

**TITLE : LONELINESS IN YOUNG  
COLLEGE WOMEN.**

**UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION  
MINOR RESEARCH SCHEME**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT ON 'LONELINESS IN YOUNG COLLEGE WOMEN' (2012)**

Loneliness appears to be a worldwide phenomenon as indicated by numerous studies conducted in various parts of Asia, Europe and North America. It is a common experience with emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions. Though loneliness is understood differently by different researchers, they all agree on three common components of loneliness. Firstly, loneliness does not stem merely from being socially isolated. It is subjective in nature. The second component of loneliness refers to a gap between an individual's desired and achieved levels of social relations. Lastly, loneliness is a painful experience. It can be intense and emotional in nature. The effects of loneliness can be harmful to an individual's wellbeing.

A large number of studies have shown that loneliness is accompanied by negative feelings including depression, anxiety, unhappiness and dissatisfaction associated with pessimism, self-blame and shyness. Physical or psychosomatic effects of loneliness are also seen among people who are lonely. They include sleep disturbances, headaches and nausea.

A review of the relevant literature indicates that loneliness can develop from a variety of predisposing and precipitating factors such as one's personality, situational characteristics, the quantity and quality of relationships, and the lack of social skills. Furthermore, perceptions of oneself, one's situation and social relationships, result in feelings of loneliness.

Culture and age are important determinants of loneliness. While loneliness may be a common occurrence in old age, it is not very common in young adulthood. However, of late it is observed that young adults are afflicted with loneliness. During youth, the developmental tasks involve establishing a network of meaningful relationships. If this network remains deficient in some ways, it may result in loneliness which is a strong cognitive and emotional reaction to having fewer meaningful relationships than desired.

The present study was conducted to explore the prevalence of loneliness and its psychological and somatic correlates in college going women between ages 18 and 23. The subject sample comprised 100 college going women in the aforementioned age range. The subjects were randomly selected from colleges of Mumbai District. A battery comprising the UCLA Scale of Loneliness version 3 (developed by Dan Russell, 1996), the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-R (developed by S.B.G. Eysenck and H.J. Eysenck), and the PGI health questionnaire N-1 (developed by Verma, Prasad & Wig) was administered to the subject sample.

The scores obtained on UCLA Loneliness Scale-III showed a mean score of 41.91, which is indicative of the difficulties experienced by young women in establishing satisfying social relationships. Four of them obtained a score of 60, which indicates severe loneliness.

There was a positive correlation between loneliness and psychological disturbances. Moreover, it was observed that the behavioral dimensions of neuroticism and psychoticism including high levels of negative affect such as depression and anxiety were positively correlated to loneliness. On the other hand, the correlation between extroversion and loneliness was significantly

negative. Extroversion refers to an outgoing, uninhibited sociable trait, and people with such a trait may have more satisfying relationships.

Neurotic illness often manifests itself through somatic complaints. The results obtained on PGI-N1 Health Questionnaire showed a significantly high positive correlation between women's experience of loneliness and the somatic symptoms or complaints they reported. The results further indicated that the experience of loneliness cuts across the selected age range and that it is significantly related to psychological and psychosomatic disturbances.

In sum, the results indicated that many young women attending college in Mumbai are experiencing certain difficulties in developing meaningful relationships despite suitable opportunities. They are vulnerable to the experience of loneliness. Therefore, a deeper probe into the phenomenon of loneliness, especially in this age range, is very essential. Knowledge of the exact nature and causes of loneliness may help develop positive strategies to improve the psychological well-being of young women in Mumbai and other places.

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