An Analysis of Personal Writing Incidence and Frequency and Its Relation to Self-Reported Scores of Depression and Loneliness

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AN ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL WRITING INCIDENCE AND FREQUENCY
AND ITS RELATION TO SELF-REPORTED SCORES OF
DEPRESSION AND LONELINESS

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Conventional wisdom suggests that the release of one’s emotions helps promote healthy
development and contributes positively to mental health. One of the common methods
used to release emotions is personal writing, such as journaling, diary keeping, or poetry
writing. Though this practice of using personal writing to express and release emotion is
thought to be highly prevalent, a dearth of empirical evidence exists to support such
claims (Pennebaker, 1995; Magee, 1999). Therefore, this study sought to describe the
incidence and frequency of personal writing among a college-aged population using sixty
student respondents. Students were administered a questionnaire called the Personal
Writing Questionnaire-Revised version (PWQ-R) that contained self-report questions
regarding personal writing incidence, frequency, type, and motivation. A Depression and
loneliness inventories were also included in the instrument.

Following analysis of the data collected from these questionnaires, we seek to support the
following hypotheses. It was hypothesized that females will report greater incidence and
frequency of personal writing when compared to males. Further, it was hypothesized that
females will report greater use of personal writing across the lifespan. In an attempt to
determine whether a relationship between personal writing and mental health status
exists, the depression and loneliness inventories will also be used in analysis. The
preliminary hypothesis states that we expect that increased self-disclosure, by means of
personal writing, will correlate negatively with scores of depression and/or loneliness.
That is, if one engages in personal writing, one is more likely to be less depressed or less
lonely when compared to those who do not use personal writing.

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