

Social Disconnectedness and Anxiety

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Abstract

When a person has a feeling of anxiety, the person can manifest actions related to anxiety. In relation to this, it is intently to assess the anxiety of the students and their disconnectedness from society. Using a pilot-tested researcher-made tool, the researchers used to collect the responses of the students in an identified school. The collected data is treated for correlation which resulted in the statistical evidence that social disconnectedness is related to anxiety. The result shows that senior high school students feel and are socially disconnected. Considering the current viral outbreak, the students lost the opportunity to socialize physically with other people.

Keywords: Anxiety, Social Disconnectedness, Students.

Introduction

Social Disconnectedness is a state where an individual lacks contact with others. Situational factors such as network structure and lack of social and group participation denote social disconnectedness (Santini et al., 2020). On the other hand, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, Depression, also known as "depressive disorder," is a mood disorder. It can cause distressing symptoms that affect how you feel, think, and handle daily activities.

People may tend to disconnect socially because of personal and precautionary reasons. For instance, one may feel not to belong when interacting with other people because of lack of confidence. In Medical Health, an individual with a contagious disease is needed to be isolated for safety health purposes, hence, that individual will be socially disconnected temporarily. Social disconnectedness may also stimulate loneliness. Furthermore, Cacippo and Hawkey (2009), as cited by Wu et al. (2020), argued that social disconnectedness is addressed by loneliness, loneliness signals, and motivates a course of social behavior. On the contrary, according to Waite and Cornwell (2009), "lack of social connectedness is not always accompanied by a feeling of loneliness and isolation." Researchers suggest that social disconnectedness may affect mental health and cause health risk problems. According to Waite and Cornell (2009), physical and mental health have a distinguishable connection with social disconnectedness and perceived isolation. The strong connection between perceived isolation and mental health causes the association between social disconnectedness and mental health to operate.

As an individual grow and change over the years, he or she will experience and deal with different situations in life. The changes in roles, and physical aspects of a person, as well as hormonal changes during the start of puberty and sudden change of events, might contribute to the risk of having depression and anxiety. Researchers have found various factors that cause anxiety. The risk of having mental problems (such as anxiety) correlates with financial difficulties (Beiter et al. (2015). Moreover, Doom and Haefel (2013), as cited by Beiter et al.,

(2015), stated that detrimental behaviors such as smoking, poor inactivity, bad sleeping habits, and "noncompliance with medical treatment recommendations are linked to anxiety. According to Goswami et al. (2012), as cited also by Beiter et al. (2015), negative perception of body image, low satisfaction in life, low self-esteem, and feelings of inferiority are linked to the increased likelihood of depression and anxiety in adolescents that can cause impairment of social, occupational, and educational functioning.

The study wants to know the significant relation between social disconnectedness and anxiety among students in Jagobiao National High School-Senior High Department.

Theoretical Background

The study was anchored on the Human Relatedness Theory, made by Bonnie M.K. Hagerty, Judith Lynch-Saeur, Kathleen L. Patusky, and Maria Bouwsema in 1992. It addresses a pervasive human concern, establishing and maintaining relatedness to others, objects, environments, society, and self.

This theory is derived from a series of inductive and deductive strategies, views relatedness as a functional, behavioral system rooted in early attachment behaviors. It states that individuals go through different states of relatedness constituting connectedness, disconnectedness, parallelism, and enmeshment. Disruptions in the client's relatedness contribute to biological, psychological, and social disturbances. This theory is formed through the researchers' evaluation of psychiatric clients that exhibit a different degree of connectedness and disconnectedness. Thousands of articles were reviewed by the authors and mostly a hundred concepts were examined encompassing attachment, alienation, loneliness, and social support. People without any psychiatric treatment history were involved in a series of four focus groups, where they have to talk about their thoughts about connectedness and disconnectedness with self, others, society, and the environment. The hybrid model was used in developing the concept of this theory. It made the concepts

of connectedness and disconnectedness a part of the main theoretical construct of relatedness. Upon the emergence of this theory, various assumptions were identified. They were as follows: (a) the context of Relatedness is a platform for an individual's growth and development; (b) individual's sense of self impacts one's way of elucidating the meaning of experiences; (c) the changes in the experiences relatedness can make a person capable of productivity; (d) affective realm is an important aspect of well-being; (e) gender, race, culture, and life span development are factors that affect Relatedness' experience, expression, and patterns; (f) internal and external rhythmic patterns are interactive and are undergone by an individual; (g) in Human's relatedness experiences, one can exercise choice and responsibility; (h) the nature of a person's relatedness experiences can be influenced by a person's experience on sensitive periods, and (i) relatedness can be experienced both internally and externally. The researchers propose that an individual state of Relatedness is determined and influenced by any particular relationship with other people, groups, objects, or environment. Mainly, a person who exhibits a high level of sense of belonging, reciprocity, mutuality, and synchrony in any particular relationship will experience connectedness. On the other hand, one can experience disconnectedness when one has low levels of sense of belonging, reciprocity, mutuality, and synchrony.

In line with this, the state of Disconnectedness in the theory of Human Relatedness was discussed to be description of emotional estrangement and social estrangement (Anderson, 1981). This indicates individuals who tend to alienate themselves exhibit disconnected behavior. Moreover, the lack of involvement and intimacy might result in emotional and psychological pain, such as anxiety. Disconnectedness is also associated with discomfort, as a human is a social being in nature, and it might be the effect of disengaging from one's nature. Furthermore, anxiety could be triggered by a lack of interpersonal relationships. Lack of involvement with another person can interfere with the behavioral system and may lead to estrangement.

Involvement in social groups and the environment is key in improving one's well-being and mental state. However, if disruptions in social involvement interfere, this might contribute to psychological and social disturbances. Notably, people with an unstable relationships, who feel lonely, isolated, and with low social support can develop anxiety symptoms (Santini et al., 2020). The distinct contributions of aspects of social disconnectedness to social involvement, experience, and relationship haven't been disentangled with mental health.

Statement of the Purpose

The main objective of this study is to assess the degree of social disconnectedness and level of anxiety relationship between social disconnectedness and anxiety of senior high school students.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between social disconnectedness and anxiety.

Ha: There is a significant relationship between social disconnectedness and anxiety.

Review of Related Literature

Among psychiatric disorders, anxiety is the most prominent which causes a great impediment of ailment (Bandelow, 2017). Moreover, children and adolescents are commonly affected by anxiety and depression which often co-exist (Ebert et al., 2015). Different processes and reactions are involved when an individual experiences anxiety. Anxiety is activated by a stimulus that starts to trigger without the presence of any threat, and it is generated internally (Calhoun & Tye, 2015). In addition, Anxiety reacts to the nonspecific threat with heightened awareness and apprehension (Nuss, 2015). The development and maintenance of anxiety may depend on the individuals' distinction in fear conditioning (Duits, 2016). Chronic anxiety can be a great burden to both affected individuals and, because of the tremendous reported number of people with anxiety, society as a whole (Tovote et al., 2015). Even if there is an undeniable large number of people having anxiety, still a few individuals

undergoing treatment of anxiety were identified (Calhoon & Tye, 2015). Various factors can lead to anxiety. For example, sedentary behavior can cause anxiety through biological pathways (Teychenne et al., 2015), and anxiety can be triggered by stressful experiences (Bekhbat & Neigh, 2018). Greater symptoms of (disposition) anxiety were greatly related to the increased time spent on social media (Vannucci et al., 2017). Furthermore, as the level of Social media use increases, several negative effects were associated such as anxiety and depression, poorer sleep quality, and lower self-esteem (Wood and Scott, 2016). Also, the freedom of mobility offered by gadgets and smartphones embraced by individuals can intensify tension and anxiety when these individuals are disconnected while traveling (Paris et al., 2018). Moreover, fear of missing out (FOMO) causes an association of anxiety and smartphone use frequency, as well as problematic smartphone use (Elhai, 2020). During a pandemic, many studies found out the association between anxiety and being quarantined. A study revealed that quarantined individuals show a higher incidence of anxiety and depression than individuals who aren't quarantined (Tang et al., 2020). Preventive measures can be done to avoid anxiety. A study found that Anxiety can be reduced by engaging in physical activity (Rebar et al., 2015).

On the other hand, out of the psychological disorders, disconnectedness is considered as more underdeveloped (Sashittal et al., 2012). Social avoidance is a component of both anxiety disorders and other psychiatric illnesses, like social phobia, panic disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Elhai et al., 2019). Various factors could lead to social disconnection. The high risk of social isolation was related to the broken relationship, such as the divorce and separation of live-in relationship, which leads to being disconnected to all forms of social connection involving family, friends, relatives, and associations (Eckhard, 2020). Correlation between social disconnectedness and loneliness were found among lonelier older adults with less supportive individuals in their lives (Talmage et al., 2020). Moreover, the relation between Social disconnectedness and loneliness is associated with psychiatric illnesses (Wu et al., 2020). Also, Disconnectedness and loneliness were associated with

Emotional responses to pleasant sounds (Picou et al., 2018). Anxiety and depressive disorders are associated with social disconnection as a common and harmful feature to individuals, however, it receives less sufficient best available treatment (Taylor et al., 2020). In addition, Social disconnection and depressed mood increase when an individual is exposed to an inflammatory challenge (Moieni et al., 2015). A higher proportion of perceived isolation was positively predicted by social disconnectedness, which results in higher amounts of anxiety and depression (Santini et al., 2015). Several harmful behaviors were also associated with social disconnectedness. A concept of social integration used by Durkheim explains that individuals who lack social connection were more likely to have a higher suicide rate (Zhang, 2016). Even though researchers examined well-connected wildland firefighters still found a high suicidal risk via social disconnectedness (Stanley et al., 2018). Moreover, the controlled variety of demographic covariates results in inherent religiosity's reduction on the negative association between social disconnection and the presence of meaning of life (Reynolds & Conway, 2020). Lastly, Social disconnection, such as conflict with and alienation from other people, is a leading problem of many perfectionists (Sherry et al., 2016).

Research Methodology

Design, Environment, and Respondents

The study used a descriptive correlation quantitative design of the variable to determine the association between social disconnectedness. The study was conducted in one of the schools of Mandaue City, Cebu. The researchers decided to research in the Senior High Department. The Senior High Department has two buildings, the first building is being occupied by Grade 11 students, while the second building is being occupied by Grade 12 students. It consists of a total of five strands/sections in both grades 11 and 12. A sample of 200 students from Grades 11 and 12 aged 16-19, males and females, took part in this study. The Senior High School Department is composed of 10 sections, the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics 11 & 12 (STEM), Accountancy

Business and Management 11 & 12 (ABM), Humanities and Social Sciences 11 & 12 (HUMSS), General Academic Strand 11 & 12 (GAS), and TVL Drafting 11 & 12 (TVL-D).

Data Gathering

The researcher secured a transmittal letter to ask permission from the students, teachers, and school head to conduct a survey. Second, the researchers obtained and accomplished necessary communication letters and secured the approval thereof. Next, the researcher gathered the data through the distribution of the questionnaire, and respondents were given enough time to answer the questionnaire. Lastly, the researchers presented the result of the survey in a tabular form. The data gathered by the researcher were used for the interpretation of data, data analysis, findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

Instrument

The researcher used a Checklist Scaling Questionnaire as a survey questionnaire adopted from the study of Lee R., Draper, and Lee S.(2001) in gathering the data for social disconnection and the study from Spence, Barrett, and Turner (2003) for the anxiety. It is a checklist type of questionnaire composed of two parts. Part 1 measured the degree of social disconnectedness of the students. Part 2 was about the level of anxiety of the students. The students chose the best answer they have for each question. The students rated each item by checking it, Always (5), Often (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), and Never (1) for Social Disconnectedness, while Extremely (5), Very (4), Moderately (3), Slightly (2), Not at all (1) for Anxiety. The checklist Scaling Questionnaire was used for this study for it was an appropriate tool in quantitative research. A pilot testing was done by the researcher, and there were 12 not actual respondents who took part in the pilot testing. Also, it had a Cronbach's $\alpha=.733$, and a Cronbach's $\alpha=.664$ based on Standardized items for Social disconnectedness. While, the anxiety had a Cronbach's $\alpha=.753$, and a Cronbach's $\alpha=.693$ based on Standardized items.

Statistical Treatment

To interpret the data, the researchers used mean and weighted mean to get the level of social disconnectedness and anxiety. Then, chi-square was used to assess relationship between social disconnectedness.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Students' Degree of Social Disconnectedness

Indicators	μ	Interpretation
1. I feel distant from other people.	3.24	Sometimes
2. I don't feel related to most people.	2.96	Sometimes
3. I feel like an outsider.	2.87	Sometimes
4. I see myself as a loner.	2.81	Sometimes
5. I feel disconnected from the world around me.	2.76	Sometimes
6. I don't feel I participated with anyone or any group.	2.81	Sometimes
7. I feel close to people.	3.18	Sometimes
8. Even around people I know, I don't feel that I really belong.	2.87	Sometimes
9. Even among my friends, there is no sense of brotherhood/sisterhood.	2.24	Rarely
10. I catch myself losing a sense of connectedness with society.	2.96	Sometimes
11. I am able to connect with other people.	3.43	Often
12. I feel understood by the people I know.	3.32	Sometimes
13. I see people as friendly and approachable.	3.36	Sometimes
14. I fit in well in new situations.	2.8	Sometimes
15. I have a little sense of togetherness with my peers.	3.26	Sometimes
16. My friends feel like family.	4.04	Often
17. I find myself actively involved in people's lives.	3.14	Sometimes
18. I am able to relate to my peers.	3.21	Sometimes
19. I am in tune with the world.	3.09	Sometimes
20. I feel comfortable in the presence of strangers.	2.36	Rarely
Weighted mean	3.04	Sometimes

The table above reveals an overall weighted mean of 3.04 which denotes the general students' degree of Social disconnectedness. On one hand, friends feel like family ($\mu= 4.04$) . Students can connect with other people ($\mu= 3.43$). They can also see people as friendly and approachable ($\mu= 3.36$). However, even among my friends, there is no sense of brotherhood/sisterhood ($\mu=2.24$). They do not feel comfortable in the presence of strangers ($\mu=2.36$). They feel disconnected from the world around ($\mu= 2.76$).

Constructive social relationships are crucial for an individual's optimal health and well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Umberson & Montez, 2010). Furthermore, positive family relationships, as well as friends could reduce the possible psychosocial problems. Definite interpersonal relationships are very important for an individual to find the meaning of his/her life (Caleb, 2020). Nonetheless, Students' Psychosocial health concerns are not uncommon (Heman et al., 2012). A significant factor of disconnectedness might prompt a vague relationship. Disconnecting from other people builds an inquiry of abnormal conditions, behavior, and experiences by preventing an essential need for a relationship. Hence, Stimulating active socialization and connection to other people may boost a positive attitude in life.

Table 2: Students' Level of Anxiety

Indicators	μ	Interpretation
1. I suddenly feel as if I can't breath when there is no reason for this.	3.00	Moderately
2. I start to tremble or shake when there is no reason for this.	2.71	Moderately
3. I feel scared if I have to travel in car, or on a bus, or train.	2.61	Moderately
4. I am afraid of being in crowded places.	2.84	Moderately
5. All of a sudden I feel really scared for no reason at all.	2.84	Moderately
6. My heart suddenly starts to beat quickly for no	3.02	Moderately

reason.

7. I would feel afraid of being on my own at home.	2.33	Slightly
8. I would feel scared if I had to stay away from home overnight.	2.75	Moderately
9. I feel scared when I have to take a test.	3.18	Moderately
10. I feel afraid if I have to talk in front of my class.	3.66	Very
11. I am afraid of dogs.	2.63	Moderately
12. I am scared of being in high places or lifts (elevator).	2.96	Moderately
13. I am scared of insects and spiders.	2.85	Moderately
14. I have to keep checking that I have done things right (like the switch is off).	3.71	Very
15. I can't seem to get bad and silly things out of my head.	3.21	Moderately
16. I get bothered by bad or silly thoughts or pictures in my mind.	3.47	Very
17. I worry about things.	3.96	Very
18. I feel afraid.	3.39	Moderately
19. I worry that something bad will happen to me.	3.54	Very
20. When I have a problem I feel shaky.	3.24	Moderately
Weighted Mean	3.10	Moderately

The table indicates an overall weighted mean of 3.10 which implies the general students' moderate degree of anxiety. They worry about things ($\mu = 3.96$). They expressed that they have to keep checking that I have done things right (like the switch is off) ($\mu = 3.71$). They feel afraid if they have to talk in front of the class ($\mu = 3.66$). On the other hand, they would slightly feel afraid of being on their own at home ($\mu = 2.33$). They averagely feel scared if I have to travel in the car, or on a bus or train ($\mu = 2.61$). Their emotions can be moderately affected because they are afraid of dogs ($\mu = 2.63$).

An individual has a natural characteristic of the emotional repertoire to experience occasional anxiety (Calhoun et al., 2015). Different circumstances produce various emotional distress, such as fear. Nevertheless, fear and anxiety are mechanisms of reaction towards possible danger, and reacting to this possible danger generates positive valence emotions which stimulate adaptive behavior or approach (Philip et al., 2015). Still, some people experience irregular episodes of anxiety (Calhoun et al., 2015). For example, constant feelings of shyness and shame are typical aspects of social anxiety (Borwin et al., 2015) that may affect an individual's ways of socialization negatively. Furthermore, excessive feelings of fear may be abnormal leading to disability (Blessing et al., 2015; Asmundson & Taylor, 2020). Some individuals with high anxiety tend to mistakenly recognize mild sensations and be a shift as dangerous (Asmundson & Taylor, 2020). Anxiety is always been present in the human condition. This may be suppressed, but it will always occur and will trigger up in certain situations (Vidon & Ricky, 2018). Moreover, students tend to respond to anxiety by separating themselves socially. The connection between Anxiety and Social avoidance might be undeniable. Social avoidance has been considered a component of anxiety disorders, as well as other psychiatric illnesses (Elhai et al., 2015). Also, anxiety is strongly intertwined with social structure (Santini et al., 2020), hence, an individual needs to keep themselves socially involved to maintain a healthy mental state.

Table 3: Social Disconnectedness and Anxiety

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Interpretation
Pearson Chi-Square	20.918a	6	.002	Significant
N of Valid Cases	114			

a.4 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10.

The table above reveals that the p-value (0.002) is lesser than the significant value (0.05), hence, rejecting the null hypothesis. This can be comprehended that there is a significant relationship between social

disconnectedness and anxiety or vice versa. Social disconnection has been a destructive feature of anxiety (Taylor et al., 2020). Hence, encouraging actions like social involvement and preventing social isolation should be considered (Cotterell et al., 2018). Being more socially active may prevent or lessen feelings of anxiety, such as improving students' interpersonal relationships with family and friends. Also, establishing healthy relationships with other people helps students view life positively.

Conclusion

Senior high school students experienced social disconnectedness and anxiety. As stated in the Human Relatedness theory growth and development are improved through experiences and relationships with other people, an individual with healthy interpersonal relationships can be productive towards active socialization. Moreover, the behavioral system can be affected by a person's state of social and mental health. Scarcity of social involvement can trigger emotional and psychological discomfort, likewise, disruptions in socialization can trigger disconnectedness and anxiety. Also, it is worth noting that people with volatile relationships, lonesome, and poor social support can result in anxiety symptoms. Conversely, the feeling of belonging, reciprocity, mutuality, and synchrony in any relationship stimulates connectedness. Therefore, an individual's involvement in social groups, such as family, friends, and peers is crucial in improving an individual's well-being and mental state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussions of the study, the following are recommended.

The School administrators and teachers should establish monthly social and mental health programs (such as an open forum).

Students should increase their social involvement and be encouraged enough to prevent mental health problems by joining programs promoting social and mental development.

Future research may include a wider sample size to be more credible and to produce more accurate data. Also, they should include Students' personality types as added variables in a study.

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Appendix 1 : Pilot testing for the Reliability of the Questionnaire

Social Disconnectedness

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.733	.664	20

Level of Anxiety

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.753	.693	20