



INTRODUCTION

- Existential Isolation (EI) is the perception that other people do not or cannot understand our subjective experiences or worldview³.
 - EI is associated with negative influences on personal well-being: loneliness, lower self-esteem.
- Existing research suggests that those who experience EI may struggle with perspective taking, making it more difficult to empathize with others.

HYPOTHESES

- We predict that people who feel more existentially isolated will also report less ease of perspective taking and less empathetic concern for others.
- We predict that ease of perspective taking will mediate the association between existential isolation and empathetic concern.

METHOD – Procedure

- All participants are presented with 3 scenarios:
 - Example: "Over drinks, a friend confides to you that they are thinking about breaking up with their partner. They suspect that their partner has been cheating on them with another person. Your friend also tells you that they have been fighting on and off with their partner for some time, although the fights have not always been 'serious' or about big things."
- Participants are given directions to perspective-take:
 - Try to take your friend's perspective, considering how they are feelings and what they are thinking about what has occurred. Visualize as much as possible their situation and what is happening to them. Attempt, as much as possible, to take the perspective of your friend.
- After each scenario, participants then completed the dependent measures.

RESULTS

Pearson Correlations between EI & Well-being

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Existential Isolation	1					
2. Interpersonal Isolation	.42***	1				
3. Similarity	-.095	.05	1			
4. Ease of Perspective Taking	-.23**	-.05	.24***	1		
5. Empathic Concern	-.26***	-.08	.23***	.26***	1	
6. Personal Distress	-.04	-.01	.21**	-.07	.31***	1

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

METHOD – Participants & Measures

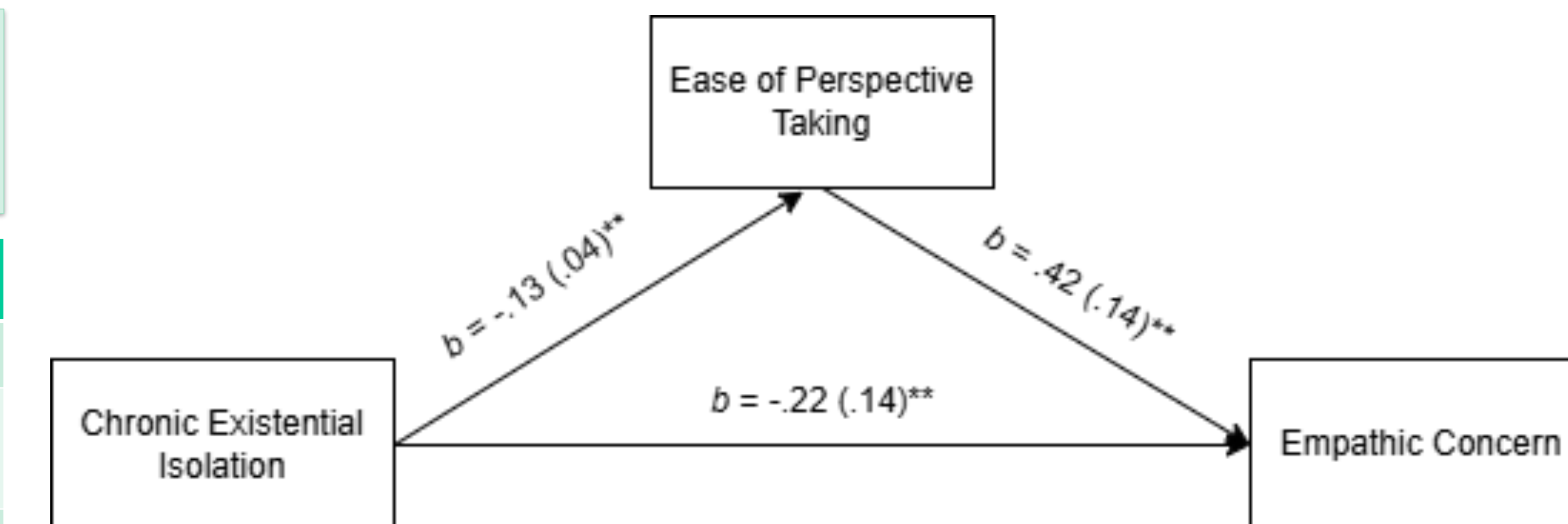
- 186 total participants (TCU undergraduates)
 - 30 men, 156 women
 - Mean age= 19.35 (SD=1.59)

Measures

Dependent Variables

- Ease of Perspective Taking**
 - e.g., "It was easy for me to take the perspective of my friend"
- Experience Similarity**
 - e.g., "How similar is the situation of your friend in the scenario to the one you have experienced?"
- Emotional Response**
 - Empathetic Concern
 - Sympathetic, Compassionate, Tender
 - Personal Distress
 - Troubled, Upset, Worried
- Existential Isolation**
 - e.g., "People do not often share my perspective"
- Interpersonal Isolation**
 - e.g., "I spend a lot of time alone"

Predictor Variables:



- Statistics for indirect effect:
 - $b = -.05 (.03)$, 95% CI [-.119, -.010]
- Pattern does not extend to personal distress
 - $b = .02 (.02)$, 95% CI [-.020, .077]
- This suggests that people who feel more existentially isolated are more likely to express difficulty with perspective taking, which, in turn, is associated with expressing less empathic concern for others.

CONCLUSIONS

- These findings support our hypotheses, suggesting that chronic feelings of EI may inhibit helping behavior

Limitations and Future Directions

- Causality (does Existential Isolation predict Perspective Taking, or does it go the other way)
- Manipulate Perspective Taking and examine whether individual differences in Existential Isolation moderate feelings of empathetic concern
- Does Existential Isolation result in lower, actual, helping behavior?

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