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The Madrid Loneliness Questionnaire (MLQ): Development and Validation in the Contemporary Sociocultural Context

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Poster

The Madrid Loneliness Questionnaire (MLQ): Development and Validation in the Contemporary Sociocultural Context

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Abstract

Background: Loneliness has become a pressing issue in contemporary societies, particularly in urban settings where social transformations have redefined interpersonal relationships. Beyond its psychological distress, loneliness has been associated with significant health risks, including increased morbidity and mortality. Given rapid technological advancements, economic fluctuations, pandemics, and shifts in relationship dynamics, existing loneliness measures may not fully capture the nuances of the experience in modern contexts. This study presents the development and validation of the Madrid Loneliness Questionnaire (MLQ), designed to assess loneliness across adulthood and in alignment with contemporary sociocultural realities. Methods: The study utilized a general population sample comprising 1,526 participants aged 18 to 87 years (77.06% women). To assess structural validity, the sample was divided into two subsamples: one for exploratory factor analysis (EFA, n=623) and another for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA, n=903). Measurement invariance across gender was tested using multigroup CFA. Convergent validity was examined through correlational analyses with scores on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and self-esteem measures. Internal consistency was evaluated via Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω coefficients. Results: The EFA and CFA supported a three-factor structure with excellent model fit indices (GFI=0.986; SRMR=0.05). The identified factors were Social Skills, Partner Relationships, and Emotional Isolation. Multigroup CFA confirmed configural, metric, and scalar invariance across gender, underscoring the scale's applicability in both male and female populations. The PSS showed significant positive correlations with the MLQ and its subscales, particularly moderate associations with the Withdrawal, Isolation, and Total Loneliness scores, while the Partner Relationships subscale showed weaker associations. Furthermore, negative correlations with self-esteem (Rho= -0.36 to -0.63) provided additional evidence of construct validity. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's α=0.93, McDonald's ω=0.92). Conclusions: The MLQ emerges as a psychometrically robust instrument for assessing loneliness in the general population. Its demonstrated measurement invariance supports its use across gender groups, reinforcing its generalizability. The scale holds potential for further applications in diverse populations, including clinical cohorts and older adults. Future research should investigate the MLQ's incremental validity and predictive capacity for mental health outcomes, strengthening its role in prevention and intervention strategies targeting loneliness.

Keywords

loneliness, questionnaire, psychometrics, factor analysis

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