# The Influence of the Emotional Intelligence Features on the Intensity of the Loneliness Experience in Adolescence

(Lyudmyla Kolisnyk)
Sumy State University, Sumy, Ukraine

**Introduction.** At the present stage of our society development under the conditions of social, economic, political, cultural transformations, industrialization and urbanization, intensive technology development, oversaturation of information and, as a consequence, human inclusion into more and more number of superficial social contacts, the problem of loneliness is becoming especially sharp. It represents an emotional state of the personality, connected with the absence of close, positive emotional ties with others or the fear of their loss and is affected a psychological wellbeing and the life quality in general.

The problem of loneliness appears in the human life at every age stage. However, it is particularly acute in adolescence, as it prevents solving age-related problems associated with the development of personal reflection and self-awareness, with the acute need for communication and deep emotional-rich interpersonal relationships, with further professional development.

It should be noted that the phenomenon of loneliness as an experience has both a positive and a negative modality. Winnicott (1960) describes the ability to be alone as one of the most important signs of the maturity of human emotional development. Brennan (1982) and also Sadler (1989) distinguish spiritual and space loneliness, which are related to the search for their identity and meaning of life. Also Peplau (1989) noted: ". solitude is not necessarily connected with loneliness; people can be happy being alone" (p. 171).

However, despite the fact that loneliness can be a positive experience, there is a negative side of this phenomenon. This is evidenced, for example, by the list of negative experiences that overwhelm the lonely person: anxiety, despair, sadness, anguish, impatience, helplessness, fear, boredom, isolation, pity and disgust to oneself, irritation, anger on others, melancholy, alienation, suspicion etc. (Shagivaleeva, 2007). The negative nature of loneliness (loneliness as a problem) manifests itself as follows: loneliness has the ability to subordinate to itself other psychic processes and conditions; violates the internal integrity of the individual; can act as a mechanism of psychological defense; leads to the formation of suppositions and revaluation of the contribution of another person in their own development. According to Kon (1989), loneliness – is "anguish, a subjective state of isolation, incomprehensibility, a sense of dissatisfied with the need for communication, human intimacy" (p. 180).

Thus, loneliness poses a threat to the positive development of personality. Therefore, in our opinion, this phenomenon requires research and intervention, first of all, in the context of its negative manifestation. We consider loneliness as a negative subjective experience of the individual, which arises either in a state of isolation, or even with the objective involvement of person in various spheres of social life and communication, and accompanied by feelings of abandonment, alienation, uselessness (Lashuk, 2010).

**Related Work.** An overview of the causes of the negative experience of loneliness in adolescence indicates that one of the most relevant factors in overcoming loneliness is the development of flexible social skills for implementing oneself in a social context for the manifestation of their own singularity as an opportunity. A phenomenon that combines a number of such skills is described in the scientific literature as emotional intelligence. Authors of the term "emotional intelligence" (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000) define it as the ability to perceive and express emotions, to understand and use them, to manage emotions in such a way as to promote their personal growth.

Conducted studies revealed the existence of a correlation between the level of emotional intelligence development and psychological well-being and the personal success of youngsters, which affects their experience of loneliness (Mayer, & Salovey, 1997; Vahrusheva, 2011; Derev'janko, 2009; Myloslavs'ka, 2011). Meyer and Selovey (1997) also describe a study in which students with a higher emotional intelligence have had greater success in their relationships (in interaction with the opposite sex). Miloslavskaya (2011) describes the revealed correlation between the components of communicative and social competence, components of social intelligence, communicative skills and the emotional intelligence level of students. According to her studies there is a correlation between the level of such emotional intelligence component as recognition of emotions of other people and the separate elements of communicative and social competence and social intelligence. The obtained results confirm the existence of the correlation between the components of emotional intelligence and the components of social and communicative competence, components of social intelligence and communicative skills (Miloslavskaya, 2011).

Vakhrusheva (2011), studying the expressiveness of structural and qualitative characteristics of emotional intelligence in adolescence and early adulthood, found that high rates of emotional intelligence are related to the

vector of benevolence in communication, such characteristics as humility, conformance, tendency to compromise, congruency and responsibility in contacts with others.

Thus, an overview of the above described works allows us to make an assumption about the existence of the correlation between the features of emotional intelligence and the intensity of the loneliness experience in adolescence.

**Purpose.** The purpose of the paper is to highlight the results of the empirical study on the correlation between the emotional intelligence features and the intensity of the loneliness experience in adolescence.

**Methodology.** 255 students from the Ukrainian higher educational establishments volunteered to participate in the presented study. There were 93 male and 162 female participants from 16 to 25 years old. The characteristic of the sample is due to the determinated chronological limits of the adolescence.

To solve the research tasks, we used the following psychodiagnostic tools: 1) the UCLA Loneliness Scale (D. Russell, M. Ferguson); 2) Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults / SELSA (E. Di Tomaso); 3) Meyer-Selovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test / MSCEIT (J. Meyer, P. Selovey, D. Caruso); 4) Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire / EMIN (D.V. Lyucyn). All questionnaires and test were printed and disseminated among students. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions of the above mentioned questionnaires and to solve the tasks from the Meyer-Selovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test. They also had to give some demographic information about themselves: age and sex. Then the data were collected, processed and analyzed. The correlational analysis of the obtained data was done with a help of Spearman's Rank Correlation in SPSS Statistics.

**Results.** It was found that 88.24% of respondent's experience loneliness from time to time, in certain life situations. They are only partially or selectively satisfied with their social contacts and emotional ties. A large proportion of young people, above all, experienced significant deficits of emotional attachment in the field of romantic relationships. A high level of romantic loneliness was demonstrated by 1.57% of respondents, and the average one is observed in 81.18% of the interviewed youth. Social links also often did not satisfy the desires of boys and girls – both their quantity and quality. Thus, the average level of social loneliness is peculiar to 79.61% of boys and girls.

The research of the emotional intelligence of the youngsters found that a large number of students – 37% – had an average level of the emotional intelligence development. A significant proportion of young people were characterized by low (17%) and very low (20%) levels of emotional intelligence. Such data were the result of the use of questionnaires in the form of self-report (EMIN, Lyusyn). An expert assessment of the skills of boys and girls to understand and manage emotions (MSCEIT) showed that the average level of the integral index of emotional intelligence had 64.5% of the respondents, the lowest – 34.5%, and the high one – only 1%.

As for the link between the depth of the loneliness experience and the level of the emotional intelligence development, the obtained results of correlation analysis have been presented in the table No. 1.

The analysis of this correlation table showed that a negative correlation was found at a high level of statistical significance ($p \leq 0,01$) between the general scale of loneliness and the general index of emotional intelligence. It concerns both Meyer – Selovey – Caruso emotional intelligence test (r = -, 220), and Lyucyn questionnaire (r = -, 294). A similar tendency was observed in relation to the link of separate scales of emotional intelligence with the general index of loneliness. Thus, at a high level of statistical significance ($p \leq 0,01$), a negative correlation was found between the general loneliness index and such Meyer-Selovey-Caruso scales, as "emotional understanding" (r = -, 210) and "emotional control" (r = -, 271); as well as the following Lyucyn questionnaire scales: "interpersonal intelligence" (r = -, 254) and "intrapersonal intelligence" (r = -, 265), "interpersonal emotional management" (r = -, 310) and "intrapersonal emotional management" (r = -, 335), "emotional understanding" (r = -, 204) and "emotional control" (r = -, 321), "interpersonal understanding of emotions" (r = -, 187).

Table 1. Correlation between the loneliness scales of E. DiTomasso and Russell-Ferguson questionnaires and emotional intelligence scales of Lyucyn questionnaire (EMIN) and MSCET (Spearman rank correlation) N = 255

| Emotional intelligence scales | Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (E. Di Tomaso) | | | | | | UCLA (D. Russell, M. Ferguson) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | romantic loneliness | | family loneliness | | social loneliness | | general loneliness | |
| | Correlation | Significance | Correlation | Significance | Correlation | Significance | Correlation | Significance |
| *EMIN Lyusyn* | | | | | | | | |
| Interp.underst. | -,140* | p≤0,05 | -,111 | ns | -,096 | ns | -,155* | p≤0,05 |
| Interp.control | -,150* | p≤0,05 | -,147* | p≤0,05 | -,219** | p≤0,01 | -,310** | p≤0,01 |
| Intrap.underst. | -,196** | p≤0,01 | -,123* | p≤0,05 | -,105 | ns | -,187** | p≤0,01 |
| Intrap.control | -,149* | p≤0,05 | -,110 | ns | -,166** | p≤0,01 | -,335** | p≤0,01 |
| Expr. Control | -,040 | ns | ,013 | ns | ,044 | ns | -,029 | ns |
| Interp.EI | -,162** | p≤0,01 | -,144* | p≤0,05 | -,170** | p≤0,01 | -,254** | p≤0,01 |
| Intrap.EI | -,180** | p≤0,01 | -,129* | p≤0,05 | -,136* | p≤0,05 | -,265** | p≤0,01 |
| Underst. of emotions | -,209** | p≤0,01 | -,130* | p≤0,05 | -,114 | ns | -,204** | p≤0,01 |
| Emotional control | -,155* | p≤0,05 | -,124* | p≤0,05 | -,181** | p≤0,01 | -,321** | p≤0,01 |
| EI | -,197** | p≤0,01 | -,145* | p≤0,05 | -,160* | p≤0,05 | -,294** | p≤0,01 |
| *MSCEIT* | | | | | | | | |
| Identif. of emotions | ,006 | ns | -,205** | p≤0,01 | -,127* | p≤0,05 | -,046 | ns |
| Use of emotions | -,025 | ns | -,182** | p≤0,01 | -,208** | p≤0,01 | -,154* | p≤0,05 |
| Underst. of emotions | ,026 | ns | -,327** | p≤0,01 | -,290** | p≤0,01 | -,210** | p≤0,01 |
| Emotions control | -,025 | ns | -,368** | p≤0,01 | -,306** | p≤0,01 | -,271** | p≤0,01 |
| EI | -,012 | ns | -,362** | p≤0,01 | -,317** | p≤0,01 | -,220** | p≤0,01 |

The statistically significant correlation (p≤0.05) was found between the general indicator of loneliness and the scale of "use of emotions" of the MSCEIT (r = -, 154), as well as the "interpersonal understanding" scale of the Lyusin questionnaire (r = -, 155).

Regarding separate types of loneliness, a negative correlation at a high level of statistical significance (p≤0,01) was observed between romantic loneliness and such Lyucyn questionnaire scales as an "interpersonal intelligence" (r = -, 162) and "intrapersonal intelligence" (r = -, 180), "intrapersonal understanding of emotions" (r = -, 196) and "other people emotions understanding" (r = -, 155), as well as emotional intelligence in general (r = -, 197). The statistically reliable connection (p≤0,05) was established between romantic solitude and such Lyucyn questionnaire scales as an "interpersonal understanding" (r = -, 140) and "interpersonal management" (r = -, 150), "interpersonal management" (r = -, 149) and emotional management in general (r = -, 155).

The data of the mathematical analysis showed a statistically significant correlation (p≤0,05) between family loneliness and such scales of Lyucyn questionnaire as "interpersonal emotional intelligence" (r = -, 144) and "intrapersonal emotional intelligence" (r = -, 129), "emotions understanding" (r = -, 130) and "emotions control" (r = -, 124), "interpersonal emotions management" (r = -, 147) and intrapersonal emotions understanding" (r = -, 123), emotional intelligence in general (r = -, 145). At the high level of statistical significance (p≤0,01), a correlation was found between family loneliness and all MSCEIT scales: "identification of emotions" (r = -, 205), "use of emotions" (r = -, 182), "understanding of emotions" (r = -, 327), "emotional control" (r = -, 368) and emotional intelligence in general (r = -, 262).

Negative correlation at a high level of statistical significance was also found between social loneliness and such Lyucyn questionnaire scales as "interpersonal emotions control" (r = -, 219) and "intrapersonal emotions control" (r = -, 166), emotional management in general (r = -, 181) and "interpersonal intelligence" (r = -, 170); as well as MSCEIT scales: using emotions (r = -, 208), understanding emotions (r = -, 290), emotions control (r = -, 306) and emotional intelligence in general (r = -, 317). Statistically significant correlation (p≤0.05) was found between social loneliness and such Lyucyn questionnaire scales as "interpersonal emotional intelligence"

(r = -, 160) and emotional intelligence in general (r = -, 136), as well as the MSCEIT scale "identification of emotions" (r = -, 127).

**Limitations and strengths of the study**. The obtained results provide a better understanding on the problem of loneliness in adolescence; let to distinguish different types of this loneliness. The study gives the possibility to compare results of the emotional intelligence that has been received with a help of using different approaches – a questionnaire in the form of self-report, and the one that envisioned an expert assessment. Sometimes results differ from each other that points to the importance of the approach. Nevertheless, there are correlations between different emotional intelligence features and loneliness (separate types and general loneliness) in spite of chosen approach.

The study is limited in a certain way because of lack of the sample variety. Only students of higher educational establishments were the participants of the study. It would be useful to include participants from other social categories.

**Social value**. So, the results of the empirical study suggest that there is a problem of loneliness in adolescence. This is evidenced by a rather high average indicator of loneliness in general, as well as its separate types: family, social and romantic loneliness.

Young people demonstrate lack of the ability to identify both their own emotions and the emotions of other people; they also have poorly developed ability to express accurately emotions and needs associated with them; they are not smart enough to distinguish accurate and inaccurate, true and false feelings. Young people are mostly not able to use emotions to focus on important information and to trigger emotions that will help them to solve certain problems. The ability to distinguish between emotions, in particular, verbal level, to understand causal relationships, to notice the sudden change of emotions, to understand the complexes of ambivalent feelings need to be improved. The obtained results demonstrate insufficient ability of respondents to be open to emotions, to cause or to get rid of certain emotions consciously, to manage the emotional states of other people.

**Conclusions**. Thus, the determined data analysis allows to conclude that there is a link between the level of the emotional intelligence development and the depth of loneliness experience in adolescence. The peculiarity of this connection is that with an increase in the level of emotional intelligence development there is a decrease in the depth and intensity of the loneliness experience. The lack of young people's ability to identify, understand, use and manage emotions affects their emotional and social satisfaction and, consequently, the associated experience of loneliness. The worse the abilities of emotional intelligence are developed, the deeper the experience of loneliness.

The link between the separate types of loneliness and the level of emotional intelligence development in general and the prevailing number of its components in particular, is revealed. Complete lack of correlation is observed only between romantic loneliness and emotional intelligence, established by means of an expert assessment of these abilities development.

A further prospect of development of this problem is the identification other factors of the loneliness occurrence, the development and implementation of appropriate psycho-correction programs aimed at loneliness prevention and overcoming.

**Keywords:** personality, psychology, young person.

**References.**
1.     Brennan, T. (1982). *Loneliness at Adolescence. In: Ed. L.A. Peplau, Perlman. Loneliness. A Sourcebook of Current Theory, Research and Therapy*. A Wiley Interscience Publication, 269–290.
2.     DiTomaso, E., & Spinner, B. (1993). *The development and initial validation of the social and emotional loneliness scale for adults (SELSA).* Personal individual differences, 14/1, 127–134.
3.     Hawkley, L.C., & Cacioppo, J.T. (2010). *Loneliness Matters: A Theoretical and Empirical Review of Consequences and Mechanisms.* The Society of Behavioral Medicine, 40 (2), 218–227.
4.     Jong-Gierveld, J.D., & Raadschelders, J. (1982). *Types of loneliness In: L.A. Peplau, D. Perlman, eds. Loneliness: a sourcebook of current theory, research and therapy*. New York: Wiley, 21–39.
5.     Killeen C. (1998). *Loneliness: an epidemic in modern society*. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 28(4), 762–770.
6.     Mayer, J.D., & Salovey, P. (1997). *What is emotional intelligence. In: P. Salovey, D. Sluyter (Eds.). Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Implications for educators*. New York: Basic Books, 3–31.
7.     Mayer, J.D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. (2000). *Models of emotional intelligence. In: Sternberg. Handbook of Intelligence.* Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 396–420.
8.     Winnicott, D.W. (1960). *The capacity to be alone. The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. London: Hogarth Press, 29-36.

9.    Vahrusheva, L.N. (2011). Vyrazhennost' strukturnyh i kachestvennyh harakteristik jemocional'nogo intellekta na jetape junosti i rannej vzroslosti [The features of the structural and qualitative characteristics of emotional intelligence in adolescence and early adulthood]. *Candidate's thesis.* Moscow [in Russian].

*10.*    Derev'janko, S.P. (2009). Emocijnyj intelekt jak chynnyk social'no–psyhologichnoi' adaptacii' osobystosti do students'kogo seredovyshha [Emotional intelligence as a factor in the individual socio-psychological adaptation to the student environment]. *Extended abstract of candidate's thesis.* Kyiv [in Ukrainian].

11.    Kon, I.S. (1989). *Psihologija rannej junosti: Kn. dlja uchitelja [Psychology of early adolescence: Book for the teacher].* Moscow: Prosveshhenie [in Russian].

12.    Lashuk,V.G. (2010). Psyhologichni osoblyvosti perezhyvannja samotnosti v junac'komu vici [Psychological peculiarities of the experience of loneliness in adolescence]. *Candidate's thesis.* Kyiv [in Ukrainian].

13.    Myloslavs'ka, O.V. (2011). *Emocijnyj intelekt jak skladova komunikatyvnoi' kompetentnosti studentiv [Emotional intelligence as a component of students' communicative competence].* Kharkyv [in Ukrainian].

14.    Peplo, L.Je. (1989). *Odinochestvo i samoocenka [Loneliness and self-esteem].* Moscow: Progress [in Russian].

15.    Sadler, U.A. & Dzhonson, T.B. (1989). *Ot odinochestva k anomii [From loneliness to anomie]. Labirinty odinochestva – Labyrinths of loneliness,* (pp. 21–51). Moscow: Progress [in Russian].

16.    Shagivaleeva, G.R. (2007). *Odinochestvo i osobennosti ego perezhivanija studentami [Loneliness and peculiarities of its experience by students].* Elabuga: Izd–vo OAO «Almedia» [in Russian].