Loneliness among Emerging Adults: Influence of Social Media and Relationship

Satisfaction

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **"Loneliness among Emerging Adults: Influence of Social Media and Relationship Satisfaction"** has been carried out independently by Ms. Farha Memon under the guidance of Dr. Jigisha Gala , in partial fulfillment for the degree of Masters in Life Span Development from the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. This research is her original bonafide work carried out from April 2022 to May 2023.

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Ethical Compliance Certificate 2022-2023

This is to certify that Farha Memon's study titled, "Loneliness among Emerging Adults: Influence of Social Media and Relationship Satisfaction" has been approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee for Human Research (IECHR), Faculty of Family and Community Science, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. The study has been allotted the ethical approval number IECHR/FCSc/M.Sc./2022/51.

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Abstract

Emerging adulthood is marked by changes in social networks and increased loneliness. However, solitude is valued in Indian tradition for spiritual well-being and enlightenment. The increasing prevalence of social media in India and conflicting research findings on its relationship with loneliness highlight the need for understanding the complex interplay between social media, loneliness, and positive solitude during emerging adulthood to promote well-being and navigate this significant transitional period. Therefore, the objective of this study was to understand more about how loneliness is defined, experienced, assessed, and managed. A mixed-methods approach was used with (N=60) urban middle-class, college-going Muslim students, equally divided by gender, and stratified by their relationship status. Results found that emerging adults experienced more solitude than loneliness, and women reported higher levels of loneliness than men, but men in relationships felt more isolated than single men. Additionally, a negative correlation (-0.374) was found between loneliness and the influence of social media, suggesting that social media can be used for connection and entertainment. The qualitative study found that academic pressure and the nature of competition can increase loneliness among young adults in the stage of emerging adulthood. Loneliness is complex and influenced by a variety of factors, including culture and gender. Depending on how individuals view solitude, social media can either encourage self-awareness and independence or cause isolation and detachment. The findings from the study highlight the need for a holistic approach to well-being, including opportunities for positive solitude, healthy social relationships, and fulfilling careers to improve psychological health and address societal expectations about masculinity by promoting emotional expression and seeking help when needed.

Introduction

"Loneliness does not come from having no people around you, but from being unable to communicate the things that seem important to you."

~ Carl Jung

Loneliness is a pervasive problem that affects individuals of all ages and backgrounds worldwide. It is a subjective and multifaceted emotional response to social isolation or lack of social connection. It can be influenced by various factors and can vary in intensity and duration. The quality, rather than the quantity, of social connections is important in determining one's level of loneliness. People can feel lonely even when surrounded by others or when in relationships. However, emerging adults, who are typically defined as individuals between the ages of 18 and 25, are particularly vulnerable to experiencing loneliness. As this age group is characterized by exploration, identity formation, and the establishment of independence. However, loneliness may also be experienced during this period of personal growth. The prevalence of loneliness among young adults is high, with studies from different countries reporting similar findings.

Several studies have found that loneliness is common among emerging adults all around the world. According to an American Psychological Association (APA,2019) survey, emerging adults in the United States experience more loneliness than any other age group. Similarly, 30% of emerging adults in the United Kingdom reported feeling lonely regularly (Mental Health Foundation, 2018). According to Australian Psychological Society (2018) research, 18% of young adults in Australia state that they are lonely frequently. Loneliness can have a significant negative impact on the mental health and well-being of young adults. Loneliness has been associated with variety of negative mental health outcomes, such as an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and thoughts about suicide (Matthews et al., 2016).

Emerging adults who experience loneliness are more likely to influence their mental health, as well as a reduced feeling of self-worth, than those who have not experienced loneliness.

In 2004, India reported that 4.91 million people were lonely and alone in the country. (Bubna, 2020). According to a study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), 13% of Indian youngsters are frequently depressed, and eight percent are usually lonely. (CSDS et al., 2017). More emphasis has been given to Mental health problems in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments, healthcare systems, and communities are being asked to prioritize mental health care and assistance because it has emerged as a major public health issue. Loneliness has been impacted by the pandemic of COVID-19 in both positive and negative ways. On the one hand, social distance policies have contributed to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Although data on loneliness in India is limited compared to other countries, research indicates that loneliness is a significant problem among young adults in India (Shukla, 2020).

The solitude and being alone are highly valued in the Indian culture as they are believed to be crucial for intellectual well-being and enlightenment. Solitude is the state of intentionally withdrawing oneself from the typical routines and events of life, and it requires not only physical detachment but also mental withdrawal to reflect on oneself (Mishra et al., 2018). We have so many great inspirational songs and literature throughout India where the virtue-walking alone, even if it makes you alone, has been acclaimed for centuries. An example of this is the Bengali song, Ekla Cholo Re, which means "Walk Alone" in English. The song composed by Rabindranath Tagore encourages people to be strong and self-sufficient in the face of misfortune, and to continue their journey even if they must do it alone.

Being lonely or isolated is typically thought to have negative psychological and physical impacts. However, the Covid-19 pandemic brought to light how prolonged

lockdowns and isolation caused loneliness, with an increase in rates of depression and suicide while losing people of their dignity. On the other side, isolation also offered an opportunity for introspection, and if treated properly, being by oneself was also a rewarding experience. Jiddu Krishnamurti, for instance, considered that solitude may aid in achieving enlightenment by enabling one to achieve clarity and comprehension of one's ideas and feelings. (Krishnamurti, 1995).

Emerging adulthood is a transitional period in which individuals explore their identity and relationships, which can have a profound influence on their psychological well-being. Romantic relationships are critical milestones in the development of emerging adults and have substantial implications for their progress (Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Gala & Kapadia, 2013). These relationships are valued for emotional and social support, companionship, and intimacy among Indian college students. (Dennis, 2011). However, also, as technology and social media have developed, emerging adults are increasingly glued to their phones, which nowadays causes pressures like "fear of missing out." Social media and the absence of meaningful interactions have an impact on how college-going students experience loneliness in this current era of digitalization, modernization, and increased competitiveness. Social media may produce and sustain new stressors, such as "fear of missing out" and frequent social media use may thus be considered asymptomatic of poorer mental health. The western idea of individualism places great emphasis on personal goals, which can cause emerging adults to be self-focused. Emerging adults, aged 18 to 25, leave their comfort zone and enter the world of reality, where they are exposed to a wide range of events. Even though university can be rigorous and keep students busy, there may be instances when they feel lonely. If we study the experiences of loneliness among emerging adults in India in which emerging adults have this notion of self as well as others, we may assume that social media use, relationships, and culture all have an impact on these individuals' experiences of

loneliness. Therefore, the objective of this study is to understand more about how loneliness

is defined, experienced, assessed, and managed.

Review of Literature

This chapter reviews literature that illustrates how emerging adults perceive loneliness and solitude. Additionally, it reviews studies that address the influence of social media and relationship satisfaction on how emerging adults experience loneliness.

Loneliness

Loneliness has been defined in a variety of ways. "*A state of solitude or being alone,*" according to one definition. *"Loneliness is not always about being alone,"* says another definition. Instead, "it is the perception of being alone and isolated that matters most" and is "a state of mind". "Inability to find meaning in one's life," "Feeling of negativity and unpleasantness," and "A subjective, negative feeling related to deficient social relationships"(Tiwari, 2013, p. 320). According to the evolutionary theory of loneliness (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018), negative thoughts and feelings of being alone are antecedent to feelings of loneliness, which leads to the search for connections. Long before that, the cognitive discrepancy approach (Peplau & Perlman, 1982) explained loneliness as a result of a presumed gap between existing relationships and the kind of interconnectedness we desire. The negative impact of it is so major and widespread that treating it as negative immunity may not be an exaggeration, especially when there is no way or alternative to deal with it. (Narain & Maheshwari, 2022).

Loneliness is researched in many academic fields, including psychiatry, psychology, and social work (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010; Mushtaq et al., 2014). It is one of the most rapidly growing psychological health issues in the modern era (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018; Rubin, 2017). Loneliness is a type of psychological distress caused by perceived differences in one's social connections (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1999).

Weiss (1973) differentiates between emotional loneliness and social isolation when defining loneliness as a common response from people who lack secure attachments. The

absence of close relationships causes emotional loneliness, which can make a person feel uneasy or constantly seek out company. When people are unable to locate their social network, where they e a part of a friendship group and share interests with others, they become socially isolated (Brakespear & Cachua, 2021).

Experiences of Loneliness among Emerging Adults

The Office for National Statistics, UK, Youth have been identified as a "hotspot" in loneliness research, with young adults reporting significantly higher rates of loneliness than older adults. (Narain & Maheshwari, 2022; The Office for National Statistic,2018). This could be due to several factors, including increased social media use, greater competition and comparison among peers, and the pressures of navigating the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The emerging adulthood phase is a period of significant transition in which individuals establish their independence for the first time and adapt to changes in their social networks (Lenz, 2001). Accomplishments such as the completion of high school, deciding to leave the parental home, entering the workforce, or pursuing university education, and establishing long-term romantic relationships all represent new challenges that, if not successfully navigated, can deprive individuals of social connection, and leave them feeling marginalized and cut off from those around them (Mathews et al.,2021). The transition from high school to college appears to be a difficult period in young adults' social life, since they typically leave their parents' homes and must create new social contacts while retaining old familial and peer relationships (Arnett, 2007). Young adults' challenges with these changes have been linked to losses in emotional well-being, such as higher levels of depressive feelings and increased feelings of loneliness (Stroebe et al., 2010). Studies conducted globally (Hernández & Amador, 2020) and in India (Narain, 2018) have indicated that loneliness has emerged as an outbreak, particularly among young emerging adults, with females reporting the highest rates.

There is a plethora of evidence to suggest that loneliness is universally felt but uniquely experienced (Gloria, 2021). In 2004, India confirmed that 4.91 million individuals were lonely and alone within the country (Bubna, 2020). More recent study done by the Centre for the study of Developing Societies (CSDS) reported that 12 percent of Indian youth often feel depressed and 8 percent reported feeling lonely quite frequently (CSDS et al., 2017). Reason for the high rates of loneliness among young adults may be since they are in a phase of transition where they are navigating relationships and are exposed to new technologies.

Solitude in India

Being alone versus being lonely are two distinct experiences. While loneliness is associated with several physical and psychological consequences, spending time with oneself is not hazardous and can even be beneficial (Sankaranarayanan, 2020). The history of India sheds light on the role of religion in early conceptions of mental health while also determining current daily customs. The ancient Indian tradition promotes solitude (Prabhu,2020). According to Indian tradition, "free time" or "being alone" is a human state luxury. It regards solitude as a prerequisite for spiritual well-being and enlightenment. Spiritual aspirants in the distant and recent past have absorbed the benefits of solitude. The Bhagawad Gita, for example, acknowledges that alone time is essential part of the human experience and necessary for liberation (Kala, 2018). Similarly, some people can convert isolation into a solitude escape known as Khalwa in Islam. Khalwa is the act of being apart from all humans, of being cut off from those with whom you normally associate, such as family, friends, and community, for a prolonged period. It is an intentional retreat from the outside world, a time for self-reflection and meditation.

Impact of Social Media

Social media has emerged as a vital means of communication that has shaped new ways of mobilizing and hooting and hollering public opinion. Social media, a set of online services that allows for two-way communication and content sharing, has become increasingly popular. It is so much a part of people's lives that if it is taken away, their roles may change (Nasir, Khatoon & Bhardwaj, 2018). Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) provided a definition of social networking sites as online platforms that allow users to create virtual profiles and share them with others. These profiles can be viewed by other users who have been added to the creator's list of friends. This list displays the user's online connections with others. The purpose of social networking sites is to facilitate communication and help people maintain relationships.

Social media use has been broadly accepted in people's daily lives across the world (Boulianne, 2015; Chou et al., 2009). According to Baker and Oswald (2010), individuals who are naturally shy and have difficulties with social interactions and support may find online social media platforms to be a welcoming environment. These platforms can provide a positive space for shy individuals to engage in social communication that they may not normally encounter in their daily lives. Facebook can improve the quality of relationships as it provides an easier and more accessible platform for communication. For those who struggle with social skills, Facebook offers a comfortable space to interact with others. By spending more time on social media, users can get to know each other better and experience increased social support (Baker & Oswald, 2010). Engaging with others online and receiving social support can help college students maintain their current relationships and improve their overall quality of life (Lui & Larose, 2008).

Social Media Usage

The Indian social media scene is a rapidly growing and influential domain for information exchange. The fact that almost all traditional media outlets have registered their presence on social networking websites demonstrates the growing importance of social media in India. The increasing affordability of smartphones and, as a result, mobile internet use, can be attributed to the increase in the number of social networking users in India. Gupta and Gupta (2015) indicated that Indians are highly involved in social media, with 88% of users sharing content on their social profiles and dedicating significant amounts of time to various social networking sites.

In this context, social media refers to applications that enable users to connect virtually with larger or smaller audiences (Meier & Reinecke,2020). When it comes to connecting with family, friends, and acquaintances, social media has been a lifesaver. It has made almost every aspect of life easier, no matter what. The platforms can be classified into several broad categories. They are broadly classified as browsing, interacting, and broadcasting. Social media is altering people's lifestyles and daily routines, as well as reshaping their well-being and spiritual fulfillment. Emerging adulthood, specifically the age range of 18-25, is devoted to the development of self-identity as well as the formation of an opinion about the world, and social media plays an important role in both.

Recent research has suggested that the degree of interaction should be regarded as a crucial element in defining social media usage (Kaye, 2021). Furthermore, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are frequently referred to as brands by users. While studies have frequently examined which brands of social media are most frequently used within a given population or context (Smith, 2021), it is reasonable to expect that using multiple brands of social media on a regular basis will be associated with a greater

total amount of time spent interacting with them, as well as a general preoccupation with

social media and "fear of missing out" (Shrum et al., 2022).

Social Media and Loneliness

Social media is omnipresent today, and it has altered how people communicate with

one another. Social media has grown tremendously over the last two decades, now

encompassing a wide range of websites and applications used by people of all ages all over

the world. According to (Olds & Schwartz, 2009), even though this generations has much

more devices and services that help people stay connected, loneliness in 21st century

America is at an all-time peak. Can online networking help to alleviate loneliness? Research

studies on the relationship between social media and loneliness have yielded conflicting

results. In terms of loneliness and mental health, it has been proposed that social media can

serve as a source of social connection and inclusion, thereby preventing or alleviating

loneliness (Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2003; Nowland et al., 2018; Thomas et al.,

2020). According to some studies, online communication via social media may increase

users' perceived social support and self-esteem while decreasing loneliness and depression

(Shaw & Gant, 2002) also online communication may have isolated individual users in real

life, leading to low well-being (Kim, Larose, & Peng, 2009). There is another perspective that

proposes social media can substitute for face-to-face social connections and contribute to the

creation of new stressors, like the fear of missing out (FOMO). According to recent research,

frequent social media use may be a sign of poorer mental health due to these factors. (Geirdal

et al., 2021; Hunt et al., 2018).

The question being raised is whether loneliness is the outcome of spending too much

time on social media, or if excessive social media use is a result of feeling lonely in the first

place. According to Schumacher and Morahan-Martin (2001), individuals who experience

feelings of loneliness and depression may find online communication to be more comfortable

and less awkward than face-to-face interactions. Social media can help these individuals satisfy their desire for social interaction and as a result, they may prefer to use social media for communication. For individuals who struggle with personality flaws, social media, and online communication can be desirable way to fulfil their socialization needs without facing their shortcomings. However, some individuals may spend excessive amounts of time on the internet, which could lead to a behavioral condition called "compulsive use" (Caplan, 2005, p.725). Because loneliness is more closely related to one's perception of the quality of their relationships than to the quantity of those relationships or the amount of time spent with others, people may experience loneliness despite being surrounded by friends or family (Hawkley, Burleson, Berntson, & Cacioppo, 2003; Masi, Chen, Hawkley, & Cacioppo, 2011; Peplau & Perlman, 1982). Although this connection has not yet been fully understood, some researchers think that the rise in loneliness among young adults is related to their use of screens and social media (Twenge et al., 2017).

Relationship Satisfaction and Loneliness

Humans have a fundamental need to engage in social interaction and build their network of relationships because they are social animals. Romantic relationships are a vital component of the daily social network for most adults. A fulfilling romantic relationship can increase partners' trust and happiness (Robles et al., 2014). When a relationship ends, there is also a significant increase in personal distress (Tashiro & Frazier, 2003). A crucial unit of measurement for measuring the calibre of a romantic relationship is romantic relationship satisfaction. A person's internal evaluation of their partner's positive emotions and the attractiveness of their relationship is known as romantic relationship satisfaction. It represents a person's assessment of how well their current romantic relationships are doing (Collins & Read, 1990).

Having a healthy romantic relationship indicates one of the most important roles that people want to play in their lives. However, according to a survey published by the Federal Statistical Office in Germany (2016), the number of single women increased by 16% between 2004 and 2014. This development appears surprising at first look, given the increasing availability of online dating portals and gradually lowering negative sentiments against online dating (Finkel et al. 2012). Adamczyk (2016) discovered differences between single and paired persons, with the former experiencing more emotional loneliness but not social loneliness. The absence of a stable romantic connection is a crucial factor in explaining increased levels of experienced emotional loneliness among single people who do not have a partner with whom to share love and closeness (Rokach & Brock 1998).

Because mingles develop a more superficial relationship in which they do not totally commit to the partner, they are likely to maintain an emotional distance from this person, for example, to lessen the unpleasant impact of a prospective rejection. In terms of a commitment continuum, being in a stable relationship is a more substantial basis of one's own identity than being in a mixed partnership and being mixed is a more prominent basis for personal identification than being single (Dush & Amato 2005). Finally, single adults should have the most emotional loneliness, followed by mingles and partnered individuals. We expect no differences in social loneliness amongst singles, mingles, and paired individuals.

People are like to feel lonely when they notice a difference between the level of intimacy and closeness they desire in social relationships and what they encounter. Partner relationships have repeatedly been discovered to be the most effective protective factor against loneliness across numerous studies. (Mund & Johnson, 2020). Given the importance of committed romantic relationships among other types of social relationships, it is not unexpected that much study has been performed to investigate the influence of relationship status on loneliness (Russell et al., 1980).

This study is an attempt to connect all the aforementioned themes and to comprehend how emerging adults understand and perceive loneliness. Also, to understand the impact of social media and relationship satisfaction on loneliness.

Theoretical Framework

The Interactionist Approach to Loneliness

Weiss (1973) proposed that loneliness was a reaction to the absence of a certain form of interaction. He believed that loneliness resulted from six types of deficits: attachments (relationships in which an individual feels safe and secure); social inclusion (having a network of relationships); opportunity for nurture (where one feels responsible for the well-being of another); reassurance of worth (relationships in which one's skills and abilities are noted); reliable alliance (one can depend on support from another); and guidance (where one receives advice).

The Existential Approach to Loneliness

The existential theory is rooted in the philosophical idea that humans have free choice, and because of that free choice, we can create purpose and meaning in our lives. Moustakas (1961) proposed an existential model of loneliness in which loneliness comes from the existential realization that we are, in reality, alone in life. The proper response to this realization is to embrace our situation and, in doing so, transcend our loneliness.

General Systems Approach

The underlying assumption of the theory is that the behavior of living creatures reflects the intertwined effect of multiple systems functioning together. Flanders regards loneliness as potentially painful, but also as a useful feedback mechanism that can contribute to the well-being of individuals or societies.

Conceptual Framework

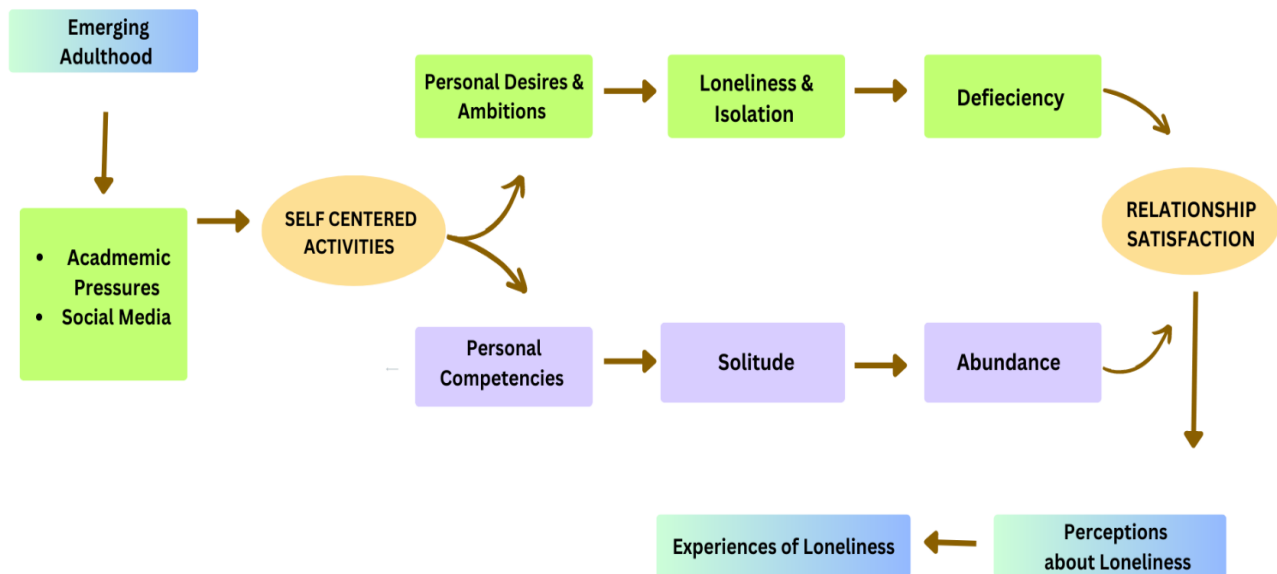**Figure 1**

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the study. Roles and situations rapidly shift as an emerging adult. Academics and relationships play a role, but so do financial independence, spirituality, civic duty, and moving away from parents and extended family. This age group is notable for its interest in self-centered activities and academic stress. In countries that value individuality, emerging adulthood is frequently viewed as a time of focusing on one's interests. However, this may not be the case in other cultures, such as India, where community interests take precedence over one's own.

As a result, this study demonstrates how India's young adults' desires are ultimately fuelled by needs created by the rise of social media and the demand for constant competition

and comparison. If these desires are not realized, a sense of disconnection, loneliness, and isolation emerges. On the other hand, people who become more self-assured and socially connected are more likely to enjoy solitude because they are already content. These experiences of loneliness and solitude will influence an individual's satisfaction in a relationship because a solitary person would feel abundant and have a good relationship with their partner. On the other hand, a person who alone probably feels like their relationship is lacking. Therefore, a person's experiences are shaped by how they perceive loneliness.

Rationale

Loneliness is a huge concern in recent times, and it is a very common experience that everyone has had. Many young people have encountered loneliness in their own distinct ways and many elements influence it. Individual (e.g., mental, and physical health) and societal factors exist on a personal level (such as quality and quantity of interactions).

Emerging adulthood is a developmental stage that primarily affects people between the ages of 18 and 25. During this time, individuals go through a transitional period that is marked by their discovery of their identity and relationships. Emerging adults leave their comfortable environments during this time and are exposed to a variety of new experiences, which may include attending university. Academic work can be challenging, leaving little time for interacting with others. Certain academic fields that require work in isolation may contribute to loneliness. Even if the academic demands of university life keep students busy, instances of loneliness may arise.

With an advancement in technology. Usage of social media has increased. It has proven to be a useful tool for connecting with others, it can also contribute to feelings of loneliness and isolation due to factors such as comparing oneself to others and a lack of meaningful in-person interactions. Social media and the absence of meaningful interactions

have an impact on how these college-going students experience loneliness in this era of digitalization, modernization, and increased competitiveness.

Research Questions

- How do emerging adults perceive loneliness and solitude, and how do they respond to it?

- What is the role of social media in the perception of loneliness?

- How does the relationship satisfaction and individuals' experience of loneliness relate to each other?

The next chapter discuses about the methodology used for this study.

Methodology

This chapter contains the research objectives, research design, Participant details and sampling techniques, tools for data collection, procedure of data collection, field testing, procedure of data analysis and ethical considerations.

Research Objectives

Broad Objective

- To understand the emerging adults' perceptions and experiences of loneliness/ solitude.

Specific Objectives

- To identify factors that lead to loneliness among emerging adults.

- To know the role of social media in the experience of loneliness.

- To measure relationship satisfaction and its relationship to loneliness.

- To study how perception determines the experience of loneliness/solitude.

Research Design

A mixed methods study was used, which included both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative approach was used to study the impact of social media and relationship satisfaction on people's perceptions of loneliness/solitude. The qualitative interviews were carried out to learn about their perceptions and experiences with loneliness/solitude.

Sampling

Sampling Criteria

The criteria for selecting the sample were as follows:

- The participant of the study included emerging adults from an urban middle-class Muslim family.

- Should be fluent in English.

- Age of the participant should be between 18-25.

- Should be a university student pursuing any degree (Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Diploma. Ph.D.).

- The emerging adults were divided into two groups 1) individuals without a romantic partner, and 2)individuals with a romantic partner.

Sampling Technique

The Purposive Snowball technique was used to find participants based on the sampling criteria.

Sample Size and Distribution

Figure 2

Sample size and Distribution
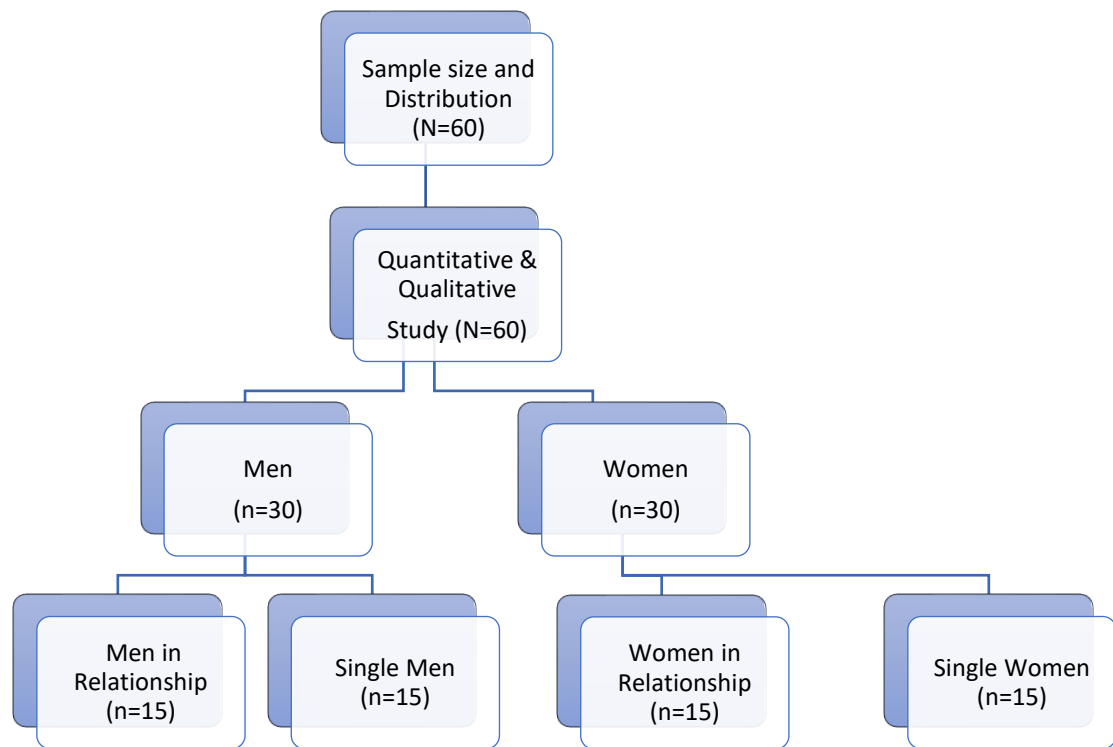
Figure 2 represents the sample distribution. The total sample size was 60 participants. It was equally distributed among 15 women and 15 men with Romantic partners and 15 women and 15 men without romantic partners. The participants were surveyed with qualitative interview and quantitative questionnaire each.

Tools for Data Collection

Tools that were used in the study are mentioned in Figure 3 and further explained below (Refer to Appendix B & C).

Figure 3

Tools used for Data Collection.
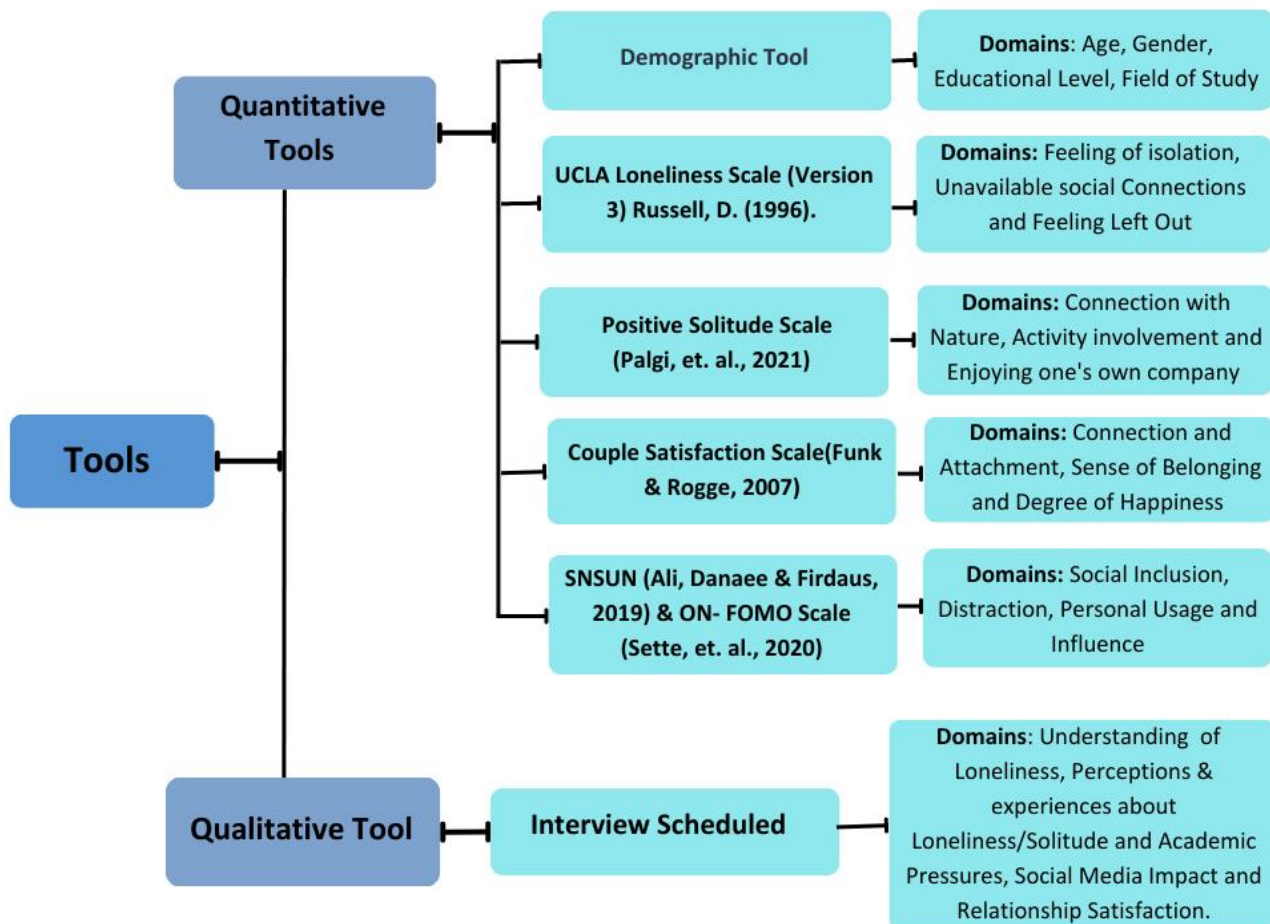
Quantitative Tools

As shown in Figure 3, the quantitative questionnaire is a four-point rating scale which was formed by referring to the standardised scales.

UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3) (Russell ,1996) tool was used in the study to measure loneliness the participants. The domains under the scale were feeling of isolation, social connections and feeling of left out.

Positive Solitude Scale (Palgi, et. al., 2021) was used in the study to measure solitude among the participants. The domains included were connection with nature, activity involvement and enjoying one's own company.

Couples Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge, 2007) was used to check relationship satisfaction among the committed participants. The domains under this scale used were connection and attachment, sense of belonging and degree of happiness.

Social networking sites usage & needs scale (Ali, Danaee & Firdaus, 2019) and The Online Fear of Missing Out Inventory (ON-FoMO) (Sette, et. al., 2020) was used to check participants usage of social media. The domains included were social inclusion, distraction, personal usage, and influence.

Qualitative Tool

The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions which were designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the individual's perceptions of loneliness and solitude, how they dealt with it, the impact of social media, academic pressures, and relationship satisfaction on how they perceive loneliness and finally their experiences with loneliness and solitude.

Field Testing of the Tool

The tool was field tested on four participants. The participants were four emerging adults aging between 18-25 years and pursuing their degree (Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Diploma. PhD).   The participants were 1 man and 1 woman with a romantic partner. Similarly, 1 man and 1 woman without a romantic partner.
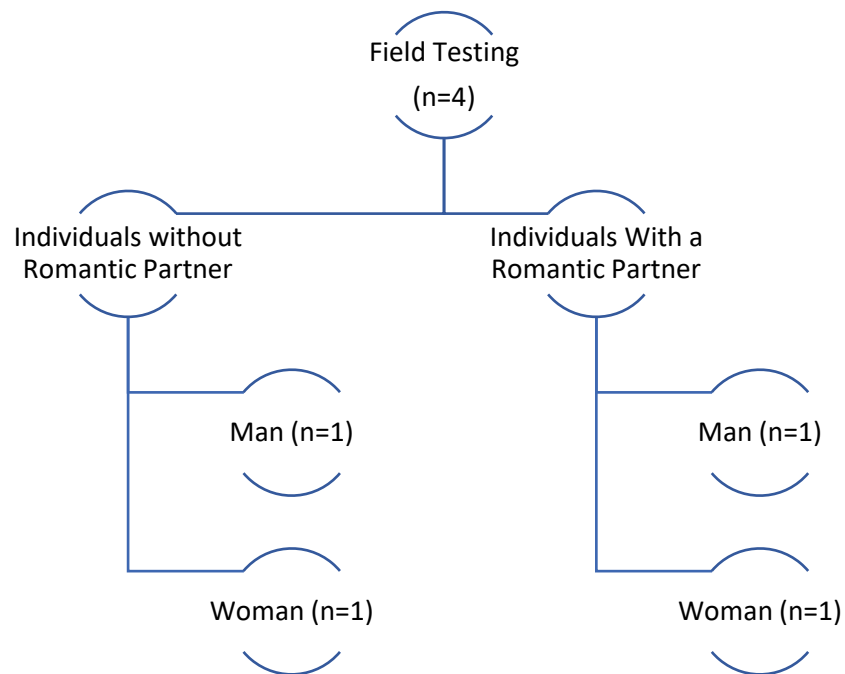
Figure 4

Sample Distribution in the Field Testing

Figure 4 displays the number of participants who were a part of field testing of the

tool.

The field testing was done for the following:

- To check for the language comprehension.

- To estimate the time required to complete the form.

- To ensure the tool's validity.

The tools received positive feedback. The participants thought the questionnaire was

comprehensive and covered every area of study.

Content Validation of Tool

The tools were validated by experts, a licensed counsellor and hypnotherapist in Baroda, and two professors from Navrachana University and from the Department of Philosophy at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. The experts felt that the tools were well-designed and addressed the study's objectives; thereby, no further changes were made to the tools.

Procedure for Data Collection

The data was collected through the purposive snow ball technique.

Both online and offline modes were used during the data collection. Participants were approached personally and through online modes i.e., through Google Forms and audio calls. Consent had been taken from the participants.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The Data collected through questionnaire and interview was analysed separately.

Quantitative data

For the analysis of the quantitative data JASP software was used.

- Mean values, standard deviations and frequencies were derived for the analysis of the scales and it has been represented through tables and figures.

- Scoring ranges were also used to examine the differences in scores across the scales. Because ranges were not specified in the tool's manual, they were created using the standard formula i.e. $\dfrac{\text{Maximum score - Minimum score}}{\text{Number of intervals}}$

- t-test was used to compare and identify the differences between the variables.

- Correlational analysis was done to evaluate the relationship between predictor variables and dependent variable.

Qualitative data

- Data received was transcribed out of which necessary verbatim comments for further analysis were drawn.

- The responses were coded and frequencies were marked for each code.

- Thematic coding was used for relating and segmenting the collected data.

Ethical Considerations

- Informed Consent (Refer to Appendix A) was taken from all the participants.

- Anonymity of the participants was maintained.

- No participants were forced to take part in the study.

- Participants could leave the study whenever they wished.

- With the participant's permission the qualitative interview was audio taped and used for academic purposes only.

- The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee for Human Research (IECHR) at the Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Vadodara. The ethics clearance number for this study is IECHR/FCSc/M.Sc./2022/51.

The next chapter discusses the results of the study.

<div align="center">

Results and Interpretations

</div>

This chapter demonstrates the results of this study under two, the Quantitative section the and qualitative section which are further divided into sub-sections respectively.

Section 1. Demographic Profile of the Participants
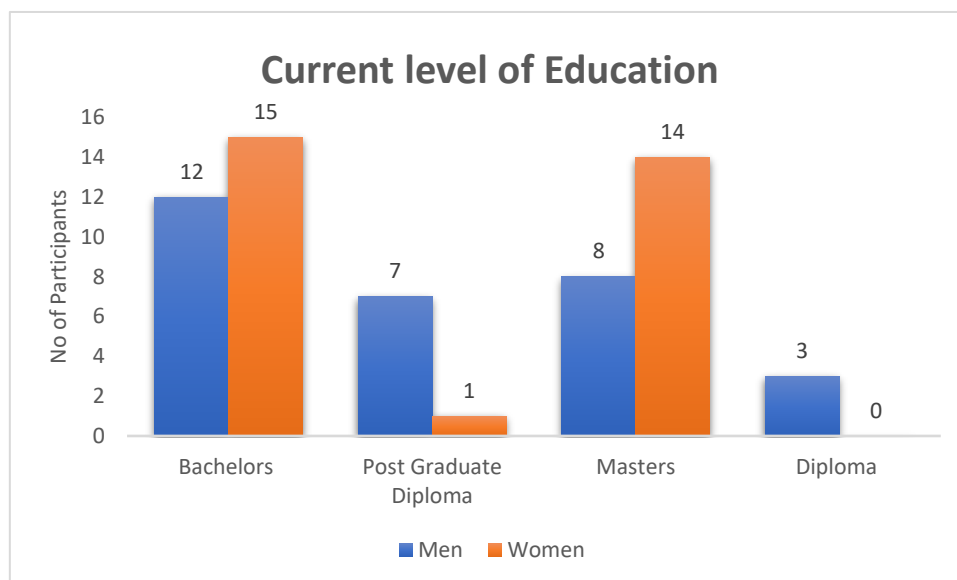
Figure 5

Age of the Participants

N=60
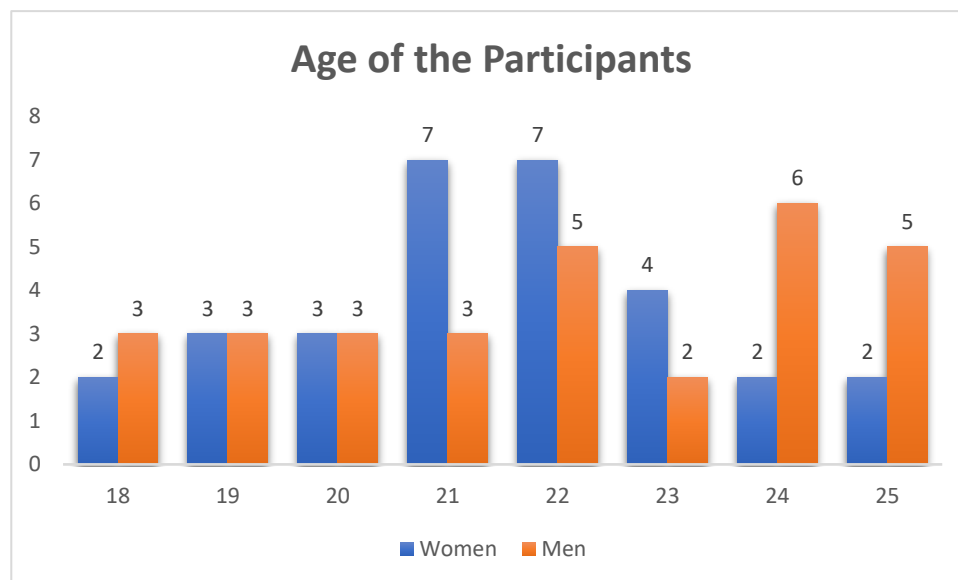
Figure 5 depicts the participants' ages. Figure 5 depicts the participants' ages. Most women were between the ages of 21 and 22, whereas the majority of men were of 24 years.

Figure 6

Current Level of Education of the Participants

N=60

As per Figure 6, 27 participants, out of which 12 men and 15 women were pursuing

their bachelor's degree, while 22 participants were pursuing their master's degree

Section 2. Quantitative Results

The Quantitative section is further divided under following sections

- Section I Assessing Loneliness among Emerging Adults

- Section II Assessing Solitude among Emerging Adults

- Section III Assessing Emerging Adults' Social Media usage

- Section IV Assessing Relationship Satisfaction among Committed Participants

- Section V Understanding the Relationship between social media usage with Loneliness

- Section VI Understanding the Relationship between Solitude and Relationship
  Satisfaction

Section I. Assessing Loneliness among Emerging Adults

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviation of Gender and Relationship Satisfaction on Loneliness Scale

			N= 60
Variables	M	SD	N
Emerging Adults	21.61	12.23	60
(a) Women	24.26	11.75	30
(i)Relationship	24.13	13.13	15
(ii)Single	24.40	10.66	15
(b) Men	18.96	12.31	30
(i) Relationship	20.93	14.63	15
(ii)Single	17.0	9.11	15

Table 1 shows, a mean score of 21.60 (SD=12.23), emerging adults feel moderate levels of loneliness. This indicates that, while they may not be lonely, they are not immune to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Some explanations include the fact that this time of life is one of transition. Emerging adulthood being a period of significant changes and uncertainty. The nature of employment and academia may vary throughout this time, and people may be building new social ties and establishing their sense of identity.

Focusing at gender differences, the data shows that women (M=24.26, SD=11.75) report higher levels of loneliness than men (M=18.96, SD=12.31). Women in India commonly experience gender-based expectations and societal standards that limit their ability to move around freely. Women often lack personal space and the opportunity to be alone, which can lead to feelings of loneliness. The high standard deviations indicates that the sample is highly diverse, with some people reporting extremely high degrees of loneliness and others reporting extremely low levels. As a result, it demonstrates that there is considerable variation in the experiences of loneliness among emerging adults although the mean score of 21.60 suggests that people feel moderate levels of loneliness on average, the

high standard deviation indicates that there are considerable variations among people in the level of loneliness individuals experience.

Figure 7

Means of Single Women and Women in relationship on Loneliness
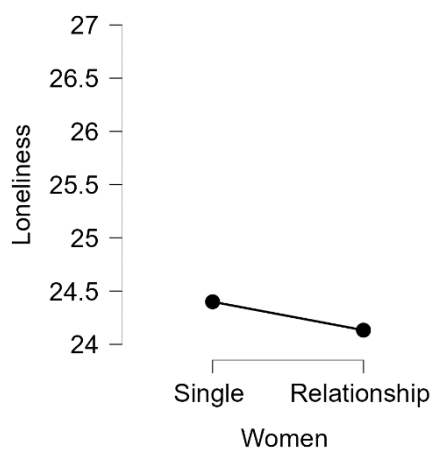
Figure 8

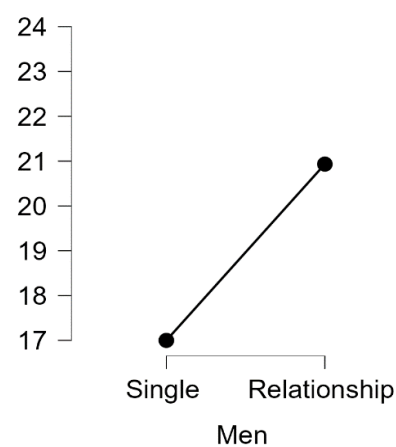*Means of Single Men and Men in relationship on Loneliness*

Figure 7 and 8 display that in terms of relationship status, there is not much difference between those women who are in a relationship (24.13) and those who are single (24.40). However, men in relationships (M=20.93, SD=14.63) experience more loneliness than single men (M=17.0, SD=9.11). This could be because men in relationships may feel pressured to keep their partners happy and may be uncomfortable expressing their own loneliness. They may find it difficult to balance their individual traits and passions with the expectations of their relationship. In terms of standard deviation, there is an enormous amount of individual variability in both men and women's experiences with loneliness, regardless of their relationship status. The relatively large standard deviation numbers for both groups (SD=14.63 for men in relationships) reveal a wide range of scores, with some participants reporting extremely high degrees of loneliness and others reporting extremely low levels.

Table 2

Results of t- test for Loneliness Scale and its Domains

N=60

	Gender			Relationship Status		
	t	df	p	t	df	p
Loneliness	1.705	58	0.094	0.577	58	0.566
Feeling of Isolation	2.016	58	0.048*	0.694	58	0.490
Unavailable Social Connections	0.702	58	0.486	0.037	58	0.971
Feeling Left out	1.858	58	0.068	0.889	58	0.378

Table 2 shows the findings of statistical analysis comparing the loneliness scale and its domains, i.e. feelings of isolation, unavailable social connections, and feeling left out with gender and relationship status. t-test and p-values for gender and relationship status were calculated for both Gender and relationship status. The findings show a significant difference between gender and feeling of isolation (t= 2.016; p=.048), but not with relationship status (t=0.694; p=0.490). The other loneliness scale dimensions, such as feeling left out, unavailable social connections, and loneliness scale, did not show any significant differences with gender or relationship status.

Table 3

Mean Values, Standard Deviations and Scoring Intervals of Emerging Adults across

Domains of Loneliness Scale

							N=60		
	Relationship			Single			Total		
Ranges	f	M	SD	f	M	SD	f	M	SD
(I) Feeling of Isolation									
(a) Women									
Low (0-10)	6	5.5	3.14	4	6	1.82	10	5.7	2.5
Medium (11-20)	8	15.8	2.64	11	15	3.25	19	15.36	2.96
High (21-30)	1	24	-	-	-	-	1	24	-
(b) Men									
Low (0-10)	8	5.12	3.44	10	5.6	2.87	18	5.3	3.05
Moderate (11-20)	5	14.4	2.88	5	13	3.39	10	13.7	3.05
High (21-30)	2	23	1.41	-	-	-	2	23	1.41
(II) Available Social Connection									
(a) Women									
Low (0-5)	7	1.71	1.97	9	3.22	1.09	16	2.56	1.67
Moderate (6-10)	7	7.42	1.272	4	6.75	3.59	11	7.72	1.42
High (11-15)	1	11	-	2	12.5	0.707	3	8.66	1
(b) Men									
Low (0-5)	10	2.8	1.93	9	2.77	1.78	19	2.78	1.81
Moderate (6-10)	3	7.66	0.57	6	6.83	0.75	9	7.11	0.781
High (11-15)	2	13	1.414	-	-	-	2	13	1.41
(III) Feeling Left Out									
(a) Women									
Low (0-5)	7	3.85	1.21	8	3.75	1.38	15	3.8	1.264
Moderate (6-10)	6	8.83	1.16	7	8.57	1.27	13	8.69	1.18
High (11-15)	2	11.5	0.03	-	-	-	2	11.5	0.707
(b) Men									
Low (0-5)	10	2.8	2.29	10	3	1.88	20	2.9	2.04
Moderate (6-10)	4	9.25	0.95	4	6.75	0.95	8	8	1.603

| High (11-15) | 1 | 13 | - | 1 | 11 | - | 2 | 12 | 1.414 |

According to table 3, most of the participants fall into the low to moderate range. It is worth noting that the highest scorers in both genders are people in relationships. There is a difference between men in relationships (M= 23) and men who are single (M=0), indicating that men in relationships feel more isolated. Reason being, single men seek out social connections with friends when they are lonely, whereas men in relationships do not. As a result, committed partners prioritize their partner over their friends, which can lead to feelings of loneliness.

Women have a mean score of 7.72 in the area of unavailable social relationships. Generally, women exhibited a higher level of unavailability of social connections than men, with a mean score of 7.11. In the medium range, single men have a slightly lower mean score of 6.83. Whereas, two men have a mean score of 13 in the highest category for lacking social connections. Women may experience greater pressure to maintain interactions, which may result in increased levels of unavailability due to numerous demands on their time and energy. Moreover, women may have higher expectations about the quality of their social interactions and may feel that their connections are poor or lacking.

Both men and women experience similar levels of feeling left out in the domain of feeling left out, but women may experience this emotion significantly more frequently. Men in the moderate range have a mean score of 8, whereas single men have a slightly lower moderate range mean score of 6.75. This could be since single men have more time and chances to establish social connections, but committed men may feel increasing pressure and responsibility in their relationships, resulting in a higher mean score of 8 in the moderate range.

Section II. Assessing Solitude among Emerging Adults

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviation of Gender and Relationship Satisfaction on Positive Solitude

Scale

			N= 60
Variables	M	SD	N
Emerging Adults	38.98	5.16	60
(a) Women	39.53	4.55	30
(i) Relationship	41.20	4.60	15
(ii) Single	37.86	3.98	15
(b) Men	38.43	5.74	30
(i) Relationship	39.80	5.41	15
(ii) Single	37.06	5.91	15

As per Table 4, the mean score for positive solitude among emerging adults is 38.98 out of 48, which indicates that this age group views being alone positively. This could be caused by a variety of factors, such as increased independence and autonomy, the ability to engage in self-reflection, the liberty to pursue personal interests or hobbies, and the ability to relax and de-stress.

According to the findings, women in both relationship and single status had higher average positive solitude scores than men. Women in relationships received a mean score of 41.20, while men in relationships obtained a score of 39.80. Single women scored an average of 37.86, while single men earned an average of 37.06. Women's tendency to experience high levels of solitude can be attributed to their strong connection with nature, involvement in activities, and enjoyment of being alone. Engaging in outdoor activities and being self-reliant may contribute to a greater comfort with solitude, while a greater level of self-awareness and introspection.

Table 5

Results of t- test for Solitude Scale and its Domains

N=60

	Gender			Relationship Status		
	t	df	p	t	df	p
Solitude	0.822	58	0.414	2.360	58	0.022*
Connection with Nature	1.520	58	0.134	2.262	58	0.027*
Activity Involvement	0.879	58	0.383	2.416	58	0.019*
Enjoying one's own Company	-	58	1.00	1.411	58	0.163

Table 5 displays the t-score, degrees of freedom, and p-value for each variable. The t-score of -0.822 and non-significant p-value of 0.414 show that there is no gender difference in solitude. The p-value, however, is less than 0.05 (0.022 for relationship status), indicating that this result is statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. This implies that people in relationships experience greater solitude than single people. Similarly, for connection with nature (t=2.262; p=0.027) and activity involvement (t=2.416; p=.019), relationship status had a significant effect but was unaffected by gender. Neither gender nor relationship status had a significant impact on enjoying one's own company domain. As a result, people in relationships feel greater solitude through connection with nature or participation in activities than individuals who are single, but there is no difference in their enjoyment in their company with respect to both gender and relationship status.

**Section III. Assessing Emerging Adults' Social Media usage**

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviation of Gender and Relationship Satisfaction on Social Media Scale

N= 60

Variables	M	SD	N
Emerging Adults	81	9.51	60
Social Media			
(a) Women	80.23	9.63	30
(i) Relationship	82.33	9.07	15
(ii) Single	78.13	10.01	15
(b) Men	81.76	9.49	30
(i) Relationship	80.80	10.16	15
(ii) Single	82.73	9.02	15

As per Table 6, the overall mean score for social media influence for the entire group of emerging adults was 81, indicating a moderate level of use, with a standard deviation of 9.51. For starters, social media has become an essential part of our daily lives, and it is no longer be considered a luxury, but rather a necessity. The participants are more likely to use social media for communication, entertainment, and information exchange. The finding that emerging adults have a limited social media influence implies that, while social media is undoubtedly important to them, it does not completely define their lives.

Figure 9

Means of Single Women and Women in

relationship on Social Media Usage
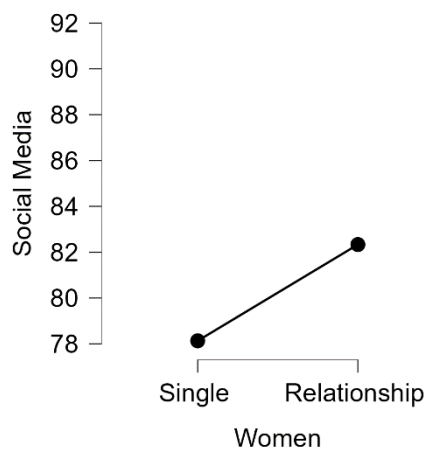
Figure 10

Means of Single Men and Men in

relationship on Social Media Usage
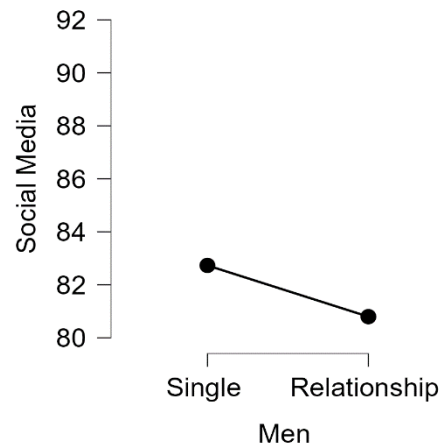
As per Figure 9 and 10, women in relationships (M= 82.33) got a higher mean score for social media usage than single women (M=78.13). Women in relationships may have a higher level of social media usage because they use it to communicate and connect with their partner. It can help them stay emotionally attached to their partner, especially if they are under stress or are feeling distant. Moreover, social media may provide them with an accessible way to keep track of their partner's activities and maintain constant communications with them.

An opposite trend was observed with men who were single (M=82.73) using social media more consistently than those who were in relationships (M=80.80). The reason that single men have a slightly higher mean score for social media usage than men in relationships could be due to the fact that single men have more extra time to engage in social media, whereas men in relationships may prioritize spending time with their partners. Also, single men may utilize social media to interact with potential partners, resulting in higher usage.

Table 7

Results of t- test for Social Media Scale and its Domains

N=60

	Gender			Relationship Status		
	t	df	p	t	df	p
Social Media	0.621	58	0.537	0.458	58	0.648
Social Inclusion	0.754	58	0.454	0.362	58	0.719
Personal Usage	0.540	58	0.592	1.575	58	0.121
Distraction	0.884	58	0.380	0.969	58	0.336
Influence	0.716	58	0.477	0.446	58	0.657

According to table 7, the t test on the Social Media scale and the domains of social media shows that there are no significant differences between the domains and the variables. The p value for all domains is greater than 0.05, indicating statistically no significance.

Table 8

Mean Values, Standard Deviations and Scoring Intervals of Emerging Adults across Domains of Social Media Scale

N=60

	Relationship			Single			Total		
Intervals	F	M	SD	f	M	SD	f	M	SD
(I) Social Inclusion									
(a) Women									
Low (0-18)	1	18	-	1	17	-	2	17.5	0.70
Moderate (19-36)	14	24.71	4.3	14	23.5	2.79	28	24.10	3.66
High (37-52)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(b) Men									
Low (0-18)	2	13.5	2.12	1	18	-	3	15	3
Moderate (19-36)	13	25.07	4.66	14	26.14	3.93	27	25.22	4.71
High (37-52)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(II) Personal Usage									
(a) Women									
Low (0-9)	-	-	-	1	8	-	1	8	-
Moderate (10-18)	7	17.14	0.69	8	16.12	0.64	15	16.6	0.82
High (19-28)	8	22.5	3.11	6	21	0.89	14	21.87	2.47
(b) Men									
Low (0-9)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moderate (10-18)	6	16.33	1.505	7	16.71	1.38	13	16.53	1.39

High (19-28)	9	21.55	2.83	8	21.12	3.356	17	21.35	2.98
(III) Distraction									
(a) Women									
Low (0-8)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moderate (9-16)	5	14	1.87	8	14.12	2.16	13	14.07	1.97
High (17-24)	10	20.1	1.91	7	19.57	1.39	17	19.88	1.69
(b) Men									
Low (0-8)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moderate (9-16)	8	15	1.41	8	14.87	0.99	16	14.93	1.18
High (17-24)	7	18.71	2.56	7	18.57	2.63	14	18.64	2.49
(IV) Influence									
(a) Women									
Low (0-10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moderate (11-20)	8	17.62	1.68	7	18.14	2.267	15	17.86	1.92
High (21-32)	7	22.71	1.704	8	23.25	1.83	15	23	1.73
(b) Men									
Low (0-10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moderate (11-20)	6	18.83	1.169	7	18.28	1.603	13	18.53	1.39
High (21-32)	9	22.55	1.236	8	23.12	1.642	17	22.82	1.42

As per Table 8, we can observe that, men, and women both use social media as a tool for social inclusion moderately with their mean scores with 24.10 for women and 25.22 for men. It is likely that the participants have strong social networks and can connect with people in meaningful ways through social media, and that they are not excessively reliant on it for social interaction. Furthermore, the findings revealed that both men and women in relationships had greater frequencies of moderate social inclusion, suggesting that they have a variety of social connections outside of social media.

Under the domain of personal usage, both women and men in relationships had slightly higher personal usage scores than single participants. The mean score for women in a relationship in the high interval was 22.5, while for men in relationship it was, 21.5. Being in a relationship can led to emotional attachment and dependence on the other person. Participants in relationship may utilize social media to keep connected and emotionally close to their partner, especially during times of physical separation or emotional distress. Whereas, for single participants however, social media maybe utilised for personal interests other than

social interaction, such as entertainment or self-expression. This could indicate that social media is used to strengthen their existing social networks rather than as a primary means of establishing social interaction.

When compared to single women, women in relationships (M=20.1) exhibited a larger frequency on the high interval in the distraction domain. Men in relationships and single men, on the other hand, had similar mean scores. Women in relationships may find social media to be a convenient and easily accessible distraction source. Due to time limits or other constraints, they may not have alternative leisure or recreational activities readily available to them, and therefore may turn to social media as a quick and easy way to distract themselves. People may also use social media to divert their attention away from relationship-related stress and into the virtual world.

Single participants had a slightly higher influence of social media on their lives compared to those in a relationship. Single women had a higher mean score (23.25) in the high interval of social media influence compared to women in relationships (22.71), while single men also had a higher mean score (23.12) in the high interval compared to men in relationships (22.55). Reason being, social media may serve as a means of filling the social void that may be present for some single individuals. By connecting with friends and others online, social media could serve as a substitute for in-person social interactions, thus having a greater influence on their lives.

Section IV. Assessing Relationship Satisfaction among Committed Participants

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviation of Gender on Couple Satisfaction Scale

N=30

Variables	M	SD	N
Emerging Adults	39.33	6.48	30
(a) Women	41.2	4.61	15
(b) Men	37.46	7.64	15

Table 9 depicts that overall, emerging adults who are in a relationship report a mean score of 39.33 out of 54 for their level of satisfaction with their romantic partner. Emerging adults who are still establishing their identities and learning new responsibilities may face stress and uncertainty, which can have an impact on their relationships. This age is still learning how to manage personal relationships, which might result in disputes and difficulties. Even so, they are seeking for intimacy and connection, and their romantic partners can provide them with stability and emotional support during times of change and uncertainty.

The table also shows that women have a higher mean score (41.2) on the Couple Satisfaction Index than men (37.46). Reasons for the difference in scores could be that women are more content with their own selves and hence feel more satisfied in their relationship. In contrast, men may struggle more with expressing their emotions and needs in relationships due to societal norms and expectations surrounding gender roles.

Table 10

Results of t- test for Couple Satisfaction Scale and its Domains

N=60

	Gender		
	t	*df*	*p*
Couple Satisfaction	0.353	58	0.726
Connection & Attachment	0.411	58	0.683
Degree of Happiness	0.372	58	0.711
Sense of Belonging	0.160	58	0.874

As per table 10, the t-tests show that there are no significant differences between men and women in their scores on any of the domains measured, including couple satisfaction scale, connection & attachment, degree of happiness, and sense of belonging.

Section V. Understanding the Relationship between social media usage with Loneliness

Table 11

Pearson's Correlations between Loneliness Scale and Social Media Scale

				N=60
Scale		Scale	Pearson's r	p
Loneliness	-	Social Media	0.135	0.304
Loneliness	-	Influence Domain	- 0.374***	0.003
Loneliness	-	Distraction Domain	0.368**	0.004
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001				

As per Table 11, the Pearson's correlation analysis between the loneliness scale and social media scale shows a weak positive correlation with a Pearson's r value of 0.135, which is not statistically significant (p=0.304). This suggests that there is no strong correlation between social media use and loneliness. However, the analysis, on the other hand, finds a significant negative connection (-0.374) between loneliness and the influence domain, showing that as loneliness reduces, people feel more influenced by social media. Furthermore, there is a significant positive correlation (0.368) between loneliness and the distraction domain, implying that when loneliness increases, people utilize distraction to cope with their feelings.

These findings may indicate that social media use does not always result in loneliness, as people may use it to connect with people and is a very useful medium as it provides them with opportunities to connect with a larger group of people at the very same time. It can also be used for entertainment, infotainment, and life coaching. Loneliness, on the other hand, may be associated with a diminished sense of influence, leading individuals to feel less connected to others and seek distraction as a coping mechanism. Individuals may utilize social media as an escape to avoid addressing their feelings of loneliness, resulting in a positive correlation between loneliness and the distraction domain.

Section VII. Understanding the Relationship between Solitude and Relationship

Satisfaction

Table 12

Pearson's Correlations between Solitude Scale and Couple Satisfaction Scale

		N=60	
Scale	Scale	Pearson's r	p
Solitude	- Couple satisfaction	0.283*	0.029
Activity Involvement	- Degree of Happiness	0.288*	0.026
Activity Involvement	- Connection & Attachment	-0.309*	0.016
Connection to Nature	- Sense of Belonging	0.306*	0.017
Connection to Nature	- Connection & Attachment	0.280*	0.030
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001			

As per table 12, the correlation analysis shows a positive correlation between solitude and couple satisfaction (Pearson's r=0.283, p=0.029), suggesting that as individuals may feel more satisfied in their romantic relationships when they are experiencing more solitude. This could be explained by the fact that solitude provides individuals with time for self-reflection and introspection, allowing them to better understand their own needs and emotions, which may lead to better communication and relationship satisfaction with their partner. The analysis also shows a significant positive correlation (Pearson's r=0.306, p=0.017) between connection to nature and sense of belonging, suggesting that individuals who feel a stronger connection to nature may also feel a greater sense of belonging to their environment. Furthermore, the analysis shows a significant negative correlation (Pearson's r=-0.309, p=0.016) between activity involvement and connection and attachment, indicating that as individuals become more involved in activities, they may feel less connected and attached to others. Those who are very active may be more independent and less likely to need others' emotional assistance. The negative relationship between activity involvement and

connection/attachment may be due to this self-reliance. It is also likely that people who are very active are more focused on their own goals and ambitions, which makes them put their own demands above those of others.

Summary of the Quantitative Results

The summary of the quantitative analysis is as follows

Assessing Loneliness among Emerging Adults

Men in relationships are more isolated than single men. Participants who were in relationships with both men (f=2) and women (f=2) fell into the high category of feeling isolated, which showed that they still felt lonely despite being in a relationship. In general, women were less likely than men to have access to social networks. However, it was interesting that two men in a relationship had the highest feeling of left out. Furthermore, the analysis of the correlation between the loneliness and the influence domain indicated that people who feel less lonely are more influenced by social media.

Assessing Solitude among Emerging Adults

Emerging adults generally view solitude positively. Women in both relationship and single status had higher mean positive solitude scores than men, suggesting that women are more comfortable with being alone due to their connection with nature, involvement in activities, and introspection. Moreover, the analysis found that there is a positive correlation between connection to nature and sense of belonging, while there is a negative correlation between activity involvement and connection and attachment.

Assessing Emerging Adults' Social Media Usage

The study discovered that emerging adults used social media at a moderate level, with women in relationships accessing it more than single women, and single men using it slightly more than men in relationships. When compared to single women, women in relationships had a higher frequency of high interval scores in the distraction area, indicating that social

media is used as a convenient and easily accessible form of distraction. According to these findings, social media plays a big role in the lives of emerging adults, particularly in their interpersonal relationships and leisure activities.

Assessing Relationship Satisfaction among Committed Participants

In relationships, emerging adults reported a moderate level of satisfaction with their romantic partners, but women tended to be more satisfied than men both with themselves and their relationships. Although men also reported moderate satisfaction in their relationships, their mean scores were lower compared to women.

Section 3. Qualitative Results

The Qualitative section is further divided under following sections

- Section I. Emerging Adults Understanding and Perceptions of Loneliness.

- Section II Do Emerging Adults feel Lonely Despite being busy?

- Section III Emerging Adults Reasons of Experiencing Loneliness.

- Section IV Emerging Adults' Ways of Dealing with Loneliness.

- Section V Impact of social media on Loneliness.

- Section VI Do Committed Emerging Adults feel Lonely in Relationship?

Section I. Emerging Adults Understanding of Loneliness

Figure 11

Participants' Responses to Understanding of Loneliness

N=60
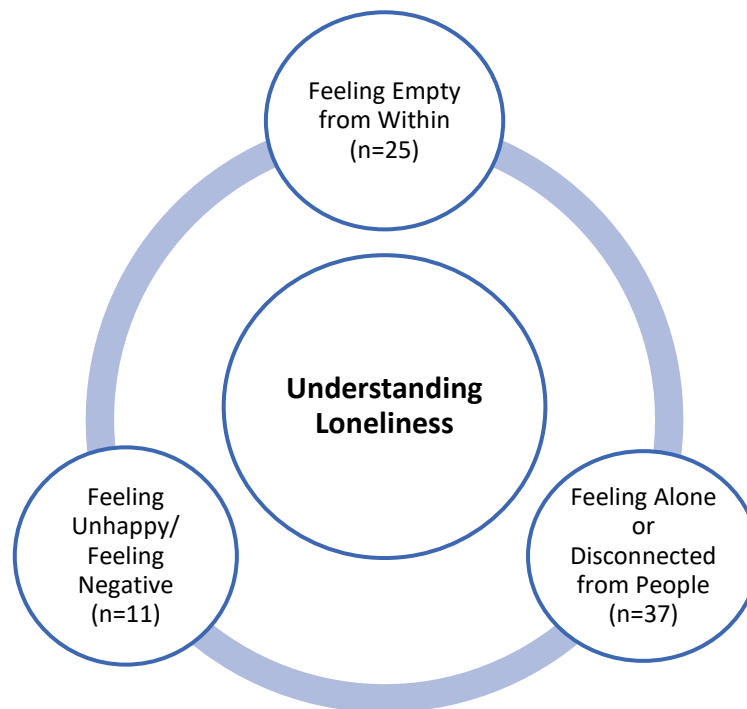
As shown in figure 11, 37 respondents shared a common theme that loneliness is the feeling of being alone even when surrounded by people. Loneliness according to the participants was defined as the feeling of being alone or disconnected from others, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Individuals may experience feelings of loneliness and disconnection from others, both physically and emotionally, due to the fear of being judged or rejected by those around them. This fear may be driven on by the pressure to live up to certain expectations, which forces individuals to conceal their true selves and experience loneliness. Such insecurities can lead to a sense of detachment from those around them,

ultimately resulting in feelings of loneliness and isolation. In the voice of a young man*,*

"When you cut of the presence of people in your life and be with yourself all the time, you do

not speak to anyone what is going on... You keep it to yourself; you might want to share your

thoughts and feelings yet you might not do it. You be surrounded by many people but still

feel alone, sad and feel like nobody understands you, love you or cares about you and you

are in this constant dilemma that people mighty judge you, because it is what I feel when I am

lonely."

While it is a negative feeling that can make a person feel empty, suffocated, and

mentally unhealthy according to seven responses. Young adults rely on relationships with

others to meet their needs. When these needs are not met, it can lead to negative emotions

like loneliness, which can have harmful effects on both their mental and physical wellbeing.

A young woman stated, *"When we talk about loneliness it indicates a little more you know a*

negative feeling of being alone, alone is something still we can consider that okay it is

something that is good as well as bad but being lonely is something which shifts me to a little

more feeling of a negative, you know a negative feeling which makes you feel a little low in

your own self."

However, 25 respondents acknowledged that they experienced loneliness when they

felt a sense of emptiness and void or lack of fulfilment within themselves. *"Loneliness to me*

is feeling empty. That empty feeling from within that there is no one for you, no one that you

can talk to… To have no one to talk to about how I feel and what I am going through. When I

feel lonely, I do tend to feel suffocated in my own thoughts." said a young woman. Reason

being that an individual may find it difficult to connect with people when they are not happy

with themselves, which can result in a feeling of loneliness and isolation.

Figure 12

Participants Perceptions about Loneliness/ Solitude

N=60
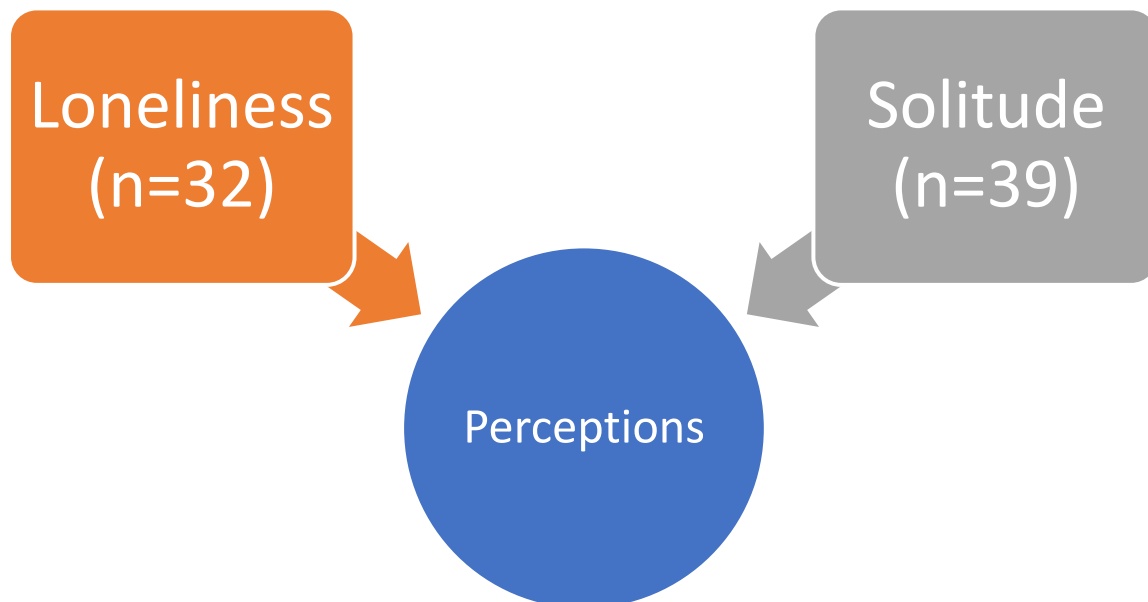
According to figure 12, when the interviewer asked about the participants perceptions regarding loneliness and solitude, Participants mentioned that they felt lonely even in the presence of others, while others found comfort in being alone. 39 respondents share that solitude can be beneficial for an individual and it can give a person time with themselves where they can introspect their lives. *"Being alone is all the time, you know all positive things, it is the only positive thing that can help you, to organize your emotions."* said a young man, because being alone allowed individuals to disconnect from the outside world and focus on their inner selves, which promoted self-awareness and personal growth. It also provided them a break from social pressures and the need to constantly engage with others, giving individuals the space, they needed to recharge and replenish their energy.

Despite solitude being an opportunity for self-reflection and introspection, 32 respondents in this study portray that loneliness can have negative effects on their mental
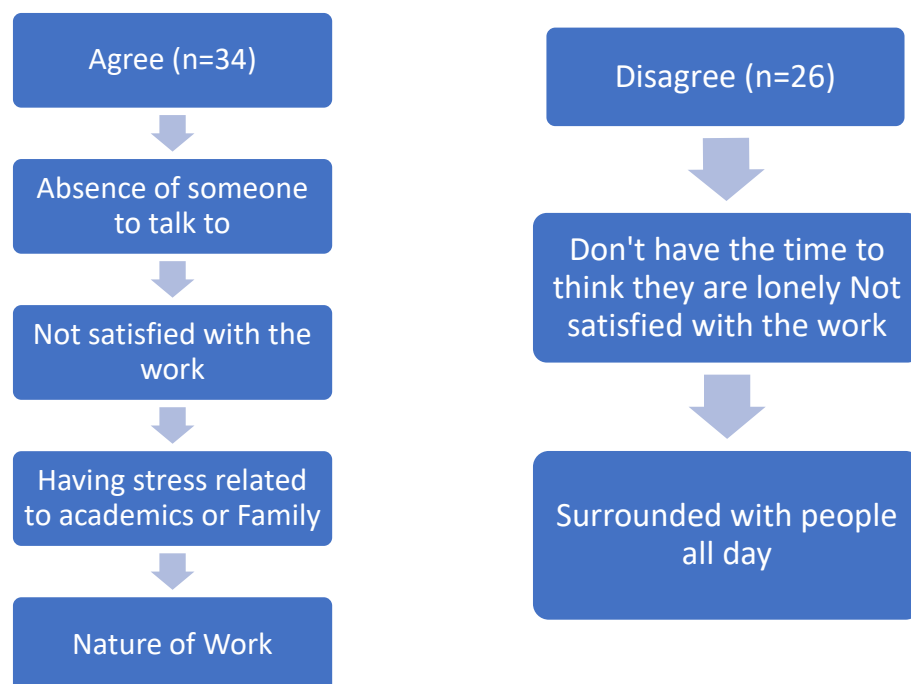
well-being. These negative effects may include increased levels of anxiety, overthinking, and difficulty in focusing on the present moment. In the voice of a young man, *being alone has been negative, because it leads to anxiety and overthinking issues for me. There have been many times where due to feeling lonely I have been unable to focus on what is going on in present and keep on regretting about my past decisions."*

Section II. Do Emerging Adults Feel Lonely Despite being Busy?

Figure 13

Participants Views on Feeling Lonely Despite being Busy

N=60

```
┌──────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
│   Agree (n=34)        │          │   Disagree (n=26)    │
└──────────┬───────────┘          └──────────┬───────────┘
           ▼                                  ▼
┌──────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────┐
│  Absence of someone   │          │  Don't have the time to │
│     to talk to        │          │  think they are lonely Not │
└──────────┬───────────┘          │  satisfied with the work │
           ▼                       └──────────┬───────────┘
┌──────────────────────┐                      ▼
│  Not satisfied with the │         ┌──────────────────────┐
│       work            │          │  Surrounded with people │
└──────────┬───────────┘          │        all day        │
           ▼                       └──────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────┐
│  Having stress related │
│  to academics or Family │
└──────────┬───────────┘
           ▼
┌──────────────────────┐
│   Nature of Work      │
└──────────────────────┘
```

Almost all the participants had a hectic college schedule, while also having to balance work and studies. As per figure 13, when participants were asked if they could feel lonely

despite being busy, 34 out of 60 agreed, with the main reason being a lack of someone to talk to. Having academic or family stress, and dissatisfaction with their work, *"yes, I think that if a person is busy all day in his work, he/she will feel alone for some point because being busy is not the point. Having someone with whom only 5 minutes of talking can also resolve things, so when people who are busy, can still feel lonely because they do not have anyone to talk or no one's is interested in them,"* said one young man.

Another interesting theme emerged was that individuals who are not satisfied with the work they are doing may feel lonely even when they are busy. For instance, in voice of a young woman "*Because I have this thing where I want to do my best at whatever I do, which creates a competition with my own self. Yes! people do feel lonely despite being busy, because I have felt it. Because as I said I have this desire to do better than what I did, I am constantly behind something or the other. And when you are finally done with the tasks that were to achieved and finally sit back with yourself, you will realise that you are all alone.*" According to the verbatim, the individual's constant desire to improve and do better in her work creates a competitive environment within herself, which leads her to be constantly busy and occupied with various tasks. However, when she finally has a moment to herself, she may feel a sense of loneliness and isolation as she realizes that she is alone. This suggests that the individual is not satisfied with her work and may be struggling to find fulfilment in her tasks, which can contribute to her feelings of loneliness.

Nonetheless, 26 respondents disagreed that people can feel lonely when they are busy. The reasons could be that in this stage where emerging adults are pursuing a particular career, they are continuously surrounded by people all the time, and the second reason is that they are so preoccupied with academia that they do not even have time to think about how lonely they are, As one young man stated, "*You know, What I think is being busy is better, because then an individual might not even have the time to think that, "oh! Am I lonely? No! because, they*
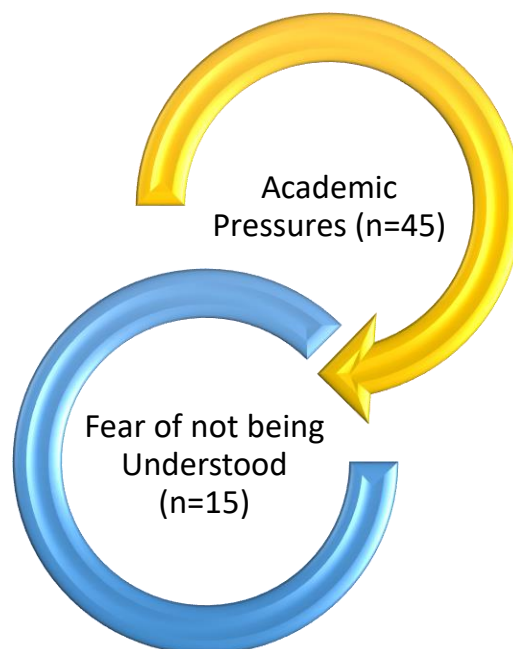
will be so occupied with the work and their schedule, they will not even have time to think that

we are lonely or alone."

Section III. Emerging Adults Reasons of Experiencing Loneliness

Figure 14

Participants experiences of Loneliness

N=60

As per figure 14, when participants were asked about their experiences with

loneliness, 45 respondents described feeling lonely as a result of academic pressures. These

pressures came from either their parents' expectations as stated by a young woman, *"Yes, I*

often feel lonely and alone, especially when you are under pressure to perform well in your

studies. When you come from a family where your parents really want you to score well and

it matters a lot to them if you get a lower score, you will feel stressed because you will be

answerable to your parents for not scoring well in your academics, and this will lead to a

feeling of loneliness because your parents will not understand the amount of pressure it

creates inside you." The pressures were also because of the nature of the field the participants

were in, which required them to isolate themselves in order to focus on their studies, *"After*

my 12th std, I didn't join any college, at that moment I was preparing for my NEET

examination, what happened is that it took a toll on my mental health, so I'd dint speak to

anyone, I was not able to think, eat, sleep, and then when I joined college and again, I felt

extremely alone!"- stated a young woman who had to isolate herself while preparing for the

NEET (competitive entrance test to enter the medical field), which became so demanding that

it affected her mental health and made her feel extremely alone. However, when

emerging adults devoted a large amount of time to mastering their subject, it is normal for

them to work alone. While the sense of accomplishment that comes with expertise can help

counteract feelings of loneliness, it is crucial that continually isolating oneself can be

negative to one's mental health and well-being. If an individual feel motivated to pursue

mastery in a field in which they have no interest or passionate, it can lead to feelings of

dissatisfaction and disappointment, regardless of the amount of isolation or success they

might achieve.

Fifteen respondents expressed the fear that others wouldn't understand them and

would judge them.A young man said, *"A couple of times where I felt extremely lonely and*

extremely disarmed I would say because I had no one , it wasn't something that I was not

really comfortable sharing with people or I really did not, but you know the judgemental

factor that comes into picture so, I really wasn't comfortable sharing what I was going

through at that time or probably I even , if I shared it people the expectation that I had of

them responding to me was not something that I got in return, so I think yeah that there were

*a couple of times where I felt like that."* In this phase, emerging adults often rely on their

relationships with others for support, validation, and understanding. When individuals might experience loneliness or emotional distress, they might have certain expectations of how others should respond to them or understand what they are going through. When those expectations are not met, people may feel disappointed or hesitant to share their feelings, leading to a fear of being judged or misunderstood.

Section IV. Emerging Adults' Ways of Dealing with Loneliness

Figure 15

Participants Strategies of Dealing with Loneliness

N=60
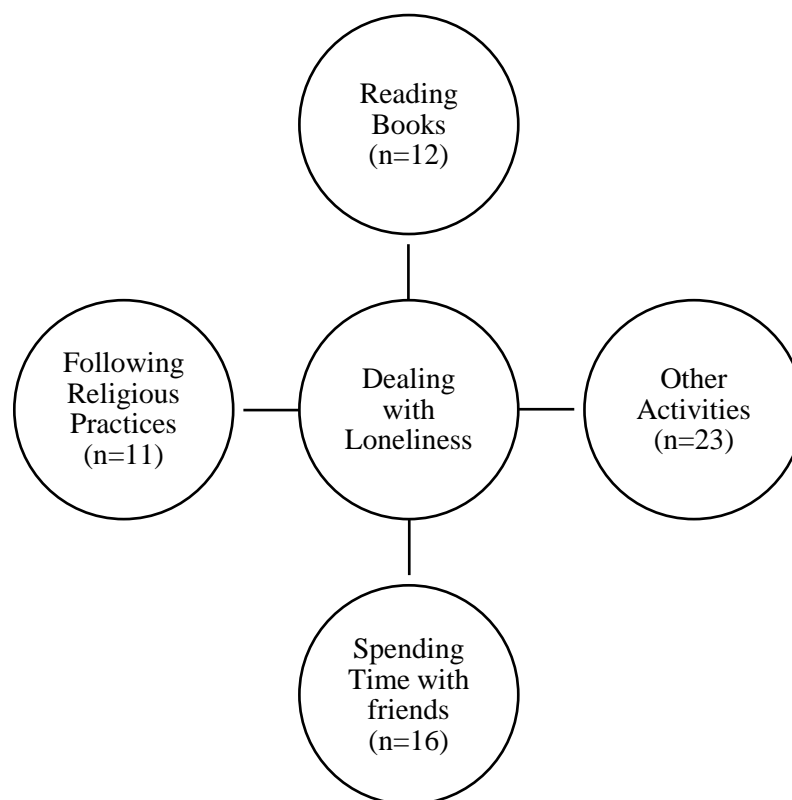
According to the figure 15, the participants used various strategies to overcome the feeling of loneliness. 12 respondents mentioned that participants found solace in reading as

also stated by a young woman, *"I took the support of books and this music so there is this particular music group that I listen to so that those were the 2 things which has really you know brought me out of that."* Because reading allowed people to escape reality and immerse themselves in a different world or perspective. 11 respondents revealed that individual involved themselves into religious practices, 16 respondents mentioned that spending time with their friends helped a lot. A young man said, *"I am very much blessed to have such a group of friends, none of my friend gave up on me and that time and stayed in constant touch, they motivated me to work and that is how I diverted my mind and I started focusing on working out and dealt with my lonely time."* While the rest 23 respondents said that they involved themselves in other activities like working out, travelling, and exploring new places. To this a young man stated, *"To overcome that feeling I started socialising more tried making new friends and started new activities like going to gym, going with friends, exploring new places and tried to keep myself busy in them."*

The coping techniques, such as reading or participating in other activities, may provide as an escape that emerging adults used for distracting themselves from feeling lonely rather than addressing the underlying problems. While these activities provide momentary escape from feelings of loneliness, it may not provide a long-term solution to the issue.

Section V. Impact of Social media on Loneliness

Figure 16

Participants views on Impact of Social Media on Loneliness
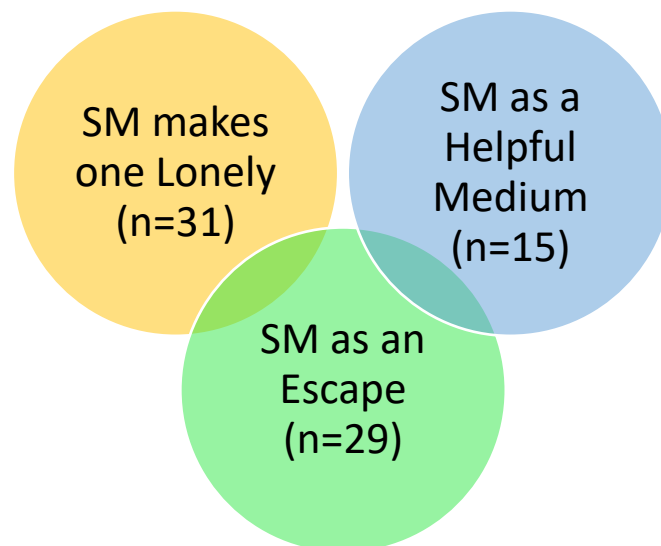
N=60

Figure 16 depicts that the common theme in derived through responses is that social media can worsen feelings of loneliness and have a negative impact on one's psychological well-being. 31 respondents indicated that social media could be overwhelming, create unrealistic expectations. As said by a young man, "*Mostly I only use it to consume content. I prefer to stay away from it. No… Definitely not! we do stay connected with our loved ones but, sometimes it can be a very overwhelming place to by. Why overwhelming? Cause perfect life! Perfect pictures, someone is having a good time, a good day or life and that can have a deep effect on you. Initially you would not realise but eventually It makes you feel like nothing is happening in your life and that you, we are worthless. It is a place of illusion and for sure takes a toll on your mental health.*" Social media platforms are created to foster a sense of constant connection and engagement, making it difficult for people to disconnect and take a break from the curated and often unrealistic visuals and narratives presented on social

media. Constant exposure to these images and lives of people can rise to feelings of inadequacies and social comparison, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and low self-worth. Moreover, social media frequently presents a filtered and curated image of people's lives, which can result in high expectations and perpetuate the idea of a "perfect" life. As people compare their real lives to the romanticized ones provided on social media, they may experience feelings of inadequacy and frustration.

While some participants believe that social media might affect one's mental health and well-being, 29 of the respondents' stated that it can be a source of distraction and beneficial content. in voice of a young woman, *"Yes, I specially believe that social networking sites can help prevent loneliness. Because it can help you to distract your mind in whatever state it is in, you feel distracted by listening songs, watching new content and getting to learn new things from social app, to watch videos on social site like you tube or something, to talk with people who are far away from you."* While 15 respondents said reveal that social media can be used to connect with people and is a very useful medium as it provides them with opportunities to connect with a larger group of people at the very same time. It can also be used to have access to valuable services such as entertainment, infotainment, and life coaching. In a young man stated, *yes, I truly believe that it helps me a lot manage my loneliness because I get to connect with friends more often and easily. So yeah, to get in touch with your friends and family it, has gotten easier to click a phone call and boom, you are able to see them, feel as if they are with you. There is a lot of content that people can consume and distract their minds of it, People can also be a part of different groups, get to know new people."* Social media platforms can create a sense of connection and involvement that may be lacking in an individual's offline life and can help these emerging adults avoid feelings of loneliness and isolation by allowing them to engage with old friends, meet new people, and access a larger range of resources.

Section VI. Do Committed Emerging Adults feel Lonely in Relationship?

Figure 17

Participants Experiences of Feeling Lonely Despite being in Relationship

n=30

Individuals who felt Lonely (n=10)

Individuals who did not felt Lonely (n=20)
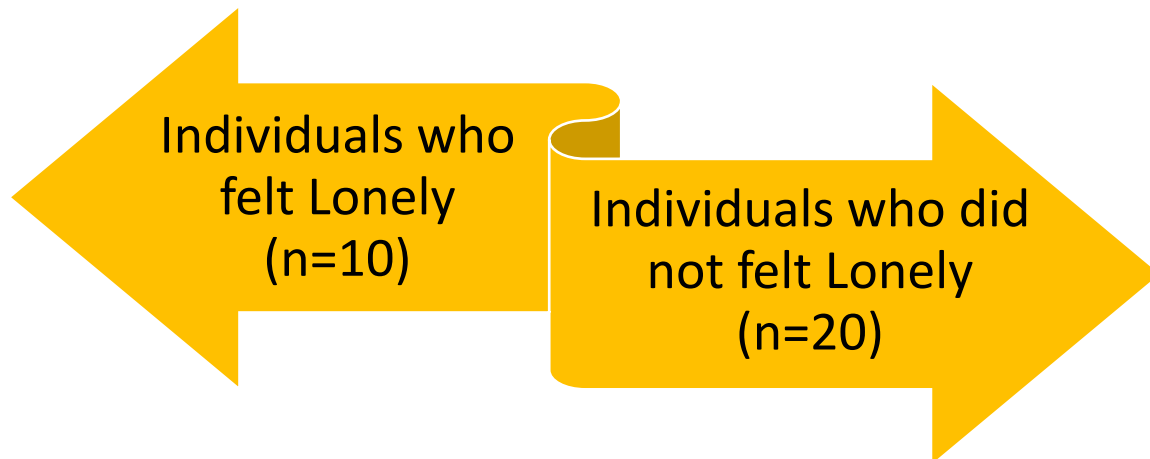
When the individuals who were in a relationship were asked if they felt lonely or not despite being with their partner, 20 of 30 committed participants, 11 women and 9 men, stated that they did not feel lonely when with their partner and that they were satisfied and happy in their relationship. In voice of a young man, "*Fortunately, I have not felt lonely whenever I am with her. We are in long distance and yet whenever I am with her virtually or in her presence, rather I feel safe and cared for.*" The reasons for this might be, that people who are more at satisfied and content with themselves might find more fulfilment in their relationships.

In contrast, ten out of thirty committed participants, four women and six men, reported feeling lonely despite being with their partners. A young woman stated, *"So yeah, there have been times when I have been lonely despite being in the relationship. Because my*

partner could not be there for me, again because of opportunities which were definitely important for the partner." One possible explanation for feeling lonely in a relationship is the presence of constant expectations or desires from one's partner. For instance, the young woman mentioned that her partner's absence due to important opportunities left her feeling lonely. This could be attributed to the tendency to rely solely on one's partner for emotional support and not acknowledging that everyone is separate and independent.

Moreover, when we look at the differences in number of responses between men and women, we can see that women felt more content than men, as indicated by the quantitative results, where women in relationships (M= 41.20 out of 48) scored the most in experiencing solitude then men.

Summary of the Qualitative Results

The summary of the qualitative results is as follows

Emerging Adults Understanding of Loneliness

Emerging Adults understood loneliness as a feeling of being alone or disconnected from others, both physically and emotionally, and was caused by fear of judgment or rejection. It led to negative emotions, such as feeling empty or suffocated, and can have harmful effects on both mental and physical wellbeing. Individuals experienced loneliness when they feel a lack of fulfilment within themselves, making it difficult to connect with others.

Perceptions of Emerging Adults on Loneliness/ Solitude

Solitude was perceived positively by participants as a beneficial experience that allowed for introspection and personal growth. Solitude also gave a break from social demands and the constant need to interact with others, allowing individuals to rest and restore their energies. Loneliness, on the other hand, was linked to negative impacts on mental health, such as increased anxiety, overthinking, and difficulty focusing on the present moment.

Do Emerging Adults feel Lonely Despite being busy?

Majority of the participants agreed they can feel lonely despite being busy, with a lack of someone to talk to being the main reason. Another theme that emerged was that individuals who are not satisfied with their work may felt lonely even when they are busy, due to a constant desire to improve and a struggle to find fulfilment in their tasks. However, 20 respondents disagreed that people could feel lonely when they are busy, possibly due to being continuously surrounded by people and preoccupied with academia.

Emerging Adults Reasons for Experiencing Loneliness

Majority of the emerging adults experienced feeling lonely as a result of academic demands. These pressures stemmed from their parents' expectations or the nature of the field, which required them to isolate themselves in order to concentrate on their studies. Some individuals indicated a worry of being judged or misunderstood, which kept them from talking about their loneliness with others.

Emerging Adults' Ways of Dealing with Loneliness

Reading, religious practices, spending time with friends, and engaging in other activities such as working out, traveling, and discovering new areas were among the strategies used by participants to overcome loneliness. Instead of addressing the underlying issue, these coping mechanisms were used to distract the individuals from feeling lonely. These activities did provide some temporary comfort, but they did not provide a long-term solution to the problem.

Impact of social media on Loneliness

Most participants stated that social media could increase feelings of loneliness because of the curated and frequently unrealistic content and narratives presented. Constant exposure to these photos and people's lives could cause feelings of inadequacy and social

comparison. Several participants, however, agreed that social media may be a source of distraction and helpful information, creating a sense of connection and engagement that an individual's offline life may lack.

Do Committed Emerging Adults feel Lonely in Relationship?

Twenty participants said they did not feel lonely with their partner and were happy in their relationship, whereas ten said they felt lonely despite being in a relationship. The presence of constant expectations or desires from one's partner is one likely cause for feeling lonely in a relationship.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the study's major findings, beginning with looking at the gender differences in loneliness, followed by understanding the influence of academic pressures, social media, and relationship satisfaction on the experiences of solitude and loneliness, and finally shedding light on how perceptions can impact how an individual experiences loneliness.

"Loneliness occurs when you measure what you fear in yourself against the mysteries of the world. Solitude occurs when you measure the mysteries of the world against what you love in yourself."

~Keith Leonard

Gender Differences in Loneliness

The study aimed to investigate how emerging adults perceive and experience loneliness. The findings suggest that individuals' perceptions of loneliness vary and can be positive or negative, depending on their perceptions, (Cacioppo et al., 2006). The study also found that young women tend to feel lonelier than men. (Bhogle, 1991; Buecker. et. al., 2020; Nikollasise & Thorsen, 2014). The Interactionist Approach to Loneliness proposed by Weiss (1973) highlights that loneliness results from deficits like including social inclusion and attachments, which could explain why young women tend to feel lonelier than men. Women may have higher expectations of social inclusion and attachment in their relationships, making them more vulnerable to feelings of loneliness when those expectations are not met. However, when people in this age group have romantic partners, they hold a special place in the individual's lives, becoming an integral part of their daily routines. while building a strong intimate relationship with a partner is natural, it can also have unintended consequences on other areas of one's life like friendships and other social systems. This can lead to experiences in higher levels of loneliness. Therefore, men in relationships may not

seek social connections with friends due to prioritizing their romantic relationship, time constraints, and the expectation of their relationship as a primary source of social support. When one partner is prevented from spending time with friends or pursuing personal interests because of their partner's expectations, it can lead to feelings of frustration and loneliness. When couples have high expectations of each other, they may be disappointed or dissatisfied if their partner fails to meet these expectations. Societal expectations about masculinity can also make it difficult for men to express their emotions or seek help when they are lonely. Men may feel pressure to be self-sufficient and emotionally stoic, which can make it difficult for them to seek support from friends or partners when they are lonely or isolated.

Women's Experience of Loneliness

India is a nation that prioritizes social and familial ties highly. Women may experience a lack of personal space and the ability to be alone as a result of this culture, which can heighten feelings of loneliness. Women are often expected to prioritize their family and social responsibilities above their own personal needs and desires especially for women who may lack personal space and the freedom to pursue their own interests. This can involve managing household duties, caring for young children and elderly relatives, and taking part in social activities (Rao & Vijayalakshmi, 2004). Women might as a result lack the time or space to engage in their own interests or simply be by themselves with their thoughts. Women may experience absence of certain forms of interactions as suggested by Wiess in his interactionist approach. In addition, women in India frequently face gender-based expectations and societal norms that constrain their ability to move about freely. They may not be able to move around freely or make decisions about their own lives. Men in India, on the other hand, may have more opportunities to spend time alone or pursue their own interests because they are not subject to the same societal expectations and gender-based

norms. As a result, men may experience less loneliness than women. Overall, while Indian culture values family and social connections, it can also leave women feeling deprived of personal space and the freedom to be alone. This can lead to feelings of loneliness, which can have a negative impact on their mental and emotional well-being.

Nature of Competition in Academics

Competition in academics can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Reasons being, when the demand is so high and the pressure to succeed is stressful, people may feel obligated to isolate themselves in order to focus on their work, which can lead to social isolation and loneliness. Furthermore, the demands and nature of various fields of study can have an impact on loneliness. According to Hershner and Chervin (2014), some professions, such as medicine and law, are known to be extremely demanding and stressful, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. The nature of the work in these fields may also require individuals working alone for long periods of time, which can be isolating.

Academics as an Escape

On the contrary, academics work as a form of escape. Students can gain a sense of control and accomplishment by focusing their attention on a task with a clear goal and measurable progress. Academics as a coping mechanism, on the other hand, can be problematic if it becomes the only way for students to deal with their negative emotions. Flett et al. (2002) discovered that university students who reported high levels of loneliness were more likely to use avoidance coping strategies, such as distracting themselves with academic work, rather than addressing their feelings of loneliness directly. Overall, while academic work can provide some people with a sense of accomplishment and purpose, it can also contribute to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Students may also experience loneliness after completing their tasks and achieving their goals, which can lead them to turn

to their studies as a coping mechanism repeatedly. This can result in the neglect of other crucial facets of life, such as interpersonal relationships and self-care, which can worsen the feelings of loneliness.

Influence of Social Media

Another intriguing finding in the results was that loneliness and the influence of social networking sites were negatively correlated, indicating that college students felt lonely when the influence of social media was lower (Lin, et al., 2016). Students can use social media to connect with peers, share experiences, and participate in online social activities. Students may have fewer opportunities to engage in these types of social interactions without social media, leading to feelings of loneliness. This could be due to FOMO (The Fear of Missing Out) caused by not being on these social networking sites. The Fear of Missing out (FOMO) is a psychological phenomenon that describes the anxiety and distress that people feel when they perceive that others are having experiences or opportunities that they are not. This is especially true in the context of social networking sites, where people are exposed to curated representations of other people's lives that highlight their positive experiences and accomplishments. People who are not active on social networking sites might worry that they are skipping out on significant occasions or social interactions, as well as that they are not keeping up with the most recent events and trends. Feelings of social exclusion and disconnect may result from this. In addition, social media gives students a sense of acceptance and belonging because they might get likes, comments, and followers that help them feel accepted and validated in their social circles. Students might not receive this kind of social validation if it were not for social media, which could make them feel insecure or excluded from society (Hawi & Samaha, 2017)

Solitude and Relationship Satisfaction

For a long time, the benefits of solitude have been highly valued in Indian spiritual and cultural traditions. Solitude is essential for spiritual well-being, enlightenment, physical health, and personal growth. Individuals can reconnect with their inner selves and get a deeper knowledge of their purpose and function in the world by taking time for themselves and quieting their minds (Mokhtari et al., 2019). This can lead to feelings of contentment and calm, as well as opportunities for rest, reflection, and rejuvenation (Fong et al., 2018). This aligns with the existential approach to loneliness proposed by Moustakas (1961). According to this approach, loneliness arises from the realization that we are ultimately alone in life, and individuals can transcend their loneliness by embracing their situation and creating purpose and meaning in their lives. In the context of relationships, the findings of a study show that emerging adults experience solitude more frequently than loneliness, and this is reflected in their level of satisfaction in committed relationships. When individuals are content with being alone, they are more likely to seek out meaningful social interactions that align with their personal values and interests, which can have a positive impact on their relationships. Additionally, individuals who are secure about themselves and happy being alone are less inclined to depend excessively on their partners for emotional support or approval. Larson and Almeida (1999) revealed that individuals who reported experiencing more solitude also reported higher levels of satisfaction in their romantic relationships.

Figure 18

Conceptual Framework
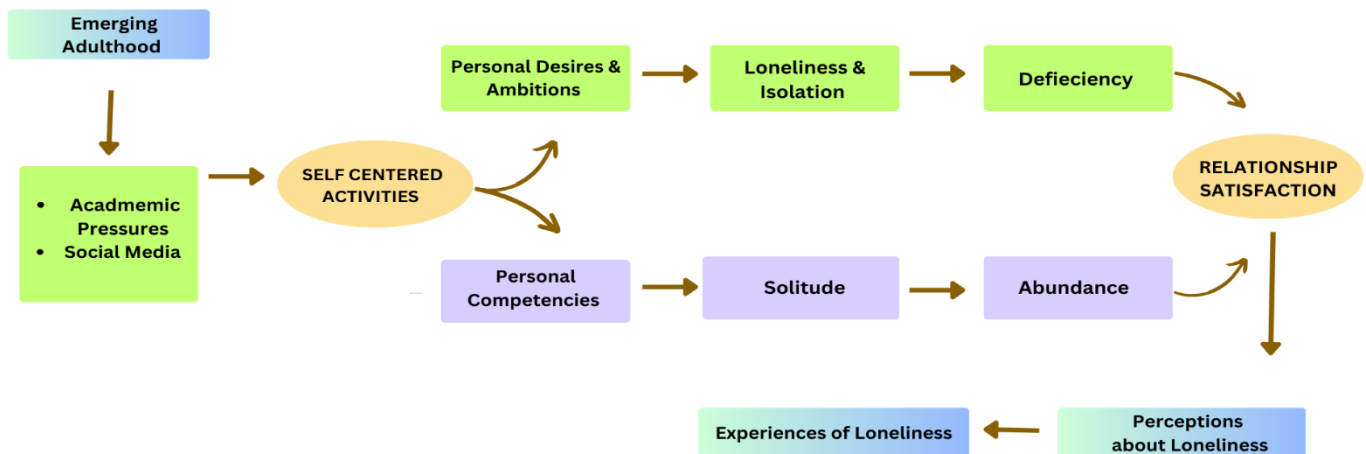
As can be seen in the figure 18, the study's findings are consistent with the conceptual framework, which claimed that social media's demands for constant comparison and competition are what motivate young adults' desires. Individuals felt disconnected, lonely, and isolated when their desires were not satisfied. In voice of a young woman, "*Because I have this thing where I want to do my best at whatever I do, which creates a competition with my own self. Yes! people do feel lonely despite being busy, because I have felt it. Because as I said I have this desire to do better than what I did, I am constantly behind something or the other. And when you are finally done with the tasks that were to achieved and finally sit back with yourself, you will realise that you are all alone.*" This indicated that the young woman's constant desire to accomplish more yet made her feel dissatisfied and alone.

However, the study also found that people who are secure in themselves and connected to others generally enjoy their solitary time because they are content with who they are. In other words, people are less likely to experience the negative impacts of social media

and its demands when they have a strong sense of self and a sense of comfort being alone themselves.

The study also discovered that a person's relationship satisfaction might be affected by experiences of loneliness and solitude. Women report high levels of satisfaction in their relationships, which is proof that individuals who experience solitude tend to have more fulfilling relationships. This is probably because people are more prone to seek out meaningful relationships when they are content in their solitude rather of relying on interpersonal interactions to make them feel better. In contrast, individuals who are isolated believed that their relationship is not secure enough.

The way an individual perceived loneliness largely determined how they felt. Individuals who experienced solitude's positive effects, such as enhanced self-awareness and independence, which improved their relationships. In contrast, people who perceived solitude negatively felt more isolated and detached, which had a negative effect on the satisfaction in their relationships.

Implications of the Study

This study offers valuable insights into the understanding and experiences of emerging adults with regards to loneliness / positive solitude and social media usage. The findings of this study highlight the importance of taking a more nuanced approach to understanding loneliness and its relationship with social media use, positive solitude, and relationship satisfaction among emerging adults. Rather than solely focusing on the negative aspects of loneliness, it is crucial to also recognize the potential benefits of positive solitude and to explore the complex relationship between social media use and loneliness. In addition, the study underscores the need to ensure that academic pursuits are not solely relied upon for social interaction and emotional fulfilment, as this can contribute to feelings of isolation and loneliness. The findings

from the study highlight the need for a holistic approach to well-being, including opportunities for positive solitude, healthy social relationships, and fulfilling careers to improve psychological health and address societal expectations about masculinity by promoting emotional expression and seeking help when needed. This implication has the potential to increase our understanding of how to improve emerging adults' psychological well-being in a more complex and effective manner.

Conclusion

This study gives an overview about how emerging adults understand and perceive loneliness and solitude. It also analysed the influence of social media and relationship satisfaction on loneliness and solitude. Loneliness is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including culture, societal expectations, and gender. Academic pressure and social responsibilities contributed to feelings of loneliness, on the other hand, social media also provided a source of connection, particularly for college students. Social media had both positive and negative effects on loneliness, depending on an individual's sense of self and perception of solitude. Those who perceived solitude positively experience enhanced self-awareness and independence, leading to more fulfilling relationships, while those who perceived it negatively felt more isolated and detached, affecting their relationship satisfaction. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a healthy relationship with social media, prioritize self-awareness, and foster meaningful relationships to combat loneliness and solitude. However according to the study, it can be stated that emerging adults tend to have moderate levels of loneliness but also tend to experience higher levels of solitude.

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Appendix A
Consent Form

Department of Human Development and Family Studies
Informed Consent Form

The Department of Human Development and Family Studies at The Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda respects the privacy and rights of all research participants and hence adopts clear ethical standards in conducting research.

Thank you for considering to be a research participant and we ensure the following:

- All participation is voluntary and no one is forced to be a part of the study. In case of children, permission is sought from their primary care takers.

- If, for any reason, during this study one does not feel comfortable, he/she can leave the study at any point of time.

- Participant identity is kept confidential.

- All information provided is strictly used only for academic purposes only.

- A note of gratitude and research summaries may be provided to the participants after the completion of the study.

- In case of sensitive topics, referrals may be provided to participants.

The following will provide you with information about the research/project that will help you in deciding whether you wish to participate.

Study Title: Loneliness among Emerging Adults: Influence of Social Media and Relationship Satisfaction

Researcher: Farha Memon
Research Guide: Dr Jigisha Gala

In this study, you will be asked to: Fill up the quantitative questionnaire and respond to qualitative Questions.

If you agree to participate, please be aware that you are free to withdraw at any point throughout the duration of the research/project without any penalty. If you have any concern and questions or do not wish to participate, please inform the researcher.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. All information will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated with any research findings.

Please indicate with your signature on the space below that you understand what participation in the study involves and agree to participate.

_____

    Signature of Participant

Appendix B

Quantitative Tool of the Study

❖ **Demographic Data**	
1.	Full Name: _____
2.	Contact Number: _____
3.	Date of Birth: _____
4.	Please select your age: ○ 18 ○ 19 ○ 20 ○ 21 ○ 22 ○ 23 ○ 24 ○ 25
5.	Gender: ● Male ● Female ● Other
6.	Name of the University/ College you are currently studying in _____
7.	What is your current level of education? ○ Diploma ○ Bachelors ○ Post Graduate Diploma

	o Post Graduate Degree (Masters) o Doctorate (PhD) o Other: _____
8.	What is your field of study? _____

❖ **Loneliness Scale**				
9.	Next to each statement, please select the option that best applies to you			

	"I often feel this way"	"I sometimes feel this way"	"I rarely feel this way	"I never feel this way"
I am unhappy doing so many things alone				
I have nobody to talk to				
I cannot tolerate being so alone				
I lack companionship				
I feel as if nobody really understands me				
I find myself waiting for people to call or write				
There is no one I can turn to				
I am no longer close to anyone				
My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me				
I feel left out				
I feel completely alone				

I am unable to reach out and communicate with those around me				
My social relationships are superficial				
I feel starved for company				
No one really knows me well				
I feel isolated from others				
I am unhappy being so withdrawn				
It is difficult for me to make friends				
I feel shut out and excluded by others				
People are around me but not with me				

❖ Positive Solitude Scale				
10. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I like carving out time to enjoy being by myself in a pleasant place/environment				
I enjoy carving out time for myself to look outside my house or gaze at the scenery				
I feel calmer when I choose to do some activities by myself, such as running, taking a walk or a hike				

Being by myself in nature makes me feel good				
When I am by myself, I can achieve the high level of focus that I need				
When I am stressed, having time by myself helps me clear my mind				
When I carve out time for myself, I enjoy being able to set my own pace				
Although I enjoy being in the company of others, occasionally I need time for myself				
When I am with myself, I enjoy listening to music that I chose, and to absorb myself in the music				
Even when I am in the presence of other people, I enjoy being by myself				
I can enjoy spending time with myself even when other people are around me				
When I carve out time for myself without anybody bothering me, I enjoy the quietness				

	❖ **Social Media Scale**
11.	Are you aware about social media? o Yes o No

12.	Please select the apps that you use
	
	   ○ Instagram
	   ○ Facebook
	   ○ Snapchat
	   ○ WhatsApp
	   ○ LinkedIn
	   ○ Twitter
	   ○ Telegram
	   ○ YouTube
	   ○ Netflix
	   ○ Prime
	   ○ Disney Hostar
	
	Mention if more: _____

13.	How Much time do you think you spend on social media?
	   ○ 1-2 hours
	   ○ 2-5 hours
	   ○ 5-7 hours
	   ○ More than 7 hours

14.	What is the number of the Instagram/ Facebook friends you have? _____
15.	On the Scale of 1-5 Mention how involved are you on these activities on social media

	1	2	3	4
Work and Education Information				
Contact and Basic Info				
Family and Relationships				
Details about you (Posting, Sharing, Reading Quotes)				
Life Events				

16.	Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I use social networking sites to become more sociable				

I use social networking sites to create my social identity				
I prefer using social networking sites to attending social gathering				
I use social networking sites for strengthening interpersonal relationships				
I use social networking sites to keep in touch with my relatives				
I use social networking sites to get information regarding current social events				
Social Media helps me to feel less lonely				
I use social networking sites to pass time when I am bored				
Social networking sites lets escape my worries				
I start using social networking sites when I have nothing better to do				
Social networking sites help me to express my emotions to others easily				
Social networking sites allow me to develop romantic relationship				
I use social networking sites to talk about my problems and get advice				
I use social networking sites to express my anger to others who will sympathize				
I use social networking sites to let others know I care about their feelings				

Social networking sites is part of my self-image				
Social networking sites portrays an image of me to others				
People can use social networking sites to judge me				
Social networking sites makes me cool among my peers				
Social networking sites informs others about me				
I use social networking sites to gain favourable approval among friends				
I use social networking sites to take part in activities				
Social networking sites allows me to communicate with my friends				
Social networking sites enables me to add new friends				
Social networking sites enables me to find more interesting people than in real life				
Social networking sites enables me to get through to someone who is hard to reach0				
Social networking sites allow me to find companionship				
I use social networking sites to see other people's pictures				
Influencers / Digital Creators have an impact on how I perceive my life				
Influencers/ Digital Creators Have an impact on my goals and aspirations				

I feel it is very important to be on a social media platform				
I feel the Fear of Missing out if I am not active on social media				
I feel sad seeing on social networks that people are happier than I am				
I feel distant from people when I see them happy in posts				
I only post photos or videos that I know my friends will like.				
When I start checking for updates, I find it hard to leave social networks				

	❖ Relationship Satisfaction Scale				
17.	Do you have a Romantic Partner? If yes, please fill the below questions. ○ Yes ○ No				
18.	Please indicate the degree of Happiness, all things considered, of your relationship. ○ Unhappy ○ A little Unhappy ○ Happy ○ Very Happy				
19.	Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.				
		Always Agree	almost Always Agree	almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
Amount of time spent together					
Making major decisions					
Demonstrations of affection					

20.	Next to each statement, please select the option that best applies to you.				
		All the Time	Most of the Time	Rarely	Never
	In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?				
	How often do you wish you had not gotten into this relationship?				
	Do you enjoy your partner's company?				
21.	Next to each statement, please select the option that best applies to you.				
		Not at all true	A little true	Mostly True	Completely true
	I still feel a strong connection with my partner				
	Our relationship is strong				
	My relationship with my partner makes me happy				
	I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner				
	I feel that I can confide in my partner about virtually anything				
	I have had second thoughts about this relationship recently				
	I really feel like part of a team with my partner				
	I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does				
22.	Next to each statement, please select the option that best applies to you.				
		Not At all	A little	Mostly	Completely
	How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?				

How well does your partner meet your needs?				
To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?				
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?				

Appendix C

Qualitative Tool of the Study

1. What is your understanding of loneliness, and how would you describe it in a few words to someone?

2. What is your typical college routine like? Do you experience academic pressures?

3. How many friends do you have, and how often do you feel comfortable expressing your emotions and feelings to them?

4. Have you ever felt isolated? How do you deal with it?

5. How active are you on social networking sites? Do you believe social media can help you prevent loneliness?

6. Do you believe social media has an impact on how you perceive loneliness, and if so, why?

7. How long have you been in a relationship with your partner?

8. Do you feel comfortable confiding in your partner and expressing your emotions to them?

9. Have you ever felt lonely even when you were with your partner?