

## PSYCHOLOGY

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### Personality prerequisites leading to loneliness

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**Summary.** This paper considers the results of a theoretical and empirical research aimed at studying psychological characteristics of personality that accompany the loneliness experience. Revealed are the significant positive relationships between the general experience of loneliness indicator and the indicators of the personality factors (according to the FPI technique). It was empirically established that certain personality characteristics can be prerequisites for a rise of loneliness. These may be: shyness, depressivity, emotional lability, indecision, closedness, irritancy, sensitivity to a denial of contact, spontaneous aggressiveness, formality in interpersonal relations and a fear to take an independent decision. It was proved that the personality characteristics are consistently interrelated with the loneliness experience and impede a process of social integration of the personality.

**Keywords:** *loneliness, personality prerequisites, causes of the rise of loneliness*

#### Introduction

This paper describes the results of a theoretical and empirical research of the influence of personality prerequisites accompanying loneliness. The problem of loneliness was topical throughout the entire history of the mankind. Loneliness can be attributed to the mostly commonly encountered problems of human mental health. The changes taking place in the social, economic and political life of the contemporary society contribute to dissociation of people and higher emotional tension in interpersonal relationships. Sense of insecurity in future and uncertainty of one's existence create prerequisites for the rise of loneliness with the majority of people. Loneliness is experienced by people of various age, professions, material and social status. This feeling is associated with the fact that a person experiences detachment from human community, family and historical reality, it disturbs the links between the inner world of a person and his or her social environment. Therefore, adjustment of a personality to new conditions and personal fulfilment problems, actually the issue of one's survival in the modern world, is important and topical.

Dictionaries of psychology consider loneliness as one of the psychogenic factors that influence emotional state and psychic health of a person. Its advent is determined by isolation – either physical or emotional. Under such circumstances (either experimentally created or natural) the communication need becomes sharply topical; if it is not met, it can cause acute psychic states, e.g., tension, anxiety, voidness and depression.

Loneliness is perceived as an acutely subjective and extremely individual, sometimes unique, experience. Some people experience it as a sore existence filled with depression and a feeling of own inferiority while other people perceive it as a calm and level self life, an opportunity to succeed in life or stick to creative activities.

When analyzing classical theories, concepts and approaches it is possible to note that the majority of them conventionally treat loneliness as a negative event within the frame of various relationships, emotional responses and associated deformations. Such feelings and emotions as fear, anxiety, sadness, isolation, needlessness and dependency are frequently considered by a person as loneliness.

Robert Nemov believes that "Loneliness is a grave mental state usually accompanied with low mood and de-

pressing emotional suffering" [6, p. 88]. Igor Kon views loneliness as a subjective state of isolation, obscurity, a feeling of the unsatisfied need in communication and emotional bond [4, p. 42].

The most precise notion that characterizes an integral response of a person to the situation of loneliness is that "experience" which is defined as any sense feeling perceived by a person and an event of reality that is directly represented in his or her consciousness and considered by the latter as the event of his or her own life [2, p. 6].

In terms of the study of loneliness "experience" appears as a process of integral and multi-faceted understanding of the situation or event that has led to perception and recognition of oneself as a lone personality. This study treats loneliness as an experience causing a complex and acute feeling accompanied with low mood, psychological estrangement, emotional isolation, fear of the lone lifestyle consequences, oppressive feeling of disunion with other people, permanent sense of abandonment, uselessness and needlessness of the own existence [1, p. 6].

Experience of loneliness can be expressed as a negative emotional state which depletes the human vitality and contributes to the rise of a feeling of hopelessness, desperation and needlessness [9, p. 51].

A theoretical review of literature made it possible to single out two main directions in studying the determiners of loneliness: situational and personal (characterological). Within the frame of the first direction considered are the situations that facilitate a rise of loneliness: widowhood, divorce or breach of relations and a low level of social relationship. In terms of the second direction studied are the personal features of lone people. Adepts of the second direction have empirically proved that the main personal prerequisites of loneliness are: low self-feeling, shyness and introversion.

As the situational factors and diverse and always are exterior of psychological events, the psychologists pay more attention to personal factors, search of a complex of characterological traits or individual properties which, when expressly pronounced, create a proneness to loneliness. Priority is given to such personal factors as low self-feeling, shyness, excessive self-criticism, negative self-perception and communicative incompetence as well as to certain characterological peculiarities, e.g., egoism and aggressiveness.

Some authors specifically term loneliness as a personal quality. Daniel Russel considers that a difference between loneliness as a state and loneliness as a personal trait is similar to the difference between a state of anxiety and anxiety as a personal trait [8, p. 219].

The authors that consider loneliness to be a consequence of the permanent personal traits link loneliness to pessimism and helplessness. There is an opinion that one of the factors leading to loneliness is a reluctance of a person to find himself in such situation of interpersonal communication when he or she is subject to risk of sensing embarrassment and disappointment. Hostility and passivity may result from earlier unsatisfactory contacts while a lack of a sense of reliability and warmth may cause an inclination to fix his or her alienation from the society and loneliness as a norm of further lifestyle [10, p. 37].

Some authors note narcissism, superiority complex and hostility [5] among the personal traits while other scientists remark shyness, focusing on one's inner world, low self-feeling and anxiety [2, p. 11].

Leticia Ann Peplaw, Maria Miceli and Bruce Morash consider that a proneness to loneliness is due to a low self-feeling which causes such experience. The authors remark that loneliness, particularly deep and lasting experiences, reduces self-feeling. The consequences of loneliness for self-feeling are still enhanced if loneliness is linked to personal traits and deficiencies [5, p. 181]. Low self-feeling leads to a rise of a sense of maladjustment and worthlessness. The people with low self-feeling interpret social relationships in a self-minimizing way. They are more prone to refer their mishaps in communication to inner and self-accusing factors, expect other people to perceive them useless as well and feel a lack of self-confidence.

Along with low self-feeling, one of the prerequisites of loneliness can be the accumulated negative experience of relationships in the past (negative attitudes), fear to lose one's personal freedom and independence, control of the situation and a reluctance to let somebody into one's personal space. Conscious and purposeful striving for loneliness can be due to certain traits that render communication and maintaining close relations with people difficult. Personal experience of loneliness can be provoked by an unsatisfactory assessment within one of the social models of communication that changes behaviour and state of a person.

Based upon the research done by these authors we can suppose that low self-feeling shapes a system of attitudes and stereotypes of behaviour that make satisfactory social interaction difficult thereby preparing a fertile ground for a rise of loneliness. In its turn, a high self-feeling can also create a style and way of thinking or behaviour that contradict the generally accepted standards and stereotypes thereby provoking experiences of loneliness. Thus, self-feeling is not a direct cause of loneliness but it may make the basis for its rise by forming prerequisites and an inclination to suffer loneliness.

According to contemporary research, passivity, submission, lack of trust to people around and suspiciousness are those personality determiners that complicate establishment of psychosocial contacts though the need of such contacts is high. Hence, a high sensitivity to deprivation arises. Loneliness can be experienced as anxiety, depres-

sion, sadness, dullness, melancholy, nostalgia after the lost relationships [10, p. 15]; as emotional isolation resulting from a loss of a loved one accompanied by despair and sadness; and as a social isolation connected with alienation from a social group. Experience of loneliness can lead to apathy and hostility [3, p. 136].

From the viewpoint of the system and role theory of personality formation, a potential liability of a person to loneliness is introduced in the very practice of personal education on the basis of the role approach. Narrow social scope for activity development leads to the situation when a person is formed in such a way that he or she may not inherit and fulfil the system of social roles in the fundamental environments: family, work collective, the world and "Ego sphere". It becomes a cause of unstable attitude of the personality, uncertain plans, deviant behaviour, disadvantage and other things that may result in loneliness.

Lone people not uncommonly find the cause of their loneliness in one self and ascribe it to the character deficiencies, lack of capacity and personal unattractiveness to a greater extent than in the factors dependent on their volitional control: a lack of one's own efforts taken to establish contacts and inefficient means to achieve this goal [6].

On the basis of classical observations and tests an American psychologist and psychotherapist Jeffrey Young singled out twelve causes of occurrence of the chronic feeling of loneliness: inability to endure forced solitude; low self-esteem; social anxiety; communicative clumsiness, ineptitude; mistrust to people; inner restraint; behavioural component; fear of a rival, fear to be cast-off; sexual uneasiness; fear of emotional intimacy; unsure passivity, lack of initiative, lack of confidence in one's desires; and unrealistic aspirations [5, p. 41].

When studying a disposition to loneliness depending on the personality type, the researchers of the University of California guided by Edward Sigelman presented the data pertaining to the characteristics that most negatively impact psychological adaptability. The author pointed out a perception that one is a loser, self-pity, a desire to keep aloof from others, avoidance of close intimacy, lying, fallacy and hostility towards other people [9, p. 19].

So, the prerequisites of loneliness rise can be personal characteristics proceeding from the very person and the conditions that facilitate the advent of loneliness. These can be: dissatisfaction, feeling of one's own inferiority, self-assessment as an unhappy person, complete absence of attention on the part of the society or a significant person, termination or absence of social relationships, emotional isolation, psychological alienation and suffered psychological trauma. Experience of loneliness can reveal as passive and inert behaviour, or it can become a push to vigorous activity aimed at overcoming loneliness.

The above described analysis of literature devoted to this problem allowed of assuming that the prerequisites of the rise of loneliness are such personal qualities as shyness, depressiveness, emotional liability, neuroticism, irritancy, closedness, uncertainty and spontaneous aggressiveness that determine proneness of an individual to loneliness.

Thus, this paper is devoted to the empiric verification of this hypothesis.

The study was conducted in the State Enterprise Southern Ukrainian K. D. Ushinsky National University.

The sample comprised 80 persons who were trainees of the advanced staff retraining department with a specialization in «Psychology» aged from 25 to 45 years. To diagnose loneliness indicators, a technique "Differential questionnaire of loneliness experience" developed by Dmitry Leontiev and EvgenyOsin was applied. This technique is based on the model of attitude to loneliness proposed by the authors that accepts loneliness as the existential fact which opens for a person a possibility to value the situation of seclusion and use it as a resource for self-communication and personal growth. The technique consists of assertions that are grouped in scales that measure general experience of loneliness, dependence on communication and positive attitude to loneliness [7].

The FPI technique (Freiburg multiple-factor personality questionnaire) can be applied for diagnosing those

qualities of a personality that may accompany the experience and manifestations of loneliness. The questionnaire contains questions and statements concerning behaviour modes, orientation, skills and physical hazards.

Mathematical and statistical processing of data was made using quantitative analysis methods – the computation was made according to Spearman’s rank-order correlation with the aid of SPSS, version 17.0 software program. Qualitative analysis was conducted with the aid of "ace" and "profiles" method.

**Results and their discussion**

Table 1 presents the significant correlation relationships between the loneliness experience indicators and the factors characterizing a personality with the use of FPI questionnaire.

**Table 1.** Significant coefficients of correlation between the loneliness experience indicators and the FPI multiple-factor personality questionnaire

Loneliness indicator	FPI multiple-factor personality questionnaire				
	F1	F3	F6	F8	F11
GEL	250*	550**	-302*	334**	535**
DC					240*

Note: 1) zeroes and commas are omitted; 2) \* – significance of correlations at 0.05 level; \*\* – significance of correlations at 0.01 level; 3) designations of loneliness experience indicators: GEL – general experience of loneliness; DL – dependence on communication; 4) designations of the FPI multiple-factor personality questionnaire indicators: F1 – neuroticism; F3 – depressiveness; F6 – balance; F8 – shyness; F11 – emotional lability.

The obtained data indicates presence of positive relationships with GEL (general experience of loneliness) and F3 (depressiveness) indicators, F8 (shyness), F11 (emotional lability) at 1% level, and with F1 (neuroticism) indicators at 5% level; negative relationships ( $\rho \leq 0.05$ ) were detected with F6 (balance) indicators. DC indicators (dependence of communication) positively correlate ( $\rho \leq 0.05$ ) with F11 (emotional lability) indicators.

Correlation analysis data make it possible to proceed with the qualitative analysis, namely, to the analysis of profiles and personality factors of the testees with high and low levels of loneliness experience according to the FPI technique. In order to identify the groups of testees

characterized by various levels of loneliness experience, a statistical method of aces. By the results of the percentile norms two groups were singled out of the total sample of respondents. The first group (Lmax, n=17) comprised the testees with a high level of the general experience of loneliness (4<sup>th</sup> quartile of the distribution from 75 to 100 percentile). The second group (Lmin, n=21) was represented by the testees with a low level of the general experience of loneliness (1<sup>st</sup> quartile of the distribution).

Table 2 presents the most pronounced personality factor indicators according to the FPI technique in groups with various levels of loneliness experience.

**Table 2.** Ranking of personality factor indicators using FPI technique in groups with high and low levels of loneliness experience

Rank	Group of persons with high level of loneliness experience, Lmax	Group of persons with low level of loneliness experience, Lmin
1	F11+	F5+
2	F3+	F11-
3	F1+	F4-
	F4-	F8-

Note: the indicators are ranked so that their absolute values reduce relative to the mean line of the series.

The obtained values are located within the zones of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile distribution, which enables to suggest trends towards high and low indicators of the studied personality characteristics.

The profile of persons with a high level of loneliness experience Lmax is characteristic of a relative domination of F11+ indicators (emotional lability), which can be attributed to the state of disadaptation, anxiety and pronounced disorganization of behaviour. F3+ factor (depressiveness) manifests itself as low mood, a lack of capacity to pull oneself together for a long period; F1+ factor (neuroticism) with a trend to the positive pole (high level) of the indicator is characteristic of a high anxiety and nervousness. F4- factor (low irritancy) which values are located within the negative pole area is characteristic of a high self-control and strict adherence to moral and

ethical principles. These facts can be viewed as a certain complex of personality traits that accompanies the loneliness experiences in this group.

In the Lmin group personality factor profile (according to FPI) the mostly pronounced are the indicators pertaining to F5+ factor (sociability), which characterizes a wealth and brightness of emotional expressions and natural and easy manners. A trend to low values of F11 factor (lack of emotional lability) indicates a low inner tension, freedom from conflicts, satisfaction with oneself and one’s achievements and a readiness to follow standards and requirements. F4- factor (absence of irritancy) with a trend to low values is peculiar of the available inner standards and self-discipline; F8- factor (lack of shyness) also has low values of this indicator and is characteristic of courage, determination and risk proneness.

The obtained data allow of compiling a psychological portrait of a typical representative of each testee group.

The group of persons having a trend towards a high level of loneliness experience is characterized by high anxiety and excitation coupled with rapid depletion on the background of low mood. At first thought one can get an impression that the representatives of that type are gloomy, morose, fenced off and introspective people who avoid socializing because of excessive self-conceit. However, the outer appearance of alienation and gloom cover sensitivity and soulful kind-heartedness. They perceive criticism and comments about themselves as an invasion on personal privacy and bear ill feelings to those persons who try, even to a small extent, to control their behaviour. Such group of people shows absence of lively emotions and chillness, they keep formal interpersonal relations and avoid intimacy, support the exterior forms of friendly relationships only, their acquaintanceship is perfunctory and formal. Company of people does not attract them, they prefer and like solitude and feel contacts as a burden. Representatives of this group are peculiar of indecision, uncertainty in one's own capability; they are afraid to take independent decisions which bring them to despair. Past and present events in their lives, irrespective of their content, cause remorse and oppressive feeling of future misfortunes and disasters. Conflict behaviours are, as a rule, the most often chosen form of protection against traumatic experiences. Ostentation traits may combine with a desire to withdraw from wide social contacts. These persons are susceptible to self-analysis and self-criticism, however such absorption into their own problems and self-abuse leads to a deep-seated loneliness experience [6].

The group of tastes with low level of loneliness experience is characteristic of calmness, easiness, emotional maturity, objective assessment of oneself and other people as well as persistence in their plans and attachments. They are active, ever-busy, proactive, ambitious and self-rigorous. Their behaviour is guided by commitment, strict observance of ethical standards, and acquittal of social norms. These people are inherently decent because of their inward

standards and high self-exactingness. They have many friends. In interpersonal relations they demonstrate rich and bright emotions, natural behaviour and easiness. Preferable for them is to be in the public eye. If all by ourselves, they feel dull, suffer psychological discomfort, look for a company and readily participate in all group events, like to work and rest among other people [6].

Thus, by the results of the empiric study it was established that the differences in groups of persons having a high and low loneliness experience are revealed in a peculiar combination of personality factors (according to the FPI technique).

### Conclusions

1. The paper considers the results of a theoretical and empirical research aimed at a study of psychological personality characteristics accompanying a loneliness experience. Revealed are the significant positive relationships between the general experience of loneliness indicator and the indicators of the personality factors (according to the FPI technique).

2. It was empirically established that the prerequisites of loneliness can be such personality characteristics as: shyness, depressivity, emotional lability, indecision, closedness, irritancy, sensitivity to a denial of contact, spontaneous aggressiveness and a fear to take an independent decision.

3. It was proved that the persons with a high level of loneliness experience are characterized by anxiety, lack of emotional intimacy, focusing on one's own experience, awareness and acceptance of one's loneliness – all that leads to uncertainty and absence of a desire or a fear to make some changes in one's life.

Representatives of the group having a low level of loneliness are distinct of an absence of the actual morbid experience, emotional maturity, energy and self-exactingness. A wide circle of contacts makes it possible for them to successfully avoid loneliness experiences.

Research in loneliness experience in terms of the personality qualities widens the integral concept of the studied phenomenon.

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### Бедан В.Б. Личностные предпосылки возникновения одиночества

**Аннотация.** В статье рассмотрены результаты теоретико-эмпирического исследования, направленного на изучение психологических характеристик личности, сопровождающих переживание одиночества. Выявлены значимые положительные связи общего показателя переживания одиночества с показателями личностных факторов (по методике FPI). Эмпирически установлено, что в качестве предпосылок возникновения одиночества могут выступать определенные личностные характеристики. К ним можно отнести: застенчивость, депрессивность, эмоциональную лабильность, нерешительность, замкнутость, раздражительность, чувствительность к отвержению, спонтанную агрессивность, формальность в межличностных отношениях, страх принятия решений. Доказано, что личностные характеристики закономерно взаимосвязанные с переживанием одиночества, препятствуют процессу социальной адаптации личности.

**Ключевые слова:** одиночество, личностные предпосылки, причины возникновения одиночества