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## PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FEELING OF LONELINESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE (SCIENTIFIC REVIEW)

**Abstract.** *This article examines the psychological characteristics of the feeling of loneliness among young people, the factors influencing its development, and its impact on their emotional and social well-being. The review compares the cognitive and the existential approaches to loneliness, distinguishes its emotional and social forms, and considers the role of self-esteem, of relationships with peers and of family support in its emergence. Alongside the classical works of Vygotsky, Erikson, Frankl, Kierkegaard, Jung, and Young and Weiss, the article also draws on the studies of Uzbek psychologists – Davletshin, G'oziyev and Karimova – and on contemporary empirical research into the relationship between social support and loneliness. Psychological approaches to reducing loneliness are also analysed. The review concludes that loneliness among young people cannot be explained through a single factor: it takes shape through the interaction of the social environment, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, the characteristics of communication and inner psychological experience.*

**Keywords:** *loneliness, young people, psychological state, social relationships, self-esteem, emotional loneliness, social loneliness, social support, self-awareness.*

## INTRODUCTION

Today, issues related to the psychological state of young people are among the most relevant topics. Especially during youth, a person experiences the processes of understanding their identity, making independent decisions, adapting to a new environment, and developing relationships with the people around them. During this

period, relationships with family, friends and peers are of great importance. Feeling understood and supported has a positive effect on a person's psychological state. Conversely, a lack of close relationships, or dissatisfaction with existing relationships, may lead to the emergence of a feeling of loneliness. Loneliness cannot be explained only by a person being physically alone: even when surrounded by many people, a person may feel lonely. L. S. Vygotsky emphasised the important role of the social environment and of relationships with the people around an individual in psychological development and in the formation of personality (Vygotsky, 1978). On the basis of his views, when understanding the emotional state of young people it is important to consider the social environment in which they live and their relationships with close people and peers. From this perspective, even if there are many people around a person, they may experience loneliness if they do not feel understood and accepted. Studying the feeling of loneliness among young people, identifying the factors influencing its development and determining ways of preventing such a condition are therefore important issues for psychology.

At present, that is, in the twenty-first century, adapting to the social environment, establishing relationships with peers and feeling oneself to be a part of society are important psychological issues for young people. Difficulties in communication, a lack of mutual understanding, or insufficient social support arising in these processes can lead to a feeling of loneliness among young people. The fact that young people today share their problems not with friends or family members but with rapidly developing artificial intelligence, and even form close attachments to it, demonstrates how relevant this topic is. Loneliness is manifested not only through being alone, but also through emotional dissatisfaction with existing relationships and through feeling misunderstood or distanced from others. Studying the psychological characteristics of loneliness among young people, the individual and social factors influencing its development, and ways of preventing such conditions therefore has significant scientific and practical relevance today.

Loneliness is one of the concepts that have long been studied in psychology. Researchers have examined the origins of loneliness, its impact on a person's psychological state and ways of reducing it from various perspectives. The social-psychological approach plays an important role in studying loneliness among young people: according to its representatives, loneliness is associated with a discrepancy

between a person's existing relationships and their need for emotional closeness. The works of Uzbek researchers likewise consider the social environment, interpersonal relationships and a person's attitude towards themselves as important factors in the psychology of youth. M. G'. Davletshin, in studying the psychological characteristics of different age periods, pays attention to the connection between personality development, the social environment and relationships with the people around the individual (Davletshin et al., 2004:130). In this regard, how young people feel in a social environment and how they establish relationships with others may also affect their emotional state. E. G'. G'oziyev analysed the psychological characteristics, needs, emotional states and individual aspects of personality from a general psychological perspective (G'oziyev, 2002). His views indicate the need to take into account the individual's inner experiences and personal characteristics when studying loneliness among young people.

L. S. Vygotsky, in his cultural-historical approach, connects the development of the human psyche with social relationships: in his view, psychological functions initially develop within social relationships and later become internal processes of the individual (Vygotsky, 1983:145). If this view is connected with loneliness, the experience a person gains through communication with others may continue in their thoughts and experiences even when they are alone. Vygotsky also pays particular attention to the development of self-awareness and reflection during adolescence (Vygotsky, 1982:138–142). During this period young people begin to think more about who they are, about their place among others and about their personal views. Short-term and voluntary solitude may therefore in some cases help self-understanding; prolonged social isolation, on the contrary, may intensify emotional difficulties. Loneliness during adolescence should thus be viewed not only as a negative condition, but also as a process in which social experience, inner experiences and self-awareness are interconnected. V. M. Karimova, in her studies on social psychology, focuses on the relationship between the individual and society, on communication and on the socio-psychological characteristics of the individual (Karimova, 1994). These views show that young people's relationships with those around them and their adaptation to the social environment are important for understanding the feeling of loneliness. Summarising the views set out above, Uzbek psychology considers the social environment, communication, interpersonal relationships and the individual psychological characteristics of personality as interconnected. It is therefore

appropriate to study loneliness among young people not through a single factor, but on the basis of the unity of the individual's internal state and their social relationships.

## MAIN PART

### *The psychological content of the concept of loneliness*

There are several psychological approaches to explaining the phenomenon of loneliness, and they reveal different aspects of this condition. In particular, the cognitive and existential approaches make it possible to explain that loneliness is connected not only with external social relationships but also with a person's inner experiences.

According to the cognitive approach, as set out in the views of D. Young and R. Weiss, loneliness is associated with the subjective perception of a discrepancy between a person's existing social relationships and the relationships they expect or feel they need (Young & Weiss, 1994). In other words, having many people around does not mean that a person will not experience loneliness. If existing relationships do not satisfy a person's emotional needs, they may feel lonely even among others. In this process, how a person evaluates social situations is also important. For example, perceiving peers' attitudes negatively, evaluating oneself as inferior to others, or experiencing communication difficulties more strongly may increase the experience of loneliness. In this regard the cognitive approach connects loneliness not only with external circumstances but also with how a person perceives those circumstances.

The existential approach, in turn, highlights the internal and spiritual-psychological aspects of loneliness. V. Frankl pays great attention to the human need to search for the meaning of life and to understand the significance of one's existence (Frankl, 2006). In S. Kierkegaard's views, self-understanding, personal choice and inner experiences occupy an important place (Kierkegaard, 1980). From this perspective, a person may feel inner loneliness even when surrounded by loved ones, if they cannot share their experiences with others or encounter difficulties in understanding their place in life. During youth the desire to understand oneself, to define future goals and to find one's place in society becomes stronger; the inner experiences of loneliness are therefore particularly important during this period. In general, the cognitive approach reveals the aspect of loneliness related to the perception of social relationships, while the existential approach reveals the aspects related to the individual's inner world and self-

understanding. It is therefore appropriate to study loneliness among young people on the basis of the unity of the external social environment and the individual's internal psychological characteristics.

Loneliness is associated with a person's perception of a discrepancy between their need for relationships with other people and their existing relationships. In this condition a person may feel misunderstood, unnecessary or separated from others. One of the main characteristics of loneliness is its subjectivity: the same situation may affect different people in different ways. One student, for example, may enjoy spending free time alone, while another may feel very uncomfortable if they do not communicate with their friends. Loneliness cannot therefore be explained simply as "there are no people around". For a person, the meaning and quality of relationships may be more important than their number. Another characteristic of loneliness is that it may also affect a person's thinking and behaviour: during prolonged loneliness a person may perceive other people's behaviour more negatively or become more afraid of rejection. This is especially important for young people, because feeling accepted and needed in society also affects their attitude towards themselves.

### ***Emotional loneliness among young people***

Emotional loneliness is more evident when a person's need for close and trusting relationships is not satisfied. A person may have many acquaintances, for example, but if they cannot talk about their inner feelings with anyone, they may feel emotionally lonely. Such a situation may occur frequently among young people. When a student enters a new university, for instance, they meet many new people, but it takes some time to find someone with whom they feel close. In emotional loneliness, thoughts such as "no one understands me" or "I cannot tell anyone about my problems" may arise. Such thoughts may not always fully reflect the real situation, but they show how the person is feeling. In psychological support, therefore, in addition to considering how many people are around young people, it is also necessary to explore with whom they feel free and safe.

### ***Social loneliness and relationships with peers***

Social loneliness is related to a person's feeling of belonging to a particular group or social environment. For young people such an environment is manifested in relationships with classmates, friends, family and other peers. E. Erikson explains the period of youth in terms of the conflict between intimacy and isolation: according

to him, during this period people strive to establish close, trusting and meaningful relationships with others (Erikson, 1968). From this perspective, a young person's inability to establish close relationships with peers, or their feeling of being separated from the group, may intensify the experience of social loneliness.

In Uzbek psychology, attention has also been paid to the individual's social environment and relationships with the people around them. M. G'. Davletshin, in describing the psychological characteristics of different age periods, emphasises aspects of personality development related to the social environment (Davletshin et al., 2004:130). This view is important for understanding young people's relationships with peers and how they perceive their place within a group. E. G'. G'oziyev, meanwhile, discusses the psychological characteristics, emotional experiences and relationships of the individual with the environment from a general psychological perspective (G'oziyev, 2002). If we connect his views with our topic, it is necessary to take into account young people's inner experiences and individual characteristics when evaluating their relationships in the social environment. As mentioned above, social loneliness is not determined only by whether or not there are people around a person: a young person's sense of belonging to a group, their satisfaction with relationships with peers, and their feeling of being understood and accepted are also important.

### ***Loneliness and self-esteem***

A person's attitude towards themselves and their level of self-esteem are important in the formation of loneliness among young people. The evaluation a person gives to their abilities, personal qualities and capabilities also affects their relationships with other people. C. G. Jung emphasises that self-awareness and the understanding of one's inner experiences play an important role in psychological development (Jung, 1966). On the basis of this view it can be determined that how young people perceive themselves and understand their personal characteristics also affects their relationships with peers. E. G'oziyev emphasises that the social environment and relationships with other people are important in the development of personality and in the process of self-awareness (G'oziyev, 2002). If we connect this idea with loneliness, a person's self-evaluation and their relationships with those around them appear to be closely interconnected. In this process particular attention should be paid to the following aspects: self-confidence, the feeling of being accepted, and positive relationships with peers.

### ***Family and social support***

In the current period of developing social networks and the virtual world, the family continues to occupy an important place in the lives of the younger generation. The family is the closest social environment for young people, and relationships within it affect their emotional state and social adaptation. Especially during youth, understanding, attention and support from close people are among the factors that reduce the feeling of loneliness. In their research, Ren and Ji studied the relationship between social support and loneliness among adolescents and showed that young people with higher levels of support had relatively lower levels of loneliness (Ren & Ji, 2019:421–428). On this basis, when young people feel understood and accepted by their family and close people, it becomes easier for them to overcome social difficulties.

The topic of family support can be examined in greater depth by dividing it into constructive and destructive forms. Constructive support is manifested through respecting young people's opinions, listening to them, encouraging them and allowing them to make independent decisions. Destructive relationships may involve excessive control, constant criticism, comparison or indifference. Such relationships may reduce young people's self-confidence and increase the likelihood of social withdrawal and of a stronger feeling of loneliness. M. G'. Davletshin, in describing the psychological characteristics of different age periods, emphasises the connection between personality development, the social environment and interpersonal relationships (Davletshin et al., 2004:130). If this view is connected with loneliness among young people, the psychological environment in the family and the attitudes of close people play an important role in how young people feel and in their adaptation to the social environment.

### ***The psychological consequences of loneliness***

Although the psychological consequences of loneliness are manifested differently in each person, the following conditions may be observed more frequently among young people: feeling separated from others, decreased self-confidence, increased negative thoughts, reduced interest in communication and social activity, emotional depression and inner tension. Loneliness affects not only a person's social relationships but also their inner psychological state. Prolonged loneliness may, over time, lead to emotional depression, a lack of self-confidence and withdrawal from communication. L. S. Vygotsky emphasises the important role of the social environment and of communication

with other people in psychological development (Vygotsky, 1999). On the basis of this view, insufficient communication with close people and withdrawal from social contacts may also affect a person's emotional state. V. M. Karimova emphasises the importance of interpersonal relationships and communication in a person's socio-psychological development (Karimova, 2012). If this idea is connected with loneliness among young people, the lack of close and sincere relationships may cause young people to feel separated from society and may reduce their social activity.

## CONCLUSION

Summarising the views of the scholars presented above shows that explaining loneliness among young people only through a reduction in social contacts is insufficient. Its development involves the interconnected influence of inner experiences, the level of self-awareness, relationships with peers and close people, and one's position within the social environment.

From Vygotsky's views it can be stated that loneliness may be understood in connection with both a person's external relationships and their internal psychological processes. Erikson shows that the formation of close and trusting relationships is important during youth. The views on age periods, personality and social relationships presented by Uzbek psychologists further complement this picture.

On this basis it can be stated that loneliness among young people is a complex phenomenon formed as a result of the interaction of the social environment, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, the characteristics of communication and inner psychological experience. When studying loneliness among young people, it is therefore important to pay attention not only to its negative consequences, but also to the personal and social factors that contribute to its emergence.

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