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# Reliability and validity of the Danish version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale

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**Abstract**

The objective of this study was to examine the psychometric properties of a Danish version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLA). The 20-item scale was completed along with other measures in a national youth probability sample of 379 8th grade students aged 13–17. The scale showed high internal consistency, and correlations between UCLA and measures of emotional loneliness, social loneliness, self-esteem, depression, extraversion, and neuroticism supported the convergent and discriminant validity of the scale. Exploratory factor analysis supported a unidimensional structure of the measure. The results, highly comparable to the original version of the scale, indicate that the Danish version of UCLA is a reliable and valid measure of loneliness.
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## 1. Introduction

Loneliness is a serious problem among adolescence (Jones & Carver, 1991; West, Kellner, & Morre-West, 1986) and has been associated with low self-esteem (Brage, Meredith, & Woodward, 1993; Schultz & Moore, 1988), depression (Koenig, Isaacs, & Schwartz, 1994; Lau, Chan, & Lau, 1999), anxiety (Johnson, LaVoie, Spenceri, & Mahoney-Wernli, 2001; Moore & Schultz, 1983),

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anorexia nervosa (Troop & Bifulco, 2002), and suicide ideation and behaviour (Garnefski, Diekstra, & de Heus, 1992; Roberts, Roberts, & Chen, 1998). However, very little research in loneliness has been done in adolescent populations in Denmark, which may be due to the lack of validated versions of well-established measures. The present article examines a Danish version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLA) (Russell, 1996); the most widely used self-report scale for measuring loneliness in adolescent and adult populations (Hartshorne, 1993; Russell, 1996). The original scale (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978), based on statements used by individuals to describe feelings of loneliness, suffered from methodological weaknesses. However, the scale was revised in a second version (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), and a third version (Russell, 1996). The two revised scales are easy to administer and have satisfactory psychometric properties, including high internal consistency, typically $\alpha \geqslant .89$ in adolescent populations (e.g. Koenig et al., 1994; Mahon, Yarcheski, & Yarcheski, 2004), and good test-retest reliability (e.g. Hartshorne, 1993; Russell, 1996). Moreover, Russell (1996) and Russell et al. (1980) have reported evidence of convergent validity, indicated by strong correlations between UCLA and other measures of loneliness, and discriminate validity, e.g. supported by confirmatory factor analysis indicating that UCLA and measures of social support define distinct factors.

The developers of UCLA consider the scale to be a unidimensional measure of loneliness (Russell, 1996). However, exploratory factor analyses of the Revised UCLA (second version) have yielded a number of different structures, on which basis researchers have argued that the scale comprises one (Pretoirus, 1993), two (e.g. Knight, Chisholm, Marsh, & Godfrey, 1988; Mahon, Yarcheski, & Yarcheski, 1995), three (e.g. Austin, 1983; McWhirter, 1990), four (Hojat, 1982) or five (e.g. Hojat, 1982; Neto, 1992) factors. As stressed by Russell (1996), some of the derived factors reflect the direction of items, indicating that ratings are affected by acquiescence or other similar response styles. Moreover, confirmatory analyses have supported the unidimensionality of the scale (Hartshorne, 1993; Russell, 1996). Evidently, the factorial structure of UCLA remains rather controversial.

UCLA has been used and validated in many different countries, including Argentina (Sacchi & Richaud de Minzi, 1997), Canada (de Grâce, Joshi, & Pelletier, 1993), Germany (Döring & Bortz, 1993), Greece (Anderson & Malikiosi-Loizos, 1992), Iran (Hojat, 1982), Portugal (Neto, 1992), Russia (Ruchkin, Eisemann, and Hägglof, 1999), South Africa (Pretoirus, 1993), Turkey (Uruk & Demir, 2003), and Zimbabwe (Wilson, Cutts, Lees, Mapungwana, & Maunganidze, 1992). All studies found the adapted scale a sufficient measure of loneliness.

The goal of this study was to standardize a Danish measure of loneliness. To do so, we aimed to examine the validity and reliability of a Danish version of UCLA in a representative adolescent population by testing the internal consistency, the convergent and discriminant validity, and the factorial structure of the scale.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Subjects

The data in this study were collected from a questionnaire survey with a national probability sample of 379 youngsters aged 13–17 ($M = 14.1$ years, $SD = 0.4$). The sample was geographically stratified and 39 randomly selected schools that taught 8th grade students were approached with

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