CHAPTER - V

Discussion
The present investigation centered around the study of loneliness in the context of certain relevant variables. The impact of loneliness on health and well-being is extremely significant, therefore factors, which contribute to it need to be clearly understood. We were studying three major factors namely anxiety sensitivity, anger direction, and competence, anger direction being studied in terms of its four components namely suppressed anger, expressed anger, anger control and anger total. These factors were studied in the general sample as well as in the two gender groups.

If we observe the results at a glance, we find that by and large the variables studied exercise an influence on loneliness.

Those who were highly lonely were also high on anxiety sensitivity. This is totally in keeping with our contention that the experience of fear associated with anxiety sensitivity may prompt a person to prefer seclusion, which limits opportunities for interactions and therefore saves the person from possible situations of anxiety provocation. On the other hand, it can be argued that the fact that a person is withdrawing may drastically limit his opportunities and capabilities for handling anxiety and therefore the feeling of fear of anxiety sensations and consequences thereof may be compounded.

It is a dilemma of social sciences that causal factors cannot be delineated but association between factors becomes an important indicator of influence and impact. In most cases factors associated with each other have a cyclic
relationship of one influencing the other. In reality, absolute and undiluted causality cannot express relationships in social sciences where in real life too relationships are complex, cumulative and interactive. The investigator is therefore of the opinion that not being able to identify the causal factors in absolute terms is not a serious disadvantage. Even for purposes of intervention, any of the variables that can be handled would serve the purpose, because each of the related variables exercise some degree of causal influence on the other.

In the same manner, it was observed that those who are high on loneliness, are high on suppressed anger. Their total anger score is also high and anger control is low so it appears that it is suppressed anger, which contributes to the total anger score. This appears to be logical since loneliness is a condition in which opportunity of interaction with others is limited, thus expression of anger at some external target is less probable. Therefore the likely mode of anger expression would be suppressed anger.

An interesting aspect of anger direction as discussed by Spielberger is anger control. Anger control refers to the ability to perceive stimuli generally considered anger provoking as non provocative of anger. A person with high score on anger control would not experience anger when faced with a certain situation, say criticism from peer, whereas a person low on anger control would be experiencing anger when subjected to the same situation. When those who are high on loneliness were compared to those low on loneliness, it was found that high loneliness was associated with low anger control.
While the experience of anger has value in terms of catharsis and communication of displeasure to others, it is also true that being able to take minor irritants in one's stride is a desirable quality and contributes to pleasant social interaction. If individuals do not have anger control they would probably not strike cordial relationships; then as a result of unpleasant experiences may gradually learn to avoid company. Whatever the nature of the dynamics, it is observed that high loneliness is associated with low anger control.

Highly lonely persons were also found to be low on feelings of competence. Competence is an ability which one acquires through understanding of situations and people. As a consequence of the inefficacy or efficacy of a particular reaction, the individual modifies or reinforces a certain behaviour. Therefore those who are withdrawn and avoid interactions are likely to be deprived of experiences, which would strengthen successful behaviour and thus increase behaviours that are competent. Some aspects of competence may be related to innate abilities; those aspects of competence will obviously remain a part of the repertoire of lonely persons also. But their scope is definitely limited.

Therefore the picture of loneliness, which emerges from our work is that lonely persons are high on anxiety sensitivity, that is they have fear of anxiety sensations together with a having low threshold at which anxiety is experienced, lonely persons also experience more anger than those who are not lonely, they have a very high total anger score as compared to less lonely. But this total anger is accounted for by high suppressed anger. Thus the lonely person is
angry with tendency to suppress anger and also anger may be provoked by even minor irritants (low anger control). Lonely persons are also having greater feeling of incompetence.

If we take this total description of the lonely person we are struck by the fact that there is an aura of helplessness about them. Having high anxiety sensitivity and having low anger control are both situations where the individual is compelled to react in ways which are actually disadvantageous to him. A more comprehensive understanding of loneliness is needed, questions like can lonely persons through appropriate learning procedures be taught to have command on negative volatile situations and can this feeling of self-control contribute to a sense of competence and a desire to interact and compete with others.

Another aspect covered by our research was to study gender difference in the experience of loneliness. The results obtained were extremely interesting. The first important conclusion which we could draw from our results was that males and females show no difference in terms of scores obtained on loneliness, anxiety sensitivity, anger direction and competence. But when we compared the phenomena of loneliness among females and males very interesting results were seen. Amongst males none of the variables which we studied were found associated with loneliness except competence, where we observed the males who are high on loneliness having low scores on competence. Otherwise there is no difference in anxiety sensitivity or any dimension of anger direction amongst high loneliness group and low loneliness group of males. Amongst females the
picture was almost similar of the general sample. Females who are highly lonely had high anxiety and high anger total, high suppressed anger and low sense of competence. The question naturally comes to our mind, do different factors account for loneliness among males as compared to females.

It does appear to be so, and it is also logical to expect differences in configuration. Societal roles, and societal expectations and child rearing practices all stamp in different behaviour patterns. As it is, it is surprising that males and females did not show difference when compared on various variables per se but differences when various loneliness groups of males and females were compared could easily be seen.

Studies have pointed out the possibility that loneliness in men and women may be predicted by different factors. For example, Green and Wildermuth, (1993) pointed that loneliness in men was predicted by a lack of expressed desire for inclusion and a desire for control from others. On the other hand, in women loneliness was predicted by lack of expressed affection. Sex difference in interpersonal needs appear to be reflected in a contextual difference between the loneliness of men and women. Bhatia and Desomond (1993) also found that the concept of loneliness is different amongst males and females but more work in the area needs to be done. Another important study in this context was conducted by Saklofske, Yackulic, and Keely (1986) in which men and women were compared on Eysenck's major personality factors and it was observed that neuroticism was related to loneliness in women to a much higher degree than in
men. Walter, La Freniere (2000) has pointed out that anger but not distress was negatively related to peer rejections amongst girls in contrast, anger and distress was positively related to peer rejection amongst males.

Each research is part of a larger framework and while it is influenced and inspired by previous research, it also presents an integrated picture of work done and the observations made which can enrich the discipline, help in theory building and further testing in wider and newer contexts.

We can say on the basis of our work that four important factors account for loneliness in a very strong way, namely anxiety sensitivity, suppressed anger, total quantum of anger experienced and competence. We have used the term "account in a very strong way" because while the four account for loneliness, loneliness also accounts for them, that is lonely people are high on anxiety sensitivity, suppressed anger, total anger, and low on competence. In the same manner those who are high on anxiety sensitivity are also high on loneliness, those who are high on suppressed anger, total anger are also high on loneliness and those who are high on competence are low on loneliness that is, all these four variables are associated with loneliness and loneliness also has some impact on them. However these findings do not hold good for males, although they describe quite accurately the phenomena amongst females. At the same time, gender differences on the variables was not observed - explanation for this may lie in the new social order where some degree of leveling in child rearing practice has occurred, so differences resulting from differential attitudes of
parents may have been minimized. However, configurations vary which reflects the different sets of factors account for loneliness among males and females. This is a rich area for study. The factor of anxiety sensitivity is related to loneliness and competence but is not related to any dimensions of anger. This is an interesting finding because anger control was one of the areas, in which it was expected that some association may exist. Higher anger control means not cognizing anger when a stimulus, popularly anger provoking is presented. Low anger control would be a logical behaviour pattern with high anxiety sensitivity. It appears that we cannot tie up the two concepts; they appear to be clearly different unrelated factors. In the same manner, none of the anger dimensions have anything to do with anxiety sensitivity. This strengthens the fact that anger and anxiety sensitivity have little in common.

Suppressed anger and expressed anger are related to loneliness but have nothing to do with anxiety sensitivity and competence. Competence influences anger and loneliness but has no influence on anxiety sensitivity. Indeed, a picture of loneliness seems to be emerging. There are many other factors which should be studied in the context of loneliness; but three important factors have been studied by us. Linked to these three factors is another important concept namely that of interpersonal skills. Whether it is anger or it is anxiety sensitivity, both these factors create situations which may deter conducive interpersonal interactions. According to Davis and others 1992, such interpersonal behaviours drive potential friends away, and these experiences result in expectations of
interpersonal failure, along with cynicism, pessimism, and the belief that one’s life is uncontrollable. In such situations the tendency and ability to disclose to others also remains limited and when inappropriate disclosures are made there can be no improvement in interpersonal interactions (Solano, Barren, and Parish, 1982). Feeling of incompetence would also be enhanced when interpersonal skills are lacking. This factor appears to offer a viable explanation to some extent for loneliness.

**Shortcomings of Present Research and Suggestion for Further Research**

Since the scope of the present research included preparation of tools for assessing loneliness and competence, which was important work in itself, there were many aspects, that could have been included in our work, had it not been for time constraint. Further, hindsight is always wiser than foresight and certain shortcomings are more clear now.

One shortcoming is in terms of methodology. When dynamic and interrelated variables have to be explored, it is advisable to undertake qualitative analysis, which will bring out nuances and details. If case studies of persons very high on loneliness and some persons very low on loneliness were analyzed in detail a much more reality based, valuable information would have been forthcoming. Therefore further research based on the constructivist paradigm should be undertaken.
Age is a factor, which may have a lot to do with loneliness. This factor did not feature in our study, we should have thought of it in the beginning itself and tried to take it in to account during data collection. Since the age wise distribution in our sample was not conducive to study of this variable, we were not able to include it when the idea came.

The differences in gender configurations bring to our mind the fact that loneliness should not be studied as a single concept but, it should be studied in terms of its components or sub factors, this would enable us to compare how each of these factors operate in men and women. There are unlimited possibilities of eliciting information in this area.

We have presented a general appraisal about factors, which influence the experience of loneliness has been given but some tentative hypothesis about what loneliness is, also come to the mind. The first thought that comes is that there may be relationship between personality factors of an individual and loneliness. Certain personality dispositions may prompt behaviour which favour seclusion whereas certain other factors may be related to preference for group activities.

If we look at the list personality factors identified by Cattell, low scores on factor "A" and factor "H" would most likely be part of the personality profile of lonely persons. To some extent factor "F" may also be contributing.
A low score direction of factor A, referred to as 'sizothmia' describe the person as likely to be reserved, detached stiff, cool, skeptical, and aloof. He likes things rather than people, working alone, and avoiding compromises of viewpoints. He is likely to be precise and "rigid" in his way of doing things and in personal standards.

A low score of factor F indicates that the person is restrained, reticent, introspective. He is sometimes dour, pessimistic, unduly deliberate, and considered smug and primly correct by observers.

Factor H is referred to as threctia vs parmia, threctia describing the low score end. The person who scores low on this trait tends to be shy, withdrawing, cautious, retiring, a "wallflower". He usually has inferiority feelings and tends to be slow and impeded in speech and in expressing himself, dislikes occupations with personal contacts, prefers one or two close friends to large groups, and is not given to keeping in contact with all that is going on around him.

The characteristics highlighted with reference to Cattell's factors A,F and H seem to be descriptions of lonely persons. Thus studies with regard to personality of lonely persons can help in evolving a comprehensive picture of the phenomena.

Another important question can be answered to some extent trying to understand personality characteristics of lonely persons. Cattell has given the
concept of "cortetia" pointing out that cortical arousal is associated with many personality characteristics.

Cattell like Eysenck favours two distinct aspects of somatic arousal

a. Cortical arousal and

b. General autonomic and endocrine activation.

The second according to Cattell corresponds most clearly with anxiety as a trait as well as anxiety as a state.

Cattell has identified the concept of "cortetia" as a general level of stable activation specifically at the level of cortical arousal. Factor ‘H’, i.e. threctia versus parmia was considered to be strongly related to this concept of arousal.

The important point which the researcher wishes to make is that this arousal is primarily a predisposition with very little contribution at the social learning level. Factor A on the other hand may have a greater contribution of experiences and learning. Thus it is possible to think of loneliness as a behaviour emerging to a certain extent from personality traits, some of which may reflect a biological predisposition and some behaviour which evolves gradually and becomes a part of the individual’s repertoire. Therefore studies which look into personality characteristics of persons experiencing loneliness would be welcome and help in a better understanding by presenting a balanced picture with regard to loneliness as a predisposition or as a primarily a learned behaviour.
In this age of razor-edge competition where ego-centric considerations are perceived as vital for survival, there is an increasing tendency to focus on the self. Social interactions may be there but a large number of them may be calculated interactions, meant to serve the self and not for the joy of being with others.

The stage appears to be set for ushering an era of a new type of loneliness- understanding it and managing it becomes even more important in the context.