

## **A Case Study on Friendship, Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction among Preschool Children**

**Suresh Kumar N. Vellymalay**

*School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia*

### **ABSTRACT**

This study was designed to identify the relationship between number of best friends and the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among the children in preschool. Thirty-six children of a private preschool were interviewed based on structured interview using interview schedule to gather information regarding their self reported feelings on loneliness and social dissatisfaction at their preschool. In-depth interviews was also conducted to elicit information from the children and the teachers regarding the children's best friends, socialization at school and the feelings of loneliness. Findings suggest that a considerable number of children experience feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction at preschool. However, the study did not find any significant relationship between children's number of best friends and the self reported feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction.

*Keywords:* Friendship, loneliness, preschool, social dissatisfaction

### **INTRODUCTION**

Friendship creates a platform of socialization and social interaction among individuals. For children, apart from the early socialization either within one's family, relatives or a small community around them where they live, the development of social interactions among peers is much stronger in school.

Friendship encourages social interactions and counteracts the feelings of loneliness for many children; but it is totally reverse in the case of friendless children (Page & Scanlan, 1994). A child's ability to form a satisfactory relationship with his peer group at school heightens the level of social satisfaction he has; and vice versa.

However, many students are lonely and they have difficulty in developing peer relationships (Asher *et al.*, 1984). Children who are unable to develop peer relationship often feel isolated and they fail to initiate interaction with other children in their

#### **ARTICLE INFO**

*Article history:*

Received: 30 May 2011

Accepted: 29 September 2012

*E-mail address:*

[suresh@usm.my](mailto:suresh@usm.my) (Suresh Kumar N. Vellymalay),

\* Corresponding author

classroom. Lack of social skills and the confidence in developing social interactions is one of the main factors of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. Children who have fewer or no friends at all experience loneliness and social dissatisfaction in relations with their peers at school.

In earlier years, research on loneliness was not seen as an area of inquiry since it was embedded by the belief that children do not experience feelings of loneliness (Bullock, 1993). Only in the 80's did researchers show an increased interest in the phenomenon of loneliness in children (Asher *et al.*, 1984; Asher & Wheeler, 1985; Moore & Schultz, 1983) and this interest continued to develop more in 90's (Cassidy & Asher, 1992; Galanaki & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1999; Margalit, 1998; Margalit & Efrati, 1996; Page *et al.*, 1992; Parker & Asher, 1993; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992; Quay, 1992; Sanderson & Seagal, 1995) To date, more studies have focused on this area of research (Bakkaloglu, 2010; Han & Choi, 2006; Jobe & White, 2007; Yu *et al.*, 2005). These researchers attempt to explain loneliness and social dissatisfaction from various scopes i.e. social relationship which focuses on friendship, peer interaction and peer rejection (Asher *et al.*, 1984; Asher & Wheeler, 1985; Bullock, 1993; Cassidy & Asher, 1992; Galanaki & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1999; Han & Choi, 2006; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992; Sanderson & Seagal, 1995) besides the importance given to education achievement (Bakkaloglu, 2010), physical fitness (Page *et al.*, 1992) and learning

disabilities (Jobe & White, 2007; Yu *et al.*, 2005; Margalit, 1998; Margalit & Efrati, 1996; Pavri & Monda-Amaya, 2000), family effects (Quay, 1992) and the emotional characteristic in siblings of children with cancer (Hamama, *et al.*, 2000).

In accordance to the description above, several studies have attempted to explain further on the relationship between friendship and the feelings of loneliness. For example, Page *et al.* (1992) in their study on 601 grade one to grade six children of two elementary schools found children who are lonely unable to interact and function effectively in groups due to their lacking in social skills. Another study by Cheng & Furnham (2002) on ninety adolescence aged sixteen to eighteen years in three schools in UK found that lack of self-esteem and self-concept in the form of confidence among the adolescence was the main source of intimate aspect of loneliness. Furthermore, their study also indicated that lack of the confidence among the adolescence in social interactions was the main source of intimate and social aspect of loneliness. Chen *et al.* (2004) examine loneliness and social adaptation among 2263 children from grade three to grade six, aged nine to twelve years in Brazil, Canada, China and Italy found that sociability was positively associated with peer relationships due to their social participation. Asher *et al.* (1984) examined the relationship between number of best friends and loneliness for third through sixth grade (9-12 years) children. They found that as the number of best friends decreased,

the feelings of loneliness increased. A study by Moore & Schultz (1983) on high school children ranging in age from 14-19 years indicated that those children who were identified as lonely were less willing to take risks in interaction. They seem to have difficulty in initiating communication with others. It is important to note here that children who have fewer friends at school have reported more feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction.

Research on loneliness among children has also focused on the issue of peer acceptance and peer rejection (Asher & Paquette, 2003). Qualter & Munn (2002) examine the relationship between social isolation and emotional loneliness on 640 children aged four to nine years. The results showed that 60 children who were socially isolated but not lonely, 145 children who felt lonely but not socially isolated, 61 children who were rejected and lonely, and another 374 children were neither lonely nor rejected. They found that loneliness has a direct influence over the withdrawn behavior among children rather than peer rejection. Sanderson & Seagal (1995) in their study on 4-5 year old children who were either attending preschool or day care also found that children who were rejected by their peers are lonelier than neglected children. Cassidy & Asher (1992) in their study on kindergarten and first grade classroom (5-7 years) pointed out that children who were rejected by their peers are lonelier than the average children, neglected children and the popular ones. Besides the studies discussed

above, Asher *et al.* (1984) also found that the unpopular children in third through sixth grade classrooms (9-12 years) are likely to have more feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction than the popular ones.

Similar to Sanderson & Seagal (1995), Cassidy & Asher (1992) and Asher's *et al.* (1984), Asher & Wheeler's (1985) study on third through sixth grade children (9-12 years) in elementary school also indicated that rejected children reported extreme feelings of loneliness than the matched groups in the study. In another major study, Parkhurst & Asher (1992) had examined the relationship between children's sociometric status and their feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among seventh and eighth-grade middle school children aged 13-14 years. Their study showed that the subgroup of rejected children reported more loneliness and social dissatisfaction than the matched groups. Therefore, it is clear that children who were rejected by their peers reported greater feelings of loneliness (Asher *et al.*, 1984; Asher & Wheeler, 1985; Cassidy & Asher, 1992; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992; Sanderson & Seagal, 1995). In addition, Coplan *et al.* (2007), in their study of 139 kindergarten children in fourteen public schools indicated that loneliness was positively correlated to anxiety, aggression and peer exclusion. The study also suggests gender differences in behavioral associates of loneliness among the children. Kirova (2003) in her study of seventy-five children from kindergarten to grade six in a school examined children's

experiences of loneliness by initiating conversation with them. She indicated that loneliness in children separates the children from their lived space, body, others and also their lived time.

However, in short, previous studies found that loneliness and social dissatisfaction among children at school is associated with the number of friends that the children have at school. Lack of social skills and confidence in children affects the children's ability to initiate friendships and form social interactions among them. Furthermore, various other factors such as anxiety, aggression, peer exclusion, limited social participation and withdrawn behavior at school also lead to the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among children.

In recent times, studies have noted an increased interest in the phenomenon of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among children. Although extensive research has been carried out on loneliness and social dissatisfaction, the number of research which focused on children at preschools remains unsatisfactory. In the context of Malaysia, ample research has been done on preschool and children's education. However, the academic interest and research based studies on children's loneliness and social dissatisfaction is still new and it is insufficient to explain the impact of loneliness and social dissatisfaction on a child's educational success. Therefore, the current study adds to the present corpus of knowledge of loneliness and social

dissatisfaction among the preschoolers in the context of Malaysian studies.

The study on loneliness and social dissatisfaction among preschool children is very important due to several reasons. First, children's loneliness and social dissatisfaction in the early years of childhood could lead to serious problems later in life in terms of interaction, socialization, adjustment and adaptation. Second, research on loneliness and social dissatisfaction is needed to understand its cause and effect in order to develop various classroom practices to encourage social interaction towards forming sustainable peer relationships. Finally, it is also important to study loneliness and dissatisfaction among preschool children since little is known about this phenomenon. Thus, this research will serve as a base for future studies in analyzing loneliness and social dissatisfaction in children.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

In accordance with the description above, the objective of this research is to explain the existence of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among children in preschool. There are two main questions addressed in this research. First, what is the level of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among the children in preschool; and second, to what extent does the number of best friends at preschool affect loneliness and social dissatisfaction among these children?

## RESEARCH METHODS

The current study adopted the deductive strategy which is in nature to test on previous research findings. Using this strategy, data were gathered from the sample of the study and necessary analysis was conducted from the gathered data. In reference to the previous research findings, conclusion was made and it is tested and compared to those previous research findings in order to identify the logical reasoning and the relationship that exist between them.

### *Sample*

The sample of this study was drawn from a private preschool in Taiping located in the state of Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia. There are forty-two children in the preschool. However, only thirty-six children participated in this study due to repeated school absences. As such six of the forty-two children could not participate in the study. The total of thirty-six children comprised children from lower kindergarten which usually caters to children aged 3-5 years and also the upper kindergarten which caters to children aged 6 years. Of these thirty-six children, 20 children were 4-5 years old. The other 16 children were 6 years old. The preschool consists of children from two main ethnic groups, the Indians and the Malays.

### *Procedure*

The study was conducted in July 2009. The teachers were informed of the study prior the research. . The researcher visited the preschool several times in the morning

before the classroom activities resumed. The researcher formed friendly interaction with the children during their recess. The role of a researcher as a friend is highly important to the development of trust and the relationship between the children and the researcher (Fine & Sandstorm, 1988). It needs to be emphasized that this is a crucial role because without establishing trust, it would be extremely difficult to conduct interviews with younger children. First, the children may not be familiar with the form of interaction and second, they may not have experience conversing with others besides their teachers at school (Grave & Walsh, 1998).

In the middle of July, written consent was obtained from the parents through the class teachers. All the parents had permitted their children to participate in this study. At the end of July, structured interviews were conducted where the children were interviewed individually in a classroom set for the purpose of the interview. Before the interview the children were asked if they were willing to participate. They were told that they need not participate if they did not want to. All thirty six children who were present during this study agreed to participate. Children were assured of the confidentiality of the interview. The children were interviewed by the researcher himself. Each structured interview took about 20 minutes.

There were two different ethnic groups in the sample. They were the Indians and the Malays. The researcher had to translate the questions in the questionnaire verbally

according to their spoken language at home. For the Indian children, the medium of instruction used was Tamil language as English was not their native language. The Malay language was used with the Malay children. This helped the children to understand the questions in the instrument used for the interview. However, as the researcher was fluent in both languages, it was relatively easy for the researcher to enhance the children's understanding of the questions being asked during the interview sessions.

Besides the structured interviews, in-depth interviews were scheduled in order to elicit information from the children and the teachers regarding the children's best friends, socialization at school and their feelings of loneliness. During the structured interviews, all the children were asked about the number of best friends they have, based on six categories of best friends (no best friend, one friend, two friends, three friends, four friends, five friends and above). The children were asked to name their best friends according to how much they liked to play with them at school. The numbers of best friends were calculated based on the information received from each child. From the total of 36 children who participated in this study, twelve children were chosen randomly which comprised of two children from each category of best friends who were then interviewed. Moreover, an interview was also conducted with two teachers at the preschool to gather information from them regarding their observations of the

children's friendship, interactions and feelings of loneliness at school.

### *Measures*

As for the structured interview, questions in an interview form were developed to assess loneliness and social dissatisfaction among children in preschool. The questionnaire was formatted into two different sections. The first section of the questionnaire contained six items on the children's background. This section required information on the children's gender, religion, age, educational status, parent's background, and the number of best friends they have at their preschool. The first five questions on gender, religion, age, educational status, parent's background were taken from the teacher's records. The information on the number of best friends was gathered from the sample. However, since the purpose of this paper is to explain the level of loneliness and social dissatisfaction; and the relationship between friendship and loneliness and social dissatisfaction among the children in preschool, this paper only focuses on the number of best friends as the only variable being tested in the line of few independent variables stated above.

The second section of the questionnaire was an adapted version of Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire. The original 24-item Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Questionnaire designed by Asher *et al.* (1984), as modified by Cassidy & Asher (1992) was used in the present study. Of the 24 items of Asher *et al.* (1984)

one item was omitted in the modified version of Cassidy & Asher (1992). The new version of the questionnaire contained 15 principle items and 8 filler items (see Table 1). These items consisted of questions on loneliness and also social dissatisfaction.

For each item, children responded to each question by answering either yes, sometimes, or no. Children's response to 'yes' was coded as '1', 'sometimes' was coded as '2' and 'no' was coded as '3'. Children's response was coded from 'yes' to 'no' such that 'no' indicated greater loneliness or social dissatisfaction. For items 6, 9, 12, 17 and 20 the response order was reversed. The 15-item scale was internally

consistent. All the information gathered from the questionnaire was analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5. The Cronbach's alpha measure was 0.88 which indicates that the measure of loneliness and social dissatisfaction was reliable.

## FINDINGS

In this section, three sets of analysis were presented. The first set of analysis examined the children's percentage distribution on the number of best friends at preschool while in the second, the percentage distribution of the children's responses to loneliness and social dissatisfaction were presented.

TABLE 1  
Questionnaire Items

Items
1. Is it easy for you to make new friends at school?
2. Do you like to read?
3. Do you have other kids to talk to at school?
4. Are you good at working with other kids at school?
5. Do you watch TV a lot?
6. Is it hard for you to make friends at school?*
7. Do you like school?
8. Do you have lots of friends at school?
9. Do you feel alone at school?*
10. Can you find a friend when you need one?
11. Do you play sports a lot?
12. Is it hard to get kids in school to like you?*
13. Do you like science?
14. Do you have kids to play with at school?
15. Do you like music?
16. Do you get along with other kids at school?
17. Do you feel left out of things at school?*
18. Are there kids you can go to when you need help in school?
19. Do you like to paint and draw?
20. Are you lonely at school?*
21. Do the kids at school like you?
22. Do you like playing card games?
23. Do you have friends at school?

Note: Items 2, 5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 19, 22 were filler items that focused on hobby or interest items.

\* Items for which response order was reversed.

Finally, correlation between the numbers of best friends the children had at their preschool and the responses of the children on loneliness and social dissatisfaction are examined.

Table 2 provides the results obtained from the preliminary analysis of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among the children at the preschool. As can be seen from the Table 2, 25.0% of the children had one best

friend, and 16.7% of the children had at least two best friends. The results also indicated that 19.4% of the children had three and four best friends respectively. Only 11.1% of the children had five best friends and above. Only 8.3% of the children reported that they had no best friend.

Table 3 presents the children’s responses to the questionnaire designed to assess the feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction

TABLE 2  
Percentage Distribution on Number of Best Friends at the Preschool

Number of best friends	Percentage (%)
None	8.3
One friend	25.0
Two friends	16.7
Three friends	19.4
Four friends	19.4
Five friends and above	11.1
Total	100.0

n = 36

TABLE 3  
Percentage Distribution of Children’s Responses to Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction

Items	Yes (%)	Sometimes (%)	No (%)
1. Is it easy for you to make new friends at school?	63.9	25.0	11.1
2. Do you have other kids to talk to at school?	66.7	27.8	5.6
3. Are you good at working with other kids at school?	63.9	27.8	8.3
4. Is it hard for you to make friends at school?*	38.9	16.7	44.4
5. Do you have lots of friends at school?	80.6	16.7	2.8
6. Do you feel alone at school?*	52.8	16.7	30.6
7. Can you find a friend when you need one?	58.3	33.3	8.3
8. Is it hard to get kids in school to like you?*	25.0	30.6	44.4
9. Do you have kids to play with at school?	75.0	19.4	5.6
10. Do you get along with other kids at school?	66.7	30.6	2.8
11. Do you feel left out of things at school?*	11.1	30.6	58.3
12. Are there kids you can go to when you need help in school?	66.7	27.8	5.6
13. Are you lonely at school?*	44.4	19.4	36.1
14. Do the kids at school like you?	77.8	19.4	2.8
15. Do you have friends at school?	86.1	13.9	0.0

n = 36

Note: Filler items are not listed in the table.

\* Items for which response order was reversed in scoring.

in their preschool environment. It shows the children's responses to each of the 15 principle items used in this study.

As shown in Table 3, 52.8% of children responded 'yes' to the question 'Do you feel alone at school?'. About 44.4% of children in this study responded 'yes' to the question 'Are you lonely at school?'. Furthermore, 38.9% of children were found to have difficulty in making friends in school and 25.0% of children were found to have difficulty in getting other children to like them. It can be seen from the Table 3 that 11.1% of children reported that it was not easy to make new friends at school. Moreover, 11.1% of the children also reported that they felt left out of things at school. These findings indicated that a sizable number of children in this study experienced loneliness and social dissatisfaction at the preschool.

In-depth interviews of children also justified the existence of this small number of children who felt lonely and dissatisfied at their school. In interviews, they expressed their doubts and feelings about their social interactions with friends. As one child who had more than five best friends stated:

*"Sometimes my friends make fun of me and my drawings. When they do that, I don't talk to them...It will never be long. Sometimes they like to play with other friends ...don't let me to join them. I will be left out watching them playing..."*

Another respondent, commenting on her dissatisfaction at school stated,

*"I don't have any best friend in my classroom...The friends who sits beside me always like to disturb me. I will tell my teacher then. I don't like to come to school... I prefer to stay with my grandmother at home."*

Table 4 provides the results of the correlation analysis between numbers of best friends the children had at preschool and the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. As shown in Table 4, it is interesting to note that in all 15 cases in this study, the observed relationship was not significant. It is apparent from Table 4 that the number of best friends the children had at preschool did not really influence the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among the children.

In-depth interviews with the children also gave a brief picture similar to the results of correlation analysis as shown in Table 4. The interviews supported previous findings that the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among preschool children existed not only among those who do not have best friends around them. The feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction also existed among those who were accompanied by a number of best friends.

In this case, as one respondent who responded to the question on why he felt alone at school, stated that:

*“Even if I have many best friends in school, I can’t stop thinking of my mother at home. At home we use to play and watch cartoon together. I have more time for these two things. I prefer to stay at home... Here, it is so boring...”*

*“We have to be very quiet in the classroom...I try not to talk to my friends...My teacher often punish us if we talk or play in the class...In group activities, we are always told not to talk but to concentrate on the work given every time”*

Looking into any children’s social and emotional development, teachers are responsible to inculcate good social skills into their children. The failure of the teachers to do so will cause a great impact on the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among the children. As one child put it:

Another respondent who was asked to explain about their cooperation during group activities in class expressed that sometimes things do not happen the way it should be. As he stated his dissatisfaction:

*“I lend my things to my best friends. But if I want any from them, they refuse to lend theirs. They also take*

TABLE 4  
Correlation between Numbers of Best Friends at Preschool and Children’s Responses to Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction

Items	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p - Value
1. Is it easy for you to make new friends at school?	-0.15	0.39
2. Do you have other kids to talk to at school?	-0.25	0.15
3. Are you good at working with other kids at school?	-0.26	0.13
4. Is it hard for you to make friends at school?*	-0.30	0.07
5. Do you have lots of friends at school?	-0.12	0.51
6. Do you feel alone at school?*	-0.04	0.81
7. Can you find a friend when you need one?	-0.20	0.25
8. Is it hard to get kids in school to like you?*	-0.06	0.74
9. Do you have kids to play with at school?	-0.02	0.93
10. Do you get along with other kids at school?	-0.12	0.49
11. Do you feel left out of things at school?*	-0.15	0.39
12. Are there kids you can go to when you need help in school?	-0.28	0.10
13. Are you lonely at school?*	-0.17	0.31
14. Do the kids at school like you?	-0.13	0.45
15. Do you have friends at school?	-0.13	0.44

n = 36

Note: Filler items are not listed in the table.

\* Items for which response order was reversed in scoring.

The negative sign in the value of Correlation Coefficient was due to response order ‘yes’ to ‘no’ such that ‘no’ indicates greater feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction.

*my things...not telling me. If I tell this to teacher ... I will be punished as well. I'm afraid... so I have to keep quiet. I don't want to friend them!"*

The results from the in-depth interview of the class teachers also supported the interview of the children described above. Interviews of teachers suggested that some children felt isolated when they were in the classroom. However, they rejected the idea that the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction were influenced by the number of best friends. As one teacher stated:

*"Some students are extremely quiet. They don't have so called best friends and they don't talk much. But they are very obedient and cooperative in learning. They participate well in activities handled in the classroom. On the other hand, there are also those who have several best friends around them yet they are not cooperative enough. They often feel dissatisfied because of peer rejection."*

## DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis of this study showed that in four negatively stated items, the percentage of loneliness and social dissatisfaction reported by the children was between 25.0% and 53.0%. The two most interesting findings of these four items were 'Do you feel alone at school?' and

'Are you lonely at school?' These two items were rated 52.8% and 44.4% respectively on self reported feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. The other two items (e.g., 'Is it hard for you to make friends at school?' and 'Is it hard to get kids in school to like you?') were rated 38.9% and 25.0% respectively on self reported feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. The percentages for other items in this study were not high. It was rated at a minimum of 2.8% to a maximum of 13.9%. This result indicated that even though the percentages of children who experienced loneliness and social dissatisfaction were not high but it justified the existence of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among children at the preschool to a certain extent. This study produced results which corroborate the findings of Asher *et al.* (1984) and Cassidy & Asher (1992) that a considerable number of children expressed their feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction at school in most of the questions that had been asked to them during the interview session. The percentages for loneliness and social dissatisfaction for the four negatively stated items were unexpected. These items have shown a high percentage of loneliness and social dissatisfaction than those reported by Asher *et al.* (1984) and Cassidy & Asher (1992). A possible explanation for this might be that the study was focused on a private preschool where the teachers in private school may not be well trained in various aspects of education such as the pedagogy, classroom teaching and children's learning outcomes as those teachers in

public preschools. Thus, the teachers in the current study may not have a polished skill in handling the classroom as those teachers in the public preschools who attend more trainings and courses.

In contrast, the current study did not find any significant relationship between number of best friends that the children have at preschool and the responses of the children on loneliness and social dissatisfaction. Surprisingly, the findings showed that loneliness and social dissatisfaction among children in the preschool was not influenced by the number of best friends that the children have at their preschool. Thus, the findings of the current study do not support the previous research of Asher *et al.* (1984) and Pavri & Monda-Amaya (2000) who found that loneliness and social dissatisfaction somewhat greater among the children with fewer friends.

The reason as to why loneliness and social dissatisfaction among children in this study was not influenced by the number of best friends that the children have at their preschool is not clear. However, a possible explanation for this might be that having best friends to a child doesn't mean that the child had been accepted by the friends in their classroom on all occasions. In accordance to that, children's emotional development needs to be considered especially when it comes to classroom activities in which they are involved in. During these activities, children could face criticism raised by their own best friends. The competition that exists among children during their activities (such as reading, writing, coloring, and painting)

could cause a child to criticize another. These criticisms affect a child emotionally and cause dissatisfaction towards their best friends, and this could lead to peer rejection. Hence, it is not surprising that the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction are often accompanied by peer rejection (Asher *et al.*, 1990 as cited in Cassidy & Asher, 1992).

Another possible explanation for this is that the teacher's application of teaching and learning in the classroom and the co-curriculum activities held outside the classroom does not provide the children enough skills to enhance a good cooperation and social interaction among them especially with their best friends. From the interview conducted with the class teachers it is noted that the class teachers were quite strict with the children in order to control their class, and to discipline them. In accordance to that, the children's involvement in various activities such as reading, writing, coloring, and painting and even during their physical education could produce a negative impact in forming a reliable social interaction among them due to the strictness of their teachers. The strictness shown by the teachers especially during their lessons in order to control and to discipline their children does not provide a healthy environment for the children either to interact well or to help each other in the classroom. In fact, it teaches them to be more individual rather than to be cooperative in groups. Thus, the curriculum and co-curriculum which focuses on group activities should be seen as a platform for the children to interact

and adapt well with each other. It may encourage greater social interaction among them and if this is the case, then there is a high probability that feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction can be alleviated among children at the preschool.

The findings in this study are subject to at least three limitations. First, the number of children studied was relatively small. With a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not represent the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among all the preschoolers in the country. Second, the current study has only examined loneliness and social dissatisfaction among children in a private preschool. The public preschools were not taken into consideration in this study. Third, the present study only evaluated the children's self reported feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. The attitude and behavior of children who experience feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction were not observed by the researcher.

## CONCLUSION

The study examined the relation of loneliness and social dissatisfaction in preschool with number of best friends that the children have. However, the findings showed that the relationship was not significant. The current study justifies that there are some other factors that influence the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among the preschoolers. More information on these factors would help us to establish a better understanding on this matter.

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have several implications. The evidence of this study suggests that teachers play an important role as a source of dependency of their child at school. As such, they should identify interesting ways of participation to help their children to socialize with other children in class room activities. They should provide more attachment to their child concerning educational activities. This helps the child to gain the trust of their teachers without any fear of being punished. Furthermore, teachers also need to identify their strength and weaknesses in their teaching and learning strategies at classroom so that it could develop more sense on peer interaction and socialization among the children. It also enables the teachers to provide more assistance to their children whenever it is needed. In addition, school also needs to develop a program on social skills to help the children who are lonely. These children need to be identified, encouraged and motivated to engage in many forms of participation in class room activities in order for their social skills to be sharpened.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among preschool children is interesting and can be usefully explored in further research. The present study focuses only on the number of best friends and its relationship with loneliness and social dissatisfaction. Considerably more work will need to be done to explore how the

friendship is formed among the popular children than the neglected ones and it would be interesting to assess the effects of friendship on these children by looking into its influence on loneliness and social dissatisfaction. Further research might also explore the children's self-concept and self-esteem; and its relationship with loneliness and social dissatisfaction among preschool children. Research is also needed to determine the extent to which the activities that the preschool children are involved in help them to cope with the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. A further study also needs to be done to identify other factors that influence the feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction among the preschoolers.

## REFERENCES

- Asher, S., Hymel, S., & Renshaw, P. (1984). Loneliness in Children. *Child Development*, 55, 1456-1464.
- Asher, S., & Wheeler, V. (1985). Children's loneliness: A comparison of rejected and neglected peer status. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 53, 500-505.
- Asher, S. R., & Paquette, J.A. (2003). Loneliness and peer relations in childhood. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(3), 75-78.
- Bakkaloglu, H. (2010). A comparison of the loneliness levels of mainstreamed primary students according to their sociometric status. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 330-336.
- Bullock, J. (1993). Children's loneliness and their peer relationships with family and peers. *Family Relations*, 42(1), 46-49.
- Cassidy, J., & Asher, S. (1992). Loneliness and peer relations in young children. *Child Development*, 63, 350-365.
- Chen, X., He, Y., De Olivera, A. M., Coco, A.L., Zappulla, C., Kasper, V., Schneider, B., Valdivia, I. A., Tse, H. C., & DeSouza, A. (2004). Loneliness and social adaptation in Brazilian, Canadian, Chinese, and Italian children: a multinational comparative study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45(8), 1373-1384.
- Cheng, H., & Furnham, A. (2002). Personality, peer relations and self-confidence as predictors of happiness and loneliness. *Journal of Adolescence*, 25(3), 327-339.
- Coplan, R. J., Closson, L. M., & Arbeau, K. A. (2007). Gender differences in the behavioral associates of loneliness and social dissatisfaction in kindergarten. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48(10), 988-995.
- Galanaki, E., & Kalantzi-Azizi, A. (1999). Loneliness and social dissatisfaction: Its relation with children's self-efficacy for peer interaction. *Child Study Journal*, 29(1), 1-28.
- Hamama, R., Ronnen, T., & Feigin, R. (2000). Self-control, anxiety and loneliness in siblings of children with cancer. *Social Work in Health Care*, 31(1), 63-83.
- Han, E., & Choi, N. (2006). Korean institutionalized adolescents' attributions of success and failure in interpersonal relations and perceived loneliness. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 28 (5), 535-547.
- Jobe, L., & White, S. (2007). Loneliness, social relationships, and a broader autism phenotype in college students. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42(8), 1479-1489.
- Kirova, A. (2003). Assessing children's experiences of loneliness through conversations. *Field Methods*, 15(1), 3-24.
- Margalit, M. (1998). Loneliness and coherence among preschool children with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 31(2), 173-180.

- Margalit, M., & Efrati, M. (1996). Loneliness, coherence and companionship among children with learning disorders. *Educational Psychology, 16*(1), 69-79.
- Moore, D., & Schultz, N. (1983). Loneliness at adolescence: Correlates, attributions, and coping. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 12*(2), 95-100.
- Page, R., Frey, J., Talbert, R., & Falk, C. (1992). Children's feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction: Relationship to measures of physical fitness and activity. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 11*, 211-219.
- Page, R., & Scanlan, A., (1994). Childhood loneliness and isolation: Implications and strategies for childhood educators. *Child Study Journal, 24*(2), 107. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Parker, J., & Asher, S. (1993). Friendship and friendship quality in middle school: Links with peer group acceptance and feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. *Developmental Psychology, 29*, 611-621.
- Parkhurst, J., & Asher, S. (1992) Peer rejection in middle school: Subgroup differences in behaviour, loneliness, and interpersonal concerns. *Developmental Psychology, 28*, 231-241.
- Pavri, S., & Monda-Amaya, L. (2000). Loneliness and students with learning disabilities in inclusive classroom: Self-perception, coping strategies, and preferred interventions. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 15*(1), 22-33.
- Qualter, P., & Munn, P. (2002). The separateness of social and emotional loneliness in childhood. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 43*(2), 233-244.
- Quay, L. (1992). Personal and family effects on loneliness. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 13* (1), 97-110.
- Sanderson, J., & Siegal, M. (1995). Loneliness and stable friendship in rejected and nonrejected preschoolers. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 16*(4), 555-567.
- Yu, G., Zhang, Y., & Yan, R. (2005). Loneliness, peer acceptance, and family functioning of Chinese children with learning disabilities: Characteristics and relationships. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*(3), 325-331.

