
LONELINESS AMONG SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN GHANA

Anthony Nkyi

Faculty of Education, Counseling Center,
University of Cape Coast. Cape Coast. Ghana.

ABSTRACT: *The experience of loneliness varies across cultures. This study explored loneliness among students in two metropolitan senior high schools in Ghana. A sample of 244 students (40.5% males, 59.5% females; mean age =18.4 years) completed Revised University of California Los Angeles (R-UCLA) Loneliness Scale developed by Russell (1982). A series of one-way analysis of variance tests (ANOVA) were used to determine the existence of any significant differences among variables. The results of the findings indicate that the mean R-UCLA scores among the senior high school students fell in the lower range (N=244; M=45.81; SD=10.001). There were significant differences in gender $F(1, 240) = 7.858, p = .005$. ; In age, $F(1, 240) = 4.958, p = .0027$, and religious affiliation $F(1, 240) = 9.030, p = .003$. The results of this study indicate that varying degrees of loneliness is felt in different cultures because the way people live and approach problem solving in their social context are different. This paper explains why this new knowledge can be used to inform parents, school administrators and counselors appreciate the effect of other demographic variables on loneliness in the life of Ghanaian adolescents.*

KEYWORDS: Loneliness, Senior High Students, Adolescents, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

Loneliness is a common experience during adolescence (McWhirter, Besett-Alesch, Horibata, & Gat, J, 2002), with some reports suggesting that as many as 66% of high school and middle school students report loneliness as a significant problem. Although it is generally accepted that old age is a time of overwhelming loneliness, research shows that adolescents and young adults, especially, tend to feel lonely (Le Roux, 2009; Taylor, Peplau & Sears, 2003). Statistics reveal that 79% of adolescents younger than 18 years report feelings of loneliness. By contrast, 53% of adults between the ages of 45 and 54 report loneliness, while only 37% of people older than 55 report feelings of loneliness (Taylor et al. 2003). Loneliness is powerfully present at adolescence because of the development of new interpersonal needs for intimacy. Invariably, researchers have developed interest in loneliness among adolescents in the past thirty years (Perplau and Perlman, 1982; Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona 1980; Young, 1982). Rokach & Neto (2000) have shown in a study with adolescents from different cultures (Canada and Portugal) that culture level has a role in the loneliness levels of adolescents.

Adolescence is a transitional period involving many biological, psychological, mental and social developments and changes (Eccless, et. al., 1993). This period initially starts with sudden physical development and change, followed by psychological and social changes. During this period, adolescents are faced with numerous physical, psychological and social role changes that

challenge their sense of self and capacity to live happily. Furthermore, the growth and large settlements in Ghana have brought with it many changes in social life as well as social problems that were not associated with traditional social organization before the pre-colonial Ghana. The social expectations inexorably push the adolescent toward unneeded independence and autonomy and sometimes to experience a sense of boredom that inevitably lead to loneliness. While adolescence can be an opportunity for making new friends, developing new interests and bring happiness, it can also lead to loneliness as a result of their age, relationships, family dynamics, religious affiliation, residential status, environment where they live and their parental status. Although there is an abundance of loneliness related literature on adolescents in developed nations, there is a dearth of information when considering adolescents from developing countries. The current study fills the gap of existing data and is a valuable asset in an effort to expand our understanding of Ghanaian senior high school students feeling and experience of loneliness. This will offer families; counseling and health professionals in Ghana new knowledge in helping adolescents cope with loneliness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Loneliness is a subjective, unpleasant experience that can have life threatening consequences (Peplum & Perlman, 1982). Loneliness is linked to alcoholism, suicide, and physical illness. Like alienation, high divorce rates, and widespread crime, loneliness is seen by some as a cause of social decay. Loneliness is strongly correlated with anxiety (Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona, 1980). Weiss (1973) distinguished emotional loneliness from social loneliness. Emotional loneliness is based on the absence of personal, intimate relationship or attachment. Social loneliness on one hand is the result of lack of social connectedness or sense of community. Weiss believed that emotional loneliness is the more acutely painful form of isolation, while social loneliness is experienced as a mixture of feeling rejected or unacceptable, together with a sense of boredom. Young (1982) also distinguished among three types of loneliness: transient, situational, and chronic loneliness. Transient or everyday loneliness includes brief and occasional lonely moods. Situational loneliness involves people who have satisfying relationship until some specific change occurs, such as divorce, bereavement or moving to a new town. Situational loneliness can be a severely distressing experience. Situational loneliness often follows major life stress events, such as the death of a spouse or ending of a marriage. Chronic loneliness evolves when, over a period of years, the person is not able to develop satisfying social relations for a period of years.

Loneliness may be part of a normal developmental process for older adolescents in transition to young adulthood (Erikson 1968), but for many adolescents the loneliness that results from school, families, and peer difficulties can lead to even more serious problems such as depression, suicide ideation, and violence. Several studies indicate that that loneliness is felt more intensively in adolescence and late adolescence rather than the old developmental stages of life (McWhirter et al, 2002). Once students feel isolated, they are less likely to seek and received guidance and support within schools, which places them at an even greater rise for further problems, such as associating with more deviant peer groups. The study estimated that about 10 to 15% of these adolescents were “seriously lonely” as defined by a pattern of simultaneously high scores on self-reported loneliness, emotional and social isolations, as well as other

indicators of loneliness. Nearly 45% suffered from somewhat less severe levels of chronic loneliness.

Growth during adolescence is characterized by striving for personal autonomy (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). The adolescent attempts to achieve behavioral, moral, ideological, and cognitive autonomy. The youth is one confronted with a large range of possibilities, with concomitant confusions and ambiguities, physical, cognitive, and moral growth, in addition to social expectations inexorably push the adolescent toward unneeded independence and autonomy. A common problem for lonely adolescents is a sense of boredom.

Among other findings, lonely adolescents reported higher levels of parental rejection, more parental use of rejection as a form of punishment, and greater parental dissatisfaction with their choice of friends (Peplau & Goldston, 1982). In another study by Peplau & Goldston, (1982), loneliness was positively related to past real and threatened separations from one's father and inversely related to the number of hours per week fathers were available to interact with their sons.

Loneliness is an important predictor of life satisfaction among adolescents (Chipuer, Bramston &, Pretty, 2003). The cause of loneliness may be found in unpleasant childhood experiences that lead to unfulfilled needs for intimacy, such as the loss of a parent through divorce or death (Le Roux, 2009). Children of divorced parents are at a greater risk of developing loneliness as adults, compared to the children of intact families (Taylor et al., 2003). However, if the father remains involved in the child's life, even if he is estranged from the child's mother, the negative consequences of the divorce are considerably reduced. Richaud de Minzi, M. C. & Sacchi, C. (2004) indicate that family relationships and family structure affect adolescents' feeling of loneliness. Loneliness may be considered as deficiencies in the systems of interpersonal interactions (Cristina, Minzi, & Sacchi, 2004); and has higher negative effects on life satisfaction among adolescents with divorced parents (Civitci, Civitci, & Fiyakali, 2009) than are adolescents with non-divorced parents.

The influence of culture on loneliness has also found that cultural background does, in fact, have an effect on the experience of loneliness (Le Roux, 2009). Triandis (1989) notes that desire to remain with parents and extended family is stronger in collectivist than individualist cultures. Correspondingly, collectivists will tend to suffer more deeply the absence of such relationships.

There are contradictory findings regarding gender and loneliness. Weiss (1973) states that women are more apt to be lonely than men. Women are said to have lower self-esteem (Hojat, 1982), which given the association between loneliness and low self-esteem means they are more prone to loneliness. But Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980) find no gender differences in relation to loneliness. However, a Borys and Perlman (1985) argue that reported gender differences in loneliness result from men's greater reluctance to disclose socially undesirable feelings. While other scholars argue that women place a higher importance than men on relationships and are more strongly affected by deficiencies in them. According to Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) people who believed in God, and have relationship with God are secure, less lonely and less depressed.

Loneliness is an important predictor of life satisfaction among adolescents (Chipuer, Bramston & Pretty, 2003). Loneliness is affected by not only the number of social relationships and the frequency of social interaction, but also the quality of relationships. In Cutrona's (1982) study of UCLA students, dissatisfactions with one's friendships, dating life, and family relationships were all significant predictors of loneliness.

In a study conducted by Brage and Meredith (1993) on adolescents, it was found that family effectiveness and communication between mothers and adolescents are negatively related to loneliness. Because divorce leads to many changes in the family structure and relationship patterns between family members, it can be expected that it decreases the effectiveness of family relationships. According to Guttman and Rosenberg (2003) and Amato (1987), children with divorced parents feel less closeness to their fathers perceive less support from the father, experience more conflicts with their siblings and perceive poorer family cohesion than do children with non-divorced parents. As these studies indicate, divorce causes changes in the family system and quality of parent-children relationships and increases the risk of straining emotional ties between parents and children (Guttman & Rosenberg, 2003).

Little or no attempt has been on research in Ghana to examine the possible experience of loneliness among senior high school students with respect to some demographic and familial characteristics. An examination of the cross-cultural research on loneliness among Ghanaian adolescents in senior high schools will fill the gap of existing data.

The purpose of the study was first (i) to expand our understanding of Ghanaian senior high school students' level of loneliness and (ii) to determine if there was a significant difference in gender, age, boarding status, relationships, family, living with parents and religion on the level of students' loneliness using a model based on the R-UCLA.

The study specifically addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the level of loneliness among senior high school students in Ghana?
2. Are there differences among gender, age, boarding status, relationships, family, living with parents and religion on students' level of loneliness?

METHODOLOGY

The Study Setting

This study is intended to address the populations of adolescents in Senior High Schools in Ghana. However, the vast diversity of this population in terms of the rural, suburban, or urban, as well as socio-economic status and other related variables makes it virtually impossible to reach out to the population.

The setting for the study consisted of all individuals within the two schools in two metropolitan areas--Cape Coast and Kumasi. Cape, the capital of the Central Region of Ghana, capital of Ashanti region respectively. Choosing these two settings provided a sample of students within a confined geographic area, thereby facilitating the collection of data while at the same time meeting the requirements of socio-economic and gender differences.

Research Design

The study employed a non-experimental design. The data collected was then analyzed using various statistical procedures, which allow the researcher to determine whether data supports or refutes or elaborates upon existing theory. The study involved the gathering of information about the level of loneliness among high school students in two different school settings.

Participants

From a list of senior high schools located in Cape Coast and Kumasi metropolitan areas, two schools were selected by purposive sampling because they were accessible, contain rich information such as ethnic diversity and had Information Communication Technology as part of their school curriculum with computer laboratory. Senior high schools in Ghana consist of Form 1, through 3. All students in the senior high schools could read and write English.

Schools “A” is a female school with a population of 903 students, while “B” is a male school with a population 1800 students. Out of a total of 2703 students, 150 students from each school were randomly selected. A total of (N= 290) students attempted to complete the online survey. After removing incomplete cases, 244 usable surveys remained with a usable response rate of 81.3% comprising 40.5% were males (N= 98) and 59.5% were females (N=144).

The mean age was 18.4 years. A total of 82% (n=193) and 17.9% (n=42) were 18 and 19 years respectively with 3.3% (n=8) were in the 10th grade, 60.7% (n=148) in the 11th grade and 36.5% (n=89) in the 12th grade. Out of the 244 students, a total of 93% (n=225) were residential students while 7% (n=17) were day students. A total of 70.1% (n=169) of the students indicated they lived in the city; 26.6% (n=64) said they lived in town while 3.3% (n= 8) indicated they lived in the rural area. A total of 76.6% of the students also reported that their parents lived together while 23.4% (n=56) indicated that their parents are divorced; 36 % (n=86) students indicated they are in serious relationship while 64% (n= 153) said they are not in any serious relationship with the opposite sex. Out of the 244 respondents who completed the test, 84.3% (n=204) students reported that they lived with their parents while 15.7% (n=38) do not. In terms of religious affiliation, 87.2% (n=211) reported that they are Christians while 12.8% (n=31) they belong to other religions.

Instruments

Revised University of California Los Angeles (R-UCLA) Loneliness Scale. The R-UCLA loneliness Scale was developed by Russell (1982). R-UCLA is one of the most widely used instruments to measure the subjective experience of loneliness. The scale is a self-report measure, consisting of 20-items with 10 negatively worded (lonely) and 10 positively worded (non-lonely) items (Russell et al., 1980). These statements concern an individual’s satisfaction with his or her interpersonal relationships. The R-UCLA Intimate subscale, the 10-item first factor of the R-UCLA, assesses the degree to which participants lack the experience of a close, one-on-one, or intimate relationship. An example of an intimate loneliness item is “No one really knows me well.” The R- UCLA Social subscale, the 10-item second factor of the R-UCLA, assesses the degree to which participants experience loneliness related to a lack of

friends and a social network group. An example of social loneliness item is “I feel part of a group of friends.” Participants are asked to respond to each item statement with responses of never=1, rarely=2, sometimes=3, and always=4s. Higher scores on the loneliness scale indicate higher loneliness.

The 20-item R-UCLA (Russell et al., 1980) and is a widely used, reliable, and valid measure of loneliness (McWhirter, 1990a). The R-UCLA has been validated for use with adolescents The R-UCLA has high internal consistency, with an alpha coefficient of 0.94. All items on the R-UCLA have an inter-item correlation above $r = 0.50$ (Russell, 1982). Criterion-related validity was reported at $r = 0.74$, and $r = 0.72$ in comparison with other loneliness measures, as well as correlation coefficients of $r = 0.72$ and $r = 0.79$ with self-reported statements of loneliness for a non-student population (Russell, 1982). Moderately high level of loneliness as a score that is one standard deviation above mean, or 50; thus, a moderately high level of loneliness would be a score from 50 to 59. A score of 50 or above would represent the top 14% of the population.

Demographic variables. Students were asked to type in their age and select the best answer for gender/sex and residential status (whether they live on campus or off campus), religious affiliation, and location (if they live in city, town and rural). Intact family or divorce family, living with parents or not.

Procedure

The researcher sought permission from the Regional/District Education Directors and headmasters/principals. Parents were informed of the children’s voluntary participation in the research. A letter of explanation, invitation, and consent was sent to students requesting their consent to participate in the dissertation project. All participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality and that their participation in the study was voluntary, a non-invasive one, and was not likely to cause any physical harm. Furthermore, the students were informed that they were free to leave blank or refuse to answer any questions. After obtaining the required permission and consent granted, survey instruments were posted on-line for six weeks between March and April 2010. The questionnaire contained two parts. The first part requested students to complete personal information and the other parts consisted of the R-UCLA. Students took about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Two facilitators from each school informed the selected students the date and time to use the school computers to take the survey online. Students were asked to review the consent information online by clicking on the “next” button indicating they understood the nature of the research being conducted and that they are willing participants.

Data analysis

The statistical procedure to test the research questions was the One Way Analysis of variance was performed using the statistical package for social science SPSS. After the data was collected, the information was downloaded from Survey Monkey. The variables and data were manipulated and aggregated scores were calculated in Microsoft Excel before importation into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows, Standard Version 17.0 software (SPSS Inc, 2010) for final analysis.

The analysis this study include descriptive information on the means, and standard deviations for the R-UCLA scores, comparison of the use of loneliness and independent variables using ANOVA. All statistical analyses were tested at a minimum of 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

1. *What is the level of loneliness among senior high school students in Ghana?*

The sample was composed of 146 females and 96 males and two participants that did not include gender. Table1 displays the means and standard deviations of the three measures, the R-UCLA for the participants in the study (N=244). The mean score for loneliness (45.81) of participants tend to fall in the lower end of the scale score of (20-80) on the R-UCLA.and lower than the cutting off score (50-60) on the R-UCLA. The results of our descriptive data analysis show that the mean R-UCLA scores among the senior high school students fell in the lower range (N=244; M=45.81; SD=10.001). This indicates a significantly lower level of loneliness among Ghanaian senior high school students.

Table 1

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation
R-UCLA	45.81	10.001

2. *Are there differences among gender, age, boarding status, relationships, family, living with parents and religion on students' level of loneliness?*

Statistical analyses were performed to compare differences in students' feeling of loneliness by gender, age, residential status, relationship, home location, family intact, lining with parents and religious affiliation. A one-way analysis of variance tests (ANOVA) determined any significant differences on the students' level of loneliness on independent variables of gender, age, residence, relationship, location, intact family, living with parents, and religious affiliation were completed as summarized below and more fully identified in Table 2.

A comparison of the mean R-UCLA score between males (M = 42.17; SD = 8.77) and females (M = 45.81, SD = 10.62) within the sample found significant differences in gender $F(1, 240) = 7.858, p = .005$. The analysis revealed R-UCLA mean score of the male students in the study was significantly lower than female students. Thus, male students appear to have lower level of loneliness than female students. The mean R-UCLA score of the age 18 year students (N=193; M=44.90; SD=10.31) was compared to the 19 year students (N=42; M=41.12; SD= 8.17) within the sample found significant difference in age, $F(1, 240) = 4.958, p = .0027$. Students of 19 years scored significantly lower on the R-UCLA than students of 18 years age.

To determine if loneliness is associated with campus residence, the mean R-UCLA scores of the students who resided on campus-“boarding” (N=225; M=44.64, SD=10.21) were compared with the mean R-UCLA score of those who resided off campus- day”(N=17; M=40.18, SD=6.73) revealed no significant difference in which boarding students showed no difference in score than day students $F(1, 240) = 3.134, p = .078$. The mean R-UCLA scores of the students who reported to have serious relationship with the “opposite sex” (N=86; M=43.29; SD=10.08) were compared to those who have NO serious relationship with the “opposite sex” (N=153; M=44.93; SD=9.98). The results indicate that there was no significant difference in R-UCLA scores with students in serious relationship with the “opposite sex” not scoring significantly different than those students in NO serious relationship with the “opposite sex” $F(1, 240) = 1.485, p = .224$. To determine if mean loneliness is associated with students home location rural (N=8; M=30.63; SD=19.07); town(N=64;M=20.78; SD=19.54), city(N=169; M=12.60; SD=15.35) has any significance on the R-UCLA, no significant finding was discovered, $F(2, 239) = 1.638, p = .197$ Multiple comparison tests were not done to determine where the differences were as no significant findings were produced. A comparison of the mean R-UCLA score between those with divorced parents (=56; M=46.34; SD=11.41) and students with intact family (N=183; M=43-63; SD=9.52). There was no significant difference between those children whose parents were divorced and those who were not on the R-UCLA, $F(1, 240) = 3.144, p = .077$. Comparing students living with parents’ mean R-UCLA score (N=204; M= 44.70; SD= 7.89) and those not living with their parents’ mean score (N=38; M=42.05; SD=10.69), the result indicate that there was no significant difference between those children lived with their parents and those who were not on the R-UCLA, $F(1, 240) = 2.238, p = .136$. To determine if loneliness is associated with religious affiliation, the mean R-UCLA score of those who are Christians (N=211; M= 44.98; SD= 9.80) was compared to those with the mean R-UCLA score of those with other/no religious beliefs (N=31; M=39.29; SD= 10.16). Students in the Christian religion group scored significantly higher on the R-UCLA than those in other/no religious affiliation $F(1, 240) = 9.030, p = .003$.

Table 2

Variable	Value	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Gender	male	98	42.17	8.77	7.858	0.005
	female	144	45.81	10.62		
Age	18	193	44.90	10.31	4.958	0.027
	19	42	41.12	8.17		
Boarding	1	225	44.64	10.21	3.134	0.078
Day	2	17	40.18	6.73		
Relationship		86	43.29	10.08	1.485	0.224
No Relp		153	44.93	9.98		
Location	Rural	8	47.38	7.48	1.638	0.197

	Town	64	46.09	9.74		
	City	169	43.75	10.10		
Intact family	1	183	43.63	9.52	3.144	0.077
Divorced fmy	2	56	46.34	11.41		
Live w Parents?	1	204	44.70	9.89	2.238	0.136
Not w parents	2	38	42.05	10.69		
Christianity	1	211	44.98	9.80	9.030	0.003
Other Religion	2	31	39.29	10.16		

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the level of loneliness among senior high school students in Ghana. The results indicate that students in the study have lower level of loneliness although female students appear to have moderately higher level of loneliness than male's students. This finding is in consistent with Weiss (1973) that women are more apt to be lonely than men. Furthermore, according to Hojat (1982). Women are said to have lower self-esteem which given the association between loneliness and low self-esteem means they are more prone to loneliness. While the findings of the study suggest that females have higher level of loneliness than males, it is also not consistent with the findings of Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980) that suggest no gender differences in relation to loneliness. The explanation to the female higher score on the R-UCLA than males could be likened to Borys and Perlman (1985) argument that gender differences in loneliness result from men's greater reluctance to disclose socially undesirable feelings. While some studies report females to be lonelier than males (Killen, 1998), others such as Le Roux (2009) conclude that male adolescents experience a significantly higher degree of loneliness than female counterparts. Based on the results from the previous research in the West, it could be concluded that there are contradictory findings regarding gender and loneliness.

The findings of the significant difference in loneliness in terms of gender may be caused by the characteristics of the participants more probably their gender role in their individual cultural roles in Ghana in terms of tribes. Probably, it can be stated that the social support networks are likely to be stronger for male students in the study than for female students. Another possible explanation is that female students in the school talk about their feelings more openly than males in the designated school. The results also suggest that age was significant in predicting loneliness with 18 year age group appear to have a little higher level of loneliness than the 19 year age group. It may appear that 18 year students are freshmen who are experiencing adjustment issues. This finding is consistent with study by Perplau and Perlman (1982) that suggests that the 10-18 age groups could be "seriously lonely" and could suffer from emotional and social isolation. The finding also suggests the 18 age group could be a period of complex developmental changes that may be related to the separation from the preadolescent identity and the concomitant struggle for autonomy and individualism.

Religion was found to be a variable that determines the level of loneliness. The results of the study indicate that loneliness was significant on the R-UCLA score though it was lower compared to the cut off score of 50-60. This is consistent with the study by Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) that people who believe in God, and have relationship with God are secure, less lonely and less depressed. The results however indicate that students with Christian affiliation score higher on the R-UCLA when compared to the other non Christian religions. Indeed, Africans are notoriously religious and religion holds an important part in people's relationship. However, religious differences do not in itself determine one's level loneliness in the school. Thus, students' beliefs in the higher power or supreme are less lonely as evidenced by the results. In the present study, relationship, dating life, divorce and family relationships did not have statistically significance on the loneliness. This is inconsistent with findings from other studies in the West (Cutrona, 1982; Taylor et al. 2003) that one's relationships, family relationships and divorce were all significant predictors of loneliness. Although divorce poses a greater risk in developing loneliness, it appears that those students whose parents are divorce have close contact with both parents that the negative consequences of divorce on the student's life are minimal. The possible explanation is that Ghanaian culture is a collectivist society that the individual greatly relies on the community for support (Mijuskovic, 1992). Extended family ties remain a strong bond and people experience a sense of belonging. As a result, when one feels separated from the mother or father, the other family members extend their support to the person. It protects the individual from experiencing what Weiss (1973) describes as "emotional and social loneliness." While Sergin, Powell, Givertz & Brackin (2003) indicate that loneliness is related to an individual's relationship with the surrounding environment and the quality of these relationships, van Buskirk & Duke (1991) maintained that loneliness is determined by friend, family and social relationships, as well as the individual characteristic features of adolescents. It is possible that students' sense of belongingness in a community may have great impact student's level of loneliness. Thus, attachment and social belongingness to their communities and nuclear and extended families lessen the feelings of loneliness among the participants in the study. Finally, it is worth to note that loneliness is affected not only by social relationships and the frequency of social interactions, but also the quality of relationships.

The present study offers important cultural issues on loneliness in the context of Ghanaian culture and the Western/American culture. In Ghana and Africa, the ideological and philosophical stance has been that of collectivism and belongingness, whereas in American/Western countries, the ideological and philosophical stance has been that of individualism. It appears that theories and research on loneliness have been grounded on in the individualistic philosophy and lack a crucial consideration of context whether it be, relationship, location, divorce, residential status, religious and parental affiliations. Thus, varying degrees of loneliness felt in different cultures because the way people live and approach problem solving in their social context are different.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Several limitations should be noted in this study. First, the sample was composed of two urban senior high school in Ghana. Thus, the findings could not be generalized to other senior high schools in rural areas in Ghana. Second, the data are self-report on an in-school survey; as a

result, inaccurate reporting is possible. Third, some of the incomplete survey was due to electricity power off and that affected the number of participants unable to complete the survey.

IMPLICATIONS TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Although the present study indicates lower level of loneliness among adolescents in the two senior high schools, it is crucial that educators at senior high schools understand the demands of dealing with adolescents and work towards lessening their levels of loneliness. Families need to listen to and connect with adolescents and accept them as individuals because the fast growth and large settlements in Ghana has brought about many changes in social life, social problems and changes in family systems. It is likely that adolescents' psychological well-being could be affected either positively or negatively by family relationships, peer group, environment and financial difficulties.

Failure for the adolescents to have a strong attachment and family bond may lead to even more psychological and behavioural problems such as depression, suicide ideation, and violence. Research linking loneliness to health problems can help senior high school counselors appreciate the significance of loneliness on the well being of Ghanaian adolescents.

With the increase in urbanization and migration from rural areas into large towns, counselors and other helping professionals in Ghana should design intervention and prevention programs that can deal with psychological issues related to loneliness. These precautions would ease the strains of adolescence, families and the society alike, and lessen their feelings of loneliness.

CONCLUSION

Many factors contribute to loneliness as a result of urbanization, social change and family dynamics. Studies have shown that loneliness is linked to alcoholism, suicide, and physical illness (Perplau and Perlman, 1982) and is a common experience during adolescence (McWhirter et al., 2002).

The aim of the present study has been to determine whether adolescents' gender, age, religion, parental, marital status, living condition level, friendships and family relationships make a difference in their levels of loneliness. On the basis of statistical findings obtained, the following conclusions can be made:

1. There is significantly lower level of loneliness among Ghanaian senior high school students.
2. Adolescent female students are lonelier than male students.
3. Age and religion have significant association with loneliness.
4. Family and community belongings are predictors of lessening loneliness.

This new knowledge can be used to inform professionals working with adolescents in Ghana.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research is needed to replicate these findings in larger and varied samples of loneliness among senior high school students in Ghana and Africa. Research on adolescent loneliness that deal with the different types of experience of loneliness in Ghana as in indicated by

Young(1982) transient, situational, and chronic loneliness and Weiss (1973), emotional or social loneliness would offer further understanding on loneliness in Ghana. A comparison of students in senior high school students in Ghana and in the United States of America is warranted. Finally, a study on loneliness and its relationships to depression and suicide in Ghana is critical for the development of interventions

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