



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Sociology**

**THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG OLDER ADULTS**

**KEY WORDS:** COVID-19, Social Isolation, Older Adults

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**ABSTRACT**

The COVID-19 pandemic became a challenge to older adults' mental and physical health. During Lockdown the social isolation had immensely affected both physically and psychologically. The social isolation at home made older adults to restrict their physical movement inside house and they spent most of their time by Binge eating and sleeping which resulted in various physical health issues such as Heart disease, Diabetes, Respiratory diseases and Already the older adults are experiencing loneliness and this pandemic situation social isolation had also greater impact on their loneliness. Further social isolation affected their proper health check up and procurement of medicines. They also lack social support and care by the volunteer at old age home. This thematic paper applies content review methodology and had gone through the contents related to the topic and analytically summarized the ideas. The conclusion of the thematic paper states that the social Isolation of older adults is high and it need to be catered at an early. The psychological therapy can be planned with the remedial measures like CBT, Emotive therapy, etc... and the Strategies like self care strategies for physical distancing and promoting social connections between family and friends, community-based networks and resources and they need safe access to nutritious food, medicine, basic necessities, money, physical health and social care. Social isolation are major risk factors that have been linked with poor physical and mental health status. This thematic paper highlights all the above issues in detail and also suggests remedies to lead a new normal life.

**INTRODUCTION**

According to World Health Organization has declared the corona virus 2019 (Covid-19) a pandemic. The global coronavirus (covid-19) caused by severe respiratory infections Corona virus 2 (SARS-COV-2) began in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. From January onwards the disease spread to other countries around the world as a global threat. At this time, adults 65 years of age and older appear to be at higher risk for serious complications from COVID-19. According to the World Health Organization, more than 95% of all homicides are over the age of 60. A third of those deaths occurred in long-term care facilities. COVID-19 changes the daily lives of older adults the friendship and support given, the ability to maintain social relationships, and the way they feel. Social isolation and loneliness are likely to become major risk factors that affect older adults' health outcomes. In almost every country where the COVID-19 outbreak occurs, the elderly are told to quarantine themselves and to shut themselves off from other people who might infect them. In long-term care facilities, it is common practice to prohibit family and friends from visiting the facility to reduce the risk of contracting the virus. Although these restrictions are legitimate in times of crisis, they can significantly adversely affect the mental health of adults experiencing social isolation and loneliness. These social isolation can lead various psychological problems like Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Fear etc.. COVID-19 is increasing the number of socially isolated older adults living in the pandemic community, including nursing home residents, as many countries have issued home stay orders and banned visits to nursing home residents and family visits. It is an important way for them to feel socially connected, and family members are their link with the outside world. However, due to the lockdown policy, all these services and programs are no longer available. These restrictions will certainly increase the social isolation of adults

**SOCIAL ISOLATION**

Social isolation can be structurally defined as the absence of family ties, relationships and social interactions with

neighbour's at the individual level of the border and in a general level with general society. According to Delisle (1988) it refers to the division of relationships, or loneliness, "as the absence ... of the greatness and quality of the relationship" In other words, social isolation involves fewer social connections and fewer social responsibilities, as well as a lack of proper relationships with other people. Social isolation occurs on Three levels. These are micro i.e. at individual level, meso at community level and Macros at the level of society (Delisle, 1999). Older adults who are able to endure social situations of isolation or adjust their expectations so that they do not develop a sense of subjective isolation may be better in terms of physical and mental health than those who feel isolated (Ferraro, 1984; Weiss, 2005). ) Social isolation has a negative impact on physical and mental health, especially among older adults (House, 2001; House, 2002; Tomaka, Thompson, & Palacios, 2006).

**THEORETICAL MODELS OF SOCIAL ISOLATION**

**Social Exchange Theory**

Exchange is the basis of human behaviour. This has been discussed by different researchers in various forms. Homans (1961) states "Social action is an exchange of activities and rewards/costs between individuals On the grounds that people have always explained their conduct by means of its Benefits and costs to them" (Homans, 1961) and is pervasive throughout social Life (Coleman, 1990). Dowd (1980) viewpoint is that Withdrawal and social isolation are not the result of system needs or individual Choices, but an unequal exchange process between older persons and other members of society. There is shift in opportunity structures, roles, and skills accompany with ageing, older people typically have fewer resources which Diminishes their social relationships, and their status accordingly (Hendricks, 1995).

**Buffer theory: Cobb (1979)**

According to this theory social support provides a 'buffer' when people are in crisis, thus the absence of social support may remove this buffer leading to health conditions. People who feel supported by others feel less stress. The individual's

social support system may help moderate, or buffer the effects of life events upon his psychological states. Knowing about friend support will make stressful situations more tolerable (Cohen & Hoberman, 1982; Antonovsky, 1974; 1979; Caplan, 1974; Cassel, 1976; Cobb, 1976; Henderson et al., 1978b; Kaplan, Liem & Liem, 1978). Studies by Andrews et al. (1978); Liem & Liem (1976); Lin et al. (1979c) indicate that social support interacts significantly with life events or strains to produce an impact upon physical or psychological wellbeing. The combination of low support and one or more life events significantly increases symptoms of Physical or psychological distress. The perception of social support promotes Mental health, because it buffers the damaging effects of stress and diminishes The perceived significance of stressful events (Wethington & Kessler, 1986). Perceived social support has also been shown to promote physical health and Reduce all-cause mortality (Ren et al., 1999)

**Social Constructionism: Scott (1969).**

This theoretical approach emphasizes learning from disabled people's experience to understand meanings of disability. Hearing loss or blind differs According to the economic and cultural contexts. A classic study showed that in The United States blindness was experienced as loss requiring counseling, in Sweden as a problem requiring support services, in Britain as a technical issue requiring aids and equipments.

**Activity Theory: Havighurst (1963)**

This theory suggests that aged people should continue an active middle-Aged lifestyle and should remain as active as possible. Instead of an acceptance Of being old, which leads to living a compromised, inactive lifestyle, the Activity Theory proposes maintaining an active life. Also, obstacles are to be resisted and that problems involving declining health, loss of roles and responsibilities, Reductions in income, and a diminishing circle of friends are to be overcome. Activity theory notes that older adults who adjust to later-life transitions by Remaining socially active are happier and healthier (Cavan et al., 1949; Lemon, Bengtson & Peterson, 1972).

**SOCIAL ISOLATION AND AGE**

The aging process can affect the health of older people and sometimes leads to isolation due to illness. Thus, social isolation increases as individuals age. They have limited access to mobility and social interaction. According to Age well Foundation (2010), elderly persons in the age group of 80 Years and above face more isolation in comparison to elderly persons in the lower age Groups. In the age group of 60-70 years, 77.7 percent elderly persons reported that They were going through a phase of isolation. In the age group of 70-80 years, 87 Percent elderly persons complained of isolation. The age groups were divided into Three main categories i.e. 60-70 years, 70-80 years and 80 years and above. An Attempt was made to find out association between age and social isolation.

**COVID -19**

According to the World Health Organization, coronavirus (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people infected with the virus come in contact with mild to moderate influenza viruses and recover without specific treatment. But some people are very sick and need to take medicine. Especially Older people are at greater risk of severe COVID-19 disease, and risk increases with age. Older people with health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease and cancer are more likely to develop serious illnesses. Anyone with COVID-19 can become seriously ill or die at any age. Infectious forms of SARS-CoV-2, such as contact, fluid, airway, fomites, faecal-oral, blood, mother to child, and animal-to-human transmission. The spread of SARS-CoV-2 can range from mild respiratory illness to severe respiratory illness and death, and some people infected with the virus have no symptoms at all.

**HOWTO PREVENT TRANSMISSION?**

To prevent transmission, WHO recommends a comprehensive set of measures including:

- Identify suspect cases as quickly as possible, test, and isolate all cases (infected people) in appropriate facilities;
- Identify and quarantine all close contacts of infected people and test those who develop symptoms so that they can be isolated if they are infected and require care;
- Use fabric masks in specific situations, for example, in public places where there is community transmission and where other prevention measures, such as physical distancing, are not possible;
- Use of contact and droplet precautions by health workers caring for suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients, and use of airborne precautions when aerosol generating procedures are performed;
- Continuous use of a medical mask by health workers and caregivers working in all clinical areas, during all routine activities throughout the entire shift;
- At all times, practice frequent hand hygiene, physical distancing from others when possible, and respiratory etiquette; avoid crowded places, close-contact settings and confined and enclosed spaces with poor ventilation; wear fabric masks when in closed, overcrowded spaces to protect others; and ensure good environmental ventilation in all closed settings and appropriate environmental cleaning and disinfection

**OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the study shows the Impact of covid -19 and Social Isolation among older adults.

**HOWTO OVERCOME**

- **Connect with others** :- Stay in touch with family and friends through video chats, email and social media. If you are not technically savvy, seek help to learn.
- **Go outdoors**:- Go for a walk in outside for some fresh air and waving or greeting others from a safe distance can make a huge difference.
- **Join a online exercise class**:- Exercising in a group setting is a fun way to maintain physical fitness and prevent senior isolation during Covid
- **Adopt a pet** :- If you can take care of animal, consider adopting a pet. Animals can be a source of comfort, as can they reduce stress, isolation and blood pressure.

**STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL ISOLATION**

- Self-Care Strategies for Physical Distancing

It is important that people experiencing social isolation have a self-care strategy. This is especially true when the factors causing isolation are now the real barriers to accessing external resources

**THERAPEUTIC TREATMENT**

Individuals suffering from the effects of social isolation should be mindful of their symptoms and seek help from experts if they persist or become severe Therapist can develop a treatment plan that helps people regain a sense of control over their social lives. Types of therapy used to treat social isolation include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and exposure therapy

- CBT Helps people become more aware of negative or inaccurate thoughts that affect their behaviour. CBT sessions can help individuals identify misperceptions and reshape negative thinking.
- Exposure therapy programs help people break avoidance and fear patterns. During exposure therapy sessions, in a safe environment, individuals are exposed

(in person or in their imagination) to situations they avoid. They confront fears, process emotions, and manage anxiety.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This thematic paper applies content review methodology and had gone through the contents related to the topic and analytically summarized the ideas. The conclusion of the thematic paper states that the social Isolation of older adults is high and it need to be catered at an early. The psychological therapy can be planned with the remedial measures like CBT, Emotive therapy, etc...

### **CONCLUSION**

COVID-19 has an emotional impact on older people. This situation made it worse for them. It affect not only physical and mental health but also social health. One of the major risk factor affect older adults is Social Isolation. It can lead several psychological problems like depression, anxiety, stress, poor sleep, hopeless, tiredness etc.. In times of isolation older people need safe access to nutritious food, basic necessities, money, physical health and social care. Experts have made various recommendations to the World Health Organization to keep the older people mentally and physically healthy. Therefore, it may be necessary to integrate "multi-disciplinary evaluation of consultants, psychiatrists and physiotherapists".

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