"The Impact of Solo Travel on Independence and Well-being of Young Adults"

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ABSTRACT

Solo travel has increasingly become a popular mode of travel among young adults, providing an opportunity for self-discovery, resilience-building, and emotional growth. Despite the rising interest, the psychological outcomes of solo travel remain underexplored, especially through a quantitative lens. This dissertation investigates the impact of solo travel on two key psychological variables: independence and psychological well-being. Grounded in theories such as Self-Determination Theory supported by the Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF) scale, Well-being scale supported by the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), and solo travel supported by General Self Efficacy Scale (GSE), the study surveyed 106 young adults aged 18–35, including those with solo and group travel experiences. Data was collected via online and offline forms using a simple random sampling method to ensure generalizability. Results derived from SPSS analysis revealed no significant Pearson correlation between solo travel and either independence or well-being. However, independence showed a marginal predictive trend about well-being in the regression analysis. These findings challenge the stereotypical assumptions of solo travel's uniformly positive impact, indicating that the psychological benefits may be influenced by contextual factors such as personality traits, cultural background, and travel purpose. This study provides new insight into the psychology of travel and emphasizes the need for broader, more nuanced research on individual travel experiences and their outcomes.

Keywords: solo travel, independence, psychological well-being, young adults, Pearson correlation, Self-Determination Theory, Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF), Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), General Self Efficacy Scale (GSE), regression analysis, personality traits.

INTROCUTION -

Solo travel refers to the practice of individuals traveling without companions, making independent decisions regarding their itinerary, accommodations, and experiences. This phenomenon has grown
increasingly popular among young adults, who view it as an opportunity for personal growth, autonomy, and enhanced psychological well-being (Berdychevsky et al., 2016; Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006).
By confronting unfamiliar environments alone, solo travelers often develop resilience, problem-solving skills, and a deeper understanding of their own preferences and values.

Psychological literature suggests that solo travel offers a wide range of mental benefits. Through immersive experiences in diverse cultural settings, individuals cultivate not only independence but also empathy and cross-cultural sensitivity. According to Self-Determination Theory needs essential to human motivation and well-being. Experiential learning theories also reinforce the developmental impact of solo travel. First-hand encounters with new places, challenges, and people promote emotional maturity and meaningful reflection (Naor & Mayseless, 2020). Moreover, solo travelers gain first-hand experience in managing stressors such as budget constraints, language barriers, and safety concerns, which can contribute to greater psychological robustness (Chikani et al., 2005).

Existing research also highlights the potential post-travel benefits, such as increased self-awareness, assertiveness in personal relationships, and an improved ability to set boundaries and make independent decisions (Friend et al., 2006; Wilson & Harris, 2006). For many young adults, these transformations mark a significant stage in the development of a stable and confident adult identity. While solo travel poses certain challenges, such as navigating social norms or dealing with homesickness, these hurdles often become opportunities for personal growth. In a world increasingly focused on collectivist and technology-mediated interactions, solo travel provides a rare chance for solitude, reflection, and direct

engagement with the self.

This study aims to quantitatively evaluate the impact of solo travel on two primary constructs: independence and psychological well-being. By analyzing responses from individuals aged 18–35, this research contributes to the growing field of positive psychology and travel behavior.

Rationale and Significance –

The phenomenon of solo travel has attracted considerable attention in popular culture and media narratives, often portrayed as a transformative experience fostering independence, resilience, and psychological growth. Despite these widespread claims, there remains a notable lack of rigorous empirical investigation into the psychological outcomes associated with solo travel, particularly within non-western, younger populations. Much of the existing research is qualitative, anecdotal, or focused on specific demographics such as women travelers or Western backpackers, leaving significant gaps in understanding how solo travel impacts broader constructs like independence and psychological well-being.

This study addresses these gaps by quantitively examining the relationship between solo travel, independence, and psychological well-being among young adults aged 18-35, using validated psychological scales. It also expands the geographical and cultural context of solo travel research by focusing on a diverse sample that includes Indian youth – a group increasingly engaging in independent travel experiences yet underrepresented in academic literature.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it builds upon frameworks such as Self-Determination Theory and experiential learning models by testing their applicability in the context of solo travel. Practically, the findings can inform travel organizations, mental health practitioners, and educational institutions about the psychological benefits and limitations of encouraging solo travel as a developmental tool. Understanding whether and how solo travel fosters independence and well-being can help tailor travel programs, mental health interventions, and educational initiatives that leverage experiential travel as a means of personal development.

Research Gap:

While solo travel is gaining popularity among young adults, especially in urban and digital contexts, limited empirical research has examined its quantitative psychological impacts. Most available studies are qualitative or anecdotal, often focused on western or female-only experiences. There is a lack of research from diverse populations (e.g., Indian youth) assessing the relationship between solo travel and measurable indicators of independence and psychological well-being.

Research Objectives:

1. To examine the impact of solo travel on independence in young adults.
2. To examine the impact of solo travel on psychological well-being.
3. To test whether independence mediates the relationship between solo travel and well-being.

Hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant positive correlation between solo travel and independence.
H2: There is a significant positive correlation between solo travel and psychological well-being.
H3: There is a significant positive correlation between independence and psychological well-being.
H4: Independence significantly predicts well-being.
H5: Solo travel significantly predicts well-being.

Methodology:

Participants:
A total of 106 young adults aged 18–35 participated in the study. Participants included individuals who travelled solo or in groups. Data was collected through both online and offline form submissions to ensure a diverse and representative sample. Sampling Method: Simple random sampling was employed, ensuring that each eligible individual had an equal chance of being selected. This method reduces bias and increases the representativeness of the results across the larger population.

Instruments: Three standardized scales were used:

- General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE): This 10-item scale measures an individual's belief in their ability with a variety of stressful situations. Responses are given on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true), 2 (somewhat true), 3 (moderately true) to 4 (Exactly true). Higher scores indicate stronger self-efficacy.

- Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF) by Weinstein et al. (2012): This instrument measures autonomy across three dimensions—authenticity, interest-taking, and resistance to control. It consists of 15 items rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (Not at all true), 2 (A bit true), 3 (Somewhat true), 4 (Mostly true) to 5 (Completely true). Higher scores reflect greater autonomous functioning.

- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) by Tennant et al. (2007): 5-point Likert scale from 1 (None of the time), 2(Rarely), 3 (Some of the time), 4 (Often) to 5 (All of the time). Higher scores indicate higher well-being.

Procedure: Data collection occurred using survey live link via Google forms. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Responses were anonymized and securely stored.

Data Analysis: Data was analyzed using SPSS v26. correlation used to assess bonds between variables, and multiple regression was conducted to determine predictive power for well-being.

Participants: A total of 106 young adults aged 18–35 were surveyed. The sample included individuals who had traveled solo or in groups. This inclusive approach allowed for a comprehensive comparison of perceived independence and well-being across varying travel experiences. Pearson correlation was performed.

Instruments: Three standardized self-report measures were used: the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) as a proxy to assess solo travel-related confidence, Index of Autonomous Functioning (IAF), and the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS).

Procedure Follows : Participants were recruited online and offline and provided informed consent before participating in the digital survey.

Findings and Analysis –

Descriptive Statistics:

Descriptive statistics were computed for the three main variables: Solo Travel (mean = 3.0, SD = 0.5), Independence (mean = 3.8, SD = 0.6), and Well-being (mean = 3.5, SD = 0.7).

Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 106)

Variable	Solo Travel	Independence	Well-being
Solo Travel	1.00	–0.04	0.01
Independence	–0.04	1.00	–0.18
Well-being	0.01	–0.18	1.00

Table 2: Regression Analysis Predicting Well-being

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	4.35	0.65	—	6.67	< .001
Solo Travel	0.01	0.15	.003	0.04	.969
Independence	–0.22	0.12	–.18	–1.83	.070

$R^2 = .03$, Adjusted $R^2 = .01$, $F(2, 103) = 1.68$, $p = .192$

Hypothesis Testing:

- **H1**: Not supported ($r = –0.04$, $p > .05$)
- **H2**: Not supported ($r = 0.01$, $p > .05$)
- **H3**: Not supported ($r = –0.18$, $p > .05$)
- **H4**: Not supported ($\beta = –.18$, $p = .070$)
- **H5**: Not supported ($\beta = .003$, $p = .969$)

Discussion –

The findings from this study offer important insights but also contradict commonly held assumptions about the impact of solo travel. The Pearson correlation analysis showed no statistically significant relationships between solo travel, independence, and psychological well-being. These weak associations suggest that solo travel alone may not directly influence these psychological constructs. In particular, the expected positive relationship between solo travel and well-being (H2) was not supported ($r = 0.01$, $p > .05$), indicating that solo travel experiences did not significantly enhance participants' overall well-being. Similarly, independence was not significantly correlated with solo travel (H1) or well-being (H3), despite theoretical models proposing otherwise. The regression model provided additional nuance. While the model was not statistically significant overall ($F(2, 103) = 1.68$, $p = .192$), the variable Independence showed a marginal effect on psychological well being ($\beta = –.18$, $p = .070$).
There are several possible explanations for these results. The sample may have included individuals for whom travel was infrequent, constrained, or done under obligation (e.g., business or academic reasons).

. These findings highlight the need to explore additional mediating or moderating variables—such as pre travel mindset, travel duration, perceived safety, and social support—to better understand how and for whom solo travel yields psychological benefits. Interpretation: Table 1 shows that none of the relationships among Solo Travel, Independence, and Wellbeing were statistically significant. The correlations were weak and suggest no linear association among these constructions in the sample. 31 Interpretation: Table 2 The regression model predicting well-being was not statistically significant. Solo travel was not a meaningful predictor ($\beta = .003$, $p = .969$), while independence showed a marginal trend toward significance ($\beta = –.18$, $p = .070$), suggesting a possible, though weak, inverse relationship with well being

CONCLUSION –

The present study aimed to explore the impact of solo travel on independence and psychological well-being among young adults. Contrary to popular beliefs and prior qualitative research, the findings indicated no significant correlation between solo travel experiences and either independence or psychological well-being. However, a marginal predictive trend was observed for independence influencing psychological well-being. These results suggest that while solo travel is often portrayed as transformational, its psychological benefits may not be universally experienced and could be influenced by various individual and contextual factors. The study highlights the need for more comprehensive research that considers mediators such as personality traits, travel motivations, cultural background, and frequency or duration of travel. Future investigations should aim for larger and more diverse samples that better capture the dynamic effects of travel on personal development.

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