# SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN RELATION TO GENDER AND PARENTAL EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

Social isolation among adolescents is a critical issue that can affect emotional well-being and academic performance. The present study aims to examine the level of social isolation among adolescents, analyze the influence of parental education on social isolation, and explore gender differences in social isolation experiences. A descriptive research design was employed, with data collected from a sample of 565 senior secondary school students in Chandigarh. Findings indicate that social isolation levels among adolescents are moderate, with a mean score of 19.781 and a standard deviation of 5.552. No significant difference was found between first-generation learners (FGL) and non-first-generation learners (NFGL), suggesting that parental education does not significantly influence social isolation levels. However, a significant gender difference was observed, with male adolescents experiencing higher levels of social isolation compared to females ($p = 0.0001$). These results highlight the need for targeted interventions to address gender-specific challenges related to social isolation in adolescents.

**Keywords**: Social isolation, adolescents, parental education, psychosocial factors, mental well-being.

## INTRODUCTION

Social isolation is a psychological and social phenomenon characterized by a lack of meaningful interactions and connections with others. It can result in feeling of loneliness, low self-esteem, and emotional distress, particularly among adolescents, who are at a critical stage of social and emotional development. Social isolation during

adolescence can have long-term consequences, affecting mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). Adolescence is a period marked by significant changes in social relationships, where peer interactions play a vital role in shaping identity and self-concept. However, various factors contribute to social isolation, including family dynamics, socio-economic status, digital engagement, and personality traits (Hawkley & Capitanio, 2015). One factor often considered is parental education, as it is believed to influence an adolescent's social skills, confidence, and ability to form relationships. Higher parental education levels are often associated with better access to resources, higher social capital, and improved communication skills, which could help in reducing social isolation among adolescents (Putnam, 2000).

Despite these assumptions, existing research presents mixed findings on the direct influence of parental education on adolescent social isolation. While some studies suggest that highly educated parents foster stronger social development in their children, others argue that social isolation is more dependent on peer relationships and personal experiences rather than parental background (Lempinen et al., 2018). This study aims to examine the relationship between parental education and adolescent social isolation, exploring whether parental educational attainment plays a significant role in shaping adolescents' social experiences.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Recent studies in India have explored various aspects of social isolation among adolescents, focusing on its prevalence, contributing factors, and psychological impacts.

Joshi (2023) investigated the relationship between internet addiction, social isolation, and psychological well-being among young adults in India. The research involved 150 participants who completed standardized scales measuring internet addiction, loneliness, and psychological well-being. The findings revealed a positive correlation between internet addiction and loneliness, indicating that excessive internet use contributes to feelings of social isolation.

Banerjee & Kohli (2022) conducted a study to measure the prevalence of loneliness among young adults during the COVID-19 lockdown in India. Data were collected from 554 participants aged 18-29 years using the UCLA Loneliness Scale. The study found that 30.3% of respondents experienced loneliness during the lockdown period. Factors such as professional status, family type, and living conditions were identified as risk factors for loneliness, with individuals living alone reporting higher levels of loneliness.

Jaiswal, Soni, Sirohi, Kumar, Malik, & Rani, (2024) explored the impact of forced social isolation on smartphone addiction and depression among the Indian population during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study included 191 individuals with a mean age of 23.79 years. Results showed that smartphone use and depression significantly increased during social isolation. A positive correlation was found between smartphone addiction and depression, indicating that increased smart phone dependency during social isolation may lead to higher depression levels.

Hawkley, L. C., & Capitanio, J. P. (2015) studied the prevalence of social isolation among adolescents. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 483 adolescents living in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. An online self-administered questionnaire was used, and it was composed of three sections which are sociodemographic characteristics, assessment of social isolation, and assessment of depression symptoms. The study reported that there was a significant association between social isolation and symptoms of depression among the studied sample ($\chi 2 = 12.3$, $p = 0.002$). It was found that being a male, living with both parents, and having low income are significant predictors of social isolation among adolescents.

These studies collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of social isolation among Indian adolescents and young adults, emphasizing the influence of internet usage, pandemic-induced isolation, and individual psychological factors. The findings underscore the importance of addressing social isolation through targeted interventions to enhance psychological well-being in this demographic.

## RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Social isolation among adolescents has emerged as a significant concern in contemporary society, impacting their psychological well-being, academic performance, and overall development. Previous studies have explored the role of peer relationships, digital engagement, and mental health in social isolation, the impact of parental education remains an area that requires further investigation. It is often assumed that higher parental education levels provide adolescents with better social skills, confidence, and access to social networks, thereby reducing social isolation. By exploring this relationship, the research seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of adolescent social behaviour and provide insights into effective strategies to mitigate social isolation. The findings will be valuable for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals in designing interventions that foster social connectedness and emotional well-being among adolescents.

## OBJECTIVES

1 To examine the level of social isolation among adolescents.

2 To study social isolation in relation to parental education among adolescents.

3 To study social isolation in relation to gender among adolescents.

## HYPOTHESES

1 There is no significant level of social isolation among adolescents.

2 There is no significant difference in social isolation in relation to parental education among adolescents.

3 There is no significant difference in social isolation in relation to gender among adolescents.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1. **Social Isolation**: In this study, social isolation refers to the lack of social interactions, meaningful relationships, and engagement in social activities among adolescents. It was measured using Home Environment Inventory by Mishra (2004).

2. **Adolescents**: Adolescents are defined as individuals between the ages of 13 and 19 years, as per the World Health Organization (WHO) classification. Participants in this study was selected from secondary and higher secondary schools.

3. **Parental Education**: Parental education refers to the highest level of formal education attained by an adolescent's parents. It will be categorized adolescent learners into two groups as:

## FIRST GENERATION LEARNER

A first generation learner in the present study is considered one whose parents or guardians have not completed high school. If the student's siblings have completed a high school, the student is still considered a First Generation Learner.

## NON-FIRST GENERATION LEARNER

In the present study, a Non-first Generation Learner is considered one whose parents or guardians have minimum qualification of matriculation.

**Gender**: Gender in this study is classified based on the biological sex of the participants as male and female, as self-reported by the respondents.

## DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study is limited to adolescents between the ages of **13 to 19 years** only.

2. The study focuses on a specific **region or selected schools**, limiting its generalizability to adolescents in other cultural, economic, or social settings.

3. The study examines **parental education** as a key influencing factor on social isolation, without extensively analyzing other potential contributors such as peer relationships, personality traits, or digital media usage.

4. The study relies on **self-reported questionnaires** for measuring social isolation, which may introduce biases such as social desirability or inaccurate self-assessment by the participants.

## METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

### 1. Research Design

The study employs a descriptive research design to examine the relationship between social isolation among adolescents and parental education. A quantitative survey method is used to collect and analyze data.

### 2. Population and Sample

**Population**: Adolescents aged 13 to 19 years enrolled in secondary and higher secondary schools.

**Sample**: In the present study, students of Class XI and XII studying in Government senior secondary schools of Chandigarh were taken as population for quantitative data collection. A Sample of 565 students was randomly selected from the schools to collect data. The final sample comprised of 282 first generations learners and 283 were non-first generation learners. Out of 282 first generation learners 156 were boys and 126 were girls. Out of 283 non-first generation learners, 139 were boys and 144 were girls.

### 3. Data Collection Tools

For the collection of data following tools have been used;

1. Demographic form for students
2. Home Environment Inventory (Mishra,2004)

## 4. Procedure

The data was collected from a sample of 565 senior secondary school students studying in government schools of Chandigarh (UT). In this regard, the researcher randomly selected 20 schools from the list of senior secondary schools of Chandigarh. In the first session, Demographic sheet and was administered. In the second session, Home Environment Inventory was administered.

## 5. Data Analysis:

1. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) to summarize data.
2. T-tests/ANOVA to examine differences based on gender and locale.

## 6. Interpretation of Data and Result:

Following are given the objective wise results, and analysis and interpretation of the collected data of the present study:

**Table 1: Mean, SD, sk and ku of Social Isolation for total sample (N=565)**

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Isolation | 565 | 19.781 | 5.552 | .167 | -.174 |

The study analyzed the level of social isolation among first-generation learners and non-first-generation learners in classes IX and X. The mean score of social isolation was found to be 19.781, indicating a moderate level of social isolation among the participants. The standard deviation of 5.552 suggests that there is some variability in social isolation experiences among the students. The skewness value of 0.167 indicates that the distribution of social isolation scores is slightly positively skewed, meaning that more students experience social isolation at levels slightly above the mean. The kurtosis value of -0.174 suggests that the distribution is platykurtic, meaning that the data is more spread out and has a flatter distribution compared to a normal curve. Overall, these findings indicate that while social isolation is present among students, its distribution is relatively balanced with a slight tendency toward higher levels of

isolation. However, the lack of significant skewness and a platykurtic distribution suggests that extreme cases of social isolation are not highly prevalent. Hence hypothesis stating that 'There is no significant level of social isolation among adolescents' is rejected.

**Table 2: Comparison of first generation learners (N=282) and Non First Generation Learners (N=283) on the variable of Social Isolation**

| Variable | Group | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Isolation | FGL | 282 | 19.699 | 5.737 | .350 | .726 |
| | NFGL | 283 | 19.862 | 5.370 | | |

Table 2 presents the comparison of social isolation between first-generation learners (FGL) and non-first-generation learners (NFGL). The mean score for social isolation among FGL is 19.699 with a standard deviation of 5.737, while the mean score for NFGL is 19.862 with a standard deviation of 5.370. A t-test was conducted to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The t-value is 0.350, and the p-value is 0.726, which is greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05.

Since the p-value is not significant, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in social isolation between first-generation learners and non-first-generation learners. This suggests that parental educational background does not have a substantial impact on the level of social isolation experienced by students in classes IX and X.

**Table 3: Comparison of Male (N=295) and Female (N=270) on the variable of Social Isolation**

| Variable | Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Isolation | Male | 295 | 20.600 | 5.801 | 3.708 | .0001** |
| | Female | 270 | 18.885 | 5.129 | | |

Table 29 presents the comparison of social isolation between male and female adolescents. The mean score for social isolation among males is 20.600 with a standard deviation of 5.801, whereas the mean score for females is 18.885 with a standard deviation of 5.129. A t-test was conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in social isolation between the two groups. The t-value is 3.708, and the p-value is 0.0001, which is highly significant ($p < 0.05$).

Since the p-value is statistically significant, it can be concluded that males experience significantly higher levels of social isolation compared to females. This finding suggests that gender plays a role in social isolation among adolescents, with males reporting greater feelings of isolation than their female counterparts.

**EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION**

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the impact of parental education and gender on social isolation among adolescents. The results have several implications for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals. Since males experience significantly higher levels of social isolation than females, schools should implement gender-sensitive counselling programs and peer support groups to address emotional and social well-being. Encouraging group activities, mentorship programs, and social skills training can help reduce isolation among male students. Schools should foster a supportive and inclusive environment where students feel connected and engaged. Strategies such as cooperative learning, peer mentoring, and extracurricular clubs can help reduce feelings of isolation among adolescents.

Schools should design activities that promote positive peer interactions, such as group projects, leadership opportunities, and sports. Special focus should be given to engaging students who show signs of social withdrawal. Policymakers should invest in longitudinal studies to explore other contributing factors to adolescent social isolation, such as family environment, digital engagement, and academic pressure. Schools can use these insights to develop more targeted and evidence-based interventions.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights the importance of addressing social isolation among adolescents, particularly among male students. By implementing inclusive educational policies, promoting parental involvement, and providing mental health support, schools can create a more connected and socially engaging learning environment for all students.

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