



RESEARCH ARTICLE

LONELINESS AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AMONG LATCHKEY CHILDREN (AGE BETWEEN 10 - 12 YEARS) AT SELECTED SCHOOLS IN MANGALURU

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 16th January, 2018
Received in revised form
21st February, 2018
Accepted 19th March, 2018
Published online 30th April, 2018

Key words:

Latchkey Children,
Loneliness,
Cognitive Development, School.

ABSTRACT

Background: Parent who spent much of their time working outside of the home tend to cause a sense of more loneliness in their children. Therefore there is a serious concern over the harmful effects brought upon the children due to decline in the amount of quantitative and qualitative time parents spent with them. Children who are left alone have poor cognitive development also. So keeping all in this view, the present study aims to correlate the loneliness and cognitive development of latchkey children (age between 10-12 years).

Method: Descriptive correlational research design was adopted for this study. A sample of 100 latchkey children was selected by purposive sampling technique from three selected schools of Mangalore. A demographic data, Screening questionnaire, UCLA Loneliness scale and Cognitive questionnaire was used for data collection.

Result: The result revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between level of loneliness and cognitive development of latchkey children ($r = -0.13$) at $p < 0.05$. Result showed that there is a significant association between level of cognitive development of latchkey children (10-12) with religion and also found that there was no significant association between the level of loneliness of latchkey children (10-12 years) with age, sex, religion and educational status.

Conclusion: The study concluded that latchkey children (age 10-12 years) feels frequent lonely and have average cognitive development.

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Citation: Mrs. Shanthi, S. and Mrs. Shambhavi, 2018. "Loneliness and cognitive development among latchkey children (Age between 10 -12 years) at selected schools in mangaluru", *International Journal of Current Research*, 10, (04), 67820-67823.

INTRODUCTION

The feeling of loneliness is a major crisis in children and adolescents which can harm the child adaptability to the environment. Elphageen defines loneliness as an unpleasant personal experience in which one feel different and suffer from visible behavioral disorders like sadness, anger and depression. There is also an in-concrete between once expectation and dreams and possibility of unrealized social relationship that leads to losing touch with others. Loneliness is a shared experience that occasionally affects 80% of people under the age of 18 and 40% of those above 60 years. Although it gradually declines in the youth, it shows an upward trend among the middle aged and the elderly.

Loneliness is also defined as agitation perceived both quantitatively and qualitatively and accompanied by recognizing ones social needs in the social environment. The adverse consequences of the latchkey situations are anger, indifference, depression, isolation and low self esteem and loneliness. In addition it is found that children who do not get attention in comparison with those who do experience more loneliness. Similarly children under the care of the grandparents and are in poor economic condition, specifically those who do not have good relationship with their parents are more in danger of feeling lonely (Samanesh, 2016). Cognitive development refers to development of thinking, reasoning, problem solving and clarification ability. According to census data in 2011, over 4 billion children were left alone without supervision for more than 6 hours every week on average ([http://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/j/ajns.July-201;4\(4\).p.207-11](http://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/j/ajns.July-201;4(4).p.207-11)). The effect of latchkey child differs with the age.

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Loneliness, boredom and fear are more common for those young school age. Children who are left alone also have poor cognitive development also ([http://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/j/ajns.July-2011; 4\(4\).p.207-11](http://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/j/ajns.July-2011;4(4).p.207-11)). We felt to do this study regarding the latchkey children because in this modern world almost all the parents are working. Working women also rapidly increase than the past few years. So there is an increase number of latchkey children who left alone in the home without any supervision. So the loneliness may affect the cognitive development of the children. So keeping all in this view, the present study was conducted to correlate the loneliness and cognitive development of the Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) at selected schools in Mangalore.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Approach

A descriptive research approach was considered .

Research Design

Correlational research design was used

Extraneous Variables

In this study extraneous variables are

- Age (10-12 years)
- Sex
- Religion
- Educational status

Setting of the Study

The study was carried out in selected students of St.Gerosa Higher Primary School, Jeppu .St Ann's Higher Primary School, Kuntikan and St Mary's English Primary School, Falnir There are 360 students in 3 Schools and 100 Latchkey children were selected for research study.

Population

The population comprises of children of age group between (10-12) years at selected schools.

Sampling

Purposive sampling technique was considered appropriate for selecting the sample for study

Sample Size

In this study the sample size was 100 children (age between 10-12 years)

Criteria for the selection of sample

Inclusion criteria

- Children who are alone at home for more than 2 hours
- Children whose both the parents are working
- Children those who are able to read and write

Exclusion Criteria

- Age group below 10 years and above 13 years
- Children who are not willing to participate in the study
- Children who are supervised by servants/siblings/guardians.

Description of the tool

The tool for data collection consisted of 4 parts namely

- Part A - Screening questionnaire
- Part B - Demographic variable
- Part C - Structured cognitive questionnaire
- Part D - UCLA loneliness scale

Part A: Screening questionnaire consisted of 4 questions in order to find out the children whose both parents are working and left alone in home for more than 2 hours

Part B: Demographic profoma including age, sex, religion, educational status.

Part C: Structured cognitive questionnaire Total 25 questions were framed which were multiple choice questions. The correct response scored 1 and wrong response scored 0.The maximum score was 25 and minimum score 1. There are five subtitle in the Cognitive Questionnaire which

Include

- Time: It consisted of five items
- Classification :It consisted five items
- Arithmetics: It consisted five items
- Memory: It consisted five items
- Thinking and Reasoning: It consisted of five items

Based on the score obtained by the sample it's classified accordingly

0 -8 =Poor Cognitive development
9-16 =Average Cognitive development
17-25 =Good Cognitive development

Part D: UCLA Loneliness scale consisted of 25 questions which is graded as 0,1,2,3 for never rarely, sometimes, often respectively. The minimum score is 0 and maximum is 60. Based on the score obtained by the sample it is classified accordingly

0-20 = Average loneliness
21-40 = Frequent loneliness
41-60 = Severe loneliness

Content Validity

The prepared tool was given to the two experts. Permission for tool validation was obtained by acceptance letter. Experts are requested to give their suggestions regarding each item in the tool in terms of Strongly agree, Disagree or Agree, validators suggestions were incorporated in the tool.

Methods of Data Collection

- Prior to data collection permission was obtained from the concerned authorities

- Purpose of conducting study was explained to subjects
- Data was collected from the selected schools from 20-11-16 to 24-11-16
- Screening questionnaire (part A) was administered
- Subjects were selected using purposive sampling technique
- Administered demographic proforma ,Structured Cognitive Questionnaire and UCLA loneliness scale to the sample
- Subjects taken approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire

Ethical Consideration

Ethical clearance was obtained through Institutional Ethics Committee A J Institute of Medical Sciences And Research Center to conduct study.

RESULTS

SECTION A: Description of sample according to demographic proforma.

This section deals with the distribution of sample according to the demographic proforma and explained in Frequency & Percentage.

Frequency and Percentage distribution of sample according to demographic variables

Majority of the sample (68%) were belonged to 12 years and majority of them (73%) belonged to Hindu religion. Highest of the Latchkey children (76%) were females. The majority of the sample (58%) were 7th standard and rest 42% belonged to 6th standard.

SECTION B: Description of level of cognitive development of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years).

The level of cognitive development of 100 Latchkey children (age 10-12 years) from selected schools of Mangalore was collected using a structured cognitive questionnaire and was represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Grading of level of cognitive development of Latchkey Children (age between 10-12 years)

N=100		
Level of cognitive development	frequency	percentage
Poor cognitive development (0-8)	1	1%
Average cognitive development (9-16)	64	64%
Good cognitive development (17-25)	35	35%
Total	100	100%

Data presented in table 1 represent that majority of Latchkey children age between 10-12 years (64%) had average cognitive development. (35%) had good cognitive development and (1%) had poor cognitive development.

SECTION C: Description of level of loneliness of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years).

The level of loneliness of 100 Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) from selected schools of Mangalore was collected using a UCLA loneliness scale and is represented in Table 2.

Table 2. Grading of level of loneliness among Latchkey Children (age 10-12 years)

N=100		
Level of loneliness	frequency	percentage
Average loneliness (0-20)	7	7%
Frequent loneliness (21-40)	90	90%
Severe loneliness (41- 60)	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Data presented in Table 2 revealed that majority of sample (90%) had frequent loneliness (7%) had average loneliness, (3%) had severe loneliness.

Mean, Range, Standard deviation and Mean percentage of level of loneliness and cognitive development of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years)

mean and standard deviation of cognitive development of Latchkey children(age between 10-12 years) was 16.02 ± 3.193 and mean percentage was 64.08%. So study concluded that Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) had average knowledge. The mean and standard deviation of level of loneliness of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) was 27.79 ± 6.14 and mean percentage was 53.44%. So study concluded that Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) had frequent loneliness.

SECTION D: Correlation between cognitive development and level of loneliness among Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years)

Data shows that there is a negative correlation between level of loneliness and cognitive development of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years). To find out the significant relationship between the cognitive development and loneliness of Latchkey children. Karl Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used. In order to test the statistical relationship between cognitive development and loneliness the following null hypothesis (H01) was formulated.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the level of loneliness and cognitive development of Latchkey children(age between 10-12 years)

Table 3. Co- relation between the level of loneliness and cognitive development of Latchkey Children (age between 10-12 years)

N=100				
	r	df	p	inference
Cognitive development & Level of loneliness	-0.13	98	<0.05	Negative correlation

r = correlation value, df- degree of freedom.

The data in table 3 shows that there is a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.13$ at $p < 0.05$) between level of loneliness and cognitive development. The calculated ($r = -0.13$) is lesser than the tabled value ($r = 0.2$) at p value < 0.05 . Hence the null hypothesis (H01) was accepted and research hypothesis was rejected.

SECTION E: Association between the cognitive development of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) with the selected demographic variable

To assess the level of cognitive development of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) with selected demographic

variable, Chi square (χ^2) test was computed. In order to test the significant association the following null hypothesis was stated

H₀₂: There is no significant association of cognitive development and with selected demographic variable

Association of level of cognitive development of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) with selected demographic variable.

There is no significant association between the level of cognitive development of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) with the selected demographic variable like age, sex, and educational status but in this study found that there is a significant association between the level of cognitive development of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) with Religion ($\chi^2=39.725$ at $p<0.05$). Hence the null hypothesis was rejected and research hypothesis was accepted

SECTION F: Association between the level of loneliness of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) with selected demographic variable To assess the level of loneliness of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) with selected demographic variable, Chi square (χ^2) test was computed. In order to test the significant association the following null hypothesis was stated.

H₀₃: There is no significant association of level of loneliness and with selected demographic variable Association of level of loneliness of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) with selected demographic variable. Data in Table 6 shows that there is no significant association between the level of loneliness of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years) with the demographic variable like age, sex, religion and educational status hence the null hypothesis (H₀₂) was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The present study showed that mean score of level of loneliness is 27.79 ± 6.14 and mean percentage is 53.44% and Latchkey children had frequent loneliness. A similar study was conducted to determine the loneliness and depression in self-care students in Mashhad North Eastern Iran.

The result revealed that Mean and SD of Latchkey and Non Latchkey children 34.77 ± 4.65 and 32.68 ± 3.16 shows that the Latchkey children experiences more loneliness (Samanesh, 2016). The studies concluded that Latchkey children feel more loneliness. The present study showed that mean score of cognitive development is 16.02 ± 3.193 and mean percentage is 64.08 so, Latchkey children had average cognitive development A similar study was conducted on the effect of Latchkey satiations on a Childs educational success. The study concluded that the Latchkey children under the age of 13 had poor academic achievement (Elza Venter and Eunice Rambku, 2013). The studies concluded that Latchkey children had average or poor cognitive development. The present study revealed that there is a significant negative correlation ($r=-0.13$ at $p<0.05$) between loneliness and cognitive development of Latchkey children (age between 10-12 years). Similar study was conducted on Effect of loneliness and the psychological wellbeing of college students. The finding of research revealed that there is a negative relationship between loneliness and psychological wellbeing (Revati, 2017). Studies concluded that there is a frequent loneliness of latchkey children lower the academic achievements.

Conflict of Interest: no conflict

Funding Statement: self fund

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