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### A study of relationship between feeling of loneliness and depression among elderly people

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#### Abstract

Population of aged people across the world is increasing rapidly due to advancement of medical facilities. The elderly population in India is ignoring population as they are known as nonproductive population. Further it is becoming more challenging for policy makers to manage these old age people and make them healthy and happy. Presently, the problem of loneliness and depression in the elderly is emerging as a social problem, which creates so many other mental health problems among elderly people. This article provides a theoretical framework for studying the relationship between feeling of loneliness and depression among the elderly people from the perspective of social problems. The Mental Health Perspective of the Elderly states that depression is closely related to feeling lonely. Therefore the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between feelings of loneliness and depression. In Kanpur district, data has been collected through standardized questionnaire from 300 men and women by random sampling method in urban and rural areas. Through this study, it was seen whether there is a positive and significant relationship between the feeling of loneliness and depression of the elderly people.

**Keywords:** Loneliness, depression, elderly people

#### Introduction

The population of India has reached above 130 crores and the population of the elderly is increasing at a very high pace but the condition of the elderly is deteriorating in the changing nature of the society. In today's era, where the youths are progressing in their life, the elderly people are struggling with loneliness in the last phase of their life. The pain of caring for single parent and their loneliness is increased even becoming more worst. The elderly feel lonely, empty and neglected and due to weak mood they are unable to establish relationships with each other and their loneliness gradually turns into depression. Oliveira Letícia Menezes de, Ribeiro Gérson da Silva (2020) Conducted a study on, the increase in life expectancy and the percentage increase in the older population are related to the reduction in quality of life and social life due to the biopsychosocial changes inherent to the aging process.

Loneliness in mankind has been understood as a gap between actual and required social relationships. The problem of the elderly is a social and universal problem. Due to the loss of physical ability and aging of the elderly, various types of diseases have come under attack. The biggest problem among the elderly is the deterioration of health. Loneliness and depression have some characteristics in common, so that when one of these conditions develops in older adults, another is stimulated. Thus, loneliness is a major risk factor for the development of depression, just as depression is an aggravating factor for loneliness in older adults.

Old age is being considered as a disease by most of the young people which is not good for a cultured society. Elderly people often lose their active role, they play a passive role and enter into loneliness which makes them feel inadequate. Loneliness in the elderly also significantly affects mental health. This leads to loneliness, over thinking, fear, anxiety and depressive thinking. It also increases the tendency of negative thinking in the elderly. In today's run-of-the-mill life, the some people are neglecting their duties towards the elderly and those elderly finally left alone and unattended. The dependence of elderly parents on their children is visible in a large population in our country. Elderly parents suffer from loneliness and depression in the absence of their children, and to a large extent loneliness and depression are related to each other.

Nitin B Raut (2014) <sup>[1]</sup> - Conducted a study on, To study loneliness, depression and coping mechanism and the relationship between these factors in depressed and non-depressed elderly.

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Cross sectional study was done on 46 depressed and 48 non-depressed elderly were assessed clinically and using Geriatric Depression Scale-Short form [GDS-SF], loneliness scale, and brief cope scale. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS 20 software. Mean GDS scores, mean loneliness (emotional and social) scores of depressed patients were higher than that of non-depressed, and this difference was found to be statistically significant [GDS:  $t = 14.33, p < 0.001$ , loneliness Score:  $t = 7.23, p < 0.001$ ]. Self-distraction (mal-adaptive-passive) was the most commonly used coping mechanism in depressed group, while in the non-depressed group active coping (adaptive) was most common coping mechanism. Loneliness (emotional as well as social subscale) was a significant predictor of depression in both depressed and non-depressed group ( $Beta = .714, p < 0.001$ ) and ( $Beta = .629, p < 0.001$ ) and predicted 51% and 39% variance in depression respectively. Loneliness appeared as a distinct factor which seems to have a temporal and synergistic relationship with depression. Use of more adaptive coping mechanisms is associated with decrease in loneliness and depression while use of maladaptive coping mechanism is associated with decreased depression and loneliness in elderly. Loneliness is an important distinct factor in predicting depression in elderly. Coping mechanisms used, also affects loneliness and depression significantly.

Keeping the above facts in mind the present study was conducted to entitled "A Study of Relationship between Feeling of Loneliness and Depression Among Elderly People" to investigate the relationship between feelings of loneliness and depression among elderly people of Kanpur district. This article provides a theoretical framework for studying the relationship between feeling of loneliness and depression among the elderly people from the perspective of social problems.

### Methodology

In the present study, descriptive research design was used to find out the relationship between loneliness and depression among older people in Kanpur city. Researcher used survey method to collect relevant information for research. In the present study Geriatric Depression Scale was used to access the depression of elderly people and revised UCLA Loneliness Scale was used to access the feeling of loneliness of elderly people. A sample of 300 elderly male and female respondents in the age group of more than 60 years, both from urban and rural areas, was selected randomly from Kanpur district.

### Result and Discussion

**Table 1:** Correlations between feeling of loneliness and depression among the elderly people

Respondents	N	Mean		SD		Person Correlation
		Feeling of Loneliness	Depression	Feeling of Loneliness	Depression	
Rural Areas	150	37.68	4.40	16.01	3.62	.913**
Urban areas	150	35.58	4.36	14.91	3.46	.902**
Total	300	36.63	4.38	15.48	3.53	.906**

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The 'person correlation' was used to explore the association between feelings of loneliness and depression in elderly people. The results from the above table showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between feelings of loneliness and depression among all respondents from rural and urban areas at the 0.01 significance level. Thus, the results showed that the respondents who had depression also had feelings of loneliness, on the other hand it showed in the present study that the feeling of loneliness was the main cause of depression.

Many of the respondents in this research had feelings of loneliness, but they did not have depression. The main reason for these types of research finding was the nature of loneliness among the elderly people, their spiritual behavior and some other factors like daily practice of yoga, meditation, exercise etc.

### Conclusion

It is concluded from the study that there is a positive and significant correlation between feelings of loneliness and depression among all respondents from rural and urban areas at the 0.01 significance level. Thus, the results showed that the respondents who had depression also had feelings of loneliness

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