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Analysis of Social and Emotional Loneliness According to Glasser’s Basic Needs

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The purpose of this study is to examine the social and emotional loneliness of university students based on the five basic needs set by Glasser. The Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale and University Students Basic Needs Scale were used in this study. A total of 371 students, 206 (55.5%) female and 165 (44.5%) male, who were studying in the Faculty of Education, participated in the study. Correlation, kurtosis, skewness values, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients, t-test, simple and multiple regression analyses were conducted throughout the study. According to the study findings, social and emotional loneliness does not differ according to gender. It was observed that survival, power, freedom, and fun, which are among the basic needs, do not predict social and emotional loneliness. Only love and belonging were observed to predict both social and emotional loneliness.

Keywords: social and emotional loneliness, love and belonging, basic needs, Glasser.



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Introduction

The concept of loneliness is an emotional state which has been present since the first history of mankind, a crucial variable which researchers have emphasized. According to Peplau and Perlman (1982), loneliness is a negative state which emerges as individuals become aware of the difference between their current social relationship and that which they desire. According to Eskin (2001), although there are many definitions for loneliness, the fact that it agonizes people is a common factor in each. As for Burger (2006), if an individual is content with having very few relationships with other people, then he or she will not feel lonely. On the other hand, the need for more and closer friendships although the individual has a high number of friends, can cause the individual to feel lonely. Studies have underlined that loneliness is related to depression (Arslantas & Ergin, 2011; Panicker & Sachdev, 2014), anxiety (Ginter, Glauser, & Richmond, 1994; Hamama, Ronen, & Feigin, 2000), cognitive distortion (Hamamci & Duy, 2007), suicide (Batigun, 2005, 2008), alienation (Atli, Keldal, & Soner, 2015), and despair (Batigun, 2005).

When the literature for loneliness is considered, researchers examined loneliness as loneliness in children (Duyan, Var, & Kilic, 2015; Kaya, 2005; Ozturk, 1997), loneliness in adolescents (Eskin, 2001; Kilinc & Sevim, 2005; Yildiz & Duy, 2014; Gencoglu, Topkaya, Sahin, & Kaya, 2016), loneliness in university students (Arslan, Hamarta, Ozyesil, & Saygin, 2011; Shieh & Demirkol, 2014; Ceyhan & Ceyhan, 2011; Cecen, 2007, 2008), and loneliness in the elderly (Akgul & Yesilyaprak, 2015; Softa, Ozturk, Dindas, & Gocmen, 2015).

Weiss (1973) delineated loneliness into two groups; as social loneliness and emotional loneliness. Emotional loneliness is due to the absence of close attachment relationship. Social loneliness is due to the deficiencies in social integrity. Social loneliness motivates individuals to participate in groups or activities. Emotional loneliness drives individuals to seek for a close, direct relationship. According to Russell, Cutrona, Rose, and Yorka (1984), social loneliness arises due to being dissatisfied with friendship relationships; whereas emotional loneliness arises due to being dissatisfied with romantic relationships.

One other variable of the study is basic needs. The basic needs variable refers to the five basic needs Glasser details in the Choice Theory, namely the needs of survival, power, fun, freedom, and love and belonging (Glasser, 1998). Motivation and actions of people are designed to meet one or several of the basic needs within the genetic structures (Brickell & Wubbolding, 2000). The survival need consists of needs such as food, air, security, shelter, heat, health, and breeding. The power need consists of achievement, competence, self-respect, pride, recognition and being important (Frey & Wilhite, 2005). The need to gain power refers to making decisions and taking responsibility (Yorgun & Voltan-Acar, 2014). Love and belonging need consists of factors such as being together with other people, being cared about, being in cooperation (Glasser, 2001), and being close to the opposite sex (Fall, Holden, & Marquis, 2004). Glasser assumes the love and belonging need to be the most prominent. He states that people need to be together with other people so as to meet their other needs (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2004). The freedom need consists of needs such as independency, autonomy, making choices, producing, explaining, expressing oneself freely, having enough space, exploring, not being restricted while making choices, and free will (Frey & Wilhite, 2005). The freedom need can sometimes be in conflict with the belonging need. While individuals meet their belonging need by joining groups such as

family, friends, religion etc., and this can prevent their freedom need to be met (Yorgun & Voltan-Acar, 2014). According to Glasser (1998), individuals worry about their freedom when their freedom is threatened. The fun need is a genetic reward for learning (Glasser, 1998). When these needs are met, the individual not only learns about himself and other people, but also enters into satisfying interpersonal relationships (Fall et al., 2004). The fun need can also consist of many daily experiences such as laughing, joking, sports activities, reading and collecting. These five needs are met based on peoples' perceptions and pictures of their minds (Sharf, 2014).

The choice theory underlines that people are not empty boxes waiting to be motivated by external forces (Corey, 2005). According to the choice theory approach, the most important element which indicates the individuals' feeling of happiness or sorrow is the extent to which they meet their basic needs (Turkdogan & Duru, 2011). The choice theory asserts that an individual who feels uneasy has at least one need that is not being met (Corey, 2005). With this respect, the purpose of this study is to examine the social and emotional loneliness of university students based on these five basic needs. Thus, the following questions were explored for the study.

- Do emotional loneliness levels of university students differ according to gender?
- Does the survival need predict social and emotional loneliness levels of university students?
- Does the power need predict social and emotional loneliness levels of university students?
- Does the love and belonging need predict social and emotional loneliness levels of university students?
- Does the freedom need predict social and emotional loneliness levels of university students?
- Does the fun need predict social and emotional loneliness levels of university students?

Methodology

Information on the participants, data collection instruments and the research process are given in this section.

Correlational research model was used in this study. Correlational research model aims to determine the relationship between two or more variables and obtain clues about cause and effect (Buyukozturk, Kilic-Cakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2014). A total of 371 students, 206 (55.5%) female and 165 (44.5%) male, who were studying in the Faculty of Education during the 2015-2016 fall semester participated in the study.

Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale (SELSA-S): The original scale was developed by DiTommaso, Brannen, and Best (2004), and adapted into Turkish by Cecen (2007). The 15-item scale is a Likert-type self-evaluative scale ranging between "It totally doesn't fit me" (1) and "It totally fits me" (7). The scale consists of three sub-dimensions. Emotional loneliness is evaluated through the loneliness in family and romantic relationship sub-scales, social loneliness is evaluated through the loneliness in social relationships sub-scale. According to the validity tests (factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and similar and different scale validity) reported by Cecen (2007), the scale has a structure in Turkish culture very similar to

the original form. According to the reliability tests regarding emotional loneliness, the internal consistency coefficient for the romantic sub-dimension was 0.83, for the family sub-dimension it was 0.77, and for the social loneliness sub-dimension it was 0.74. In this study, the internal consistency coefficient for social loneliness was .71, for the romantic loneliness sub-dimension it was .73, and for the family sub-dimension it was also .73.

University Students Basic Needs Scale (USBNS): The scale was developed by Turkdogan and Duru (2012). The 33-item scale is a seven Likert-type self-evaluative scale, ranging between "I totally disagree" (1) and "I totally agree" (7). The five sub-dimensions of the scale are *Survival, Power, Fun, Freedom, and Love and Belonging*. According to reliability tests, the internal consistency coefficient was .77 for Survival, .77 for Power, .84 for Fun, .78 for Freedom, and .76 for Love and Belonging. The internal consistency coefficient in this study was .74 for Survival, .72 for Power, .82 for Fun, .72 for Freedom, and .77 for Love and Belonging.

Personal information form, SELSA-S and USBNS were used as the data collection instruments for the study. Participants filled in the data collection instruments in the classrooms arranged for the study, based on the volunteer principle. Correlation, kurtosis, skewness values, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients, t-test, simple and multiple regression analyses were conducted in order to analyze the data.

Findings

In this section, social and emotional loneliness is examined based on gender. In addition, the relationship between social and emotional loneliness with the five basic needs are assessed, and results given for the multiple regression, which was conducted to examine whether or not the five basic needs predict social and emotional loneliness.

When social and emotional loneliness was examined according to gender, no significant differences were observed both for social ($t_{369}=-1.010$; $p>.05$), and emotional ($t_{369}=-1.249$; $p>.05$) loneliness.

Table 1. Relationship between social-emotional loneliness and the five basic needs, skewness and kurtosis values

	1.SL	2. EL	3. SU	4. P	5. F	6. FR	7. LB
1	1						
2	.39*	1					
3	-.05	-.06	1				
4	-.08	-.13**	.15*	1			
5	-.12**	-.09	.15*	.34*	1		
6	-.11**	-.12**	.15*	.33*	.43*	1	
7	-.39*	-.19*	.15*	.21*	.29*	.11**	1
Skewness	.148	-.182	-.030	-.769	-.496	-.431	-.969
Kurtosis	-.801	-.824	-.665	.215	-.192	.256	.168

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$ SL=Social Loneliness, EL=Emotional Loneliness, S=Survival, G=Power, F=Fun, FR=Freedom, LB=Love and Belonging

According to Table 1, social loneliness has a negative and low level relationship with fun ($r=-.12$, $p<.01$) and freedom ($r=-.11$, $p<.01$) variables, a negative and moderate level relationship with the love and belonging variable ($r=-.39$, $p<.05$), and a positive and

moderate level relationship with emotional loneliness ($r=.39$, $p<.05$). Emotional loneliness was observed to have a negative and low level relationship with power ($r=-.13$, $p<.01$), freedom ($r=-.12$, $p<.01$), and love and belonging ($r=-.19$, $p<.05$) variables.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis results regarding social loneliness

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Social Loneliness	Constant	28.821	2.408		11.970	.000
	S	.017	.047	.018	.367	.714
	P	.028	.060	.025	.475	.635
	F	.010	.037	.015	.272	.786
	FR	-.062	.042	-.081	-1.475	.141
	LB	-.528	.068	-.392*	-7.712	.000*

$R=.396$, $R^2=.16$, Corrected $R^2=.15$

It is evident from Table 2 that by conducting multiple regression analysis, the extent to which social loneliness predicts survival, power, fun, freedom, and love and belonging can be determined. It was observed that the regression model is significant ($F(5-365)=13.567$; $p<.05$). According to analysis results, these variables (survival, power, fun, freedom, and love and belonging) explain 16% of social loneliness variance ($R=.396$, $R^2=.16$). However, the love and belonging variable ($\beta=-.392$, $p<.05$) was observed to significantly predict social loneliness, and survival, power, fun and freedom variables were observed not to be significant predictors.

Table 3. Love and belonging variable predicting social loneliness

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Social Loneliness	Constant	27.851	1.512		18.424	.000
	LB	-.524	.065	-.389	-8.113	.000

$R=.389$, $R^2=.15$, Corrected $R^2=.15$

According to Table 3, a simple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of love and belonging need on university students' social loneliness levels. It was observed that the regression model is significant ($F(1-369)=65.820$; $p<.05$). According to the simple regression analysis results, which was conducted to determine the effect of love and belonging variable –significant predictor of social loneliness– on social loneliness, the need for love and belonging explains 15% of social loneliness's total variance ($R=.389$, $R^2=.15$).

Table 4. Multiple regression analysis results regarding emotional loneliness

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Emotional Loneliness	Constant	49.037	4.266		11.494	.000
	S	-.021	.084	-.013	-.250	.803
	P	-.143	.106	-.076	-1.349	.178
	F	.024	.065	.022	.369	.712
	FR	-.103	.075	-.080	-1.377	.169
	LB	-.383*	.121	-.170	-3.155	.002*

$R=.225$, $R^2=.05$, Corrected $R^2=.04$

It is evident from Table 4 that by conducting multiple regression analysis, the extent to which survival, power, fun, freedom, and love and belonging variables predict emotional loneliness was determined. It was observed that the regression model is significant ($F(5-365)=3.897$; $p<.05$). According to analysis results, these variables (survival, power, fun, freedom, and love and belonging) explain 5% of social loneliness variance ($R=.225$, $R^2=.05$). However, the love and belonging variable ($\beta=-.17$, $p<.05$) was observed to significantly predict social loneliness, and survival, power, fun, and freedom variables were observed not to be significant predictors.

Table 5. Love and belonging variable predicting emotional loneliness

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Emotional Loneliness	Constant	41.701	2.690		15.503	.000
	LB	-.429	.115	-.191	-3.734	.000

$R=.191$, $R^2=.04$, Corrected $R^2=.03$

According to Table 5, a simple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of love and belonging need on university students' emotional loneliness levels. It was observed that the regression model is significant ($F(1-369)=13.943$; $p<.05$). According to the simple regression analysis results, which was conducted to determine the effect of love and belonging variable –significant predictor of emotional loneliness– on emotional loneliness, the need for love and belonging explains 4% of emotional loneliness's total variance ($R=.191$, $R^2=.04$).

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, social and emotional loneliness levels of university students studying in the Faculty of Education were examined with regards to gender. In addition, whether or not social and emotional loneliness is predicted by the five basic needs set by William Glasser (1998), survival, power, fun, freedom, and love-belonging were analyzed. The discussion process was carried out based on the findings of the study and suggestions were made.

According to the study result, emotional and social loneliness levels of university students do not significantly differ with regards to gender. This result is in line with various study results in the literature (Bulus, 1997; Izgar, 2009; Mahon, Yarcheski, & Yarcheski, 1994). There are studies in the literature which indicate that loneliness is in favor of males (Amil & Bozgeyikli, 2015; Deniz, Hamarta, & Ari, 2005; Duyan et al., 2008; Erozkhan, 2004). There are also studies in the literature indicating that it is in favor of females (Gurses, Merhametli, Sahin, Gunes, & Acikyildiz, 2011; Kutlu, 2005). According to a meta-analysis study on loneliness conducted by Mahon, Yarcheski, Yarcheski, Cannella, and Hanks (2006), gender has a profound effect on loneliness. According to a meta-analysis study conducted by Pamuk, Atli, and Kis (2015), which examined the theses on loneliness, gender was observed to have an insignificant effect in favor of males.

According to another result, only the love and belonging need predicts university students' state of social loneliness ($\beta=-.392$, $p<.05$). According to the simple regression analysis results, which was conducted to determine the effect of love and belonging variable –significant predictor of social loneliness– on social loneliness, love and belonging explains 15% of social loneliness's total variance ($R=.389$, $p<.05$). Because there is a negative

relationship between social loneliness and love and belonging, social loneliness levels increase in students when their need for love and belonging is not met. According to Weiss (1973), social loneliness emerges due to the following deficits. The study results support this opinion. The state of social loneliness increases when the love and belonging needs of individuals are not met. According to Baumeister and Leary's (1995) belonging hypothesis, people have a strong drive to create and sustain at least minimum level persistent, positive and important interpersonal relationships. According to De Jong Gierveld, Van Tilburg, and Dykstra (2006), the opposite of loneliness is belonging and close relationships. Peplau and Perlman (1982) state that the most accurate and satisfying solution in coping with loneliness is enhancing social relationships.

According to another result of the study, only the love and belonging need predicts university students' state of emotional loneliness ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .05$). According to the simple regression analysis results, which was conducted to determine the effect of love and belonging variable –significant predictor of emotional loneliness– on emotional loneliness, love and belonging explains 4% of emotional loneliness's total variance ($R = .191$, $p < .05$). Because there is a negative relationship between emotional loneliness and love and belonging, emotional loneliness in students increases when their need for love and belonging is not met. It is evident that emotional loneliness emerges due to the lack of satisfaction in close and romantic relationships (Russell et al., 1984; Weiss, 1973). According to Glasser (1975), the need for love and belonging, which is a predictor of emotional loneliness, proceeds from friendship to loving one's mother, family, and spouse. Glasser's statement indicates that emotional loneliness increases when individuals' needs to love their mothers, family and spouse are not met. This statement is in line with the study results. According to Glasser (1998), people who don't have close relationships are almost always lonely and feel bad.

From birth to elderhood, each person has a need to be loved and cared about. This is true for both families and other groups. Showing love to others and being cared about are crucial components for successful growth and development (Fuller, 2015). According to Glasser (2000), an individual needs to interact with people in order to meet his other needs. This statement indicates that meeting the need for love and belonging has a crucial role in meeting the other four needs. According to Heinrich and Gullone (2006), failing to meet the need for belonging causes states such as loneliness in people.

The following suggestions were made based on the findings of the study:

- Group guidance activities can be practiced to increase university students' awareness for social and emotional loneliness;
- Individual or group counseling can be provided for individuals experiencing social and emotional loneliness; and
- Group guidance activities can be carried out to increase university students' awareness on the need for belonging and love.

Notes

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