

# FORESEEN SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG YOUTH, A THREAT TO MENTAL HEALTH: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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## **Abstract**

There are several studies conducted in the west on Social Isolation and the major effects of Social Isolation among older people. Social Isolation amongst older people has a major concern for health. The health outcomes of the Social Isolation are well documented in west with several studies but prevention of Isolation in later life remains scarce [1]. Very few studies have been conducted in India with various reputed Indian Institutes on the effect of Social Isolation on the stress levels. Effects of Internet use is also factor among the Gen Zs for Social Isolations. But an Multi Facet Approach is required to study as why Social Isolation is happening? The Objective of this article is to analyze the effects of Isolation in adults by researches already conducted in west and mental effects that it had. This article will mainly focus on defining different types of Isolation from the findings of different literature reviews with special focus on the Urban Youth of India and what preventive steps are advised in the further studies. This article will focus on the assessing the situation of Social Isolation in Youth of India and the effects seen on Mental Health through various literature reviews. This article concludes that There should be proper strategies to mitigate the situation at the very early age and there is a huge research gap in providing a proper line of preventive courses of action for the mitigation of Social Isolation, the yogic approach in details should be studied and practices in more channelized form, is advisable to prevent the Foreseen ill effects of Social Isolation on Youth of India. A more systemized study to be conducted in terms of Yogic Approach for Social Isolation.

**Keywords:** Isolation, Youth of India, Mental Health

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **What is Isolation?**

#### **Root word**

“French took its word *isolé* from the Italian *isolato*, and it in turn comes from the Latin adjective *insulatus*. At its root is the Latin word for an island, *insula*, to which has been added a suffix, *-atus*, used to form adjectives from nouns. *Insulatus*—and, at some length, our word *isolated*—ultimately means ‘made into an island’.”

Paul Anthony Jones (Haggardhawks) Author of 8 books defines ISOLATED: (ADJ) set apart, detached, alone.

ISOLATED literally means ‘made into an island’.

Psychoanalysis definition of Isolation is a process whereby an idea or memory is divested(occupied) of its emotional component.

Isolation is also defined as a state in which an Individual experiences a reduction in the level of normal sensory and social input with possible involuntary limitations on physical space or movement [Isolation:A Concept Analysis by Healthier M Gilmartin].

More appropriately, Isolation is opposite of forming a warm relationship and is described as Emotional Isolation & Social Isolation. [Basic Psychology of Nursing in India]

Emotional Isolation means a loss of closed emotional ties or intimate relationships. While Social Isolation means loss or absence of social ties or the presence of other people.

This article mainly focuses on the Social Isolation.

The Social Isolation is categorized also as Situational and Chronic Isolation among the older people [2].

### **Situational Isolation**

Ageing can be a period of considerable change, which can lead to temporary or what may be termed “Situational Isolation”. Certain life stages such as retirement, or decline in general health or loss of partner can particularly be unsettling at an older age.[2]

### Chronic Isolation

A persistent lack of social ties may lead to the development of a chronic condition that poses serious health risks for older people. While the situational and chronic isolation may be addressed differently, attention should be paid to these two forms of isolation as they can both have an impact on the wellbeing of older adults.[2].

### Defining Youth

There is no universal agreed international definition of Youth age group. For the statistical purpose however, the UN defining Youth as those persons between the age of 15-24 years.

In India as per the National Youth Policy 2003, “Youth” was defined as a person of age between 13-35 years but in the current policy document i.e. National Youth Policy 2014 the person between age group of 15-29 years are considered Youth.

As per the Report of Technical Group on Populations constituted by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Youth in age group of 15-29 years comprises 27.2% of the total population of India for 2021, which is expected to decrease to 22.7% by 2036 but still huge in absolute numbers of 345 million.

### Youth in India [3]

“My hope of the future lies in the youths of Character, Intelligent, resourcing all for the services of others and Obedient – good to themselves and the country at the large.”

-Swami Vivekananda

With 356 million 10-24 years old, India has the world’s largest youth population, UN report 2014. It is said that the developing countries with large youth populations should invest heavily in young people’s education and health and protect their rights. Every fifth person in India is an adolescent between 10 & 19 years. [GoI 2011]. The article [3] addresses the different issues and concerns of young Indians and has pointed out the Health, Mental Health concerns of the young Indians.

Since Youth constitutes a major portion of the country’s working group of population, its good health is seen to enhance the human resources & social capital to improve the political, economic and social wellbeing of a country as a “demographic dividend”. [Morell et al 1998, World Bank 2007, IMF 2012].

### Mental health of Youth

The ministry of Family and Health services in the study of 6 states points out that nearly 10 percent of the urban youth displayed symptoms such as severe stress, depression and anxiety which are indicative disorder [IIPS 2010]. Linked to mental health is the dependence on substance like tobacco and alcohol [3]. The study gave various recommendations to address the issues the youth is facing but there is a gap seen that this study, doesn’t talk about the Social Isolation youth is facing due to several other reasons like disconnection that arise out of the excessive use of social media, leaving the home town at early age, hence finding difficulties in adjusting into the new demographic environment by the youth.

## FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO ISOLATION

There are various problems which any population faces at the demographic and economic state but they are beyond the scope of this study and this study mainly focuses Social Isolation in Urban Youth of India which can lead to several mental health problems. Among the other causes, soon Social Isolation can cause different health concerns in coming generation.

Excessive Social Media use.

Disconnected from the old friends, colleagues and family members due to Migrations.

Unable to find a social circle and finding difficulties due to new demographical environment, while moving out of the home town for studies at a very early age.

Lots of competitions, not only in terms of studies but also how one looks, how one communicates etc.

Body Shaming leading to stay away from the social circles.

Try to maintain a lifestyle revolving around social media.

Not able to share the new problems, situations with the family members.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

The present young Indians are losing a consistent contact with the family members and are not able to communicate as the previous generations were doing. In Such case, the future adult of India are anticipated to be more Isolated or Lonely. What does this mean in understanding the Isolation and Loneliness among this young generation, what needs to be done?

**METHODS**

About 20 articles on Academia, google scholar were reviewed with the keywords Isolation, Mental Health, Youth of India. The language of review articles searched was only English. Also, Book Youth of India is referred for Data collection for the Indian youth Population and the problems.

Several researches done on the older people have concluded many health problems and mental health issues like reduced mortality rate, memory issues, depression, anxiety, depression, use of tobacco and alcohol.

The result of social disconnectedness and perceived isolation are independently associated with lower levels of self-rated physical health. However, the association between disconnectedness and mental health may operate through the strong relationship between perceived isolation and mental health.[4]

After adjusting for a wide range of covariates, the researcher observed that both loneliness and social isolation were associated with several physical health outcomes and health behaviors. However, social isolation was more predictive of mortality risk and loneliness was a stronger predictor of psychological outcomes. Loneliness and social isolation have independent effects on various health and well-being outcomes and thus constitute distinct targets for interventions aimed at improving population health and well-being.[5]

More than one in ten individuals in the adult population reported social isolation, and prevalence varied strongly with regard to sociodemographic and socioeconomic factors. Social isolation was particularly frequent in disadvantaged socioeconomic groups. From a public health perspective, effective prevention of and intervention against social isolation should be a desired target as social isolation leads to poor health. Countermeasures should especially take into account the socioeconomic determinants of social isolation, applying a life-course perspective.[6]

Outcomes of social isolation include psychosocial responses (e.g., depression and quality of life), health-related behaviors (i.e., self-care), and clinical responses (e.g., cognitive function and health service use) [7]

Stress among young adults is not out of the ordinary these days and with the effect of social isolation it can have a havoc on one's mental and physical health.[8]

In the study conducted in West Bengal the reviews of various articles suggests that there is a positive correlation between loneliness and internet addictions among various young students of India. For example, one of the studies concluded that the Social Isolation for girls is higher than that of boys due to the dependency on the Internet. Tiwari and Ruhela [10] determined that extent of social isolation for girls is higher that of boy's counterpart. Further reviewed by the study found that 9.5% under graduate students of MGM Medical College, Indore are internet addicted while girl students are more addicted than that of boy students. Various Researchers have found that socially isolated individuals tend to suffer from physical illness like higher rates of morbidity and mortality, infection, and blood pressure as well as mental illness like depression, cognitive decline, stress and psychological wellbeing. Social acceptance level also decreases with the increases of internet usage [9].

A review conducted by HoltLunstad et al. (2010) revealed that individuals lacking social contact carry a health risk equivalent to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day and being an alcoholic and describes social isolation as being more harmful than not exercising and twice as harmful as obesity (Bolton, 2012, p.10). Research also shows that social isolation puts older adults at greater risk of early mortality (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2010; Steptoe et al., 2013), dementia (Fratiglioni et al., 2004), suicide (Conwell et al., 2011), and cognitive decline (James et al., 2011). This issue is even more important to address given that social connectedness plays an important role in the mental wellbeing of older adults. Individuals who lack social contacts are prone to be socially and psychologically weakened (Pan Ké Shon, 2003), leaving them at greater risk of developing low self-esteem (Scharf, 2014), depression, and loneliness (Djernes, 2006).

Several factors can increase the likelihood of developing social isolation in people with a chronic illness.[7]

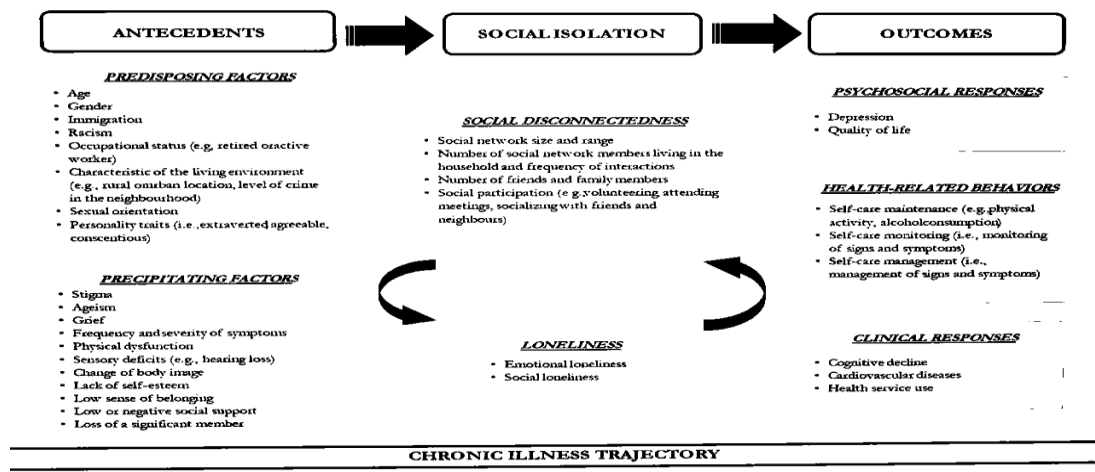


Figure 1. Pictorial model of the middle-range theory of social isolation in chronic illness

There was a recent study conducted on the College student anxiety levels due to forced Social Isolation during COVID 19, and analysis of data proved that the prolonged periods of peer deprivation induced the feeling of loneliness due to a sudden situation of Social Isolation which also increases the fears, sleep patterns were affected, due to the social isolation during COVID the stress levels were seen a rise.[11]

One of the recent studies which was carried out for the first time in India which investigated the social, psychological and organizational factors in “Gen Z’s” sharing their personal information on the social media, due the constant feeling of Social Isolation which leads them to anxiety and hence sharing the personal information to social media. The Study also focuses that there is this feeling of “FOMO” feeling of missing out among this generations and while they don’t rely on or do not find any close ones to share their feelings, they share it on the social media.[12]. The authors suggested further study in this regard is to be conducted as the interactive study with the Gen z’s and it should be a multi facet study. “Another area that researchers could also look at in the future is the interaction of social isolation and social anxiety with other drivers of online sharing of personal information, like altruism and trust”.[12]

## GENERAL SOCIAL ISOLATION SCALES

- Lubben Social Network Scale (LSNS): This 6-item scale measures the size and closeness of an individual's social network. Scores range from 0 to 30, with higher scores indicating a larger and closer network. It's widely used and relatively simple to administer.
- Steptoe Social Isolation Index: This index utilizes five factors to assess isolation: marital status, contact with children, contact with other family, contact with friends, and participation in social groups. It's easy to use and good for capturing broad social connectedness.
- Cornwell Perceived Isolation Scale: This 9-item scale measures perceived lack of social support and loneliness. It includes questions about the availability of family and friends for emotional support and advice.

## SCALES FOCUSING ON SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Social Connectedness Scale: This scale, derived from the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP), captures two dimensions of social isolation: restricted social network and social inactivity. It provides deeper insights into how individuals participate in their social circles.
- Duke Social Support Index (DSSI): This scale emphasizes the perceived adequacy of social support received from different sources like family, friends, and neighbors. It's useful for investigating how individuals perceive their support networks.

## NEED OF THE RESEARCH

Firstly, no such problems were much researched in India, probably because we have the community system and that is very structured till date. But now the system is changing rapidly. And therefore, there arise a need for more researches to be done on this topic, within India. Secondly, as most of the researcher felt and addressed that not a very appropriate Scales are available to measure the Isolation. Thirdly, most of the research is done on the older people, but the scenario is changing and there arise a need to focus and study the Isolation tendencies in Youth.

Fourth, It is foreseen that Social Isolation may increase due to social media use and technological advancement, so it is better to prevent it at early stage than to regret later. We should consider the research done in west on older people in this regard and the major health problems, this elderly generation is already facing and should find out the methods, techniques mentioned in age old yogic tradition to prevent the situation before it shows adverse conditions which can be uncontrollable to the most populated country in the world.

*Also, to note that very few studies suggested Yogic means for the mitigation of Social Isolation and much detailed and practical approach to mitigate the problem should be researched in future.*

## STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATION OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

Some stress relieving techniques like yoga and exercise, engaging in art or a hobby, meditation, staying connected with loved ones virtually, keeping a journal can help people during isolation.[8]  
Meditation reduced the stress level during COVID 19.[11]

## CONCLUSION

It is foreseen that the Social Isolation among the youth in India is going to rise in future and its effects on mental health will be seen, considering the pace at which the technological upgradation is on rise. Therefore, more Studies needs to be done on the Social Isolation in youth of India. And more Accurate Scales are required to measure the

Isolation and how it is different from Loneliness. Also, efforts should be done to work on the Situational Isolation so that the Chronic Isolations and its ill effects on mental health can be avoided for the future generations of India. And Govt of India should pace up the efforts on the Youth development, like changing the education systems. Yogic techniques should be incorporated in early stage of life to children. Inclusions in every task by family members from a very early age is advised. The research gap that is seen in understanding the Social Isolation is wide and more practical approach should be adopted to prevent the problem and Yogic text and its practical approach should be studied as how the Yogic texts, practices will help in problem solving.

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