



BSc in Psychology
Department of Psychology

Alone and Angry: What is the Nature of the
Relationship Between Loneliness and Sexist
Attitudes in Men?

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the BSc Psychology degree, Reykjavik University, this thesis is presented in the style of an article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

I would like to start off by thanking my boyfriend, (and hopefully life partner) Vignir, for loving me even when I was grumpy and irritable while writing this thesis and for being my biggest cheerleader. Next, I would like to thank my advisor Áslaug for all the great chats, advice, counteracting my overthinking, and for driving me home in your Tesla when it was cold outside. I am as well very grateful that the Department of Psychology at Reykjavík University provided me with the kindness of an extended deadline. I would also like to thank Niels, for always making me feel smart and capable. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Natalia, for setting an excellent example of what a woman can be and achieve. Sexism and misogyny are still prevalent issues in the world today and it is scary out there for a woman. With lawmakers seeking to gain increased control over women's bodies and the platforming of misogynistic views and ideologies, the topic of this thesis is an especially important one.

Abstract

Loneliness is an experience that affects physical and mental well-being, making it a public health concern. In recent years there has been a rise in single, lonely, men. Some lonely men cope by seeking out support and community from a misogynistic hate group that call themselves ‘incels’. Subsequently, research has shown a connection between loneliness and misogyny in men. However, researchers have not properly explored the connection between loneliness and sexism. Consequently, the aim of the current study was to see if there was a positive correlation between sexism and loneliness. A total of 156 Icelandic, cisgender, male participants were recruited to take part in a survey. The survey included the UCLA Loneliness Scale (1996) along with the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (1996) to measure loneliness and sexism respectively. Both scales were translated into Icelandic. No significant relationship between loneliness and sexism was found, however age and hostile sexism had a small, negative, correlation. Limitations included a monolithic sample due to convenience sampling and the measure of sexism being outdated and out of touch with Icelandic society.

Keywords: *Loneliness, sexism, misogyny, Icelandic men*

Útdráttur

Einmannaleiki er upplifun sem hefur áhrif á líkamlega og andlega heilsu, sem gerir einmannaleika að lýðheilsuvandamáli. Á undanförunum árum hefur orðið aukning á einhleypum og einmanna karlmönnum. Sumir þessara karlmannna sækjast í stuðning og félagsskap frá kvennhaturshóp sem kalla sig ‘incels’. Í kjölfarið hafa rannsóknir sýnt fram á tengsl milli einmannaleika og kvenhaturs meðal karlmannna. Samt sem áður hafa rannsakendur ekki almennilega kannað tengslin á milli einmannaleika og karlrembu. Þar af leiðandi var markmið þessarar rannsóknar að sjá hvort jákvæð fylgni væri á milli karlrembu og einmannaleika. Í heildina tóku 156 íslenskir, sískynja, karlmenn þátt í könnun á netinu. Könnunin innihélt íslenskaða útgáfu af UCLA Loneliness Scale (1996) og Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (1996) sem mæla einmannaleika og karlrembu. Engin marktæk fylgni fannst á milli einmannaleika og karlrembu, en aldur og fjandsamleg karlremba höfðu lágan, neikvæðan fylgnistuðul. Takmarkanir rannsóknarinnar eru meðal annars hentugleikaúrtak sem leiddi til einsleitts úrtaks, og að mögulega var mælitækið á karlrembu úrelt fyrir íslenskt samfélag í dag.

Lykilorð: *Einmannaleiki, karlremba, kvenhatur, íslenskir karlmenn*

Alone and Angry: What is the Nature of the Relationship Between Loneliness and Sexist Attitudes in Men?

Loneliness is a public health concern (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). With increased loneliness due to isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic (Keller et al., 2022; Killgore et al., 2020) and a rise in single, lonely, men (Fry & Parker, 2021), the concern is escalating. What makes loneliness even more concerning among men specifically, is its potential connection to misogyny (Parent et al., 2019; Sparks et al., 2022^a). Humans are not meant to be alone and isolated, they evolved to be social creatures as it provided them with an advantage when it came to survival (Cacioppo et al., 2014). Humans evolving to be social creatures is the basis for Cacioppo & Cacioppo's Evolutionary Theory of Loneliness (ETL). This theory proposes that loneliness is a similar evolutionary mechanism to pain, alerting to something being wrong and providing motivation to remedy the situation. Furthermore, the ETL highlights that the distress of loneliness can cause detrimental effects on our physical and mental health in the long-term (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018)

In Cacioppo's earlier research on loneliness, Cacioppo et al. (2006) found that depression and loneliness were positively correlated. Later, in a 5-year longitudinal study, Cacioppo and his colleagues found that loneliness was able to predict changes in depressive symptomatology (Cacioppo et al., 2010). Furthermore, when examining how loneliness spreads using network analysis, Cacioppo et al. (2009) found that, ironically, being in close proximity to lonely individuals made it more likely that you would be lonely too. Clusters of lonely individuals were mainly situated on the outermost parts of the social network. Meaning, the individuals who isolated and at the edge of the networks transmitted their loneliness to those connected to them, for up to three degrees of separation (Cacioppo et al., 2009).

Turning our attention to Iceland, Baretto et al. (2021) indicated that culture affects how lonely people are. According to their study, young men in individualistic countries

experience the highest levels of loneliness. The scale that Baretto et al. used places Iceland as a highly individualistic country. Therefore it would be safe to assume that a large number of young, Icelandic men experience loneliness. Combining the aforementioned assumption with the fact that Iceland still struggles with sex inequality (Forsætisráðuneytið, 2022; Hagstofa Íslands, 2021) one can see cause for concern. One example of Iceland's struggles is that there is still a pay gap across the sexes. Without correcting for factors like overtime, education, line of work, and job title, men get paid 25,5% more than women on average in Iceland. When all aforementioned factors are controlled for, the pay gap drops to 4,3%. These statistics show that the main problem is not the pay itself, but the lack of opportunities women have to earn money compared to men (Hagstofa Íslands, 2021).

A report from Iceland's governing council provided further insight. In 2021 women were far more likely to work part-time jobs than men. In households with children, women provided the brunt of the unpaid household labour, which explains why a greater number of women worked part-time jobs. Women were also more likely to work for the government and municipalities. Expanding on these results, lower-paying jobs were generally more saturated with female employees rather than male employees. Efforts have been made to combat the sex differences in both male-dominated and female-dominated lines of work and success has been made in all except nursing. Furthermore, only about 5% of women held the position of CEO (Forsætisráðuneytið, 2022). Evidence for sex inequality in Iceland indicates that sexist attitudes may be prevailing among the Icelandic population.

Carrying on with sexism, Glick and Fiske (1996) placed sexist attitudes on two dimensions; hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). The definition of HS was based on Allport's (1954) definition of prejudice, an antagonistic attitude towards women based on weak generalisations and stereotypes. The definition provided of BS states that it consists of more prosocial attitudes than HS. These attitudes seem to portray a positive view of women on the surface, however the underlying message supports traditional and restrictive

gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between misogyny and sexism, as they have often been conflated. Although they are both aspects of the patriarchy, misogyny is more overt and action-based than sexism. The simplest way to distinguish the two is to think of sexism as the beliefs that drive misogynistic actions (Dictionary, 2018; Prasad, 2019).

In regards to the relationship between age and sexism, Hammond et al. (2018) found that men's support of hostile sexism viewpoints peaked at early adulthood, decreasing in middle adulthood, and finally peaking again at late adulthood. When it came to men's support of benevolent sexism viewpoints, their support increased as they got older. Men seemed to align with sexist viewpoints throughout their whole lifetime. Furthermore, support of hostile sexism viewpoints predicted support of benevolent sexism viewpoints (Hammond et al., 2018).

It seems as though feminist terms often inspire debate, including the term 'toxic masculinity'. The concept of toxic masculinity has been a hot topic in feminist spaces since 2016 (Harrington, 2021) and has been widely researched. However, the term lacks a clear and concise definition for a majority of academics to agree on. Most definitions include a set of behaviours and attitudes born from masculine norms that are harmful to men, and to society as a whole. Examples of behaviours involve asserting dominance (e.g. by picking fights or sexually harassing women), pushing past mental and physical limits, and refusing help. Toxic masculinity attitudes may include disdain for femininity, "boys don't cry", and that men should be hyper-independent (Harrington, 2021).

Regardless of the unclear definition, a majority of studies show that toxic or unhealthy masculinity has negative effects on the mental health of men and those whom they interact with. A study by Parent et al. (2019) found that negative interactions within social media networks made depression worse, and toxic masculinity made negative interactions more likely. The definition Parent et al. provided for toxic masculinity was that "toxic

masculinity is characterised by a need to dominate, antifemininity, and homophobia” (Parent et al., 2019). The process by which toxic masculinity made negative interactions more likely was that the domination aspect of toxic masculinity manifests in the need to win an argument, resulting in a tendency to pick fights (Parent et al., 2019).

Smith et al. (2022) found that hegemonic masculinity, a related concept to toxic masculinity, also had detrimental effects on ageing men. It was found that men in late adulthood who upheld hegemonic masculinity ideals reported more depressive symptoms. Furthermore, the results confirmed that when participants experienced a threat to masculinity, such as declining health or extreme loss of wealth, it lead to great distress. These results imply that the pressure to uphold the ideals of hegemonic masculinity is especially detrimental to mental health in old age. Although inevitable in old age, participants struggled to accept when their health declined, as they were supposed to be strong and independent till death (Smith et al., 2022).

At the end of the extremism road is the incel. The term involuntary celibate, better known as ‘incel’, was originally coined by a woman named Alana, who started a website to document her romantic and sexual struggles. Eventually, a positive space to find community and support without judgement became a space where overt and hostile misogyny thrived (Taylor, 2018). The term incel has numerous definitions. A clear and concise definition provided by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) states that incels are “heterosexual men that blame women and society for their lack of romantic success” (Center for Extremism, 2022). The definition alone implies that incels experience great loneliness, with research also supporting this claim (Jaki et al., 2019; Maxwell et al., 2020; Sparks et al., 2022^a; Sparks et al., 2022^b)

A review of the literature by Sparks et al. (2022)^a on involuntary celibates found that incels experience a host of mental health issues, such as anxiety, loneliness, insecure attachment, and depression. Consequently, they seek support and connections within the incel

community. Vulnerable men seeking comfort among incels is especially harmful due to the hateful and violent nature of incel ideology (Sparks et al., 2022)^a. A content analysis in a now defunct incel community on Reddit, r/Braincels, revealed that members frequently dehumanised, degraded, and reduced women to stereotypes. Additionally, members expressed feelings of anger, frustration, and resentment, sometimes through violent language (Maxwell et al., 2020).

Following their previous study, Sparks et al. (2022)^b explored the role that a lack of friendships played in the lives of incels. When comparing incels to non-incels they found that incels had more difficulty coping with romantic rejection due to their social isolation. Social support has previously been found to cushion the blow of bad news (Adams et al., 2011, Ringdal et al., 2007). Incels also engaged in more destructive coping mechanisms such as self-critical rumination, self-blame, and reducing their efforts to make romantic connections (Sparks et al., 2022)^b. Although incels seek out support and community from each other, Cacioppo et al. (2009) found that this solution could be counterintuitive. If one's social interactions are almost exclusively with others struggling with loneliness, it could exacerbate the problem, creating a vicious cycle (Cacioppo et al., 2009).

In light of all of the aforementioned research on loneliness, sex inequality, and misogyny, the question “What is the nature of the relationship between loneliness and sexist attitudes in men?” emerges. Although research reveals a connection between loneliness and misogyny, it is unclear whether loneliness has a relationship with sexism. Perhaps if there is a connection between loneliness and sexism, that connection could help explain where the incel's starting point lies. Well-adjusted people are unlikely to join or identify with hate groups, with preconceived notions playing a part as well (Karimi et al., 2021). Furthermore, considering that Hammond et al. (2018) found that age had a relationship between both dimensions of sexism, the current study aimed to explore this. Additionally, the following three hypotheses were developed:

1. Loneliness and hostile sexist attitudes in men positively correlate
2. Loneliness and benevolent sexist attitudes in men positively correlate
3. Loneliness and general sexist attitudes in men positively correlate

Method

Participants

The population for this particular study was all heterosexual males between the ages of 18-45 years in Iceland. Therefore, the inclusion criteria for this particular study were that participants had to be a cisgendered male, between the ages of 18-45 years, and a resident of Iceland. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants by posting a link to the questionnaire online and sending an email to the students of Reykjavik University.

Participation in the survey was not required and participants were able to withdraw consent at any time. No compensation was provided for taking part in the study.

Measures

To measure loneliness, the third version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale (1996) was used. Due to the participants being Icelandic, the UCLA Loneliness Scale was translated to Icelandic for the purposes of this study. When testing the validity of the UCLA Loneliness Scale, Russel (1996) found support for both construct and convergent validity. Additionally, the scale was found to be highly reliable with a coefficients ranging from .89 to .94. In the current study, the translated UCLA Loneliness Scale had a Cronbach's α coefficient of .91. The 20-item scale included statements such as "*I lack companionship / mig skortir félagsskap*" and "*I feel isolated from others / mér finnst ég vera einangraður frá öðrum*". For the full translated scale, see appendix A. The scale measures the level to which people experience a lack of social support. Participants are asked to indicate how often they identify with each statement. Each response option is given a score, from 1 to 4. Scores are calculated by summing the scores from each item. The minimum score is 20, indicating a low level of loneliness, with the maximum score being 80, indicating a high level of loneliness.

To measure misogyny, Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) was used. The ASI has been shown to be reliable and valid, with α coefficients ranging from .83 to .92 (Glick & Fiske, 1996). As with the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the ASI was also translated to Icelandic. In the current study, the Cronbach's α coefficients were .92 for the scale as a whole, .89 for hostile sexism, and .87 for benevolent sexism. The 22-item scale included statements such as "*women are too easily offended / konur móðgast of auðveldlega*" and "*every man ought to have a woman he adores / allir karlmenn ættu að eiga konu sem þeir dýrka*". For the full translated scale, see appendix B. Participants are asked to indicate the level to which they agree/disagree with each statement. Each response option is given a score, from 0 to 5. Scores are calculated by averaging scores from each item. The minimum score is 0, indicating a low level of sexism, with the maximum score being 5, indicating a high level of sexism.

The ASI measures two dimensions of sexism, hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS), with both dimensions being composed of Paternalism, Gender Differentiation, and Heterosexuality. Paternalism refers to the idea that women are inherently weaker and less "adult" or mature than men. Gender Differentiation refers to the idea that men and women are inherently different and should serve different roles in society. Heterosexuality refers to the dependency men feel towards women for physical and emotional intimacy (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Research Design

The current study is a quantitative, cross-sectional study in the form of a survey. The study explored two independent variables, loneliness and sexist attitudes. Moreover, the relationship between loneliness and age, as well as sexist attitudes and age was also explored.

Procedure

The study was conducted by a university student at Reykjavík University. An online survey was made in QuestionPro that included the translated versions of the UCLA

Loneliness Scale (1996) and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (1996) along with questions about participants' age, education, and gender identity. Prior to the questions being available, a banner containing information about the study appeared (see appendix C). There it was clearly stated that by continuing on to the questionnaire they were consenting to participate in the study, that they could withdraw consent at any time, and that responses would not be personally identifiable. Also included was the time it would take to answer the questionnaire, the inclusion criteria, the purpose of the study, and contact information should any questions or concerns arise. An application to the Icelandic ethics committee was thought to be unnecessary for this particular study. Participants were also asked to provide some useful background information, including age, the highest level of education completed, and gender identity.

Participant recruitment was conducted both by posting a link to the survey on the researcher's personal social media accounts on Instagram and Facebook, as well as in an Icelandic men's advice Facebook group. Participants were also recruited by sending a mass email to the students of Reykjavík University. The email included a message asking male students to participate in the study as well as a link to the survey. To participate in the study, an internet connection was needed, as well as one of the following; a Facebook, Instagram, or an email account, along with an electronic device that was able to access such an account.

Data analysis

Data collection was performed by using QuestionPro and data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS version 28. A bivariate correlation model was used, as well as an independent samples T-test. During data analysis, sexist attitudes were divided into hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS), with overall sexism being an average of the two.

Results

Descriptive statistics

A total of 156 individuals took part in the study with their age ranging from 18-44 years old ($M = 28.80$, $SD = 6.67$). Regarding participants' education level, a majority of them, 37,2% ($n = 58$) had completed a high school diploma, followed by 20,5% ($n = 32$) who had completed an undergraduate degree, 17,9% ($n = 28$) a graduate degree, 12,8% ($n = 20$) elementary school education, and lastly 11,5% ($n=18$) had completed a trade school degree. Descriptive statistics of the variables of interest in this study can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1*Descriptive statistics for UCLA Scale, ASI Scale and Subscales*

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Crohnbach 's α</i>
UCLA	43.63	10.81	23-68	.91
ASI Total	1.62	0.74	0.41-4.09	.89
Hostile sexism	1.26	1.06	0-4.44	.92
Benevolent sexism	1.98	0.73	0.36-4	.87

As seen in table 1, participants' loneliness scores ranged from 23 to 68, with the mean score being 43.63, which is considered below average. Participants' overall sexism scores ranged from .41 to 4.09, with the mean score being 1.62, which is considered low. The mean score for hostile sexism was 1.26, and the mean score for benevolent sexism was 1.98.

Table 2*Frequency table for responses to item 7 and item 21 of the ASI (1996)*

Response option	Item 7		Item 21	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Disagree strongly	91	58.3	36	23.1
Disagree somewhat	34	21.8	35	22.4

Disagree lightly	5	3.2	22	14.1
Agree lightly	10	6.4	27	17.3
Agree somewhat	11	7.1	16	10.3
Agree strongly	5	3.2	19	12.2

Table 2 shows participants' rate of agreement/disagreement with the statement in item 7 of the ASI (1996); "*Það er ekki markmið femínista að konur verði valdameiri en karlmenn/Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men*" and the statement in item 21 of the ASI (1996); "*Femínistar gera einungis sanngjarnar kröfur til karlanna. (Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men*". As seen in table 2, 83.3% ($n = 130$) of participants disagreed to some degree with the statement in item 7, which is a large majority. Responses to item 21 are more evenly spread out, however 59.6% ($n = 93$) of participants disagreed to various degrees with the statement. The relevance of these results will be explained in the discussion chapter further below.

Bivariate correlations

Results from bivariate correlations indicate that there is no significant relationship between sexist attitudes and loneliness. Furthermore, results did not indicate a significant relationship between either of the two dimensions of sexist attitudes, hostile and benevolent sexism as seen in table 3.

Table 3

Pearson's correlations loneliness and sexist attitudes

	UCLA	ASI (Hostile)	ASI (Benevolent)
ASI (Hostile)	-.04		
ASI (Benevolent)	-.03	.36**	

ASI Total	-.05	.89**	.75**
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Note: ** $p < .01$

Furthermore, the relationship between age and sexist attitudes was examined. There was a negative correlation between age and hostile sexism ($r(151) = -.20, p = .012$), indicating that hostile sexism decreased with increased age. However, age was not significantly associated with benevolent sexism ($r(151) = -.01, p = .881$). Interestingly, the relationship between sexism overall and age was almost significant ($r(151) = -.15, p = .061$), again indicating that sexism decreased with increased age. Even further, no significant relationship was found between age and loneliness ($r(151) = .12, p = .156$).

Independent samples t-test

Participants were split into two groups based on their UCLA Loneliness Scale scores. Those who scored 51 or higher ($n = 49$) were considered the high-loneliness group, and those who scored 50 or lower ($n = 107$) were considered the low-loneliness group. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in Ambivalent Sexism Inventory scores between these two groups as seen in table 4.

Table 4

Mean differences in sexist attitudes by loneliness

	High loneliness ($n=49$)		Low loneliness ($n=107$)		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
ASI (H)	1.28	1.17	1.25	1.02	-0.15	154	.882
ASI (B)	1.94	0.66	2.00	0.76	0.54	154	.594
ASI Total	1.61	0.77	1.63	0.73	0.16	154	.876

Discussion

The current study aimed to evaluate if a relationship between loneliness and sexism exists among men. All three hypotheses put forth by the researcher proved to be false, as

bivariate correlations reveal no significant connections between loneliness and sexist attitudes. These results partially contradict previous research that showed a connection between loneliness and misogyny (Jaki et al., 2019; Maxwell et al., 2020; Sparks et al., 2022^a; Sparks et al., 2022^b). However, even though they are related, sexism and misogyny are not the same (Dictionary, 2018; Prasad, 2019). Although a reasonable guess would be that loneliness and sexism also have a connection, said connection is not a given. Nevertheless, there are a number of potential reasons behind the lack of connection between the two variables, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

One reason behind the insignificant results could be the measure of sexist attitudes used. The ASI (1996) was published 27 years ago and developed by researchers from the U.S. The age and origin of the measure means the items might be outdated and out of touch with Icelandic society today. A few participants contacted the researcher to ask for clarifications on some of the ASI (1996) items because they had a hard time understanding them, particularly items number 8, 18, and 19 (see appendix B). Although version 3 of the UCLA Loneliness Scale (1996) was published the same year as the ASI, loneliness is a more universal experience, with the experience itself being less varied across cultures than sexism (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). Moreover, the participants scored quite low on loneliness on average. Possibly because a great number of the responses were from university students, a time when social life is thriving.

Speaking of age, hostile sexism showed a small, negative correlation with age. Said results are in line with Hammond et al. (2018), who demonstrated that men's support of hostile sexism viewpoints peaked at young adulthood and late adulthood. Also, in Karimi et al.'s (2021) study on hate groups, they found that people often "age out" of hostile attitudes towards minorities. However, unlike Hammond et al. (2018), the current study did not find a positive correlation between age and benevolent sexism. Even though the current study only discovered a relationship between age and hostile sexism, this relationship is noteworthy

because as previously mentioned, hostile sexism predicts benevolent sexism (Hammond et al., 2018). Furthermore, Glick & Fiske (1996) had also revealed a positive correlation between hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hence there is cause for concern and intervention, especially due to the popularity of online creators that create misogynistic content among young men (Adler, 2022; Das, 2022).

Moving on to age and loneliness, the current study did not find any significant correlation between the two, meaning there was no relationship between loneliness and age. These results contradict Baretto et al. (2021), who found the highest rates of loneliness among young men in individualistic countries. However, Baretto et al. (2021) had a considerably larger, more diverse and representative sample than the current study. As discussed previously, it is not entirely surprising that there was no correlation between age and loneliness due to the high concentration of university students in the current study's sample.

Following the results from the correlation analysis, two sub-samples were created of participants who scored below average on the UCLA Loneliness Scale (1996) and those who scored above average. The two sub-samples' ASI (1996) scores were compared using an independent samples T-test. Nonetheless, no significant difference in sexist attitudes were found. Similar to the results from the bivariate correlation analyses, the insignificant results from the T-test partially contradict previous findings (Jaki et al., 2019; Maxwell et al., 2020; Sparks et al., 2022^a; Sparks et al., 2022^b). The lack of a difference is perhaps because the participants were on average lonelier than they were sexist. Also, a sample composed largely of university students might not only explain the relatively low levels of loneliness, but also the low levels of sexism. University students are taught to engage in critical thinking, which could lead them to question and challenge sexist stereotypes and ideas.

Although there are quite a few factors at play that could have affected the study's results, the possibility that sexism is not overt nor extreme enough to be connected to

loneliness should also be considered. Sexism is quite socially acceptable to this day (Hammond et al., 2018), with Glick & Fiske (1996) specifically describing a dimension of sexism that is ‘prosocial’. Even though studies have not shown whether loneliness causes misogyny or vice versa, men have a tendency to direct frustration over their poor mental health at women (Jaki et al., 2019; Maxwell et al., 2020; Parent et al., 2019). Projecting their frustration in violent and socially unacceptable ways may lead to further isolation, loneliness, and mental health struggles. Another possibility is that there was no relationship between loneliness and sexism because the average Icelandic man harbours a low level of sexist attitudes, which one hopes to be the case.

Interestingly, despite the participants’ low sexism scores, they seem to show disdain or disapproval of feminists. This disdain or disapproval can be seen in their responses to items 7 and 21 of the ASI (1996). As with all feminist terms, academics and activists do not seem to agree on a singular definition of ‘feminism’, and today there are numerous types of feminism. Nevertheless, all of them include a notion of equality (Loke et al., 2017). Still, a large majority of participants from the current study disagreed that feminists want equality. Instead, the participants feel that feminists seek to possess more power than men. A large majority of participants also disagreed that feminists only make reasonable demands of men. It seems as though the participants view feminists as extremists, rather than equal rights activists. Furthermore, the participants seemingly fail to consider that men can also be feminists. Although these results were somewhat unexpected, they are in line with Loke et al.’s (2017) analysis on the media discourse surrounding feminism, which says that feminism has become a “bad word” (Loke et al., 2017).

Strengths and Limitations

Even though there was no significant connection between loneliness and sexism, the current study is one of the first that explored the possibility of a connection between the two. Also, this study shone a spotlight on a potential problem that is growing in Iceland and will

hopefully inspire others to research this topic further. The current study was conducted with the hope of coming closer to a prevention method, as the root has to be understood before the problem can be treated. Additionally, this study managed to recruit a sizable sample of male participants, which is quite the feat considering that women are considerably more likely to participate in surveys than men (Smith, 2008).

Nonetheless, the current study is not free from limitations. The main one being the sampling method that was utilised. Due to a lack of resources available to the researcher, convenience sampling was used. Convenience sampling led to a monolithic sample that is not necessarily representative of the population of young, Icelandic men as a whole. The ratio of participants who were either currently in university or had completed a university degree in this study was 53.6%, whereas the ratio of Icelandic men in university is roughly 11% (Hagstofa Íslands, n.d.).

As previously discussed, another limitation of this study is the measure of sexism used. Despite the issues mentioned in the introduction, Iceland does fare markedly better in regards to sex equality than the U.S. (World Economic Forum, 2022). There are also significant cultural differences, such as the idea of women being housewives is close to obsolete, as most Icelandic women work (Forsætisráðuneytið, 2022). When the aforementioned is considered, it is understandable that the majority of participants did not agree with item 20 of the ASI (1996); *“Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives”*. Furthermore, Icelandic culture does not place too much importance on marriage (“Icelandic Weddings”, 2023). Consequently, Icelanders might identify with items relating to heterosexuality to a lesser degree.

Conclusion

Research has shown a link between loneliness and misogyny, but not loneliness and sexism. Since misogyny and sexism are related it was hypothesised that loneliness and

sexism would positively correlate. Using version 3 of the UCLA Loneliness Scale (1996) and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (1996), the loneliness and sexism levels were measured in 156 Icelandic, cisgender, male participants, aged 18-44. Results from the current study showed no connection between loneliness and sexist attitudes. Interestingly, age and hostile sexism had a small, negative correlation, perhaps due to the increased volume of misogynistic content circulating on the internet in recent years. Also, despite low levels of sexism, participants showed disapproval towards feminists, viewing them as extremists. Key limitations include a monolithic sample due to convenience sampling and a possibly outdated and out of touch measure of sexist attitudes.

Directions for Future Research

Due to the monolithic sample in the current study, conducting the same study on a more diverse sample that better reflects the population of Icelandic men, might yield interesting results. However, the ASI (1996) could still be an ineffective measure of sexism. Hence future research should also aim to develop a reliable and valid measure of sexism that is relevant to Icelandic culture today. Developing such a measure could also be beneficial for research in other Nordic countries due to cultural and historic similarities. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore the relationship between loneliness and sexism in countries where sex inequality is high, and sexism is part of conforming to society. Also, beyond sexism, research should also be conducted to determine the prevalence of loneliness in Iceland. Especially since other countries do not seem to be fully recovered after the height of the COVID-19 epidemic, and loneliness can be a difficult and even embarrassing experience.

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Appendix A – Full Translated UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3 (1996)

Eftirfarandi eru staðhæfingar um einmannaleika. Vinsamlegast greindu frá hversu oft hver staðhæfing á við um þig.

1. Ég er í takt við fólkið sem er í kringum mig.
2. Mig skortir félagsskap.
3. Það er enginn sem ég get leitað til.
4. Mér líður ekki eins og ég sé einn.
5. Ég upplifi mig sem hluti af vinahóp.
6. Ég á margt sameiginlegt við fólkið í kringum mig.
7. Ég er ekki náinn einhverjum núna.
8. Annað fólk deilir ekki sömu áhugamálum og hugmyndum og ég.
9. Ég er félagsvera.
10. Það er fólk sem ég upplifi að er náíð mér.
11. Mér finnst ég vera skilinn útundan.
12. Félagslegu tengslin mín eru yfirborðskennd.
13. Enginn þekkir mig mjög vel.
14. Mér finnst ég vera einangraður frá öðrum.
15. Ég get fundið félagsskap þegar mig langar í hann.
16. Það er fólk sem skilur mig virkilega vel.
17. Ég er óánægður með hlédrægni mína.
18. Fólk er í kringum mig frekar en að vera með mér.
19. Það er fólk sem ég get talað við.
20. Það er fólk sem er til staðar fyrir mig.

Appendix B – Full Translated Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (1996)

Eftirfarandi eru staðhæfingar sem snúa að lífsviðhorfum. Greindu vinstamlegast frá hversu ósammála eða sammála þú ert hverri staðhæfingu.

1. Það skiptir engu máli hvað karlmaður hefur afrekað, hann er ekki heill án þess að kona elski hann.
2. Margar konur notfæra sér jafnréttisstefnu sem afsökun til að fá sér meðferð, eins og kynjakvóta sem er hliðhollur konum frekar en karlmönnum.
3. Þegar hamfarir eiga sér stað á ekkert frekar að bjarga konum á undan karlmönnum.
4. Flestar konur upplifa saklaus ummæli eða hegðun sem kynferðislegt áreiti.
5. Konur móðgast of auðveldlega.
6. Fólk upplifir oft sanna hamingju þrátt fyrir að það sé ekki í ástarsambandi með hinu kyninu.
7. Það er ekki markmið femínista að konur verði valdameiri en karlmenn.
8. Margar konur búa yfir ákveðnu eiginleikum sakleysis em karlar hafa ekki.
9. Konur ættu að njóta umhyggju og verndar frá karlmönnum.
10. Flestar konur kunna ekki að meta allt það sem karlmenn gera fyrir þær.
11. Konur reyna að ná völdum með því að ná stjórn yfir karlmönnum.
12. Allir karlmenn ættu að eiga konu sem þeir dýrka.
13. Karlmenn eru heilir án kvenna.
14. Konur ýkja vandamálin sem þær glíma við í vinnunni.
15. Um leið og kona fær karlmann til að skuldbindast sér, reyndir hún oftast að hefta frelsi hans.
16. Þegar konur tapa fyrir karlmönnum í heiðarlegri samkeppni er algengt að þær kvarti yfir að þeim hafi verið mismunað.
17. Góð kona ætti að vera í hávegum höfð hjá mannum sínum.
18. Það eru í raun fáar konur sem fá eitthvað út úr því að reyna við karlmenn bara til þess að hafna þeim seinna.
19. Samanborið við karlmenn, eru konur yfirleitt með sterkari siðferðisvitund.
20. Karlmenn ættu að vera tilbúnir til að fórna eigin vellíðan til þess að geta séð fjárhagslega fyrir konunni í lífi þeirra.
21. Femínistar gera einungis sanngjarnar kröfur til karlmannna.
22. Konur eru almennt með betri smekk og menningalega fagaðri en karlmenn.

Appendix C – Information letter

Kæri þátttakandi,

Þessi könnun er hluti af lokaverkefni mínu, Óskar Chow, til BSc gráðu í sálfræði við Háskólann í Reykjavík (HR). Leiðbeinandi og ábyrgðaraðili rannsóknarinnar er Áslaug Kristjánsdóttir, kennari við HR. Tilgangur könnunnarinnar er að athuga algengi einmanaleika og hvort einmanaleiki tengist viðhorfum til lífsins. Þáttökuskilyrði er að vera karlmaður á aldrinum 18-40 ára.

Þátttaka felur ekki í sér áhættu og það tekur um 10-15 mínútur að svara spurningalistanum. Með því að svara spurningalistanum samþykkir þú þátttöku í könnuninni. Þér er ekki skylt að svara spurningum sem þú kýst ekki að svara og þú má hætta þátttöku á hvaða tímapunkti sem er. Öll svör eru ópersónugreinanleg og órekjanleg.

Skyldu óþægindi eða spurningar vakna upp við þátttöku þína má hafa samband við rannsakendur með því að senda tölvupóst á osk20@ru.is eða aslaugkr@ru.is. Hjartans fyrirfram þakkar fyrir þátttökuna.