Journal Website

Article history:
Received 04 August 2026
Revised 08 November 2026
Accepted 16 November 2026
Initial Publication 17 November 2026
Final Publication 01 November 2027

Psychology of Woman Journal

Open peer-review report

E-ISSN: 3041-8615

Loneliness Among Women in Emerging Adulthood: The Roles of Relational Expectations, Social Comparison, and Perceived Belonging

Nahid. Yousefpour[1*]

[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

*** Corresponding author email address**: nahidyousefpour97@pnu.ac.ir

Editor	Reviewers
Hussein OMAR Alkhozahe Professor, Department of Sociology, Al-Balqa' Applied University, Salt, Jordan huss1960@bau.edu.com	**Reviewer 1:** Nadereh Saadati Department of Couple and Family therapy, Alliant International University, California, United States of America. mdaneshpour@alliant.edu **Reviewer 2:** Farideh Dokanehi Fard Associate Professor, Counseling Department, Roudehen Branch, Islamic Azad University, Roudehen, Iran. Email: f.dokaneifard@riau.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph discussing university and young adult samples, the sentence “Loneliness has also been associated with maladaptive patterns of digital engagement” is relevant but currently somewhat detached from the study’s actual predictor set. The authors should explicitly connect digital environments to social comparison by explaining that curated social media content can intensify upward comparison concerning romantic relationships, friendship networks, appearance, educational progress, and lifestyle. This would create a clearer theoretical bridge between prior literature and the inclusion of social comparison in the present model.

In the paragraph beginning “The experience of loneliness among women requires particular attention,” the discussion of gender is conceptually sound, but the manuscript should avoid implying that women are necessarily more lonely than men. The cited literature itself emphasizes the complexity and context-dependence of gender effects. The authors should revise this section to state that the study focuses on women not because loneliness is presumed to be categorically higher among women, but because relational expectations, stigma, disclosure norms, and perceived belonging may operate through gendered social processes.

In the paragraph on the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure, the manuscript states that it “assesses individual differences in the tendency to compare one's opinions, abilities, achievements, experiences, and social circumstances with those

of other people." This section should identify the number of items and whether the full INCOM or an abbreviated version was used. Because social comparison can differ by domain and direction, the authors should also acknowledge that this instrument primarily assesses comparison orientation rather than specifically upward or downward social comparison, which limits the interpretation of the positive regression coefficient.

In the paragraph describing the General Belongingness Scale, the authors should provide more complete psychometric information. The sentence "The instrument encompasses both positive experiences of belonging and experiences reflecting rejection, exclusion, or lack of social fit" suggests multidimensional content, yet only a total score was analyzed. The authors should clarify whether the scale has theoretically or empirically distinct acceptance/inclusion and rejection/exclusion components, and justify the use of a total score rather than subscale scores.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph defining relational expectations, the sentence "Relational expectations refer to the standards individuals hold regarding how close relationships should function" requires stronger operational alignment with the instrument used in the Methods. The manuscript refers to "a relational expectations questionnaire," but does not identify a specific validated scale, its developer, number of items, response range, scoring procedure, or prior psychometric evidence. This is a major methodological issue. The authors must clearly identify the exact instrument or, if it was researcher-developed, provide item-generation procedures, expert review, pilot testing, construct validity, and reliability evidence.

In the Methods section under Study Design and Participants, the sentence "A total of 384 women were included in the final sample" should be accompanied by a transparent sample-size justification. The manuscript should specify whether 384 was determined through Cochran's formula, power analysis, regression-based sample-size estimation, or another method. Because the primary inferential analysis was multiple regression with three predictors, a priori power analysis based on expected effect size, alpha, desired statistical power, and number of predictors would provide a stronger methodological justification.

In the same Methods paragraph, the description of "a multistage sampling procedure from universities, educational and vocational centers, cultural centers, and community-based settings" needs substantially greater procedural detail. The authors should identify how many districts and centers were selected, the method used at each stage, whether centers were randomly selected, how participants within centers were approached, and how many women declined participation. Without this information, the sampling method cannot be replicated and may more accurately reflect multistage convenience sampling than probability-based multistage sampling.

In the participant eligibility description, the sentence "Eligibility criteria included being female, being between 18 and 29 years of age, residing in Tabriz for at least one year..." is clear, but the exclusion criteria include the vague phrase "reported circumstances that prevented reliable completion of the study measures." This should be operationalized. The manuscript should specify whether this refers to severe psychiatric symptoms, cognitive impairment, acute distress, language limitations, or other predefined conditions, and explain how such circumstances were assessed.

In the Methods section, the ethical statement is incomplete for a manuscript reporting human-subject research. The sentence "Ethical principles concerning voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, and protection of participants' personal information were observed" should be supplemented with the name of the approving ethics committee or institutional review board, the formal ethics approval code, the date of approval where required by the journal, and a statement that the study complied with applicable ethical standards. If formal approval was not obtained, this must be transparently explained.

In the Data Collection Tools section, the description of the UCLA Loneliness Scale should specify the exact version used. The manuscript currently refers generically to "the UCLA Loneliness Scale," but multiple versions exist. The authors should report the developer, number of items, Likert response format, total score range, interpretation of higher scores, any reverse-scored items, and evidence supporting the validity and reliability of the Persian version used in the Iranian population.

PWJ
Psychology of Woman Journal
E-ISSN: 3041-8615

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.

PWJ
Psychology of Woman Journal
E-ISSN: 3041-8615