

Loneliness and Attributional Style in Relation to Culture and Age

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Abstract

Sometimes, a sense of loneliness increases so much that it overcomes an adolescent in such a way that they even can attempt suicide. The psychologists found that the subjects, who tried suicide often, have a long history of disturbed family relationships. Loneliness is by definition of negative emotional state, but as many workers in the field have made abundantly clear, being alone is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for feeling lonely. The term attribution is studied in two senses. Investigators and theorists in this area of psychology have been concerned both with the process by which individuals explain or attribute events and the process by which they make judgments about the stable properties or attributes of individuals, objects and situations (Wolman, 1977). According to Weiner (1972) attribution is a process by which an individual interprets events as caused by a particular part of relatively stable environment. The question whether attributions are situation specific or share cross situational generally, is an important issue in attribution research for theoretical and practical reasons.

1. Introduction

Concept Of Loneliness

Loneliness is one of the important social and psychological problems prevailing in our society rapidly. Everyone is found complaining lonely whether a child, adult or mature. Though it is related with various factors, which affect the individuals as well as society. Especially, loneliness is known as a complex phenomenon. The social psychologists have pointed out that loneliness may occur in any age, sex, culture class and country. An important form of stress during childhood is related to separation. It begins in early time of life when the child is left alone by the parents. A feeling of loneliness is very essential for a normal development of personality. Now a day everyone is found complaining lonely. The most critical impact of separation on loneliness feeling is related to the divorce of parents and may be related to the death of anyone of them. The problems of divorce are most important which should be studied seriously not only in India but in United States also due to the increasing highest divorce rate among western nations this rate is increasing day by day. The lack of a parent may be the result of abandonment or death. The impact is greatest when the loss is sudden and unexpected and when the children have more love for that lost parent.

Attribution and Its Features: - The attribution process was first described by social psychologist Heider (Trotter & Mc Connel, 1978). Especially, research on attribution phenomena became the most active area of social psychology in the 1970s as a result of studying the attributions that people make in order to understand and organize their worlds (Carroll and Frieze, 1983). From the very dawn of civilization people frequently attribute causes to their own behaviour as well as the behaviour of others. But the scientific investigation of attribution is a new phenomenon. Although the phenomenon of causality has been discussed by earlier eminent scholars, yet only after long time the research on attribution came into the mainstream of scientific psychology.

2. Review of Study

Culture

Culture also affects loneliness in many ways. In this context, Smith (1991), Shumarkar (1993) compared loneliness among Australian and Japanese. A high inverse correlation was found as Australians reported significantly less loneliness than Japanese. Simmons (1991) compared loneliness among Korean and American culture and found that Korean subjects were more lonely than American subjects. Rokach, Ami (1999), Kim Oksoo (1999) examined the influence of cultural background on individuals ability to cope with loneliness, participants were from three cultural background i.e., North American, South Asian and West Indian. Results suggest that North American subjects feels lonelier than the South Asian and West Indian subjects North American subjects had the lowest scores on the social support network factor. On the other hand, South Asian and West Indian subjects had highest scores on the social support network.

Age

Age is a main personal characteristic in all respects. There are general conclusions drawn by a number of researchers, that loneliness is more widespread in the younger age groups Blau, 1973; Dryer, 1974; Russell et. al., 1980; Goswic & Jones, 1982; Natale, 1986; Marcon, Goossens & Caes, 1987; Christians, 1989; Ostrov and Offer, 1978; Rubenstein & Shaver, 1989). It is striking that loneliness is more experiencing phenomenon in college students than others, because it has been found that with increasing age, there is also a steady decrease in the amount of thin spent with parents. Bragg, Diane and his associates (1993) concluded that older subjects were more loneliness than younger subjects.

3. Objectives of The Study

- To investigate the effect and culture on loneliness.
- To investigate the effect of age on loneliness.
- To the investigate the effect of between culture and age loneliness.

4. Hypotheses

1. There are no significant difference in the scores of loneliness of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh subjects.
2. There are no significant difference in the scores of loneliness of adult and late adult subjects.
3. There are no significant difference in loneliness of male and female subjects.

5. Methodology And Design

Psychologists seek to find relationship between independent and dependent variables M.C. Guigan (1969) P.G. A scientific method of findings this relationship between independent and dependent variables starts with a problem. Problems pose a question and a tentative answer to the question is called hypothesis. This hypothesis is advanced to give a direction to research work. Then experiment is planned and conducted to collect data with the help of some apparatus or tool. The data are then tabulated, analyzed and the results indicate the probability of the hypothesis being true (accepted) or false (rejected). After this the psychologists may be able to generalize his statements.

VARIABLES UNDER STUDY**Independent Variables**

1. The first independent variable - culture has three levels i.e., Hindu, Muslim and Sikh subjects.
2. The second independent variable - age has two levels i.e., adult and late adult subjects.

Dependent Variables

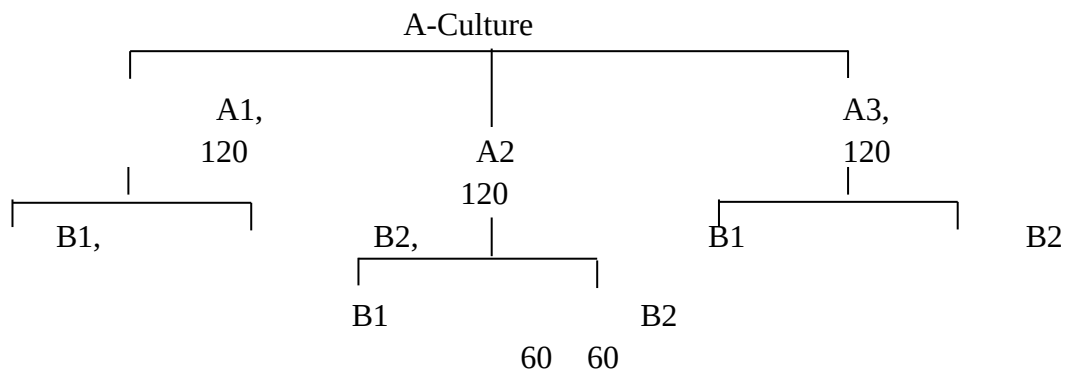
1. The first dependent variable loneliness.

2. The second dependent variable attribution style.

Table – 1

Variables	Levels	Symbols
1. Culture	Hindu	A
	Muslim	A1
	Sikh	A2
		A3
2. Age	Adult	B
	Late Adult	B1
		B2

2×2 Factorial Design



The statistical analysis that is most frequently applied to the factorial design is analysis of variance. Variance is merely the squares of the standard deviation, which indicates the nature of the distribution of the scores. The simplest application of analysis of variance would be testing the mean difference between two randomized groups.

Measuring Tools

The two tools have been used in the present investigation.

(1) **MULN SCALE**

(2) **MUAS SCALE**

To study the attribution style of the people supplementary scale named MUAS was also used.

Sample

Sample is a part of population which is taken as representative of the whole population. In our study the subjects who participated in the study were chosen from the school going students and teachers of Meerut and Baghpat region. The total random sample of 360 includes a number of subjects from schools.

Analysis of Data

Two way analysis of variance has been used to analyze data in the present study.

6. Results

The purpose of the present study has been to investigate the effect of two independent variable i.e. culture & age on loneliness. Results are obtained related to loneliness only. However, the attribution style (D.V.) has been dropped out in the present study.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique is applied in testing differences among two or more means

and its special merit in testing differences of all time means at the same time.

TABLE-2

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR LONELINESS SCORES

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean Squares	F value
A (Culture)	1479.11	2	739.56	16.40**
B (Age)	6.94	1	6.94	0.15
A×B (Culture × Age)	264.15	2	132.08	2.93

Main Effects

Effects of Culture

In the present investigation, first factor - culture is varied at three ways i.e., Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. We shall designate this factor as A and three levels by A1 corresponding to Hindu, A2 corresponding to Muslim and A3 corresponding to Sikh. The table of analysis of variance shows that F ratio for the first independent variable (16.40) clearly reveals that F ratio for culture is found to be highly significant at 0.01 level of confidence. This significant F value enables us to conclude that Hindu factor significantly affects loneliness. So, we reject the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in the scores of loneliness about Hindu, Muslim and Sikh subjects. It leads us to conclude that culture is an important factor in loneliness. In order to know as to Ss of which culture has maximum and which culture has minimum loneliness, means were calculated for both types of culture (given in table-2).

TABLE-3

INTER GROUP DIFFERENCES IN CULTURE

A	N	Total	Mean
A1 (Hindu)	120	8177	68.14
A2 (Muslim)	120	8241	68.68
A3 (Sikh)	120	7696	64.13

A glance at table reveals that mean loneliness scores for A, is 68.14, A2 is 68.68 and A3 is 64.13. It clearly indicate that there is a significant difference between Hindu and Sikh, Muslim and Sikh subjects, which does not support our hypothesis.

Effect of Age

An inspection of table of analysis of variance clearly reveals that F ratio for age of the subjects is not found to be significant ($F, 1, 336 = 0.15$ $P > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in scores of loneliness about adult and late adult subjects is accepted. On the basis of this non-significant F value, it can be asserted that subjects belonging to different categories of age do not differ in their loneliness. For comparison of these groups, means of loneliness scores for adult and late adult were calculated and obtained means values are given in table-3.

TABLE-4
INTER GROUP DIFFERENCE IN AGE

B	N	Total	Mean
B1 (Adult)	180	12082	67.12
B2 (Late Adult)	180	12082	66.84

The mean for B1 is 67.12 and the mean for B2 is 66.84 shows that adult subjects feel slightly higher loneliness as compared to late adult subjects. Therefore, it can be said that age is a less influential variance in determining the degree of loneliness.

Two Way Interaction

Culture and Age (AxB) Interaction

The summary table of ANOVA apparently shows that the mean squares for culture and age interaction is insignificant as the F value (2.93) less the value given in the statistical table. This insignificant interaction between culture and age also shows that these two independent variables do not dependent on each other. It can be noted that these both variables do not interact with each other in a significant way or they interact insignificantly. Thus, the hypothesis which we had made there will be no significant interaction in the loneliness scores between culture and age is accepted.

TABLE - 5
MEAN LONELINESS SCORES FOR THE INTERACTION EFFECTS OF
CULTURE AND AGE (AxB)

A	B					
	B1			B2		
	N	Total	Mean	N	Total	Mean
A1	60	4086	68.10	60	4091	68.18
A2	60	4072	67.87	60	4169	69.48
A3	60	3924	65.40	60	3772	62.87

Table shows that mean loneliness scores of late adult belongings to Muslim is highest and of adult belonging to Sikh is lowest. Although there are differences in different means of (AxB) but the same are not significant. Thus we may say that the age has no different effect on loneliness of Ss belonging to Hindu, Muslim and Sikh categories of culture.

7. Discussion and Interpretation

The most important part of a dissertation is the discussion and descriptive analysis of the investigation made by any psychologist. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to interpret the findings obtained in the present investigation in the light of the proposed hypotheses and relevant studies. The chapter has been divided into three parts.

Over the years, many psychologists and sociologists have offered theoretical remarks on loneliness. For did active purposes, we will classify these speculations into eight different categories. Psychodynamic, phenomenological, existential-humanistic, sociological, integrationist, cognitive, privacy and system theory.

Naturally there are many dimensions on which to compare explanations of loneliness. We will focus on three main issues. First, what is the nature of loneliness itself? It is a normal or abnormal condition? A

positive or a negative experience? Second, what is the cause of loneliness? Do they reside within the person or within the environment? Do they stem from contemporary or historical/developmental influences on behaviour? Third, and perhaps somewhat less important, on what evidence (i.e. case histories, systematic research, etc.) or intellectual traditions was the theory formulated?

Effects of Culture on Loneliness

The findings related to first independent variable - culture of subject clearly indicates that this variable has been found as an influential factor to affect the loneliness among the subjects used in the present study. The findings regarding this variable clearly reveal that Muslim subjects feel more loneliness in comparison to the Hindu and Sikhs. These findings are supported with the results obtained by many investigators such as Smith (1991), Schumaker (1993), Simmons (1991), Rokach, Ami (1999), Kim, Oksoo (1999), Hsu, Hailey & Range (1987). Now the question arise as to why one culture reported more loneliness in comparison to other culture. To answer this question, explanations can be advanced two theoretical views proposed by Rogers (1970, 1973) that loneliness as a manifestation of poor adjustment. The cause of loneliness lies within the individual, in a phenomenological discrepancy in one's concept. Other views proposed by Weiss (1973). His explanations of loneliness can be classified as interactionist. He sees that loneliness as a normal reaction, obviously he considers both internal and external causes of loneliness.

Since the Muslims are found to have more degree of loneliness in comparison to other subjects belonging to Hindu and Sikh cultural group. On the basis of the two approaches, it can be noted. In this context that due to poor adjustment Rogers (1970, 1973) and due to failure of social requirements by interactions Weiss (1973) Muslim are found lonelier in the present context.

Effect of Age on Loneliness

In regard to age of the subjects our finding is clear that the subjects used in the present study have not shown different degrees of loneliness. Thus, it can be said that age has not significant effect on loneliness. These findings have been supported by the results obtained by some investigators such as Blua, 1973; Dyer, 1974; Ostrove and Offer, 1978; Rubenstian and Shaver, 1980; Natale, 1986; Marcon, Goossens & Caes, 1987; Christians, 1989.

8. Suggestions For Further Research

The value of any social research has not only in what has been explored and how far it is socially useful but also as to the new vistas of research it opens up.

1. The culture of the subjects has presented some new information regarding loneliness. The researcher has explored the effect of three cultures i.e. Hindu, Muslim & Sikh. In this context, it may be suggested that apart from these above quoted cultural group the other cultural group i.e. Christian and Jain may be studied in future.

2. The findings related to the second variable is clear that two age groups, i.e., 20-25 years and 30-35 years have insignificant different on loneliness. It is therefore, suggested that these differential age groups may be further re-examined by choosing the greater number of the subjects.

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