

Loneliness and Depression in Relation to Latchkey Situation

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Abstract : The study examines loneliness and depression in students who regularly care for themselves after school (latchkey students) in Mashhad and compares them with parent supervised students using a causal-comparative research method. The 270 participants, aged 7 -13, were selected using convenience and cluster random-assignment sampling. Independent t-test results showed significant differences between loneliness (-4.32, $p \leq 0.05$) and depression (-3.02, $p \leq 0.05$) among latchkey and non-latchkey students. Using the Pearson correlation test, significant correlation between depression and loneliness among latchkey students was also discovered ($r=0.59$, $p \leq 0.05$). However, regarding non latchkey students, no significant difference between loneliness and depression was observed ($r= 0.02$. $p \geq 0.05$). Multiple regression results also showed that depression variance can be determined by gender (22%) and loneliness (34%). The findings of this study, specifically the significant difference between latchkey and non-latchkey children regarding feelings of loneliness and depression, carries clear implications for parents. It can be concluded that mothers who spend most of their time working out of the house and devoid their children of their presence in the home may cause some form of mental distress like loneliness and depression. Moreover, gender differences affect the degree of these psychological disorders.

Keywords : loneliness, depression, self-care students, latchkey and non-latchkey students, gender

Conference Title : ICE 2015 : International Conference on Education

Conference Location : Berlin, Germany

Conference Dates : May 21-22, 2015