evaluation. Socio demographic datasheet, the revised UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) Loneliness Scale, the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS), the Multidimensional Scale for Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) were administered. Study was conducted with the consent of scientific and ethics committee of Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi. Statistics was scrutinized by deploying Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Highest height of loneliness (926), social anxiety in 21%, social phobia in 22%, and stern internet addiction was there in 15% of the part takers. Loneliness had a noteworthy optimistic link with social anxiety.

**Bala and Verma (2023)** Studied the perceived loneliness among Indian students studying abroad. The sample of 100 Indian students who are pursuing their education at foreign universities. The data was further stratified into male and female as well as graduate and postgraduate students. The study mainly aimed at finding out the differences in perceived loneliness among Indian students studying abroad with respect to their gender and level of education. The result depicts that to infer that there is no significant difference in the perceived loneliness among Indian students studying abroad with respect to their gender and level of education.



**Conti, Lanzara, Rosa, Muller and Porecelli (2023)** Psychological correlates of perceived loneliness in college students before and during the COVID-19 stay-at-home period: a longitudinal study. Sample of 177 psychology college students were recruited. The results revealed that the loneliness, students with high levels of loneliness during lockdown showed worsening psychological distress and alexithymic traits over time. Suffering from depressive symptoms before COVID-19 and the aggravation of alexithymic traits independently predicted 41% of perceived loneliness during the COVID-19 outbreak.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

### **STUDY OF PERCEIVED LONELINESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

#### **OBJECTIVE**

1. To study the significant difference between perceived loneliness among male and female secondary school students.

#### **HYPOTHESIS**

1. There exist no significant difference between perceived loneliness of male and female secondary school students.

#### **RESEARCH METHOD**

**DESIGN:** The present study falls under descriptive survey research, as it aims to describe and analyze the relationship between perceived loneliness among secondary school students.

**SAMPLE:** Random sampling technique was used. The sample consisted of 200 students of classes 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> from government (N=100) and private (N=100) secondary schools of Gurdaspur district. The sample included 50 males and 50 females from each type of school.

#### **TOOLS USED:**

1. Perceived Loneliness Scale by Parveen Kumar Jha (1997)

**PROCEDURE:** After seeking permission from school authorities, the scales were administered to the selected students during school hours. Instructions were explained clearly. Data were collected, scored as per manuals, and subjected to statistical analysis.

#### **STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES:**



1. Mean, median and Standard Deviation were calculated for descriptive analysis.
2. t-test was applied to find significant differences between groups.

## DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

### 1. SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PERCEIVED LONELINESS OF MALE AND FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

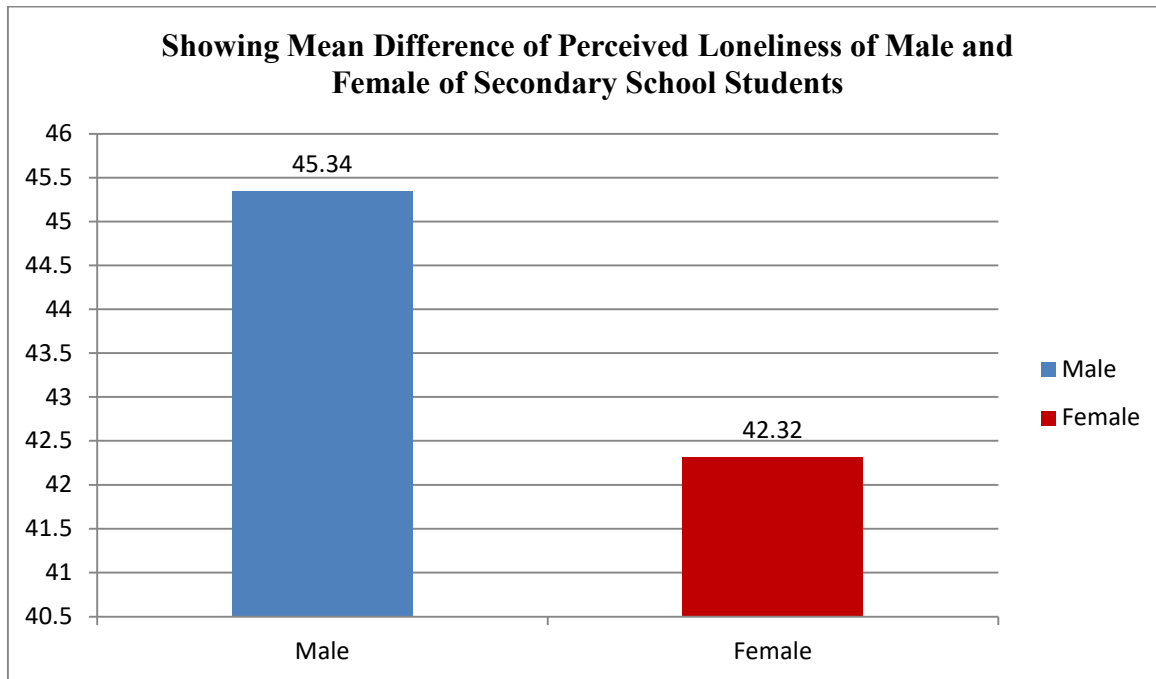
**TABLE 1.1 Comparison of Perceived Loneliness of Male and Female of Secondary School Students (N=200)**

S.No.	Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD.	SE <sub>D</sub>	Df	t-ratio	Level of Significance
1	Perceived Loneliness	Male	100	45.34	5.6	0.74	198	4.08	Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level
2		Female	100	42.32	4.9				

Table 1.1 shows that the mean score of males (45.34) is higher than females (42.32). The calculated t-value is 4.08, which is significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 level. Hence, Hypothesis 1 is rejected. There is a significant difference in perceived loneliness between male and female secondary school students, with males experiencing greater loneliness.

The findings of the study clearly indicate that gender has a significant influence on perceived loneliness among secondary school students. Male students were found to have higher loneliness scores as compared to female students. This difference may be due to variations in emotional expression, social adjustment, peer interaction, and support systems available to students. Female students may receive greater emotional and social support from friends and family members, which helps them manage feelings of loneliness more effectively. In contrast, male students may feel hesitation in sharing their emotions openly, which can increase feelings of isolation and loneliness. The significant t-value further confirms that the difference between the two groups is statistically meaningful and not due to chance factors. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in perceived loneliness between male and female secondary school students stands rejected. The result emphasizes the importance of providing emotional counselling, guidance services, and supportive school environments to reduce loneliness among adolescents, particularly among male students.

**Figure 1.1**



### **FINDING OF THE STUDY**

1. There is significant difference between perceived loneliness of male and female secondary school students. Male students reported higher levels of loneliness than female students.

### **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

1. Students experiencing high loneliness and depression show reduced motivation, poor concentration, and low academic achievement, leading to absenteeism.
2. Emotional loneliness is directly linked with academic burnout and stress among adolescents in Gurdaspur schools.
3. Lonely students may engage in excessive internet use or social media as compensation, which can further increase isolation and depressive symptoms.
4. Lack of peer support reduces students' willingness to participate in classroom activities and cope with academic challenges.
5. Schools must establish counseling cells, peer mentoring, life-skills programs, and teacher-sensitization workshops to create a supportive environment and improve student mental health.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**



1. The study may be conducted on other psychological variables like anxiety, self-esteem, or academic stress.
2. A comparative study may be conducted at primary, secondary, and senior secondary levels.
3. The study may be extended to college and university students of Punjab.
4. Research may be conducted with a larger sample covering rural and urban areas of Punjab.
5. Intervention-based studies may be conducted to test the effect of counseling on loneliness and depression.

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