

TALK

CAN WE QUANTIFY LONELINESS?

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ABSTRACT

With well-established loneliness scales, such as the UCLA-Loneliness Scale (Version 3), existing, gauging loneliness should be straightforward. However, there is a lack of research in establishing where on these scales an individual is “lonely”. There are multiple studies using benchmarks, but with no explanation of their origins. Other studies base loneliness off an arbitrary grouping of scores (i.e. in a scale with the highest total being 10, scores of 7.5 – 10 are very lonely, 5 – 7.5 are moderately lonely, and so on). Finally, some studies use the mean. However, the mean changes over time, among groups, and studies. The need for a study specifically focussing on finding where an individual is lonely is apparent. This study will look at multiple scales stemming from the UCLA-Loneliness Scale, including a 20, 10, and 3 item version. This will also allow for categorical data from different versions of the scale to be loosely compared. Capturing the subjective aspects of loneliness is important in indicating any loneliness benchmark. This can be done through self-reporting as feeling lonely, although this is often biased. Additionally, a text analysis of how individuals describe loneliness and their experiences may correlate with specific scores. Finally, components of the biological happenings of loneliness have been identified and can be monitored. Such happenings include cortisol, which could rise more in lonely individual when socialising than non-lonely individuals. Overall, using subjective reporting, text analysis, and biomarkers, the benchmark for loneliness should be applicable across multiple scales.