การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบความว้าเหว่ของวัยรุ่นในครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยว และครอบครัวพ่อแม่อยู่ด้วยกัน

A Comparative Study of Loneliness among Adolescents from Single-Parent Families and Two-Parent Families

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(Received: *August 2, 2025*: Revised: *January 25, 2026*: Accepted: *April 4, 2026*)

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยเชิงเปรียบเทียบแบบภาคตัดขวางนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาและเปรียบเทียบความว้าเหว่ของวัยรุ่นในครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยวและครอบครัวพ่อแม่อยู่ด้วยกัน และ 2) เปรียบเทียบความว้าเหว่ของวัยรุ่นในแต่ละกลุ่มตามปัจจัยส่วนบุคคล กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นเด็กวัยรุ่นอายุ 13 – 18 ปี จากครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยวและครอบครัวพ่อแม่อยู่ด้วยกัน กลุ่มละ 121 คน ในจังหวัดมหาสารคาม สุ่มตัวอย่างแบบกลุ่ม วัดความว้าเหว่ด้วยแบบวัด RULS-6 (Cronbach's Alpha = .86) และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยสถิติ Independent samples t-test ผลการวิจัยแยกตามวัตถุประสงค์ พบว่า

1. เด็กวัยรุ่นในครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยวมีคะแนนเฉลี่ยความว้าเหว่ (M = 14.89, SD = 3.97) สูงกว่าเด็กวัยรุ่นในครอบครัวพ่อแม่อยู่ด้วยกัน (M = 13.75, SD = 4.17) อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ (p-$value$ = .030) ทั้งสองกลุ่มมีระดับความว้าเหว่อยู่ในระดับปานกลาง เมื่อพิจารณารายข้อพบว่าเด็กวัยรุ่นในครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยวมีคะแนนเฉลี่ยระดับปานกลางทุกข้อ (2.12 – 2.74) ส่วนครอบครัวพ่อแม่อยู่ด้วยกันมีคะแนนเฉลี่ยในภาพรวมระดับปานกลาง (1.87 – 2.56)

2. ในกลุ่มครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยว พบว่าเพศมีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ (p-$value$ = .005) โดยเด็กวัยรุ่นหญิงมีคะแนนความว้าเหว่สูงกว่าเด็กวัยรุ่นชาย (M = 15.56, SD = 4.03 และ M = 13.38 , SD = 3.42 ตามลำดับ) ส่วนปัจจัยด้านอายุ รายได้ครอบครัว ระยะเวลาที่อยู่ในครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยว และอายุของเด็กเมื่อเริ่มอยู่ในครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยว ไม่พบความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ในกลุ่มครอบครัวพ่อแม่อยู่ด้วยกัน พบว่ารายได้ครอบครัวมีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ (p-$value$ = .048) โดยเด็กวัยรุ่นในครอบครัวที่มีรายได้ต่ำกว่า 10,000 บาทต่อเดือน มีคะแนนความว้าเหว่สูงกว่าครอบครัวที่มีรายได้ตั้งแต่ 10,000 บาทขึ้นไป (M = 14.44, SD = 3.90 และ M = 12.80, SD = 4.19 ตามลำดับ) ส่วนปัจจัยด้านเพศและอายุไม่พบความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ

ผลดังกล่าวสะท้อนให้เห็นว่าปัจจัยที่สัมพันธ์กับความว้าเหว่แตกต่างกันตามโครงสร้างครอบครัว โดยเพศเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในกลุ่มครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยว ในขณะที่รายได้ครอบครัวเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในกลุ่มครอบครัวพ่อแม่อยู่ด้วยกัน

คำสำคัญ: ความว้าเหว่ วัยรุ่น ครอบครัวพ่อแม่เลี้ยงเดี่ยว ครอบครัวพ่อแม่อยู่ด้วยกัน

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Abstract

This cross-sectional comparative study aimed to: (1) examine and compare loneliness among adolescents from single-parent families and two-parent families, and (2) compare loneliness within each group according to personal characteristics. The participants consisted of 242 adolescents aged 13–18 years in Maha Sarakham Province, Thailand, including 121 adolescents from single-parent families and 121 adolescents from two-parent families. Cluster sampling was employed. Loneliness was assessed using the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale–6 (RULS-6) (Cronbach's Alpha = .86). Data were analyzed using independent samples t-tests. The findings revealed as follows.

1. Adolescents in single-parent families reported significantly higher mean loneliness scores (M = 14.89, SD = 3.97) than those in two-parent families (M = 13.75, SD = 4.17) (p-*value* = .030). Both groups demonstrated moderate levels of loneliness overall. Item-level analysis showed that adolescents in single-parent families had moderate mean scores across all items (2.12 – 2.74), while those in two-parent families also reported moderate overall scores (1.87 – 2.56).

2. Within the single-parent family group, gender differences were statistically significant (p-*value* = .005), with female adolescents reporting higher loneliness scores than males (M = 15.56, SD = 4.03 vs. M = 13.38, SD = 3.42). No significant differences were found for age, family income, duration of living in a single-parent family, or age at the onset of living in a single-parent family. In the two-parent family group, family income was a significant factor (p-*value* = .048). Adolescents from families with monthly income below 10,000 THB reported higher loneliness scores than those from families with income of 10,000 THB or more (M = 14.44, SD = 3.90 vs. M = 12.80, SD = 4.19). Gender and age showed no significant differences.

These results highlight that factors associated with adolescent loneliness vary according to family structure: gender is a key factor in single-parent families, while family income is more influential in two-parent families.

Keywords: Loneliness, Adolescents, Single-Parent Families, Two-Parent Families

Introduction

During adolescence, individuals experience significant physical, emotional, and social changes as they transition into adulthood. As they gain independence, adolescents often reduce interactions with their parents, who are frequently occupied with work responsibilities. This reduced communication between parents and children can contribute to feelings of loneliness and social isolation. Ying (2023) reported that parent-child relationships, family functioning, and parenting styles significantly influence adolescent loneliness. Concurrently, adolescents are increasingly spending time on social media platforms and with peers. Social media has become a pervasive aspect of daily life, with notable impacts. (Best, Manktelow, Taylor, 2014) identified harmful effects of social media use among young adults, including increased exposure to harm, social isolation, depression, and cyberbullying (Arnold, Kappes, Klinenberg, Winkielman, 2021) defined loneliness as the perceived discrepancy between actual social relationships and the desired quality of those relationships. Loneliness is considered a significant public health issue and is characterized by a subjective sense

of emotional and social isolation. Additionally, it is recognized as having potential adaptive value in humans (Cacioppo, Cacioppo, Boomsma, 2014). Favotto, Michaelson, Pickett, and Davison (2019) found that the quality of family communication moderates the relationship between daily computer-mediated communication and loneliness among Canadian youth. For adolescents with high-quality family communication, frequent use of verbal and social media communication with friends was positively associated with loneliness compared to non-daily users.

According to recent statistics from Thailand's Department of Provincial Administration, approximately 15 - 20% of Thai families are headed by a single parent, with this proportion steadily increasing over the past decade. Research in Thai adolescent populations has indicated that loneliness affects roughly 25 - 30% of secondary school students, with higher rates observed among those facing family structure transitions or economic hardship (Chanatsirikul, Santirat, 2020). The factors contributing to loneliness vary among adolescents. Previous studies have identified gender as a key variable, with females generally experiencing less loneliness than males. Gender differences, along with variations in family income, have been shown to influence loneliness levels. This may be linked to the perception of females as more emotionally expressive, communicative, and relationship-oriented (Chanatsirikul, Santirat, 2020). Shahini (2010) reported a negative correlation between loneliness, family structure, and life satisfaction with changes in social relationships such as the loss of family members or divorce often contributing to loneliness (Perlman, Peplau, 1981). Increasingly, family structures characterized by divorce and separation are becoming common, affecting adolescents in single-parent families. These adolescents frequently experience limited parental interaction due to their parents' work, commitments, resulting in heightened loneliness. Aufseeser, Jekielek, Brown (2006) observed that many 15-year-olds struggle to discuss deeply personal issues with their parents, while adolescents living with both parents tend to benefit from greater parental involvement, such as awareness of their whereabouts after school. Adolescents with closer relationships with their parents are also reported to exhibit lower mental health symptoms and reduced loneliness (Cooper, Hards, Moltrecht, Reynolds, Shum, McElroy et al., 2021). In this study, a single-parent family is defined as a household where an adolescent resides with only one biological or adoptive parent, regardless of the reason for the absence of the other parent (e.g., divorce, separation, death, or abandonment). A couple-parent family (also referred to as a two-parent family) is defined as a household where an adolescent resides with both biological or adoptive parents. Loneliness levels were categorized as low (scores 6 - 11), moderate (scores 12 - 18), or high (scores 19 - 24) based on the RULS-6 score distribution.

Loneliness is strongly associated with negative psychological outcomes, including depression and low self-esteem (Bekhet, Zauszniewski, Nakhla, 2008). Adolescents experiencing loneliness are at higher risk of depression and poor health outcomes in adulthood (Goosby, Bellatorre, Walsemann, Cheadle,2013). Moreover, Heshmati, Blackard, Beckmann, Chipidza (2021) found that adolescents in families with high-quality relational ties experienced lower levels of loneliness, regardless of gender, parental education, or family income. Financial factors also play a role; Chanatsirikul, Santirat (2020) reported that adolescents from financially stable families experience less loneliness than those facing economic hardships. Economic pressures can reduce parental availability, further exacerbating

feelings of loneliness among adolescents. Thanaprakrit (2002) also highlighted that loneliness levels vary by academic grade, with younger adolescents reporting higher levels of loneliness than older ones. Interestingly, Arnold, Kappes, Klimenberg, Winkielman (2021) found no significant relationship between loneliness and family income or gender but reported that age was positively correlated with higher loneliness.

Economic hardship has been consistently linked to increased loneliness among adolescents through multiple pathways. Lower family income often correlates with reduced parental availability due to longer working hours, fewer resources for social and recreational activities, and increased family stress, all of which may contribute to heightened feelings of loneliness (Chanatsirikul, Santirat , 2020). Furthermore, adolescents from low-income families may experience social marginalization or limited peer interactions due to economic constraints, further exacerbating their sense of isolation. Characteristics of loneliness among adolescents include behavioral and emotional manifestations such as reduced social participation, neglecting affection for loved ones, and seeking social support. Other indicators include overeating, oversleeping, avoiding social interactions, and addiction. Adolescents unable to adapt to socio-economic changes or those in single-parent families, are at an elevated risk of loneliness. Loneliness can significantly impact self-esteem, induce self-blame, reduce social participation, and impair academic performance. If left unaddressed, loneliness can lead to depression and, even suicide (Department of Mental Health, 2019). Thus, loneliness is a critical issue for adolescents in both single-parent and two-parent families.

Despite existing research, limited studies specifically address the differences in loneliness between adolescents from single-parent families and those from couple-parent families. While much attention has been given to loneliness in adults and older populations, this study focuses on adolescents, aiming to investigate and compare loneliness in these two-family structures. The findings will provide a foundation for future research and inform strategies to mitigate loneliness, thereby improving adolescent mental health. Laursen and Collins (2009) emphasized the variability in parent-child relationships during adolescence, noting their influence on individual differences. Narr, Allen, Tan, Loeb (2019) suggested that adolescents who prioritize close friendships are better equipped to navigate key social developmental tasks than those focused on peer popularity.This study aims to explore the extent to which loneliness differs between adolescents in single-parent and couple-parent families.

Objectives:

1. To investigate and compare the loneliness of adolescents in single-parent and couple families.
2. To compare loneliness within each group of adolescents based on personal factors.

Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by the Social Psychological Theory of Loneliness proposed by Perlman and Peplau (1981), which conceptualizes loneliness as a subjective experience arising from a perceived discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships. According to this theory,

loneliness is shaped by both personal characteristics and situational factors that influence individuals' social interactions and expectations.

In the context of this study, adolescents are viewed as individuals undergoing rapid developmental transitions, during which reliance on peer and family relationships becomes increasingly critical (Steinberg, 2014; Larson, Lampman-Petraitis, 1989). Family structure is one situational factor that may significantly influence adolescents' social and emotional well-being. Adolescents living in single-parent families may experience limited parental time, fewer emotional resources, and altered patterns of communication, potentially resulting in unmet social or psychological needs. Conversely, adolescents in couple-parent families may benefit from greater emotional support and more consistent parental involvement.

Therefore, variation in family structure may contribute to differences in adolescents' experiences of loneliness. This conceptual framework underpins the study's focus on comparing loneliness between adolescents from single-parent and couple-parent families.

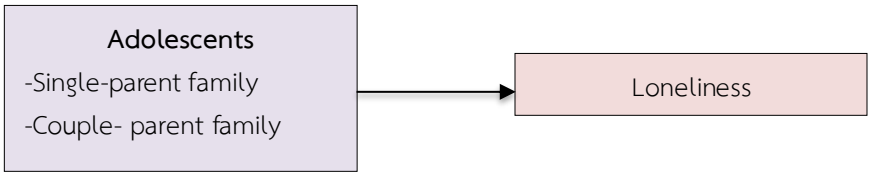


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methods

This study used a cross-sectional comparative research design.

Population and Sample

Population: The target population for this study consisted of secondary school adolescents enrolled in Grades 1 through 6 (Academic Year 2021) across the 13 districts of Maha Sarakham Province, Thailand. The eligible population encompassed students from both single-parent and couple-parent family structures.

Samples and Sampling: The sample was selected through cluster random sampling from the population of 13 districts in Mahasarakham Province. Data collection was conducted in Phayakkhaphumphisai district, chosen due to the presence of a single secondary school in the area with a total enrollment of 2,804 students (Student Affairs Department, Phayakkhaphum Vitthayakhan School, 2020 Preliminary data focused on adolescents enrolled in Grades 1 through 6 for the academic year 2021, comprising both single-parent and couple-parent family groups.

The study employed cluster random sampling, with schools defined as the sampling units, as the target population was naturally grouped within educational institutions. This approach was appropriate for educational and public health research contexts. A total of 13 schools were randomly selected from the complete sampling frame, with each school having an equal probability of selection. Data were subsequently collected from participants within the selected schools.

The selected schools shared similar baseline characteristics, including curriculum structure, grade levels, student age range, and socio-environmental context, indicating between-cluster

homogeneity. This resulted in a total sample of 242 adolescents, comprising 121 from single-parent families and 121 from couple-parent families.

Sample Size Calculation

The required sample size was estimated using G*Power 3.1.2 with the (following parameters: an effect size of .50, α = .05, and power = .95 Based on these calculations, a minimum sample size of 210 participants (105 from each group) was determined. To account for an attrition rate of 15%, the final sample size was adjusted to 242 participants.

Research Instruments

The primary research instrument used was the RULS-6, derived from the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996). The RULS-6 was translated into Thai and validated by Wongpakarn, Wongpakaran, Pinyopornpanish, Simcharoen, Suradom, Varnado et al. (2020). This scale consists of six items measured on a four-point Likert, scale where respondents rate the frequency of their feelings, ranging from "Never" (1) to "Almost Always). Scores on the RULS-6 range from 6 to 24., with higher scores indicating higher levels of loneliness. In this study, scores were categorized into three levels: low, moderate, and high levels of loneliness. The RULS-6 demonstrated strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86. Additionally, a personal questionnaire was used to collect demographic data, including age, gender, family type, and grade level.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a six-month period, from September 2020 to February 2021.

Data were collected using paper-based questionnaires distributed in classroom settings. Students completed questionnaires individually during designated class periods, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize participants' demographic information and levels of loneliness. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the mean loneliness scores between adolescents from single-parent and couple-parent families. Additional analyses, including subgroup comparisons, were performed to assess differences in loneliness based on gender, family income, age, and duration of single-parent family status. Statistical significance was set at *p-value* < .05 for all analyses.

Prior to conducting t-tests, assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test and Levene's test, respectively. Additional analyses using independent t-tests were performed to assess differences in loneliness based on gender, family income, age, and grade level within each family structure group. Statistical significance was set at *p-value* < .05 for all analyses. While multiple comparisons were conducted, the exploratory nature of subgroup analyses should be considered when interpreting findings.

Ethical Consideration

This study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Mahasarakham University (Approval No. 223/2020). It was conducted as a component of the broader research project titled "A Causal Model of Psychological Well-being Among Adolescents." Participation was

entirely voluntary. Information regarding the study objectives and procedures was provided to both adolescents and their parents or guardians through a formal information letter. Informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, while adolescents provided assent by signing an assent form. To protect participants' privacy, strict protocols were implemented to ensure anonymity and maintain the confidentiality of all data, which were accessible only to the research team.

Results

The study included a total of 242 adolescents aged 13 – 18 years. Among them,121 adolescents lived in single-parent families, while the other 121 lived in couple-parent families. The average age of the adolescents was 15.07 years (*SD* = 1.65). Most participants were female (n = 151, 62.40%) and identified as Buddhist (97.70%). In terms of education, 130 adolescents (53.12%) were enrolled in high school levels 1–3. Most fathers (n = 92, 38.02%) and mothers (n = 98, 40.50%) were employed. Regarding family income, most families earned less than 10,000 baht per month (46.28%). Among adolescents from single-parent families, most experienced parental separation when they were between 0 and 12 years old (88.60%). The duration of being in a single-parent family was primarily 0–10 years (68.60%) (Table 1).

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of adolescents (n = 242)

Characteristics	Single parent group n (%)	Couple parent group n (%)	Total n (%)
Family status			
Single parent	121 (50.00)	-	121 (50.00)
Couple parent	-	121 (50.00)	121 (50.00)
Gender			
Male	37 (15.29)	54 (22.31)	91 (37.60)
Female	84 (34.71)	67 (27.69)	151 (62.40)
Age (years)			
13 - 15	74 (30.58)	67 (27.69)	141 (58.26)
16 – 18	47 (19.42)	54 (22.31)	101 (41.74)
Education			
Secondary school level 1-3	67 (27.69)	63 (26.03)	130 (53.12)
Secondary school level 4-6	54 (22.31)	58 (23.97)	112 (46.28)
Religion			
Buddhism	118 (48.76)	118(48.76)	236 (97.52)
Others	3 (1.24)	3 (1.24)	6 (2.48)
Occupation of father			
Agriculture	18 (7.44)	40 (16.53)	58 (23.97)
Employee	52 (21.49)	40 (16.53)	92 (38.02)
Government service	8 (3.31)	10 (4.13)	18 (7.44)
Business	11 (4.55)	21 (8.68)	32 (13.22)
No answer	32 (13.22)	10 (8.3)	42 (17.36)

Characteristics	Single parent group n (%)	Couple parent group n (%)	Total n (%)
Occupation of mother			
Agriculture	20 (8.26)	35 (28.9)	55 (22.73)
Employee	56 (23.14)	42 (34.7)	98 (40.50)
Government service	5 (2.07)	10 (4.13)	15 (6.20)
Business	21 (8.68)	23 (9.50)	44 (18.18)
No answer	19 (7.85)	11 (4.55)	30 (12.40)
Family income (Baht/month)			
< 10,000	53 (21.90)	59 (24.38)	112 (46.28)
≥ 10,000	41 (16.94)	41 (16.94)	82 (33.88)
No answer	27 (11.16)	21 (8.68)	48 (19.83)
Child's age at the onset of being single family (Years) (*M* = 7.06, *SD* = 4.58, Range = 0-16)			
0 - 12	106 (88.60)	-	106 (88.60)
≥ 13	15 (12.4)	-	15 (12.4)
Duration of being a single-parent family (years) (*M* = 8.43, *SD* = 4.89, Range = 0-18)			
0-10	83 (68.6)	-	83 (68.6)
>10	38 (31.4)	-	38 (31.4)

The mean loneliness scores for adolescents from single-parent families, as measured by the RULS-6 scale, ranged from 2.12 to 2.74, with higher scores indicating greater loneliness. In contrast, the mean loneliness scores for adolescents in couple-parent families ranged from 1.87 to 2.55. Adolescents in single-parent families exhibited a moderate level of loneliness for both total and individual item scores, while adolescents in couple-parent families showed a moderate level of loneliness for the total score but lower levels of loneliness for specific items, such as "How often do you feel left out?" and "How often do you feel that you are no longer close to anyone?" The total loneliness score for adolescents from single-parent families was higher than that for adolescents from couple-parent families, indicating a greater sense of loneliness among the former group (Table 2).

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of the loneliness of adolescents (n = 242)

Loneliness score	Loneliness							
	Single-parent family (n = 121)				Couple- parent family (n = 121)			
	Range	*M*	*SD*	Level	Range	*M*	*SD*	Level
1. How often do you feel that you lack companionship?	1-4	2.38	0.87	Moderate	1-4	2.38	0.90	Moderate
2. How often do you feel alone?	1-4	2.56	0.90	Moderate	1-4	2.43	0.88	Moderate
3. How often do you feel that you are no longer close to anyone?	1-4	2.12	1.00	Moderate	1-4	1.97	0.96	Low
4. How often do you feel left out?	1-4	2.33	0.96	Moderate	1-4	1.87	0.96	Low
5. How often do you feel that no one really knows you well?	1-4	2.74	0.94	Moderate	1-4	2.56	0.96	Moderate
6. How often do you feel that people are around you but not with you?	1-4	2.68	0.99	Moderate	1-4	2.55	0.92	Moderate
A total score of loneliness	**6-24**	**14.89**	**3.97**	**Moderate**	**6-24**	**13.75**	**4.17**	**Moderate**

A comparison of the total loneliness scores revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with adolescents in single-parent families reporting higher levels of loneliness than those in couple-parent families. (t = −2.18, *p-value* < .05) (Table 3).

Table 3 Comparison of loneliness between adolescents living in a single-parent family (n = 121) and a couple-parent family (n = 121)

Scale	Single parent group *M* (*SD*)	Couple parent group *M* (*SD*)	*t*	*df*	*p-value*
Loneliness	14.89 (3.97)	13.75 (4.17)	2.18*	239.41	.030

Further analysis showed a significant gender difference in loneliness levels between the groups (t = −2.87, *p-value* < .05). However, there were no significant differences between groups in terms of age, family income, duration of being in a single-parent family, or the child's age at the onset of single-parent status. Despite this, late adolescents reported higher loneliness scores than younger adolescents. Additionally, adolescents from families with low incomes exhibited higher loneliness scores compared to those from higher-income families. Adolescents who had lived in a single-parent family for less than 10 years also reported higher loneliness scores than those who had been in such families for more than 10 years (Table 4).

Table 4 Comparison of loneliness among demographics data of adolescents living in single-parent families (n = 121)

Demographic data	*M* (*SD*)	*t*	*df*	*p-value*
Gender		-2.870*	119	.005
Male	13.38 (3.42)			
Female	15.56 (4.03)			
Age (years)		-.565	119	.573
13-15	14.73 (4.25)			
16-18	15.15 (3.50)			
Family income (Baht/month)		1.028	92	.307
< 10,000	15.19 (3.75)			
≥ 10,000	14.32 (4.46)			
Duration of being a single family (years)		1.233	119	.220
0-10 years	15.20 (4.22)			
> 10 years	14.24 (3.29)			
Child's age at the onset of single-parent status (years)		-.580	119	.152
0 - 12 years	14.70 (3.98)			
13 - 18 years	16.27 (3.69)			

It should be noted that a notable proportion of participants (19.83%) did not provide information regarding family income. This missing data may limit the certainty of findings related to the association between family income and loneliness, particularly in the couple-parent family group where income was found to be a significant factor.

For adolescents living in couple-parent families, a significant difference in mean loneliness scores was observed based on family income (*p-value* < .05) (Table 5).

Table 5 Comparison of loneliness among demographics data of adolescents living in couple-parent families (n = 121)

Demographic data	*M* (*SD*)	*t*	df	p-value
Gender		-.948	119	.345
Male	13.35 (4.33)			
Female	14.07 (4.04)			
Age (years)		1.482	119	.141
13 - 15	14.25 (4.36)			
16 - 18	13.13 (3.90)			
Family income (Baht/month)		2.001	98	.048
< 10,000	14.44 (3.90)			
≥ 10,000	12.80 (4.19)			

A noteworthy finding emerged regarding the differential patterns of associations between personal factors and loneliness across family structures. Specifically, gender was significantly associated with loneliness only in the single-parent family group, whereas family income was a

significant factor only in the couple-parent family group. This suggests that different mechanisms may underlie loneliness experiences depending on family structure.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that adolescents from single-parent families experience significantly higher levels of loneliness compared to those from couple-parent families. This difference may stem from the increased likelihood of limited communication within separated families, which can lead adolescents to feel isolated and unsupported. According to Heshmati, Blackard, Beckmann, Chipidza (2021), adolescents living in families with high-quality relationships report lower levels of loneliness. Similarly, Praizendorf, Lubimova, Kumina (2020) describe loneliness as a mental state characterized by feelings of separation, along with a lack of adequate acceptance, recognition, and emotional response from others. Adolescents with closer parental relationships experience fewer severe mental health symptoms and report lower levels of loneliness (Cooper, Hards, Moltrecht, Reynolds, Shum, McElroy et al. 2021).

These findings align with Perlman and Peplau's (1981) Social Psychological Theory of Loneliness, which posits that loneliness arises from a discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships. The higher loneliness observed among adolescents in single-parent families may reflect a gap between their relationship expectations which may be shaped by cultural norms emphasizing close family bonds and the actual availability of parental time and emotional resources in single-parent households. The demands of children from sole-parent families, including financial responsibilities and household management, may limit the capacity of single parents to fulfill adolescents' social and emotional needs to the same extent as couple-parent families.

Among adolescents in single-parent, families, significant differences in loneliness were observed based on gender. Female adolescents reported higher levels of loneliness compared to males. This difference may be attributed to females' greater emotional sensitivity and a tendency toward overthinking, which can lead to heightened emotional insecurity. Additionally, 88.60% of children from single-parent families experienced the onset of single-parent status. at a young age (0–12 years), and most (68.40%) had lived in single-parent families for a duration of 0–10 years. These findings suggest that the timing and duration of single-parent status may contribute to the level of loneliness experienced by adolescents. Contrary to some previous findings suggesting that males experience higher loneliness levels (Chanatsirikul, Santirat, 2020), this study found that within single-parent families, females reported significantly higher loneliness than males. This gender difference may be context-specific to single-parent family structures. Adolescent females may have higher expectations for emotional intimacy and communication with parents, and when a parent is absent particularly in mother-only households where fathers are absent female adolescents may experience a greater sense of unmet emotional needs. Additionally, cultural expectations in Thai society regarding female roles in family relationships may intensify these feelings when family structure changes.

For adolescents in couple-parent families, family income was a significant factor influencing loneliness levels. Adolescents from higher-income families reported lower levels of loneliness

compared to those from lower-income families. This disparity may be explained by the increased financial insecurity experienced by lower-income families, which can lead to insufficient financial support for basic necessities. Economic instability and uncertainty regarding social status may strain familial relationships and contribute to feelings of isolation. In contrast, higher-income families are less likely to face such challenges, leading to more stable relationshipsand lower levels of loneliness.

The demographic profile of participants provides further context for these findings. Female adolescents comprised the majority of the sample (62.40%), while 58.26% of participants were early adolescents. Additionally, 46.28% of families reported a monthly income of less than 10,000 baht, and 40.50% of parents worked as employees. The majority of children from single-parent families (88.60%) experienced parental separation at a young age, which may further compound feelings of loneliness in this group.

Implications of the Results

1. School nurses and counselors should implement targeted screening and psychosocial support programs for adolescents from single-parent families who are at risk of loneliness.

2. Gender-sensitive interventions should be developed, particularly for female adolescents in single-parent families who demonstrated higher levels of loneliness.

3. Community health nurses and nursing educators should strengthen parenting support programs and promote family-centered care through nursing education and community-based interventions.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. Future studies should evaluate the effectiveness of school-based screening, counseling, and peer support interventions in reducing adolescent loneliness.

2. Further research should investigate gender differences and the psychosocial factors associated with loneliness among adolescents from different family structures.

3. Longitudinal and intervention studies should explore the effects of socioeconomic status, parenting support, and family relationships on adolescent mental health outcomes.

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