

**Levels of Loneliness among
Irish and non Irish students
studying in Dublin
and its impact on
Self Esteem and Social Support**

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Content

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Chapter 1 Introduction	5
1.1 Loneliness	6
1.2 Defining Loneliness	7
1.3 Structure of Loneliness	8
1.4 Emerging Adulthood and Loneliness	10
1.5 Gender Difference and Loneliness	14
1.6 Self Esteem and Loneliness	14
1.7 Consequences of Loneliness	16
1.8 Coping with Loneliness and Social Support	17
1.9 Current Study	19
Chapter 2 Method Section	21
2.1 Materials	21
2.2 Participants	22
2.3 Design	22
2.4 Procedure	23

Chapter 3 Results Section	24
Chapter 4 Discussion Section	32
References	38
Appendices	44

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Abstract

The current study examines the levels of loneliness and its relation to self esteem and social support among Irish and non-Irish students studying in Dublin. One hundred students participated in the research. It was hypothesised that Irish students will score lower on UCLA Loneliness scale than non-Irish students; and that there will be a correlation between loneliness, self-esteem and social support. Results of the study did not show difference in loneliness among both groups. However, a significant correlation was found between variables.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Ireland's reputation for high quality third level education and its higher educational institutions (HEI) are known worldwide for their qualifications and excellence. Irish higher education establishments welcome students from all over the world, of all backgrounds and abilities, including people with disabilities, older students, people who need financial support, and those from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Students are able to choose from a variety of courses in a number of institutions to meet their needs.

Becoming a student is a big change in a person's life, and this change needs to be met with support. Ireland provides its students with support in a number of fields. For example, students can get help with living accommodation, finances, job, and many more necessary things to remain in the country. Moreover, there are a number of discounts provided for students throughout the country such as many membership fee deductions, shopping and travelling discounts; also, there are different schemas and plans to help students pay tuition fees. There are also dedicated international offices providing administrative, academic and specialist staff support. Through these structures students receive direct access to information, facilities, services and staff. This supportive environment coupled with high quality educational system attracts international students from all over the world.

According to the Irish council for international students, there is an increase in the amount of students studying overseas. It was estimated in 2007 that 2.8 million students were studying full-time outside their country of origin. Since 2002 Irish Higher Education Institutions have been experiencing growth in the number of international students. Based on HEI's raw data, collected from 2009/2010 survey's records, there were 28,893 international students from 159 countries enrolled in the third level education in Ireland during 2009/2010 academic year (Enterprise Ireland, 2010).

Going to a new university is not just about studying; it is about living in a whole new world for both international and Irish students. Therefore, colleges tend to provide their students with an exciting students life by organising a variety of communities, facilities, clubs, societies, and volunteer groups. These organisations give an opportunity for students to meet new people, to adjust to a new society and culture, and to form new relationships.

However, there is still a number of problems students face while adapting to a new life. For instance, due to separation from family and from old friends, students tend to experience some unpleasant feelings such as loneliness.

1.1 Loneliness

The feelings of loneliness can be found in any age group; however, more prone to those feelings are the young and the old (Nexhipu, 1983, as cited in Rokach, 2001). This phenomenon has become a subject of interest quite recently. Thus, Daniel W. Russell (1996) suggests that an increase in research on loneliness started from the publication of the seminal work by Weiss in 1973. According to Cacioppo and Hawkley (2010), the first scientific paper on loneliness can be traced back to 1959 to the work of Frieda Fromm-Reichmann. However, the oldest publication about loneliness is considered to be 'Über die Einsamkeit' by Zimmermann in 1785-1786 (De Jong Gierveld, Van Tilburg & Dykstra, 2006).

The majority of people agree that loneliness is primarily connected to an individual's experiences of being withdrawn from society, family, and balance of nature (Pokrovskij, 1989). Researchers in that area suggest that loneliness results from the lack of an individual's social network relations (Perlman & Peplau, 1981; De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006; Hawkley et al, 2003).

However, there is more to it than just one's desire to be involved in social relationships. Feelings of loneliness can be due to changes in one's life, low self-esteem and

not being able to achieve a desired goal. Rook (1988) observed that loneliness occurs as a result of interaction between personal factors and situational constraints, and that this interaction is associated with changes that an individual deals with during his or her life (Rokach, 2001).

A distinctive axiom of most theories on loneliness is that physical isolation from others does not necessarily lead to loneliness. Nowadays a person can experience loneliness during intensive communication, or while being surrounded by family members or friends. Thus, a term 'the lonely crowd' proposed by American sociologist David Riesman in 50s became a symbol of our era.

1.2 Defining Loneliness

There are a number of definitions of loneliness, all with similar meaning. For example, Perlman and Peplau (1981) defined loneliness as an unpleasant experience that usually occurs when someone's network of social relations is insufficient in a certain way, either quantitatively or qualitatively. In this definition they identified three general points that should be noticed: first, loneliness is a result of lack of a person's social relations; second, loneliness is subjective; and finally, loneliness is distressing and unpleasant.

In her book on depression, Rowe (1994) wrote that loneliness is the state of being isolated from other people because of the fear of others. She refers to loneliness as a barrier and emptiness between oneself and other people. She writes "You reach out to other people, but the barrier intervenes. You take a step towards other people, and there is nowhere to put your foot. People come towards you, and your loneliness shuts them out" (Rowe, 1994, p. 239). According to Rowe (1994) it is a person's loneliness and not the lack of other people which leads individuals to be alone.

Rogers (1961) mentions a couple of ways that people feel lonely. He distinguishes between estrangement of man from himself and the lack of any relationship. The first one is due to discrepancy between individual's real experiences and imposed ones; and the second one, refers to insufficient amount of people to turn to or just to spend time with (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990).

Another definition of loneliness, used quite often in Europe, was formulated by De Jong Gierveld, and reads as follows: "Loneliness is a situation experienced by the individual as one where there is an unpleasant lack of certain relationships. This includes situations, in which the number of existing relationships is smaller than is considered desirable, as well as situations where the intimacy one wishes for has not been realized" (De Jong Gierveld, 1987, p. 120).

1.3 Structure and Predictors of Loneliness

A distinction has also been made between several components of loneliness. Zimmermann (1785/1786) described negative and positive types of loneliness. The positive type is a voluntary withdrawal from daily routine, and it is supposed to be orientated towards higher goals such as meditation and communication with God. Negative loneliness is related to unpleasant feelings due to absence of personal relationships and contacts with other people who are important for an individual (De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006).

On the other hand, Weiss (1973) differentiated between emotional and social loneliness (as cited in Perlman & Peplau, 1981). Definition of emotional loneliness is based on the absence of a personal relationship, or a close emotional attachment. Social loneliness refers to an individual's sense of community, being engaged in a social network.

Moustakas (1961) distinguished between loneliness anxiety and existential loneliness. According to him, loneliness anxiety results from alienation between individuals, but, existential loneliness is an inevitable part of human life, which enables self-growth and involves self-confrontation (as cited in Perlman & Peplau, 1981).

Cacioppo and Hawkley (2010) studied predictors of loneliness and the factors which contribute to individual differences in experiencing loneliness. These include sociodemographic factors, social roles, quality and quantity of social contacts, and health. All of these influence the feelings of loneliness. Anderson's (1999) study showed that Asian students studying at an American university reported a higher level of loneliness than their U.S. counterparts, however, Goodwin, Cook and Yung (2001) argued that these results are due to differences in Asian and American societies such as Asian collectivist perspectives and American individualistic society (as cited in Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2010). This idea is supported by Simmons, Klopff and Park (1991) who studied loneliness among Korean and American university students. The results of their study showed that Koreans were lonelier than American students even though both groups studied away from home. Wiseman (1997) found that overseas students from North America did not score higher on UCLA Loneliness scale than American students studying at home, supporting the idea of cultural differences in experiencing loneliness.

As for social roles, marriage is considered to be a sort of protection against loneliness. Dykstra and Fokkeman (2007) stated that loneliness is greater among divorced or never-married people. Also, such social roles as church membership or voluntary group membership, employment have been observed to protect from being lonely (as cited in Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2010).

Quality and quantity of social contact is another predictor of loneliness. Smaller social networks and lack of interactions with friends promotes loneliness (Dykstra, van Tilburg, & de Jong Gierveld, 2005). Cutrona (1982) found that lonely students tend to report less satisfaction with social support from family and friends.

1.4 Emerging Adulthood and Loneliness

In the past few decades a change in life span development occurred. The road to adulthood became longer for modern adolescents than it was in 1970's. They leave home at the age of 18 or 19, however, unlike previous generation; they do not marry and have children or engage themselves in a long term job. Contemporary young people tend to delay these kinds of activities till late twenties if not thirties. From late teens to late twenties today's youth is exploring the possibilities available to them, before making lifelong choices (Arnett, 2010).

This period cannot be referred to as adolescence or young adulthood due to differences in stages, therefore, it is distinguished as a separate independent stage - emerging adulthood. This stage separates adolescents from adults. Arnett (2004) states five features of emerging adulthood, which are: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and age of possibilities.

The age of identity exploration refers to the time when young people are trying themselves in a variety of areas. Exploring themselves in love and work helps emerging adults to find their identities, to understand who they are and what they want.

The age of instability is described by Arnett (2004) as the time when emerging adults prepare some sort of a plan for their future, however, due to new explorations this plan keeps changing. Young people during this period are very mobile. Emerging adults move all the time: they travel around, they change their residence in relation to college location,

romantic or friend relationships, or job. This constant movement results in instability (Arnett, 2004).

Thirdly, emerging adults are self focused. They are mostly not involved in any serious relationships requiring coordination of activities. They decide their daily routine, leisure time and plan their travelling themselves. This self focus provides young people with a base for self-sufficiency.

Another feature of this stage is called the feeling in-between. During this time young people do not feel themselves either adolescents or adults. According to Arnett (2004), emerging adults were not able to specify whether they still were adolescents or have become young adults. He suggests that emerging adult should be financially independent, fully responsible and should be able to make independent decision in order to become a young adult.

The last criterion of emerging adulthood is the age of possibilities. Arnett (2004) refers to this time as a time of high hopes and great expectations. In other words, emerging adults tend to think that everything is going to work out. They do not consider any difficulties or disappointments in their future lives; it all seems easy and bright (Arnett, 2010).

Arnett (2010) considers that a delay in entering young adulthood is partly due to increasing amount of years spent on higher education. Nowadays more and more young people tend to enrol themselves in higher level education after finishing school.

Coon (1992) states that early 20's in Western culture is the time when young adults leave their families and prepare themselves for life socially, vocationally and academically (Rokach 2001). One of the important aspects of such transition is establishment of new adult social relationships. Since college students are more likely to face similar problems while adjusting to a new life style, they give a good possibility for researchers to study factors influencing adaptation during transition period (Cutrona & Russell, 1987).

The first year in college is considered to be the most stressful, and most freshman college students experience loneliness to a certain degree (Wei, Russell & Zakalik, 2005).

Cutrona (1982) studied freshman college students. Participants had to fill in questionnaires twice, first time after two weeks spent in college, and then, seven weeks later. Results indicated that around 75% of students were most lonely during their first two weeks of college. Also, 40% of respondents stated that their level of loneliness was fluctuating between moderate and high. The second testing seven weeks later revealed that level of loneliness decreased; and another testing, seven month after starting college, showed that only 25% of all participants were still feeling lonely (Russell, 1982). Research also has shown that college students' loneliness is positively linked to depression, and to the lack of social skills or ability to begin and develop close interpersonal relationships (Wei et al. 2005). Participants of Curtona's (1982) study were asked to state what influenced their loneliness and what in their opinion affected the length of these feelings. Thus, 40 % of participants answered that separation from family and moving out of home had an impact on feelings of loneliness. Other factors mentioned were as follows: breaking up with a partner (15% of respondents), problems with a roommate (11% of participants), and family difficulties such as divorce of parents, quarrels with parents, and marriage of a sibling (9% of participants). Also, 11% of participants claimed that difficulties in school influenced their level of loneliness. It was explained that the amount of course work leads to lack of time which affects relations with friends. Some respondents answered that continuously bad exam and assessment results lead to disappointment and isolation from friends and social life (Pokrovskij, 1989).

Cutrona (1982) discusses several factors related to loneliness among freshmen college students. She claims that all students experience loneliness, however, certain

situations and some personality traits make a period of adaptation harder for some students which results in a longer time of feeling lonely. Secondly, she suggests that feelings of loneliness are affected by relationships of any kind, for example, friendship cannot replace romantic relationships and vice versa. Finally, Curtona (1982) suggests that it should be established whether loneliness occurs due to the lack of personal relations or quality of already existed ones.

Loneliness is usually associated with negative feelings about interpersonal relationships (De Jong Gierveld, 1998), and those experiencing loneliness have been judged to be less interpersonally competent compared to those who do not feel lonely (Wei et al. 2005). Several studies (Riggio, 1986; Sergin, 1993, as cited in Wei et al. 2005) have shown that there is a correlation between loneliness and social skills. So, it might be that if college students improve their social skills and self-efficacy, the level of loneliness they experience can decrease (Wei et al. 2005).

Studies by Girgin (2009), Wei et al., (2005), Lobdell & Perlman (1986) suggest that family background may have an influence on loneliness among college students (Ponzetti, 1990). Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory can be used in order to understand the adaptation process for college students. The theory is based on the relationships which are developed and formed between an infant and a caregiver. According to this interaction a child develops working models, like judgement and evaluations of self and others (Acbag & Imamoglu, 2010).

The study done by Di Tomasso, Brannen-McNulty, Ross and Burgess (2003) on attachment styles, social skills and loneliness supported the idea that attachment theory may provide a useful background to study social competence and adjustment. Acbag's and Imamoglu's (2010) study also showed that attachment styles played a determinant role on

loneliness. Results indicated negative correlation between loneliness and secure attachment style, and positive correlation between loneliness and fearful, preoccupied and dismissing styles (Acbağ's & Imamoglu's, 2010).

1.5 Gender Differences and Loneliness

Girgin (2009) investigated factors affecting loneliness and hopelessness among college students in Turkey. According to his study, male participants suffered from loneliness and hopelessness more frequently compared to female participants. Moreover, male students were more likely to suffer greater negative self-evaluation and social consequences from admitting their loneliness (Borys & Perlman, 1985 as cited in Ponzetti, 1990).

Medora and Woodward (1986), while studying loneliness among adolescent college students, found that women were lonelier than men, and that there was a relationship between ease of making new friends and loneliness.

Pinquart and Sorensen (2001) did a meta-analysis of 102 studies that examined gender differences in loneliness (as cited in De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006), the results showed that women report significantly higher levels of loneliness compared to men.

Gilligan (1982) argues that gender differences in experiencing loneliness exist partially due to differences in socialization, meaning that girls develop a huge sense of morality in caring for others, whereas boys are encouraged to develop behaviours which can be barriers to intimacy (as cited in Eshbaugh, 2010).

1.6 Self Esteem and Loneliness

Shyness, loneliness and depression are very distinct, but strongly related constructs which closely affect each other (Ponzetti, 1990). Perlman and Peplau (1981) suggest that

shyness is one of the characteristics that predisposes individuals to loneliness. Pilkonis (1977) defines shyness as an inability and failure to participate in social situations as well as a tendency to avoid social communications. Several studies (Zimbardo, 1977 as cited in Perlman & Peplau, 1981; Jones et al., 1981) showed significant correlation between self-reports of shyness and loneliness. Thus, under some situations, high levels of shyness may affect certain individuals to later experience loneliness, especially if there is a genetic predisposition to shyness (Jones et al., 1990, as cited in Jackson et al., 2000).

Self-esteem is another characteristic that predisposes to loneliness and is affected by it. Lonely students report poorer self-concepts and lower self-esteem (Perlman & Peplau, 1981). Jones et al., (1981) found a strong correlation between scores on UCLA Loneliness Scale and Coopersmith's Self Esteem Scale. Lonely participants reported themselves to have lower self-esteem, being shyer, less accepted by others, and self-conscious. Also, a study done by Eddy (1961) showed a significant relationship between loneliness and indirect measure of self-esteem (as cited in Perlman & Peplau, 1981). In another study on relationship between loneliness, stress and self-esteem, Yaacob, Juhari, Talib and Uba (2009) found that stress and self-esteem have a significant relationship with loneliness and subsequent depression. They found that loneliness was inversely related with self-esteem, and this showed that participants with higher loneliness had lower self-esteem. Similar findings were described by Wei et al., (2005), where social self-efficacy lead to association between attachment anxiety and loneliness and subsequent depression.

The relationship between self-esteem and loneliness is reciprocal (Perlman & Peplau, 1981), so the low self-esteem and all the related factors, like shyness, can encourage loneliness.

1.7 Consequences of Loneliness

Loneliness is also linked to different life styles and health problems (De Jong Gierveld, 1998). Feelings of loneliness can result in unhealthy behaviours (Ponzetti, 1990; Jackson, Soderlind & Weiss, 2000) and health problems (Hawkley et al., 2003; Pritchard & Yalch, 2008). Cacioppo and Hawkley (2010) associated loneliness with poor health behaviours. High fat and high calorie diets as well as sedentary lifestyles contribute to obesity. Lauder, Mummery, Jones and Caperchione (2006) conducted a cross sectional study of 1,289 adults aged 18 and higher, where the lonely group had a higher mean BMI and a greater proportion of overweight individuals compared to the non-lonely group (as cited in Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2010).

Hawkley, Thisted and Cacioppo (2009) propose that loneliness is related to reduced physical activity. These data suggest that decrease in physical activity among lonely people may reinforce risk of cardiovascular disease (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2010). Hawkley et al., (2003) states that impact of loneliness on health may not be evident until late in life, however, thoughts, feelings and behaviours may put people at risk early in life. It is suggested that health habits and lifestyles established by young adults can lead to either good or ill conditions later in life.

Cacioppo, Hawkley, Crawford, et al., (2002) tested young adults to examine mechanisms by which loneliness may have affects on health. Results showed that lonely individuals had relatively high level of total peripheral resistance, which, over long term, may contribute to the development of hypertention, a condition that increases the risk for cardiovascular events, like myocardial infarction and stroke (Hawkley et al., 2003).

It is generally accepted that loneliness results in poorer well-being, for instance, sleeping problems, eating disorders (Pritchard & Yalch, 2008), depression (Yaacob et al.,

2009), alcohol overconsumption, loss of self-esteem, powerlessness, and stress (de Jong Gierveld, 1998).

1.8 Coping with Loneliness and Social Support

Several attempts were made to examine different ways of coping with loneliness. Perlman & Peplau (1981) suggest that a general approach of coping with loneliness is to reduce individual's desired level of contacts, and according to them, it may be accomplished in three ways: adaptation, task choice, and change of standards. Based on Lowenthal's (1964) study, Perlman & Peplau (1981) propose adaptation as one of the ways of overcoming loneliness. According to Lowenthal (1964) older people who spend their time mostly alone during a substantial period of time are less likely to report feeling lonely than those who were often participating in social life.

Another coping strategy discussed by Perlman & Peplau (1981) is task choice, where people are advised to select and engage themselves in those tasks which they prefer doing alone. Rook (1984) pointed out that solitary activity help people from dependence on others, therefore, reducing feelings of loneliness and increasing the sense of personal control (De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006).

Changing one's standards in terms of friendships can also decrease the feelings of loneliness (Perlman & Peplau (1981). In other words, individual is advised to broaden his/ her circle of people she or he can become friends with. Nonetheless, Perlman & Peplau (1981) strongly recommend that any strategy or therapeutic interventions should first of all consider individual factors which lead to loneliness. Therefore, college student as well as an old person may require completely different approaches in dealing with loneliness due to different reasons of being lonely.

De Jong Gierveld et al., (2006) suggest that some individuals recover from loneliness by using their own strategies, whereas, others require professional help. Ponzetti (1990) argues that effective coping should be focused on the emotional, cognitive and behavioural components of experiencing loneliness.

France, McDowell and Knowles (1984), suggest that writing a personal journal, where students can explore their feelings can help to overcome loneliness (Ponzetti, 1990). Booth (1985) and France et al., (1984) advised to organise support groups for lonely students, where they can share their emotions, and can also be taught to apply relaxation techniques when feeling stressed (Ponzetti, 1990).

Students suffering from loneliness require social support in order to recover from unpleasant feelings. Social support is described as an aid or assistance from individuals, one's social group, society or community. College students require a greater access to structured social support which includes peer support, mentoring and personalized support, parental involvement, and early college preparation and planning (Pathways to college networks, 2007).

It is suggested that positive peer support is an important strategy to raise expectations and increase academic performance as well as overcoming difficulties. Girgin (2009) found that college students who had more than five friends were not experiencing loneliness as those who had fewer friends. Mentoring and personalized support can be provided by a caring teacher, a college staff member, or an individual who knows a student well and demonstrates concern for one's personal state and academic achievements.

Pathways to college networks (2007) suggests that successful mentoring can be achieved by pairing students with a teacher or other college staff, a community members, or other college students. This mentoring can occur as a class activity, after class or summer

programs and internships. This type of support could provide a student with more curiosity about the class. It would also help in getting involved socially, which in turn, would stop the individual from separating him/herself from others. Engle and Tinto (2008), suggest that building relationships inside and outside of campuses is important (as cited in Pathway to college network, 2010).

In terms of parental support and early preparation, Pathways to college networks (2007), advises parents to prepare their children before hand. This preparation can be accomplished by explaining what is and what should be expected from college life. Also, parents should be interested in student's academic achievements to make them feel connected. Turner, Chandler, and Heffer (2009) found that students with high family interactions report higher results in academic achievements; and, they also tend to have higher academic self-efficacy (as cited in Pathway to college network, 2010). Positive peer relations, support from family and community, faculty and staff mentors are types of social support that are essential for college students to perform well both academically and personally (Pathway to college network, 2010).

1.9 Current study

The aim of the current study is to investigate the levels of loneliness among college students in Dublin. The study is aimed to compare two different groups of students: Irish students and non-Irish students studying in Dublin. The level of loneliness, self-esteem and the amount of social support received and satisfaction with received support is going to be

examined among two groups. Both groups of participants will be compared based on results they scored from three questionnaires: UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3), Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale, and Social Support Questionnaire. Also, gender differences and the amount of time spent in Dublin will be considered while assessing the results.

Hypotheses

1. Irish students will score lower on UCLA Loneliness Scale than non-Irish students.
2. There will be a correlation between loneliness, self-esteem and received social support.

Chapter 2

Method Section

2.1 Materials

To carry out the study three questionnaires and pencil or pen were used. The first questionnaire used was Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. This scale is the most widely used instrument to measure self esteem. This scale is a brief and unidimensional measure of global self-esteem. It is a ten item scale, where items are answered on a four point scale – from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Rosenberg, 1965). It consists of ten statements dealing with general feelings about the participant. If participants strongly agreed with a statement they had to circle SA; if agree – A; if disagree – D, and if they were strongly disagree with a statement then they had to circle SD.

The second questionnaire was the short form of Social Support Questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 12 items; each one asks a question to which a two-part answer is required. The items ask that participants a) list the people they can rely on and turn to, and b) how satisfied they are with these social supports (Sarason, Levine, Basham & Sarason, 1987).

Revised UCLA scale (Version 3) was used to evaluate levels of loneliness among students. This version of the scale was constructed by Russell and colleagues (1980) in order to simplify the response format and wording of the items. The revised version of the UCLA loneliness scale has ten positively worded and ten negatively worded items which had the highest correlations with a set of questions that asked about loneliness in detail. This version had satisfactory discriminant validity with the measures of personality, social desirability and depression (Russell, 1996). The evaluation of revised UCLA Loneliness scale showed that the measure was highly reliable, in terms of internal consistency (coefficient α ranging from

0.89 to 0.94) and test-retest reliability over a 1 year period ($r = 0.73$) (Russell, 1996). The questionnaire also included biographical details of participants: age, gender, nationality, the period of time spent in Dublin and people who they were living with in Dublin. These details can help in establishing ethnical difficulties and adaptation time as well as support provided.

These three questionnaires are going to be used to assess participants' levels of loneliness, and self-esteem, what support they are getting and how satisfied they are with it. The copy of questionnaires and cover letter can be found in the appendices section. Questionnaires can be found in the Appendices section.

2.2 Participants

Participants were 100 students, 67 were Irish and 33 were students from other countries (see Appendix E). All of them were undergraduate students involved in third level education. Participants were from different universities in Dublin: Dublin Business School, Dublin Institute of Technology, University College Dublin, Dublin City University, and Institute of Technology Tallaght. Participants were enrolled in different programmes, and were of different ages, nationality and sex. Respondents were randomly selected, and their participation was voluntary with no incentives offered.

2.3 Design

To carry out the statistical analysis of the data Software program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used to test whether distribution of scores was significantly different from a normal distribution. Distribution of scores used in the study was measured by such scales as UCLA Loneliness scale, Rosenberg's Self-esteem scale, Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ_scale) and SSQ_satisfaction. Distribution of scores did not differ significantly from a normal

distribution, therefore, t-test for Equality of Means and Pearson Correlation were used. T-test for Equality of Means was used to compare the levels of loneliness, self esteem, social support, and satisfaction with social support. Then, Pearson Correlation was used to measure the strength of relationship between variables. Chi-square test was used to evaluate gender differences among Irish and non Irish participants, and to test whether two variables (different levels of loneliness and different levels of self esteem) are associated. To analyse the relationship between variables (Loneliness, Self esteem and Social support) correlational analysis was used. The strength of relationship was measured by Pearson Correlation Coefficient. To evaluate whether time spent in Dublin affects loneliness ANOVA the Univariate Analysis of Variance was used.

2.4 Procedure

Participants were approached during the day in college, or at work. They were asked to complete three questionnaires. Participation was voluntary and participants were given an informed consent with the explanations. They also were explained that they could withdraw at any time, that all the data gathered were confidential, and that if they wanted to know the results of the study all the contact information was provided. Most participants completed and submitted the questionnaires the same day they were given out. However, some of participants were willing to take the questionnaires home and brought them back when they were finished with them. Those completing their surveys at the same time they were handed out, spent maximum 15 minutes working on them. They also were provided with help if needed, like explaining a statement, especially if participants were non-native English speakers. After completion of the questionnaires the participants were thanked and debriefed.

Chapter 3

Results Section

The aim of the current study was to examine the levels of loneliness among Irish and non-Irish students studying in Dublin. The study was mainly focused on evaluating the correlation between loneliness, self-esteem and social support. Also, the study looked at the relationship between loneliness and the amount of time spent in Dublin. There are two hypothesis of this study:

1. Irish students will score less on UCLA Loneliness Scale compared to non-Irish students.
2. There will be a relationship between loneliness, self esteem and social support.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Gender Differences among Participants*

Crosstab

			Group		Total
			Irish	Nonirish	
Gender	Male	Count	40	12	52
		% within Gender	76,9%	23,1%	100,0%
		% within Group	59,7%	36,4%	52,0%
	Female	Count	27	21	48
		% within Gender	56,3%	43,8%	100,0%
		% within Group	40,3%	63,6%	48,0%
Total	Count	67	33	100	
	% within Gender	67,0%	33,0%	100,0%	
	% within Group	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years with the mean 21.84, and Std. Deviation 3.73. Half of the participants were younger than 22 years of age. The age mean for Irish participants was 21.76, whereas, among non-Irish group the mean was 22.

The time spent in Dublin was also measured; the results are explained in Table 2. and illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for the Time Spent in Dublin.*

		Duration			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5 years	12	12,0	12,0	12,0
	6-10 years	21	21,0	21,0	33,0
	11-22 years	28	28,0	28,0	61,0
	All my life in Ireland	39	39,0	39,0	100,0
	Total	100	100,0	100,0	

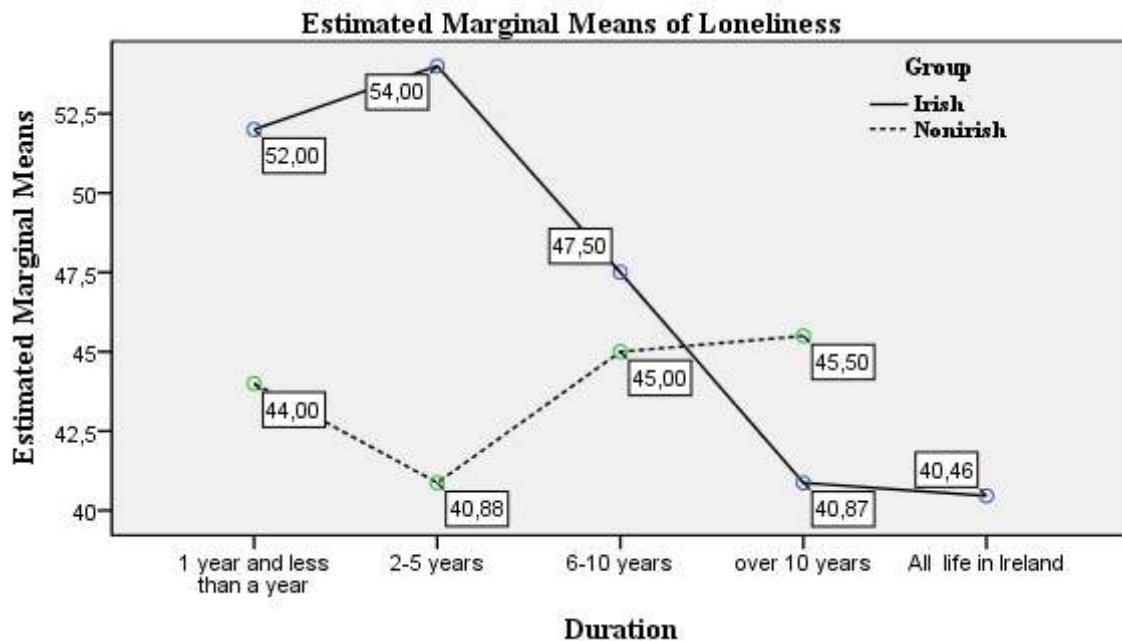


Figure 1. Correlation between Duration and Loneliness.

Figure 1. shows how the time spent in Dublin influenced the levels of loneliness among participants. According to Tests of Between-Subjects Effects, there was no difference in loneliness found in relation to the time spent in Dublin ($F= 0.885$, $p= 0.476$). There was

also no influence of duration on loneliness found in relation to Irish or non-Irish participants ($F= 0,710$, $p= 0,549$).

Distribution of scores did not differ significantly from a normal distribution (One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, $Z=0.460$, $p>0.05$), which allowed for the use of t-test for Equality of Means and Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

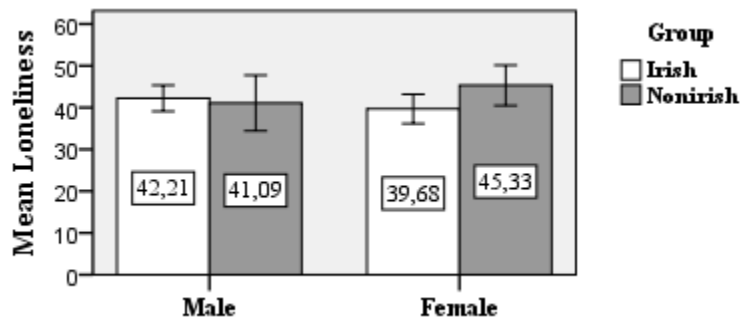


Figure 2. Loneliness Mean for females and males from both groups.

According to Figure 1., loneliness mean for Irish participants is 41.22 and for non Irish participants it is 43.88, based on *t-test for Equality of Means* this difference is not statistically significant ($t=-1.227$, $df=94$, $p=0.223$). However, when focusing on gender differences among both groups, there is a slight difference, on the level of statistical tendency, in loneliness among women (*t-test for Equality of Means*, $t=-1.930$, $df=44$, $p=0.06$). These results showed that there was a higher level of loneliness among non-Irish female participants (*t-test for Equality of Means*, $t=0.325$, $df=48$, $p=0.747$).

According to UCLA Loneliness Scale, scores lower than 38 represented lower levels of loneliness, scores from 38 to 56 indicated the average level of loneliness, and scores 56 and higher related to high level of loneliness.

Table 3. *Levels of loneliness among two groups.*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	37	37,0	38,5	38,5
	Medium	55	55,0	57,3	95,8
	High	4	4,0	4,2	100,0
	Total	96	96,0	100,0	
Missing	System	4	4,0		
Total		100	100,0		

According to Table 3., There are 55% of participants with medium level of loneliness among two groups, 37% were not lonely and only 4% of respondents reported high level of loneliness. High level of loneliness was reported by one Irish student (1.6%) and by three (9.4%) non Irish participants. Table 4. Illustrates the levels of loneliness within groups.

Table 4. *Levels of loneliness within each group.*

			Group		Total
			Irish	Nonirish	
Levels of Loneliness	Low	Count	26	11	37
		% within Levels of Loneliness	70,3%	29,7%	100,0%
		% within Group	41,3%	37,9%	40,2%
	Medium	Count	37	18	55
		% within Levels of Loneliness	67,3%	32,7%	100,0%
		% within Group	58,7%	62,1%	59,8%
Total	Count	63	29	92	
	% within Levels of Loneliness	68,5%	31,5%	100,0%	
	% within Group	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

Means for Self esteem and Social Support can be found in Table 4. There was nearly significant difference found in Self esteem and Social Support (SSQ) among participants of both groups (t-test for Equality of Means, $p > 0.05$).

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics for Self Esteem and SSQ within Two Groups*

					t-test for Equality of Means
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self-esteem	Irish	67	18,25	4,473	0.072
	Nonirish	33	20,06	5,068	
SSQ_scale	Irish	67	1,3831	,35058	0.158
	Nonirish	33	1,4949	,40715	
SSQ_satisfaction	Irish	67	1,6592	,45174	0.062
	Nonirish	33	1,8485	,50752	

To analyse correlation between loneliness and self esteem, loneliness and SSQ Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used (this correlation coefficient was chosen based on One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, $Z=0.460$, $p>0.05$).

Table 6. *Correlation between Self Esteem, SSQ and Satisfaction with Social Support received*

	Loneliness			
	Irish		Nonirish	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Self-esteem	,342*	,684**	,732*	,615**
SSQ_scale	,385*	,513**	,376	,602**
SSQ_satisfaction	,280	,752**	,887**	,550**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

According to the results from Table 6., there is a significant relationship between Loneliness and Self esteem, and this correlation is stronger for non-Irish male participants ($r=0.732$; $p>0.05$), the weakest positive correlation was among Irish male respondents

($r=0.342$; $p>0.05$). Among female participants there was an average positive correlation with ($r=0.684$; $p>0.05$) for Irish respondents and ($r=0.615$; $p>0.05$) for non-Irish females.

Correlation found was linear; therefore, respondents with higher self esteem reported higher level of loneliness, compared to participants with lower self esteem. The linear correlation between variables can be seen in Figure 3.

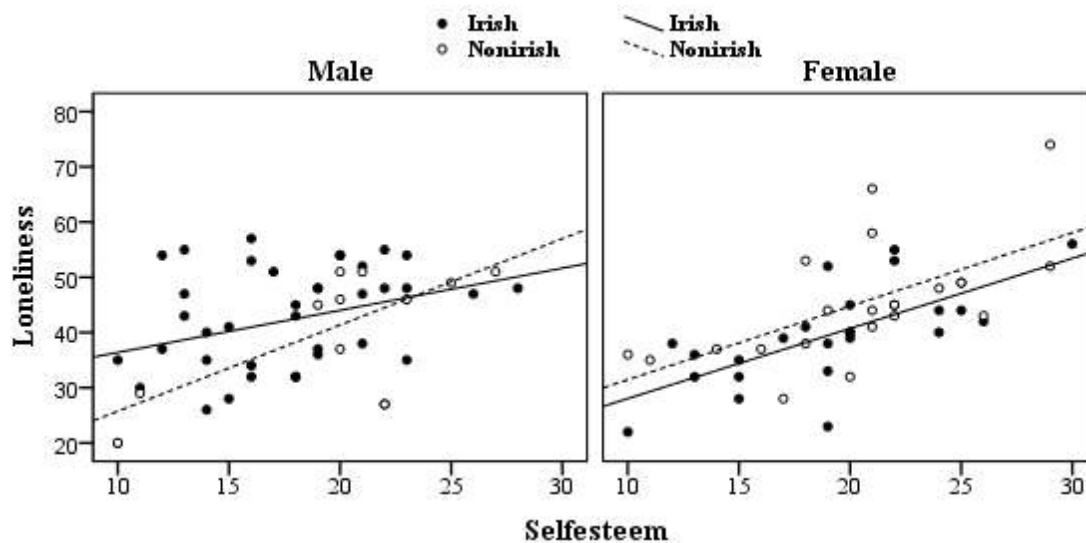


Figure 3. Correlation between Self Esteem and Loneliness.

The results showed that there is a linear, significant correlation between Loneliness and SSQ, and between Loneliness and SSQ satisfaction. The strongest correlation between Loneliness and SSQ satisfaction was observed among non-Irish male participants ($r=0.887$; $p>0.05$). This correlation among Irish male participants is not statistically significant ($r=0.280$, $p>0.05$).

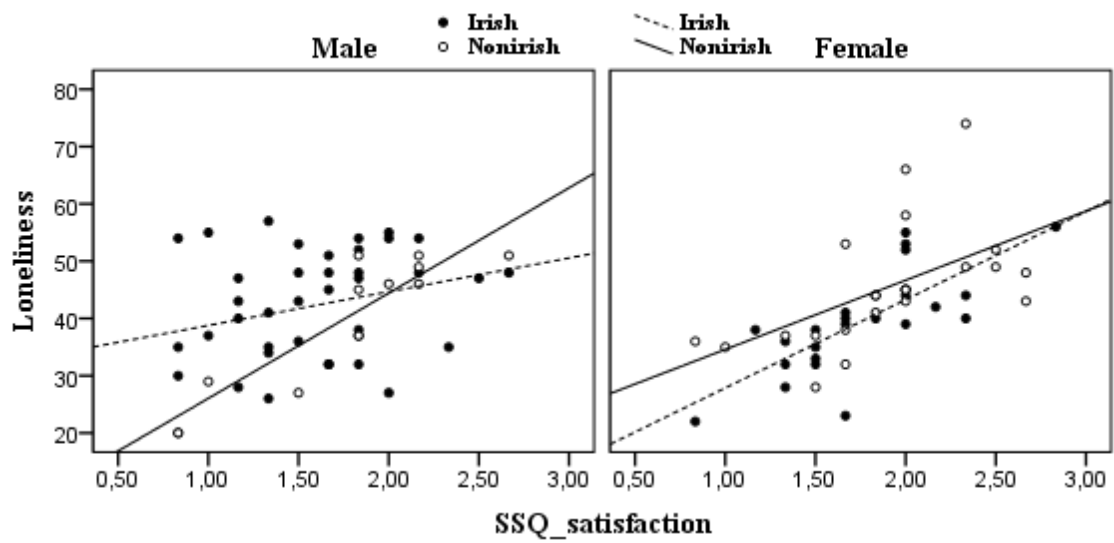


Figure 4. Correlation between SSQ Satisfaction and Loneliness.

Rosenberg's self esteem scale allows to distinguish between participants with positive attitude toward themselves (Self esteem > 20) and those with negative attitude towards themselves (Self esteem ≤ 20).

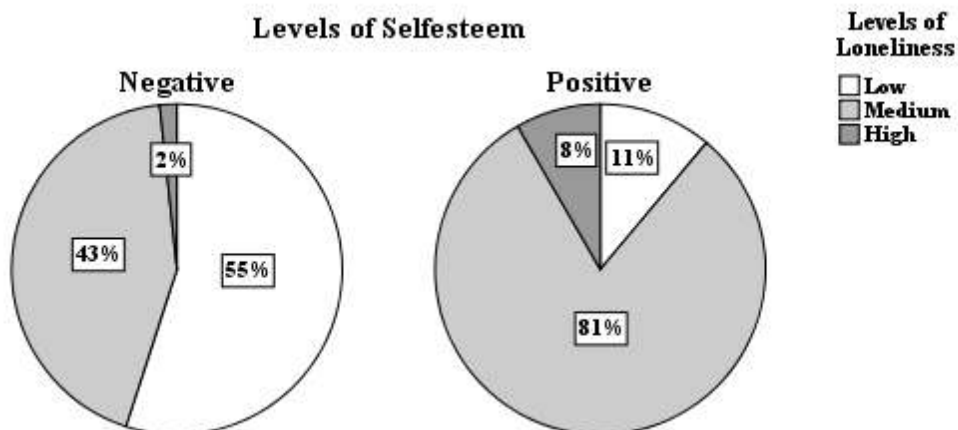


Figure 5. Illustrates correlation between Loneliness and students with positive and negative attitudes towards themselves.

There were 81% of participants with self esteem >20 who had medium level of loneliness, whereas, 43% of respondents with self esteem ≤ 20 had also normal level of loneliness; and 55% of students with low self esteem reported low levels of loneliness.

Chapter 4

Discussion section

The aim of the current study was to investigate the levels of loneliness among college students in Dublin, as well as to examine the relationship between loneliness, self esteem and social support received by students. The study also looked at gender difference in experiencing loneliness. It was hypothesised that Irish students studying in Dublin will score lower on UCLA Loneliness scale than non-Irish students studying in Dublin. The second hypothesis stated that there would be a correlation between loneliness and self esteem, loneliness and SSQ.

The results of this study showed that there was no difference in loneliness between the two groups, therefore, the first hypothesis was not supported. Based on the results, both groups had lonely and non-lonely individuals, and, there was no significant difference between groups. These results are similar to Wiseman's (1997) who found that American students studying in Israel had similar levels of loneliness to their counterpart students who studied at home. The results of this study can be matched with the results of Simmons's et al., (1991) which indicated that American students studying overseas had lower levels of loneliness compared to Korean students who also studied away from home.

However, the results of current study are inconsistent with previous research done by Anderson (1999) whose results showed that Asian students studying in America reported higher levels of loneliness compared to their U.S. counterparts. But, it should be considered that difference in loneliness among two groups of Anderson's (1999) study might be due to cultural differences.

The results of current study indicated a slight tendency among non-Irish female students to be lonelier than other participants. These results partly go in hand with previous studies (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2001, as cited in De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006; Medora & Woodward, 1986) on gender differences in experiencing loneliness. Pinquart and Sorensen (2001) combined the results of 102 studies examined gender differences in relation to loneliness. The results of this meta-analysis study indicated that women experience higher levels of loneliness than males (as cited in De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006). Same results were presented by Medora and Woodward (1986). They found that female college students were lonelier than male students.

However, only non-Irish female students showed a tendency towards feeling lonelier than men in the current study, therefore, it cannot be fully applied to the whole population, since there was no difference found between Irish male and female students or Irish female and non-Irish male students. Completely different results were found by Girgin (2009). He examined levels of loneliness among Turkish students, and the results showed that male participants suffered from loneliness more frequently compared to female students.

The second hypothesis was supported since there was found significant correlation between loneliness and self esteem, and between loneliness and social support. The results showed that the higher self esteem the lower levels of loneliness was reported among participants. These findings do not match other researches done on measuring relationship between these variables. Moreover, previous studies (Perlman & Peplau, 1981; Cutrona, 1982; Zimbardo, 1977; Eddy, 1961; Jones et al., 1981; Yacoob et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2005) have shown an opposite correlation between these two variables. Jones et al., (1981) studied correlation between loneliness and scores on self reports and attitudes scales among college students. The results of his study showed that the low self esteem is related to high levels of

loneliness. The similar pattern was stated by Eddy (1961) who found a significant correlation between loneliness and indirect measure of self esteem (as cited in Perlman & Peplau, 1981). Ponzetti (1990) evaluated loneliness among college students and stated that students with low self esteem are lonelier than those with high or moderate levels of self esteem.

As for results of current study, they could be presented in the light of Zimmermann's (1785/1786) and Moustakas's (1961) theories. The theories distinguished between positive and negative types of loneliness, stating that positive loneliness is focused on self actualization and is not referred to an unpleasant experience, whereas, negative one is unpleasant and occur due to the lack of social relationships (De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006; Perlman & Peplau, 1981). Based on this view, it can be considered that students with high self esteem and high levels of loneliness experience positive loneliness and that it was their choice to have fewer social relationships.

The results of current study indicated that there was a significant correlation between loneliness and social support and its quality. It was found that the higher the level of loneliness, the greater social support was received. These results also supported the second hypothesis since the correlation between loneliness and social support was determined. Current findings could be explained in a sense that lonelier individuals tend to seek more social support compared to non-lonely people.

However, these findings were not consistent with some previous researches which showed that lonely individuals have less social support. For instance, Ponzetti (1990) suggests that lonely college students have smaller social networks, and that the networks of lonely students tend to be less interconnected and less satisfying. Cutrona (1982) found that lonely students have a tendency to communicate more with different network of people; and students from her study also reported less support from their family and friends. Similar

results were provided by Girgin (2009). He found that college students who had five and more friends to spend time with reported lower levels of loneliness than those who had fewer friends. All in all, it was determined that greater social relations and better quality of social support prevents feelings of loneliness (Cutrona, 1982).

Limitations and recommendations

Several flaws that might have affected the outcome of current study are explained below.

Firstly, the study has a small amount of participants. The sample was too small to correctly assess the results. It cannot be applied to the full population of students studying in Dublin. Further research would contribute to and improve current results by using a larger sample of students. Results from a bigger sample would be more consistent with the literature, and would apply to a larger population of students studying in Dublin.

Secondly, the variety of nationalities in the second group prevent from adequate assessments of the results. There were 33 non-Irish students who differed a lot in their nationalities ranging from Russian to American. Cultural differences may affect the study in a number of ways:

- adjustment to a new society. There is a difference in how students from different countries adapt to a new environment, and the amount of time they require for the adaptation to happen. Therefore, having such a variety of nationalities within the sample, it is difficult to conclude what the cause of loneliness is.
- difference in socialization. There is a difference in upbringing and values among cultures, therefore, students from various countries differ in their approaches of making new contacts and maintaining them. This also should be considered while

evaluating loneliness, and since the current study does not have a substantial amount of participants with the same cultural background, it cannot reasonably assess loneliness among overseas participants. Further study would require a substantial amount of students from the same culture in order to draw coherent and correct conclusion. Also, to evaluate cultural differences in relation to loneliness among college students, a researcher would need bigger samples of students from a particular culture, and having samples of three or more nationalities would give the chance to compare differences in loneliness among people from different cultural backgrounds.

Thirdly, current study did not consider other variables which have an impact on experiencing loneliness. Part of the participants was undergraduate psychology students, what may have an influence on how they completed surveys. Further research in this field could use a longitudinal study to control for such variables as adjustment period, the difference in levels of loneliness in the beginning, middle and the end of the academic year, and gradual changes in self esteem.

Survey from the current study included questions about the duration of time spent in Dublin, and participants were asked to state who they lived with. However, due to small samples of both groups it could not be determined whether these variables were related to the levels loneliness.

The results of current and subsequent studies could be useful in a number of ways:

Firstly, social workers may use gathered information for improving social systems for students. New techniques and voluntary support groups can be developed and promoted for lonely students to teach them the strategies of coping with loneliness, and techniques to increase self-esteem. The data from the study could be used in social settings for better evaluation of causes of loneliness.

Secondly, college representatives may use and benefit from governed data. Social support groups can be organised within the educational establishments, and can be focused on helping students who experience loneliness. Due to supportive environment in universities, students could potentially improve academically.

Finally, the information from further studies in this area may be used at governmental level. Government could be involved in supporting the students by investing in students' social support settings; organising and developing better social environment for college students, and possibly by promoting rewards for those involved in higher education.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Informed Consent

To whom it may concern,

My name is Valerija Gnusareva. I am final year psychology student in Dublin Business School. I would appreciate if you could take part in my final year project investigating potential loneliness among college students in Dublin. All the data gathered will be confidential. The 3 questionnaires can be completed in about 10 minutes. If you are interested in the results from the study, or if you need more information, feel free to contact me on 1 [REDACTED]

Thank you for your time and participation,

Valerija Gnusareva.

Age:

Gender:

Nationality:

How long have you been in Ireland?:

Do you live in Dublin with your family/family member/ friend/alone? (Please specify):

Appendix B**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale**

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle SA. If you agree with the statement, circle A. If you disagree, circle D. If you strongly disagree, circle SD.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with life. SA A D SD
2. At times, I think I am no good at all. SA A D SD
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities. SA A D SD
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people. SA A D SD
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. SA A D SD
6. I certainly feel useless at times. SA A D SD
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. SA A D SD
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. SA A D SD
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. SA A D SD
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself. SA A D SD

Appendix C

Social Support Questionnaire (Short Form)

SSQSR

Instructions:

The following questions ask about people in your environment who provide you with help or support. Each question has two parts. For the first part, list all the people you know, excluding yourself, whom you can count on for help or support in the manner described. Give the persons' initials, their relationship to you (see example). Do not list more than one person next to each of the numbers beneath the question.

For the second part, circle how satisfied you are with the overall support you have.

If you have had no support a question, check the words "No one", but still rate your level of satisfaction. Do not list more than nine people per question.

Please answer all the questions as best you can. All your responses will be kept confidential.

EXAMPLE:

Who do you know you can trust with information that could get you in trouble?

No one	1. T.N. (brother)	4. T.N. (father)	7.
	2. L.M. (friend)	5. L.M. (employer)	8.
	3. R.S. (friend)	6.	9.

How Satisfied?

6 – very 5 – fairly 4 – a little 3 – a little 2 – fairly 1 – very

Satisfied satisfied satisfied dissatisfied dissatisfied dissatisfied

1. Whom can you really count on to be dependable when you need help?

No one	1.	4.	7.
	2.	5.	8.
	3.	6.	9.

2. How Satisfied?

6 – very 5 – fairly 4 – a little 3 – a little 2 – fairly 1 –
very

Satisfied satisfied satisfied dissatisfied dissatisfied dissatisfied

3. Whom can you really count on to help you feel more relaxed when you are under pressure or tense?

No one	1.	4.	7.
	2.	5.	8.
	3.	6.	9.

4. How Satisfied?

6 – very 5 – fairly 4 – a little 3 – a little 2 – fairly 1 –
very

2. 5. 8.
3. 6. 9.

10. How Satisfied?

6 – very 5 – fairly 4 – a little 3 – a little 2 – fairly 1 –
very
Satisfied satisfied satisfied dissatisfied dissatisfied dissatisfied

11. Whom can you count on to console you when you are very upset?

No one 1. 4. 7.
2. 5. 8.
3. 6. 9.

12. How Satisfied?

6 – very 5 – fairly 4 – a little 3 – a little 2 – fairly 1 –
very
Satisfied satisfied satisfied dissatisfied dissatisfied dissatisfied

Appendix D

UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3)

Instructions: The following statements describe how people sometimes feel. For each

statement, please indicate how often you feel the way described by circling an appropriate letter. Here is an example:

How often do you feel happy?

If you never felt happy, you would respond "never": if you: always feel happy, you would respond "always."

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES ALWAYS

1. How often do you feel that you are "in tune" with the people around you? N / R / S / A
2. How often do you feel that you lack companionship? N / R / S / A
3. How often do you feel that there is no one you can turn to? N / R / S / A
4. How often do you feel alone? N / R / S / A
5. How often do you feel part of a group of friends? N / R / S / A
6. How often do you feel that you have a lot in common with the people around you? N / R / S / A
7. How often do you feel that you are no longer close to anyone? N / R / S / A
8. How often do you feel that your interests and ideas are not shared by

those around you? N / R / S / A

9. How often do you feel outgoing and friendly? N / R / S / A

10. How often do you feel close to people? N / R / S / A

11. How often do you feel left out? N / R / S / A

12. How often do you feel that your relationships with others are not meaningful? N / R / S / A

13. How often do you feel that no one really knows you well? N / R / S / A

14. How often do you feel isolated from others? N / R / S / A

15. How often do you feel you can find companionship when you want it? N / R / S / A

16. How often do you feel that there are people who really understand you? N / R / S / A

17. How often do you feel shy? N / R / S / A

18. How often do you feel that people are around you but not with you? N / R / S / A

19. How often do you feel that there are people you can talk to? N / R / S / A

20. How often do you feel that there are people you can turn to? N / R / S / A

Appendix E

Participants

		Nationality			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Irish	67	67,0	67,0	67,0
	Mauritian	1	1,0	1,0	68,0
	Philipino	3	3,0	3,0	71,0
	Latvian	1	1,0	1,0	72,0
	Polish	2	2,0	2,0	74,0
	Indian	2	2,0	2,0	76,0
	Pakistani	1	1,0	1,0	77,0
	Nigerian	2	2,0	2,0	79,0
	German	1	1,0	1,0	80,0
	Lithuanian	6	6,0	6,0	86,0
	English	2	2,0	2,0	88,0
	Ghana	1	1,0	1,0	89,0
	Chinese	4	4,0	4,0	93,0
	Yeman	1	1,0	1,0	94,0
	Venezuelan	1	1,0	1,0	95,0
	Belgium	1	1,0	1,0	96,0
	Croatian	1	1,0	1,0	97,0
	American	1	1,0	1,0	98,0
	Russian	1	1,0	1,0	99,0
	French	1	1,0	1,0	100,0
	Total	100	100,0	100,0	

		Group			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Irish	67	67,0	67,0	67,0
	Nonirish	33	33,0	33,0	100,0
	Total	100	100,0	100,0	