**Online connectedness as a cure for loneliness?**

Online social networks have become a central platform in fostering interpersonal relationships among young people (Vaterlaus, Jones, Patten, & Cook, 2015). This article seeks to examine whether social and social relationships in online social networks indeed foster meaningful social connections and enable the individual to be less lonely in his or her own, or is it an imaginary connection that covers the existence of loneliness.

Loneliness is perceived as a state of mind of sadness and depression because of the lack of friends. Weiss (1975) describes loneliness as a difficult and damaging subjective experience. Isolation as a physical state can be a complete mental life as opposed to loneliness which is emotion and a subjective sense of emptiness, depression, and distress. Thus, Loneliness is conceptualized as perceived social isolation rather than physical separation (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2003).

Marangoni and Ickes (1989) stated loneliness is a multifaceted construct that can be defined as “(1) a subjective experience that may be uncorrelated with objective social isolation; (2) this subjective experience is an aversive psychological state for the lonely individual; and (3) the onset and origin of loneliness can be traced to some form of social relationship deficit” (p. 93).

Fear of loneliness leads many people to give up their privacy, to sacrifice their independence, thoughts and personal decisions, to share them all and to belong the herd - if only to gain a sense of security and an imaginary identity (Frum, 1977). Russell (1926) suggests humans should maintain a healthy balance between loneliness, aloneness, and life in the herd.

During the 20th century, the separation between public and private spheres was blurred, and there was an increased focus on the individual and his emotional world, mainly through the use of techniques to expose the self and its connection to others (Illouz, 2007). If the individual is no longer defined as different from the other, then his inner self-draws the "outside," the object. In such a way, the uniqueness and the boundary between the object and the subject and between the self and the other also become blurred.

Empirical findings on loneliness in online environments are inconsistent. Some has been suggested that users who spent more time on the internet reported higher levels of perceived loneliness than the user who did not spend as much time online (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). In contrast, the use of online media has been linked to a decrease in offline social interactions (Subrahmanyam & Lin, 2007). Similarly, the use of online media found to reduce loneliness by providing more opportunities to associate with others and increasing control over one's interactions (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Grieve et al. (2013) suggest it is necessary to distinguish between online and offline connectedness; those who used Facebook for social purposes were less lonely online but not in real life.

The frequency of Facebook use or time spent on Facebook was associated with higher loneliness (Lou, Yan, Nickerson, & McMorris, 2012), but when the number of Facebook friends has measured it associated with lower loneliness (Lemieux et al., 2013; Lou et al., 2012).

Do young people see social networking as a site to dispel their loneliness in light of the interconnectivity and collaboration that the network ostensibly offers? According to Kimchi (2010), social network users tend to believe that it is possible to get to know each other completely through the core list of basic characteristics. Thus, in time the user finds himself in a new social situation called "alone together" (Turkel, 2011). It is a social illusion that makes the individual feel connected to society, but in fact, it is a superficial connection that replaced the real, intimate and personal conversation. The individual show himself only after editing and "Just enough." Therefore, despite the constant connection to the online world, which gives him the illusion of connectedness to others, he feels lonely and develops a real fear of finding himself alone.

We examine these ideas among students who were asked to write freely what loneliness is for them and how lonely they feel in the online social networking environment.