



Lead Author e-mail: [anna.r.ronka@oulu.fi](mailto:anna.r.ronka@oulu.fi)

**Title:** *Experiences of loneliness from childhood to adulthood. Northern Finland Birth Cohort 1986 Study.*

**Rönkä, Anna Reetta**<sup>1</sup>, Taanila, Anja<sup>2</sup>, Sunnari, Vappu<sup>1</sup>, Rautio, Arja<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Women´s and Gender Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Oulu, Finland*

<sup>2</sup>*Institute of Health Sciences, University of Oulu, Primary Health Care Unit, University Hospital of Oulu, Oulu, Finland*

<sup>3</sup>*Thule Institute, University of Oulu, Finland*

Loneliness is a multidimensional experience that is an inherent, cross-cultural and universal part of the human condition. When one´s socioemotional needs are not adequately met, the feeling of loneliness occurs. Loneliness is subjective experience; one can feel lonely around others or not lonely when alone. Loneliness can also be contextual experience affected by one´s living environment. Left unattended, loneliness has serious negative consequences on one´s mental and physical well-being and health.

Individualism, the loss of community and the ethos of `managing on one´s own` are causing more experiences of marginalization and social exclusion, themes closely related to loneliness. This PhD research is focused on northern Finland, where urbanization, the `death` of small villages, long distances to access services, the poor availability of educational facilities and job opportunities and other social and economic problems still exist and contribute to growing social malaise, including loneliness.

Data used in this study consist of a large, homogenous, general, population-based age cohort of Northern Finland Birth Cohort 1986 (N=9,432). All mothers whose expected delivery date fell between 1 July 1985 and 30 June 1986 and who lived in two northernmost provinces of Oulu and Lapland were recruited. Additionally, data from various national registers were used.

The aim of this research is to examine how loneliness manifests itself over the life time of young people in northern Finland and to look what consequences it has for their well-being, health, learning and growth. Two journal articles have already submitted for publication. According to those result, most (70.4%) adolescent reported not feeling lonely, 26.4% reported feeling somewhat and 3.2% reported feeling very lonely. Girls reported more loneliness than boys. In the first manuscript, multinomial logistic regression was employed to describe the association of selected social, emotional, contextual, health and well-being factors between three loneliness groups. Associated factors (not having close friends, feeling unliked, being victim of bullying, avoiding company, feeling unhappy, sad or depressed, dissatisfaction with life, poor self-rated health) were similar to somewhat and very lonely, but very lonely adolescent, especially girls, experience them more strongly.



In the second manuscript, logistic regression showed that loneliness was associated with deliberate self-harm among adolescents. Third publication will examine educational and career paths of lonely young adults, and the final article examines the longitudinal experiences of loneliness. In this presentation the results and the research plan will be discussed.