INVESTIGATION OF LONELINESS LEVELS OF FOREGN STUDENTS IN TERMS OF SOME VARIABLES

BAZI DEĞİŞKENLERDE YABANCI UYRUKLU ÖĞRENCİLERİN YALNIZLIK DÜZEYLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ

Doç. Dr. Ercümend ERSANLI

Ondokuz Mayıs University, Faculty of Health Sciences /Social Work, Samsun / TÜRKEY, ORCID: 0000-0003-4840-3629

Arş. Gör. Volkan DURAN

Ondokuz Mayıs University, Department of Education Programme and Education, Samsun / TÜRKEY, ORCID: 0000-0003-0692-0265

ÖZET

Amaç: Samsun'da uluslararası öğrencilerin yalnızlık düzeylerinin bazı değişkenlere göre araştırılması amaçlanmıştır. **Desen:** Bu çalışma ilişkisel tarama modeline göre hazırlanmıştır. Konular: Araştırmanın nüfusu 2015-2016 öğretim yılında Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi'nde eğitim gören uluslararası öğrencilerden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmanın örneklemini, Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi Türk Dili Eğitimi Merkezi'nde Türkçe derslerine katılan rasgele örnekleme ile belirlenen 60 uluslararası öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. **Ölçme Araçları:** Veri toplama araçları olarak "UCLA Yalnızlık Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. **Analiz:** Cinsiyet, ilişki durumlarına ve uluslararası öğrencilerin kardeşi sayılarına göre karşılaştırma için T testi analizi kullanılmıştır. **Bulgular:** Uluslararası Öğrenci Öğrencilerinin yalnızlığı, demografik değişkenlere göre incelenmiş, bu değişkenler açısından anlamlı bir farklılık bulunamamış, bu nedenle uluslararası öğrencilerin yalnızlık düzeyleri demografik değişkenlerden bağımsız olup, literatürde bu konudaki bulguları desteklemektedir. **Tartışma:** Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma yalnızlık düzeyinin demografik değişkenlerden bağımsız olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yalnızlık Düzeyi, Uluslararası Öğrenciler, Demografik Değişkenler

ABSTRACT

Objective: It is aimed to investigate loneliness levels of international students in Samsun according to some variables **Design:** This study was prepared according to the relational screening model. **Subjects:** The population of the research is constituted from international students studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University in 2015-2016 academic year. The sample of the research is composed of 60 international students determined by the random sampling who are participating in Turkish courses at Ondokuz Mayıs University Turkish Language Teaching Center. **Measurement Tools:** ""UCLA Loneliness Scale" were used as data collection tools. **Analysis:** According to gender and relationship status, as the number of siblings variables of international students and T-test analysis for comparison were used. **Conclusions:** When the level of loneliness of the İnternational Students students were examined according to demographic variables, no significant difference were found in regards to those variables. Thus, the loneliness levels of international students are independent from demographic variables. The literature also supports the findings of this study in that aspect. **Discussion:** In conclusion, this study shows that loneliness levels are independent of demographic variables.

Key words: Loneliness Level, İnternational Students, Demographic Variables

1. INTRODUCTION

Loneliness concept can be thought as a modern situation derived from urbanization, technology and new working conditions. Subject of loneliness can be seen in Greek myths. Jung and other researchers have expounded Prometheus's stealing fire from the Gods as figurative of his raising himself above and thus alienating himself from his fellow men (Süer, 2015). Loneliness refers to feeling distressed about the quantity or, more perhaps more importantly, the quality of one's social relationships (Baran, Baran, Maskan, 2015). Rook (1984), defined loneliness as an emotional pain when the individual is not understood by others, is left unfamiliar or rejected by them and / or because of the lack of suitable social partners to carry out the desired activities that offer opportunities to establish a sense of social integration and emotional closeness. Zilboorg (1938) separated the concepts of loneliness and being alone, and used the term "lonesome" to explain this. For him, the term "lonesome" represents a "normal" state of loneliness and a "transition state of the mind", which does not have a negative meaning. This situation is felt when a special person is not in his / her life for a short time or if a special person is lost. The feeling of loneliness is a stifling, heavier and long-lasting experience. According to Zilboorg, loneliness reflects the basic characteristics of narcissism, megalomaniac and animosity, and therefore loneliness has difficulty in exhibiting open-hearted behaviors, and behaves in such a way as to protect personal, childish feelings, and expect other people to praise him / herself (İmamoğlu 2008: 94). According to Geçtan (2014), loneliness is filled with negative emotions such as abandonment, exclusion, depression, insecurity, hopelessness, meaninglessness, unworthiness and anger, and he thinks that he is not worthy of anyone's love. The individual who is full of these negative emotions has difficulty in his / her social life.

People who used to become lonely due to physical reasons now became lonely due to psychological and social obstacles while being close more than ever. To illustrate, according to the report that was published by Jo Cox Commission in 2017 in England about loneliness, more than 9 million people feel frequently or always lonely and there exist evidence that this fact is worse than smoking 15 cigarettes a day.[1] Loneliness is caused by the mismatch of the social relationships of an individual and the ideals that the person perceives about them and that causes a psychologically disturbing situation (Ponzetti,1990). This definition of loneliness conceptualizes it as a multidimensional phenomenon. In that manner, there are three dimensions of loneliness. First is related to having an intimate connection and to the emotions of emptiness and to be left. So called "deprivation" component is the core of the concept. The second component states the time perspective (Do people see their loneliness as desperate or curable? Do they blame themselves for the situations they are or others in?) The third component consist of the emotional aspects such as sadness, sadness and shame, guiltiness, frustration and desperation (Gieveld, 1998).

Weiss (1973) put forward six social needs in a theoretical review of the foundations of loneliness, focusing on what people have gained from their relationships with others. These; attachment, social integration, reliable social commitment, help in stressful situations, value, physical and emotional support. Each of these needs arises in different relationships and it is not expected to meet all the needs in a single relationship (Weiss, 1973).

While explaining the experience of loneliness, Peplau and Perlman (1982) discuss manifestation of loneliness in different domains, mainly affective, motivational, cognitive and behavioral factors. Being less happy, less satisfied, more pessimistic, depressed and feeling empty are high correlates of loneliness in affective experience of it. In terms of motivational manifestations, Loneliness can either be a driving force to initiate social relationships or to diminish motivation for interpersonal contact. It is also asserted that lonely people are not able to concentrate on a certain task or focus their attention effectively in cognitive domain. They have negative attitude towards the self and others (Yalçınkaya, 2015).

Besides these, the level of loneliness of international students coming to Turkey due to various reasons has become issue of concern for the researchers. Trying to communicate with other people in a country they are not familiar with is a very troubling process for these individuals. Loneliness levels of individuals who have difficulty communicating can be expected to be high in line with this measure.

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[1] https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/17/world/europe/uk-britain-loneliness.html, Retrieved at: 04.04.18

Nowadays, individuals in society can be prejudiced toward and be distant from foreigners. People tend to communicate with the individuals in their own culture in their social relations. Many factors such as trust, belonging, cultural compatibility and being sociable in social relations are influential in such a structure. Even, students who study in universities in a different city than their hometown, may have social obstacles and feel lonely and do not know who they will go to when they have any problems. When we consider all of this, it is inevitable that the individuals who come to study from a different country suffer more from those kind of issues. When the situation is considered from a different point of view, the cultural values of the most of the international students and the cultural values of the Turkish society are quite different. While Turkish society has more protective and possessive values, it might be misinterpreted in the perspective of different cultural values . In this regard in this research, it is aimed to investigate loneliness levels of international students according to some variables.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was prepared according to the relational screening model that is obtained through comparison. The relational screening model is used to determine the coexistent change and/or the degree of it between two or more than two variables. Whether the groups that is created according to the relational model variable (independent) has caused a change in the other variable (dependent) is tried to be identified (Kardaş,2017).

In this sense, the life satisfaction of the international students were examined according to demographic variables. The population of the research is constituted from international students studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University in 2015-2016 academic year. The sample of the research is composed of 60 international students determined by the random sampling who are participating in Turkish courses at Ondokuz Mayıs University Turkish Language Teaching Center.

Table 1: General Distribution of Students in Sample in Terms of Gender

		Total
	Female	32
Gender	Male	28
	Total	60

"Life Satisfaction Scale" and "UCLA Loneliness Scale" were used as data collection tools. The UCLA (University of California Los Angeles Loneliness Scale) Loneliness Scale that was developed by Russel, Peoplau and Ferguson was first adapted to Turkish by Yaparel (1984) and later it was illustrated in multiple studies that it is a reliable assessment instrument.

Statistical package 17.0 program was used in the analysis of the data. Before parametric analyzes were performed, it was checked whether assumptions about normal distribution and variance homogeneity were met. It was determined that the obtained data were distributed normally. According to gender and relationship status, as the number of siblings variables of international students and T-test analysis for comparison were used.

3. FINDINGS

When the loneliness levels of international students was investigated according to gender, there found no significant difference in terms of loneliness levels. Since the values of t test are t(32) = -791, t(28) = -784,(sig.= 0.557 > 0.05), p < .05 in our analysis, it is understood that there is no significant difference between male and female students in terms of loneliness levels. (Table 2).

Table 2: The t-test Result of the International Students' Loneliness Levels According to Gender

	Gender	N	$\overline{x}$	SS	T-testi	Sig.(2-tailled)
UCLA	Female	32	43,0940	7,07270	-791	432
	Male	28	44,6430	8,09760	-784	437

Male students were found to have higher UCLA loneliness scores (x = 44,6430) than female students' UCLA loneliness scores (x = 43,0940). Loneliness level of male students is higher than loneliness level of female students but it is not in a significant level.

When the loneliness levels of international students was investigated according to relationship status, there found no significant difference in terms of loneliness levels. Since the values of t test are t(20) = 1,530, t (40) = 1,432, (sig.=0.660 > 0.05), p < .05 in our analysis, it is understood that there is no significant difference between the existence of the relationship of students in terms of loneliness levels. (Table 2).

Table 3: The t-test Result of the International Students' Loneliness Levels According to Relationship Status

	Relationship Status	N	$\overline{x}$	SS	T-testi	Sig.(2-tailled)
UCLA	**Have**	20	45,9000	8,43490	1,530	131
	Have not	40	42,7750	6,93370	1,432	162

Students having relationship having higher scores that the those having not. This may be due to the fact that the numbers of students who have not relationships is not proportional to the students who have relationships.

The level of loneliness of international students studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University did not show any significant difference according to the numbers of siblings they have (sig = 0.601> 0.05), p <0.05.

Table 4. The t-test Result of the International Students' Loneliness Levels According to Numbers of Siblings Students Have

The number of Siblings	N	$\overline{x}$	SS	T-testi	Sig
0-2	23	44,5650	5,65523	0,514	601
3-5	28	44,5000	9,78790		
6-10	9	44,9000	3,20713		
Total	60	43,8170	7,54310		

4. DISCUSSION

When the level of loneliness of the İnternational Students students were examined according to demographic variables, no significant difference were found in regards to those variables. Thus, the loneliness levels of international students are independent from demographic variables. The literature also supports the findings of this study in that aspect.

It was found that the level of loneliness of international students studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University didn't not show any significant difference according to gender in this study. This results is supported by the study of Şanlı and Poyraz (2018) entitled as International Students' Loneliness Levels and also by Çeçen (2008) and Yiğit (2012) . In contrast, Poyrazlı et al. (2002; cited by Şanlı and Poyraz, 2018) found that gender was an important predictor of loneliness in international students. In addition, it is concluded that social cohesion is related to gender if it is accepted as an opposite dimension of loneliness (Özçetin, 2013), Furthermore, when the study was done in the populations consisting of local students, the results shows significant differences in the literature. Körler (2009) has found in theresearch that was conducted on 1993 students that the level of loneliness of male students is higher than female students. Similarly, Demir (1990), Buluş (1996), Saraçoğlu (2000), Kılınç and Sevim (2005) has found that male level of loneliness is higher than females too. Al Khatib (2012) has found in his research that was conducted in United Arab Emirates that female students have lower levels of self-respect and higher levels of loneliness in comparison to male students. Yaacob, Juhari, Abu Talib and Uba (2009) have claimed that female students have higher level of loneliness according to the study conducted on teenage students in Malaysia. Yılmaz (2012) has found that the level of loneliness of secondary education students differ according to gender. On the other hand, Kırımoğlu et al, (2010) has found no statistically significant difference between loneliness and gender variable. Gürsoy and Bıçakçı (2006) have pointed out that it does not affect the level of loneliness. Contrary to the findings of the research, it is stated in the related literature that men have higher level of loneliness in comparison with women (Avery, 1982; Stokes, Levin, 1986). Thus, Baran, Baran and Maskan (2015) have found that the level of loneliness differ according to gender variable. Although in most of the researches the average point of loneliness of male students are higher than female or vice versa, one can also find studies in the literature that has not observed statistically significant differences conducting thee populations consisting of local groups.

This finding has been supported in the literature (Certel, Yakut, Yakut, Gülsün, 2016; Kılıç, 2014; Kıralp, Serin, 2017; Lamm, Stephen, 1987; Neto, Barros, 2003; Oruç, 2013; Özçelik, İmamoğlu, Çekin, Başpınar, 2015). According to the our study and by the study of Şanlı and Poyraz (2018) the loneliness levels of international students is not related to gender, but literature conducted to populations consisting of locaal groups shows differences. In other words, there is no consensus whether this is related being an international students or not. A wider sample can be searched for clarity and loneliness level should be investigated in terms of different variables and different tools such as interviews and meta-analysis. The differences in the results of the study remind the possible effect of the culture on these studies which are applied in different samples. Especially in researches where international students forming the sample, cultural differences can show itself more than many other studies. Therefore, it is possible to talk about the significant effect of culture in different studies that reveal the relationship between gender and loneliness (Sawir et al., 2008; Şanlı and Poyraz, 2018).

It was found that there was no significant difference between the loneliness levels of international students studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University according to relationship status. The lack of romantic partners or intimate relationships may be an important perceived reason for one's present feelings of loneliness (e.g., Rokach & Brock, 1998). Besides, higher levels of loneliness are perceived in people who are single than in married/cohabitant ones, consistently with recent literature (Drennan et al., 2008; Ernst & Cacioppo, 1999; Findlay, 2003; Victor et al., 2005). For example, married individuals and individuals living with a significant other reported less romantic loneliness than those who were not in such relationships (Bernardon, Babb, HakimLarson, & Gragg, 2011) [36]. Çeçen (2007) found that not being involved in a romantic relationship was related to great romantic loneliness, but not with family or social loneliness (Çeçen, 2007) . In another study, it is indicated no significant differences in family loneliness as a function of relationship status, and only slight differences in social loneliness, with partnered individuals reporting slightly higher social loneliness than participants in non-marital romantic relationships. Interestingly, the effect for social loneliness was such that partnered individuals reported slightly higher social loneliness than single individuals (Adamczyk, Segrin,2015). However, it should be noted that the samples of those studies doesn't cover international students. Hence, more data obtained from international studentts regarding this issue is needed in order to evaluate this issue more objectively.

It was found that the level of loneliness of international students studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University didn't not show any significant difference according to the number of siblings they have. When the literature is examined it is seen that no study conducted to international students in terms of this variable was found. It is predicted that loneliness level should be differed according to to the number of siblings, but just as in the case of gender, the results obtained from international students maybe different than the results obtained from the local students. In the literature conducted to local students, some studies found no differences according to number of sibling that participants have (Ümmet, 2007; Karaoğlu, Avşaroğlu, Deniz, 2009), so more in-depth studies should be required to interpret these results based on the literaature.

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