

## Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Isha Gupta<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Kumkum Pareek<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Covid-19 has changed the meaning of life globally. Covid-19 has affected the mental & physical health in all age group people but some of them are most vulnerable people such as: older adults. Covid-19 has changed older adults' daily routines. New practices of social distancing or reducing physical closeness with other may contribute to another deadly epidemic among older adults: Social isolation and Loneliness. Older adults are more vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness as they are functionally very dependent on family members or supports by community services. In this paper the researchers attempt provides a better understanding of the impact of covid-19 pandemic among older adults and its management techniques for healthy ageing.

**Keywords:** Loneliness, Social Isolation, Older Adults, COVID-19 Pandemic

We all are facing Covid-19 as a worldwide challenge. Covid-19 has affected the mental & physical health in all age group people. The dizzying spread of Covid-19 as well as the ensuring Social distancing restrictions and public health interventions have contributed to an epidemic of another sort- loneliness. Older adults are more vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness as they are functionally very dependent on family members or supports by community services.

The risk of covid-19 infection is greater for older adults over the age of 60 years who are at a heightened risk of severe illness; hospitalization intensives care unit admission and death (USCDC, 2020).

Covid-19 is changing older people's daily routine the care and support they receive their ability to stay socially connected & how they are perceived. Older people are being challenged by requirement to spend more time at home, lack of physical contact with their family members, friends & colleges and other activities fear of illness & death their own and others.

A report from the National Academics of science, engineering and medicine (NASEM) points out that more than one third of adult aged 45 and older feel lonely and nearly one-

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, R.G.(P.G.) College, Meerut (U.P.) India

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, R.G.(P.G.) College, Meerut (U.P.) India

\*Corresponding Author

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fourth of adult aged 65 and older are considered to be socially isolated. Older adults are at increased risk for loneliness & social isolation because they are more likely to face factors such as living alone, the loss of family or friends, chronic illness & hearing loss.

### ***Loneliness & Social Isolation during Pandemic***

Loneliness & Social Isolation frequently co-occur & are all too common in senior citizens. Loneliness is a subjective feeling of being isolated (NAS et al. 2020) while social isolation is defined as the objective state of having few social relationship or infrequent social contact with others (National Academics of Science et al 2020). Loneliness is also one of the prime indicators of social well-being (Cacipoo & Patrick, 2008).

Study suggest that while loneliness and social isolation are not equal to each other, both have significant physical & mental health effects, especially at older ages, Elderly people are at a higher risk of infection due to their decreased immunity & associated multiple co morbidities like diabetes, Hypertension chronic kidney disease that make them more susceptible to high mortality risks out of this present pandemic situation (Ministry of Health & family welfare, India 2020, Morley & vales 2020).

Old age loneliness an important public Health issue long before the out break has been primary concern with members of the scientific community expecting loneliness to increase during the pandemic measures as lockdown & social distancing are instated for elderly citizens in the protect of healthy safety. (Armitage & Nellums 2020, Ayalon et al 2020, Brooke & Jackson 2020)

During covid-19 the strategy of social distancing is readopted as a tool to prevent human transmission. However, social distancing has some inbuilt challenges for the elderly who are already suffering from a higher rate of social isolation leading to serious psychological distress (Gupta 2020, Khan 2020).

### ***Tips for preventing the effect of loneliness and Social Isolation***

Studies report that loneliness among older people has considerably increased during the pandemic due to maintain virus mitigating measures such as social distancing, self-isolation. It is there important that we create opportunities to foster healthy ageing during the pandemic.

- Spend more time with your family- Earlier all the family members were busy with their respective work but due to pandemic they got a chance to spend the time together.
- Maintain Social Connection with Technology- Today, technology has greatly influenced the lives of people. Through social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Skype. People are connected to each other in different ways. But senior citizens are not acquainted due to which they can not use technology properly. But research has shown that as simple as weekly telephonic session can help reduce anxiety at the time of pandemics (Yang et al 2020).
- Take a Break from News- The 24 hours news cycle can limit. Stick with what you need to know & what happening in your community. Read only what's relevant to you. Covid-19 all means is a digital epidemic where the related statistics spread faster than the virus itself. Only relevant & updated information about the situation outside helps relieve anxiety during isolation (Hyvavarinen & Vrs 2016)

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- Keep Them Engaged Indoors- Take advantages of the slower pace & free time. Try a new hobby. Do something like gardening that gives you a sense of purpose or achievement. Do things that make you feel good.
- Take Care of Yourself- Eat well, go for walk if you can. Try deep breathing, stretching, meditation & yoga. Have a daily routine, have a regular wake up and bed time.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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