CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Loneliness is defined as an unpleasant experience that occurs when there is a perceived discrepancy in one’s interpersonal relationships (Peplau & Perlman, 1979; Perlman & Peplau, 1982). Loneliness appears always to be a “response to the absence of some particular type of relationship or, more accurately, a response to the absence of some particular relational provision” (Weiss, 1973: 17). It is categorized as a discrete emotional state (Barrett, 1998), and considered to be an “enduring condition of emotional distress that arises when a person feels estranged from, misunderstood, or rejected by others and/or lacks appropriate social partners for desired activities, particularly activities that provide a sense of social integration and opportunities for emotional intimacy” (Rook, 1984: 1391). It refers to the perception that one’s social relationships are inadequate in light of one’s preferences for social involvement (Weiss, 1973).

2.1 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF LONELINESS

Research on loneliness started almost five decades ago by Frieda Fromm-Reichmann (1959) on psychoanalytical perspective. Further, phenomenological and existential perspectives were introduced soon afterwards (Moustakas, 1961; Rogers, 1961). Then came the work of John Bowlby on attachment bonds (Bowlby, 1973) which was said to be the beginning of theoretical conceptualizations of loneliness. Weiss (1973) explained an attachment theory of loneliness where he provided different social provisions which he said were attributed to feelings of loneliness. This theoretical perspective also called the “social needs” approach, gave a direction to loneliness research (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2007).

Another conceptual approach on loneliness was focused on social skill deficits and personality traits. According to research in the field of personality, loneliness is said to be associated with depressive symptoms, shyness, neuroticism, low self-esteem, optimism, conscientiousness and agreeableness (Marangoni & Ickes, 1989).
A third conceptual approach is the one in which loneliness is represented by cognitive discrepancy theory. It refers loneliness as the consequence of altered social perceptions and attributions. According to Peplau and Perlman (1982), loneliness is defined as the distress that occurs when one’s social relationships are perceived as being less satisfying than what is desired. Cognition is said to mediate between social needs and loneliness (Peplau & Perlman, 1982).

The fourth conceptualization of loneliness is based on the theory of evolution which says that not only reproduction but also the survival of any species is required. This is basically emphasized upon inclusive fitness. For the survival of any species, social connections and the behaviors the species possess amongst each other enhance the survival and reproduction of those involved, which in turn increases inclusive fitness (Leary & Hoyle, 2009). The different perspectives on the construct have been delineated in the next section.

2.2 THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

2.2.1. Psychodynamic, personality and behavioural perspective of loneliness

Loneliness concept has been taken from Freud’s psychodynamic perspective which basically explains the clinical/medicalization and stigmatization of dimension of human behaviour. According to this perspective, loneliness is considered as ‘abnormal’ or a ‘deviant’ state which is completely out with the norm. Freudian theory perspective maps the factor that how intra psychic conflict or individual traits lead to loneliness.

Personality theories have evolved from the psychodynamic tradition in a number of ways and in line with that tradition’s use of clinical experience and observation to speculate on some of the potential causes of loneliness. Rogers’ (1973) analysis assumes that society forces individuals to act in restricted and socially approved ways. His ‘self-theory’ of personality suggests that the demands of the social pressures conform leads to the discrepancy between
one’s true inner self and the self-presented in everyday life – a phenomenological discrepancy in one’s self-concept. Loneliness is experienced by these individuals when they drop their external persona to get in touch with their inner selves and, according to Rogers, the belief that their real selves are unlovable ‘keeps people locked in their loneliness’. Unlike psychodynamic theory which explains childhood factors as a reason to define loneliness, this perspective takes individual’s current experiences and societal factors as a reason to define the concept of loneliness. This perspective does not offer any possible possibilities of loneliness.

An existential approach which also emerged from clinical practice focuses on positive possibilities of loneliness. Rather than searching for causes, this perspective focuses upon the aspect such as how can an individual deal with the lonely situation, giving the opportunity to act reflexively and having an understanding of one self. The starting point of this theory is that individual’s personal experience cannot be understood completely by others. Individuals share up to the level where they are comfortable. Hence, this could be partial sharing or complete. Also, this perspective doesn’t take loneliness as a deviant state but as a part of the normal human experience.

### 2.2.2 Psychological perspective of loneliness

The psychological perspective explains the role of cognition in understanding loneliness construct. Cognition is considered as a mediator between the social relationships and loneliness or isolation. Also, two similar theories based on same approaches are attribution theory and self-discrepancy theory. This explains that when there is a discrepancy between expected social relationships and perceived social relationships, it lead to loneliness. According to psychological perspective, attribution theory can also lead to the loneliness in people. As the theory states, people usually attribute their loneliness and interpersonal deficit to uncontrollable external factors and exhibit dysfunctional behaviour such as fear of rejection, high level of
social anxiety, insecurity in interpersonal relations, social embarrassment in social interactions etc. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative aspects of an individual social relationship may be mediated by their interpersonal or cognitive behaviour.

Within psychology, there are two more theories which explain the concept of loneliness- Social development and social support theory, which have given primary focus on the unmet need of an individual. Social development theory has been taken from Neo-Freudian which discusses the importance of social relationships in fulfillment of human needs for intimacy. However, this was broadly emerged when Bowlby (1973) worked on the need for attachment where he describes that like kids, adults also have some need for intimate relationships or a confidant. This need of intimate attachment or confidant has a great influence on concepts like quality of life and social engagements. As per the social support theory, loneliness is considered as an absence of attachment figure which leads to low self-esteem and self-worth and also influences the quality of life negatively. This attachment figure provides security to the individual because of the perpetual and emotional sense of linkage to that figure.

2.2.3. Sociological perspective of loneliness

Unlike psychological perspective, social perspective takes into account the social context in which individuals develop their relationships. According to this perspective, an individual’s behaviour is completely dependent upon his social environment. This discussion has been taken from theoretical ideas of the sociologist Durkheim (1952) who developed theories about social integration and social relationships. However, his work was based on extreme pathology i.e. suicide. Hence, the common of both the sociologist and psychological perspective is that both emerged from the same clinical background. Hence, sociological perspective has taken this tradition which assumes that loneliness is an outcome of social isolation which in turn is a consequence of the lack of integration in social networks.
2.3 THEORIES OF LONELINESS

2.3.1. Need for attachment

In psychology, social development theory has been taken from the Neo-Freudian approach which discusses the importance of social relationships in fulfillment of human needs for intimacy. However, this was broadly emerged when Bowlby (1973) worked on the need for attachment where he describes that like kids, adults also have some need for intimate relationships or a confidant. This need of intimate attachment or confidant greatly influences the quality of life and social engagements. Attachment needs takes the special relationship of parents and the child into consideration and posits its effects on child’s throughout life needs. According to Bowlby, not just the kids but even adults search for some attachment figure in their lives. As the child grows up, the need for attachment is always there but the source of gratification changes (Murphy & Kupshik, 1992). Hence, people tend to spend their time with those who satisfy their needs (Weiss, 1973). People are anxious about breaking attachments and failure to achieve need for attachment will lead to loneliness (Murphy & Kupshik, 1992). Loneliness is considered as an absence of attachment figure and influences the quality of life negatively. This attachment figure provides security to the individual because of the perpetual and emotional sense of linkage to that figure.

2.3.2 Theory of attribution

Various authors have discussed the theory of attribution in the past (e.g. Kelley 1967, Weiner, 1974). According to Kelley (1967) theory of attribution, people are likely to attribute the cause of their own and other’s behavior. This is termed as attribution theory. Attributing behaviours help them to cope better in future situations. According to this theory, when attributing the cause of own behavior, individuals tend to play down the role of personality factors and exaggerate the situational factors as a cause of the own behavior. However, while
attributing the cause of other’s behavior, individuals tend to play down the role of situational factors and blame it on the situational factors. In the case of loneliness, a lonely person will attribute the cause of his/her loneliness on situational factors (e.g. my office hours, my boss etc.). While observing the loneliness of others, individuals tend to put it on his/her personality factors (e.g. he must be ugly, boring or selfish). The process of attribution depends upon the information available to the person. In the case of an observer, the only information available is that person (who is lonely). However, in the case of a lonely person, the information available is his/her surroundings. So, s/he makes his judgments on that basis.

Another concept in the theory of attribution has been given by Weiner (1974). According to Weiner’s theory of attribution, people give a variety of causal explanations to different events in their lives. They have classified these causal explanations into two types- the locus of causality i.e. internal verses external and stability i.e. constant verses variable. According to the theory, people will attribute their behaviours to themselves instead of external factors. Perlman and Peplau (1979) drew their argument of loneliness from Weiner’s theory of attribution and exhibited that people attribute being lonely to the internal factors.

### 2.4 COMPONENTS OF LONELINESS

Since its evolution, loneliness has been conceptualized either as a unidimensional or a multidimensional phenomenon (Russell, 1982). Russell, Peplau &Cutrona (1980) R-UCLA loneliness scale is one of the most widely used scales in the literature (McWhirter, 1990) and known to be a ‘standard’ scale to measure the construct (Shaver & Brennan, 1991; as cited in Russell, 1996). Further, various studies (e.g. Austin, 1983; Hojat 1982; McWhirter, 1990) claimed that R-UCLA scale is a multidimensional scale and not unidimensional in nature. Later, one of the authors of R-UCLA also established that the scale is multidimensional in nature (see Russell, 1996). Hence, going by the argument established in the literature, this study takes into consideration the work of Austin (1983) which was later confirmed by
McWhirter(1990). According to the psychological assessment of the scale, there are three components of R-UCLA twenty item scales which are- intimate others, social others and affiliative environment (Austin, 1983).

### 2.5 WORKPLACE LONELINESS

Workplaces loneliness is not new for the journalists to report upon. For instance, as reported by Fortune in 2014, ‘Being lonely at work is bad for business’. As per the report, Fortune 500 companies have been constantly addressing employee loneliness on the priority basis in the past decade. In 2014, Harvard Business Review published an article on ‘Why work is lonely’. HC online in 2014 publishes an article ‘Lonelyemployees: The sad facts’ in which it is mentioned that workplace loneliness is a widespread and largely silent problem. According to a study by UK charity ‘Relate’ in 2014, it was found that 42% of employees do not have any close friends at the workplace (as reported in the article). A recent article by Huffington Post mentions that though there is a wide scope of social interaction, people still feels lonely at work. The article argues that workplace loneliness is a serious problem which is barely noticeable and is difficult to address formally. Though the literature on workplace loneliness lacks substantial evidence, few papers have reported the phenomenon empirically. For example, Ozcelik and Barsade (2011) in their study demonstrated that workplace loneliness decreases relational performance and also affects team role, tasks, and affective commitment. Another study by Lam and Lau (2012) found that workplace loneliness is negatively related to both in-role performance and citizenship behavior. Table 2.1 presents the detail of existing literature on workplace loneliness.
Table 2.1: Available literature workplace loneliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) and Year</th>
<th>Paper Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waytz, Chou, Magee and Galinsky (2015)</td>
<td>Not so lonely at the top: The relationship between power and loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayazlar and Güzel (2014)</td>
<td>The effect of Loneliness in the Workplace on Organizational Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lam and Lau (2012)</td>
<td>Feeling lonely at work: Investigating the consequences of unsatisfactory workplace relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erdil and Ertosun (2011)</td>
<td>The Relationship between Social Climate and Loneliness in the Workplace and Effects on Employee Well-Being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ertosun and Erdil (2012)</td>
<td>The Effects of Loneliness on Employees’ Commitment and Intention to Leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozcelik and Barsade (2011)</td>
<td>Work loneliness and employee performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Loneliness in the Workplace: Construct definition and scale development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6 LONELINESS: STATE OR TRAIT

Two different streams of literature define loneliness as a state or a trait. Loneliness as a trait was initiated by personality theories where loneliness is considered to be caused due to social skill deficits and personality traits. Trait loneliness is the traditional conception of loneliness (Cacioppo& Patrick, 2008). Traditional researches have associated loneliness with depressive symptoms, shyness, neuroticism, and low self-esteem, optimism, conscientiousness and agreeableness (Marangoni & Ickes, 1989). As per this stream, loneliness as a trait is known as “chronic loneliness”.

The streams of literature considering loneliness as a state are many (e.g. Cacioppo& Patrick, 2008; Peplau & Perlman, 1982; Shaver, Furman &Buhrmester, 1985; West, Kellner &
Moore-West, 1986). Loneliness as a state is caused due to the situational factors. Almost all the potential literature on loneliness has considered loneliness as a state. Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) defined loneliness as a ‘transient human motivational state’. According to them, loneliness is similar to other human states such as hunger, thirst, pain etc. According to Wright (2005), researches on loneliness aren’t based on one particular theory because of many useful elements on each of them. Therefore, loneliness is assumed to have both state and trait qualities over the course of a life time (Wright, 2005). However, this study considers loneliness as a “state” which is affected by situational and environmental factors. Moreover, trait loneliness which takes the form of chronic illness such as depression is a part of clinical psychology. The focus of this study is to study the organizational factors and not just the personality factors that lead to loneliness.

2.7 DISTINGUISHING LONELINESS FROM SIMILAR PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS

The construct ‘loneliness’ is often confused with other similar constructs such as aloneness, solitude, isolation, depression (Wright, 2005). Few people use these words interchangeably (Wright, 2005; Victor, Scambler, & Bond, 2009). A brief differentiation between loneliness and few of the important related constructs are discussed here.

2.7.1 Isolation

Even though isolation is considered as the strongest predictors of feeling lonely, both isolation and loneliness are different experiences (Ernst & Cacioppo, 1998; Peplau & Perlman, 1979; Victor et al., 2009). Isolation describes the objective condition of having few social ties (Rook, 1984). Hence, isolation is about the quantity of people whereas loneliness is about the quality. Townsend (1957) distinguished between the two constructs and posited four typologies - lonely but not isolated, isolated but not lonely, lonely and isolated and, neither.
2.7.2 Depression

Depression is defined as a condition that affects an individual’s behaviours, thoughts and wellbeing (Salmans, 1997). Peplau (1988) argued that not all lonely people are depressed and not all depressed people are lonely. However, severe loneliness leads to depression (Peplau, 1988). There are strong correlations between loneliness and depression, but evidence suggests that loneliness is not just the negative emotional arousal (Wright, 2005). Loneliness is a more specific experience of dissatisfaction than depression (Horowitz, French, & Anderson, 1982). Weiss (1973) differentiated both the constructs by exhibiting that in loneliness, a person tries to get into new relationships to come out of it but in depression, the person surrenders to it. In a research Bragg (1979) compared the university students based on who were lonely and depressed, lonely but not depressed, or neither lonely nor depressed. They found that there were people who were lonely but not depressed.

2.7.3 Aloneness

Aloneness is the objective condition of being by oneself (Wright, 2005). Aloneness considers having a certain degree of choice in wanting to be by oneself, and the ability to control one’s personal space, unlike loneliness which is an undesirable social experience (Wright, 2005). Loneliness and aloneness are different concepts (Peplau & Perlman, 1979; Wright, 2005) According to Weiss (1973) loneliness is not caused by being alone but by being without a definite expected relationship in one’s life.

2.7.4 Solitude

Solitude has been defined as “that state or condition of living or working alone … without the pain of loneliness or isolation being an intrinsic component of that state or condition” (Gotesky, 1965, p. 236). Solitude is stated as the pleasures of sometimes being by yourself (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Unlike loneliness, in the state of solitude, individual wants the freedom to be
alone (Wright, 2005). It is a positive and refreshing experience and comprises of delighted and self-fulfilment (Wright, 2005). Loneliness is perceived to be imposed by individuals, however, solitude is chosen by the individual (Marano, 2003).

2.7.5 Alienation

Alienation is a form of powerless self-estrangement (Hancock, 1986). It is basically a phenomenon of separation from social institutions and feeling powerless and normless (Bell, 1985). Being alienated and being lonely are different (Peplau, 1988; Wright, 2005). Alienation refers to separation from the society or an institution by the person himself whereas loneliness is unwanted in nature. However, like aloneness and isolation, unwelcome alienation can also lead to the feelings of loneliness (Wright, 2005).

2.7.6 Ostracism

Ostracism has been defined as “a process that is characterized as an unfolding sequence of responses endured while being ignored and excluded” (Williams, 2007, p. 429). Williams (2007) described ostracism as being ignored and excluded and usually takes places without excessive explanation or explicit negative attention. Loneliness and ostracism are two different constructs. As compared to ostracized individuals, lonely individuals may take longer to recover (Cacioppo & Hawkley 2005; Wesselmann, Wirth, Mroczek, & Williams, 2012).

2.8 DIFFERENCES AMONG WORKPLACE LONELINESS, OSTRACISM AT WORK AND WORK ALIENATION

Though studies have attempted to differentiate among related but not same construct, limited evidences have differentiated them in workplace contexts. This study attempted to differentiate between workplace loneliness (WL), ostracism at work (OS) and work alienation (AL) (which are nothing but loneliness, ostracism and alienation in work context). Two hypotheses were
tested further: First, workplace loneliness, ostracism at work and work alienation are different from each other. Second, the relationships of these three concepts are different with various job attitudes. A sample of 100 professionals was tested empirically with the aim to find out whether these constructs are related or different to each other. Three job attitudes (job satisfaction (JS), affective commitment (AC) and intention to quit (IQ) were measured to see how the relationship of workplace loneliness, ostracism at work and work alienation with these job attitudes emerged are different (or similar) to each other. The rationale behind choosing these three constructs: loneliness, alienation and ostracism is that most of the other similar constructs such as isolation, aloneness etc. have already been differentiated theoretically and empirically in the past. Literature has evidences that loneliness is different from concepts such as depression (Peplau, 1988), isolation (Peplau & Perlman, 1979; Victor et al., 2009), aloneness (Peplau & Perlman, 1979; Wright, 2005), alienation (Wright, 2005) etc. The job attitudes (job satisfaction, affective commitment and intention to quit) which are said to be most prominent at workplace have been included. This is a small study (not focus of the main study) to find out whether alienation and ostracism are empirically different from the concept of loneliness or not. The literature has theoretically differentiated these two with loneliness already. Data was collected from working professionals who were enrolled in the management development program at IIM Indore. Due to small sample size, the analysis has been done on PLS SEM which allows researcher to perform statistical tests on small samples. Discriminant validity (how much constructs are different from each other as they claim to be different theoretically) ensured that workplace loneliness, ostracism at work and work alienation are different from each other. Moreover, the causal relationship and the strength of relationship of these constructs with various job attitudes were different from each other. Results are mentioned in Appendix 1.