



The Effective Contribution of Psychological Well-Being and Adjustment to Loneliness Among Out-of-Town University Students

Via Pristinia Putra Dadang

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Abstract: Loneliness is a common issue among university students, particularly those living away from home. This study explores how psychological well-being and student adjustment together influence loneliness among Indonesian university students living independently. Using established measures of psychological well-being, college adjustment, and loneliness, data from 171 participants were analyzed through multiple regression. The results show that higher psychological well-being and better adjustment are both linked to lower loneliness, with adjustment emerging as the stronger predictor. This finding highlights that loneliness is shaped not only by emotional health but also by how well students adapt to new academic and social environments. The study offers new insight into the simultaneous roles of psychological well-being and adjustment in explaining loneliness, adding cross-cultural evidence from Indonesia to global research on student mental health. Practically, the results suggest that universities should promote adjustment and well-being through mentoring, resilience training, and counseling programs that support students' adaptation and emotional balance.

Introduction

Loneliness has become a critical mental health issue among university students worldwide, especially for those who migrate from their hometowns to pursue higher education (1, 2). The transition to university life away from familiar family and social support systems often disrupts emotional well-being and challenges students' capacity to adapt (3-5). In Indonesia, many students move from rural or regional areas to metropolitan centers such as Surabaya, increasing their vulnerability to social isolation. Studies show that 70% of international students report experiencing loneliness (Ogden, 2022), while a domestic survey during the COVID-19 pandemic found that 98% of respondents in Java reported feelings of loneliness (Prawira *et al.*, 2021). Young adults aged 16-24 are particularly at risk, with *Psychological Medicine* reporting that they experience higher loneliness than older adults (Novena, 2018).

Addressing loneliness is vital, as it is strongly associated with depression, anxiety, and poor academic performance (6, 7). These negative outcomes are often intensified by inadequate psychological well-being and limited adjustment skills (8, 9). While many interventions focus on social integration or campus-based support programs, they often overlook internal psychological resources such as self-regulation, autonomy, and adaptability (10, 11).

Psychological well-being, defined by Garcia *et al.* (2014), includes self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (12). Meanwhile, student adjustment refers to how individuals manage internal needs and external demands in academic and social contexts (13, 14).

Previous research has examined psychological well-being and student adjustment separately in relation to loneliness (15, 16). However, no study in Indonesia has explored the simultaneous contribution of psychological well-being and student adjustment to loneliness among out-of-town university students. This gap provides the basis for the present research, which offers a new perspective by integrating these two internal psychological factors within Indonesia's collectivist cultural context. In such a setting, family bonds, interdependence, and migration experiences differ substantially from Western contexts, making this study both culturally and theoretically significant.

The scope of this study is limited to internal psychological predictors of loneliness, specifically psychological well-being and student adjustment, while external factors such as family support, financial status, or campus environment are intentionally excluded. This focus allows a clearer understanding of how students' psychological resources shape their emotional experiences. Theoretically, this study contributes to educational and social

psychology by linking loneliness with psychosocial development theory and student adjustment theory. It demonstrates how internal adaptive capacities influence well-being and social connectedness in new environments. Practically, the findings are expected to guide universities in designing programs that strengthen students' psychological resilience, adaptive skills, and overall mental health. By examining the joint effects of well-being and adjustment, this study not only fills a research gap in the Indonesian context but also extends theoretical understanding of student loneliness through a developmental and cross-cultural lens.

Methodology

Study Design and Rationale

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design to examine the relationships between psychological well-being, student adjustment, and perceived loneliness among out-of-town university students (*mahasiswa rantau*) in Surabaya, Indonesia. This design was chosen to identify the extent to which variations in psychological well-being and adjustment predict loneliness while controlling for the study variables.

Participants The target population consisted of undergraduate students enrolled at universities in Surabaya who had migrated from other cities or provinces and were living in temporary accommodations such as dormitories, boarding houses, or rented rooms. A total of 171 students aged 18–24 years participated in the study.

Although random sampling was initially intended, the online distribution of questionnaires through university and student organization networks resulted in a convenience sampling approach. This limitation is acknowledged, as the final sample was dominated by students from East Java (46%), which may affect representativeness and generalizability.

Inclusion criteria included: (1) active enrollment at a Surabaya-based university, (2) migration from another city or province for study purposes, and (3) residence in Surabaya for at least one semester. Students with prior psychiatric diagnoses or under psychological treatment were excluded.

Instruments and Measures

Data were collected using three standardized psychological instruments. Loneliness was measured using the UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3 (Russell, 1996), which consists of 20 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicate greater perceived loneliness. The Cronbach's alpha obtained in this study was 0.88, indicating good reliability. Psychological well-being was assessed using the 42-item Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS), which measures six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Responses were rated on a 6-point Likert scale, with subscale reliability coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.85. Student adjustment was measured using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), which was adapted for the Indonesian context. This 67-item instrument assesses academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional attachment adjustment on a 5-point Likert scale and demonstrated excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.90$).

Procedure Ethical approval was obtained before data collection. From January to March 2023, participants voluntarily completed an online questionnaire distributed via

secure Google Forms links. Informed consent was obtained electronically. Responses were anonymous, and demographic data (age, gender, length of stay in Surabaya, housing type, and region of origin) were collected alongside the main variables. Data were screened for completeness and validity, resulting in 171 usable responses. To avoid redundancy, this section does not repeat implementation details described in the Results section.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26. Descriptive statistics summarized participant characteristics, followed by Pearson's correlation to examine bivariate relationships. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the predictive effects of psychological well-being and student adjustment on loneliness. Model fit was assessed using R^2 , and significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Standardized beta (β) coefficients indicated the relative contribution of each predictor. Tests for normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity confirmed that regression assumptions were met.

Methodological Limitations

This study's cross-sectional design limits causal inference, as relationships among variables cannot determine directionality. Furthermore, the convenience sampling method and online data collection may have introduced sampling bias, particularly the overrepresentation of East Java students. These limitations should be considered when interpreting and generalizing the results.

Results

Research Implementation

The research process began by identifying the underlying problem, formulating research questions, and defining the study objectives. A quantitative approach was chosen to examine the relationships among loneliness, psychological well-being, and student adjustment. A literature review was conducted to establish the theoretical framework and develop research hypotheses.

The study population consisted of university students living away from their home regions in Surabaya. Instruments were adapted from established scales and validated through expert judgment. Data were collected from May 15 to June 5, 2023, using an online questionnaire distributed to students living independently (e.g., in dormitories or rented housing). Data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics, correlations, and multiple regression.

Participant Characteristics

A total of 171 valid responses were analyzed (see **Table 1**). Most participants were female (65%) and aged 18–19 years, originating from 11 provinces, with East Java contributing the largest share (46%).

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics (**Table 2**) show that participants generally reported moderate levels of loneliness ($M = 49.89$, $SD = 8.09$), psychological well-being ($M = 32.46$, $SD = 5.07$), and student adjustment ($M = 35.03$, $SD = 6.20$). Categorization based on standard deviation intervals (**Supplemental Tables 1–4**) indicates that respondents were in the moderate range across all three variables.

Table 1. The participant demographic characteristics.

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	60	35
	Female	111	65
	Total	171	100
Age (years)	18	71	42
	19	82	48
	20	13	7.6
	21	4	2
	22	1	1
	Total	171	100
Region of Origin	East Java	79	46
	West Java	30	18
	Jakarta	29	17
	Central Java	16	9
	Banten	8	5
	Riau Islands	2	1
	Yogyakarta	2	1
	East Nusa Tenggara (NTT)	1	1
	Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam	1	1
	Jambi	1	1
	Bali	1	1
	South Kalimantan	1	1
	Total	171	100

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of psychological variables.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological Well-being	171	20	48	32.46	5.07
Student Adjustment	171	20	51	35.03	6.20
Loneliness	171	30	70	49.89	8.09

Pearson correlations revealed significant negative relationships between loneliness and both psychological well-being ($r = -0.28$, $p < 0.01$) and student adjustment ($r = -0.62$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher well-being and adjustment are associated with lower loneliness.

Descriptive Analysis by Demographic Factors

Loneliness by Gender

A cross-tabulation analysis examined the distribution of loneliness levels across gender (**Table 3**). The results show that among participants with high levels of loneliness, 8 were male and 4 were female. In the moderate category, 39 males and 78 females were recorded. For the low loneliness group, there were 13 males and 29 females. Overall, both male and female participants predominantly experienced moderate loneliness.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of gender and loneliness levels.

Gender	Low (n/%)	Moderate (n/%)	High (n/%)	Total (n/%)
Male	13 (7.6%)	39 (22.8%)	8 (4.7%)	60 (35.1%)
Female	29 (17.0%)	78 (45.6%)	4 (2.3%)	111 (64.9%)
Total	42 (24.6%)	117 (68.4%)	12 (7.0%)	171 (100%)

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of age and loneliness levels.

Age	Low (n/%)	Moderate (n/%)	High (n/%)	Total (n/%)
18	12 (7.0%)	53 (31.0%)	6 (3.5%)	71 (41.5%)
19	23 (13.5%)	53 (31.0%)	6 (3.5%)	82 (48.0%)
20	5 (2.9%)	8 (4.7%)	0 (0.0%)	13 (7.6%)
21	2 (1.2%)	2 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (2.3%)
22	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)
Total	42 (24.6%)	117 (68.4%)	12 (7.0%)	171 (100%)

Loneliness by Age

A cross-tabulation analysis was also conducted to examine loneliness levels across different age groups (**Table 4**). The results indicate that participants aged 18 and 19 years had the highest proportion of moderate loneliness (each 31%), followed by those aged 20. Only one participant, aged 22, reported moderate loneliness. These findings suggest that younger students, particularly those in their first years of study, tend to feel lonelier, consistent with the transition challenges of emerging adulthood.

Loneliness by Region of Origin

Table 5 presents the cross-tabulation of loneliness by region of origin. The highest number of participants reporting moderate loneliness came from East Java ($n = 53$, 31.0%), followed by West Java ($n = 21$, 12.3%) and Jakarta ($n = 22$, 12.9%). High levels of loneliness were more prevalent among respondents from West Java and Jakarta. Several regions, such as Bali, Yogyakarta (DIY), and Aceh, had very few participants, all reporting low or moderate loneliness. This pattern reflects both sample distribution and cultural proximity, as students from East Java may find adaptation in Surabaya relatively easier.

Regression Analysis

Building on the correlation results, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the combined contribution of psychological well-being and student adjustment to loneliness. The analysis revealed that both predictors significantly explained variance in loneliness, $F(2, 168) = 111.18$, $p < 0.001$, with the model accounting for 57% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.57$). These findings indicate a strong explanatory power of the model.

As presented in **Table 6**, both psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.16$, $p < 0.01$) and student adjustment ($\beta = -0.67$, $p < 0.001$) significantly predicted lower levels of loneliness. Among the two, student adjustment emerged as the stronger predictor, underscoring its critical role in helping students cope with the challenges of living away from their home regions. Effective contribution analysis further showed that

Table 5. Cross-tabulation of region of origin and loneliness levels.

Region	Low (n/%)	Moderate (n/%)	High (n/%)	Total (n/%)
Aceh	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)
Riau Islands	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.2%)
Jambi	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)
Banten	4 (2.3%)	3 (1.8%)	1 (0.6%)	8 (4.7%)
Jakarta (DKI)	5 (2.9%)	22 (12.9%)	2 (1.2%)	29 (17.0%)
Yogyakarta (DIY)	2 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.2%)
West Java	5 (2.9%)	21 (12.3%)	4 (2.3%)	30 (17.5%)
Central Java	4 (2.3%)	12 (7.0%)	1 (0.6%)	17 (9.9%)
East Java	21 (12.3%)	53 (31.0%)	4 (2.3%)	78 (45.6%)
Bali	1 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)
South Kalimantan	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)
East Nusa Tenggara (NTT)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)
Total	42 (24.6%)	117 (68.4%)	12 (7.0%)	171 (100%)

Table 6. Regression analysis of predictors of loneliness.

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	84.81	2.84	–	29.87	.000
Psychological Well-being	–0.25	0.09	–0.16	–2.75	.007
Student Adjustment	–0.85	0.07	–0.67	–11.51	.000
Note: $F(2,168) = 111.18$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.57$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.565$. Effective contributions: Student adjustment (49.4%), Psychological well-being (7.6%).					

student adjustment accounted for 49.4% of the explained variance, while psychological well-being contributed 7.6%.

Discussion

These findings confirm that both psychological well-being and student adjustment play essential roles in mitigating loneliness, with adjustment emerging as the stronger factor. This underscores that students' adaptive abilities, managing academic, social, and emotional demands, are central to coping effectively with separation from familiar support systems. The result strengthens previous research demonstrating that adaptive functioning is a protective factor against loneliness across cultural contexts (15, 16).

From a theoretical perspective, the results align with several developmental psychology frameworks. Erikson's psychosocial theory (intimacy vs. isolation) emphasizes that young adults who form meaningful relationships can avoid loneliness (17), while Chickering's student development theory highlights autonomy, competence, and purpose as key components of successful adjustment to university life (18). Peplau and Perlman's social-psychological model (19, 20), also supports these findings, proposing that loneliness arises from discrepancies between desired and actual social relationships, influenced by both internal traits (e.g., coping skills, self-esteem) and external transitions (e.g., relocation, cultural change). Collectively, these perspectives explain how internal well-being and external adaptation interact to shape students' psychological adjustment in early adulthood.

The stronger influence of adjustment reflects the developmental challenges of emerging adulthood (21), a

period marked by identity formation and independence. Students who migrate for higher education often face cultural transition, academic pressure, and the need to build new social networks (22). Those with strong adjustment skills are more capable of integrating into new environments, reducing the likelihood of prolonged loneliness. Conversely, insufficient adjustment may intensify isolation, even when psychological well-being is moderately high (23).

Demographic findings provide further context: most participants were 18–19 years old and female, consistent with literature suggesting that early-stage university students, especially women, are more vulnerable to emotional distress during transition periods (24). Regional differences also revealed that students from nearby areas (e.g., East Java) reported lower loneliness, likely due to shared cultural norms and easier adaptation (25). These findings illustrate that cultural familiarity can serve as a protective factor during university transition.

Practical Implications

These findings provide clear directions for university policy and student mental health services. Universities should strengthen both adjustment and well-being through comprehensive programs that foster belonging, resilience, and adaptation. Peer mentoring and community-building activities can help students develop social connections and a sense of inclusion, while workshops focused on resilience, emotional regulation, and academic coping can enhance students' psychological skills. In addition, culturally sensitive counseling services are needed to address adjustment challenges among students from diverse regions and backgrounds. Orientation and transition programs that integrate academic and cultural preparation are equally essential to support students' adaptation to university life. Embedding these initiatives within student affairs can reduce loneliness, promote inclusion, and improve student retention and academic performance. Such efforts not only address mental health concerns but also strengthen institutional responsibility for fostering holistic student development.

Conclusion

This study confirms that psychological well-being and

student adjustment significantly predict lower levels of loneliness among out-of-town university students, jointly explaining 57% of the variance. Its novelty lies in integrating these two internal predictors within the Indonesian cultural context, extending existing frameworks of loneliness to a non-Western population. The findings strengthen and expand Erikson's psychosocial theory, Chickering's student development model, and Peplau and Perlman's social-psychological approach, offering comparative insights that contribute to the global discourse on student adaptation and mental health.

Practically, universities should implement structured interventions such as peer mentoring, resilience-building workshops, and culturally sensitive counseling programs to enhance student adjustment and well-being. These initiatives can reduce loneliness, promote inclusion, and foster overall academic success. Despite its limitations, particularly the cross-sectional design and the geographic focus on Surabaya, the study provides a foundation for future longitudinal and cross-cultural research aimed at deepening the understanding of loneliness and adjustment among emerging adults worldwide.

Declarations

Author Informations

Via Pristinia Putra Dadang ✉

Corresponding Author

Affiliation: Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Health, State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia.

Contribution: .

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicting interest.

Data Availability

The unpublished data is available upon request to the corresponding author.

Ethics Statement

Not applicable.

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Supplemental Material

The supplementary materials can be found at the link: <https://etflin.com/file/document/20251123102137612882624.docx>

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Additional Information

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