EXPLORING LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG EMERGING ADULTS IN KERALA

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled "Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala" is the bonafide record of my original research. It has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been duly acknowledged in the text.



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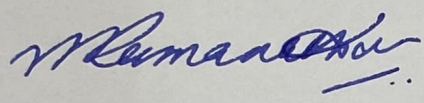
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation titled "Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala" is a record of the research work undertaken by B Harigovind in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of "Master of Public Health" under my guidance and supervision.



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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full form
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BSNL	Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CSDS	Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
C-section	Caesarean section
DOI	Digital Object Identifier
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEM	Grid Elaboration Method
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDI	In-depth interview
IDI Guide	In-depth interview guide
IIPS	International Institute for Population Sciences
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer +
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual
LMIC	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
LSNS6	Lubben Social Network Scale-6
MS-Word	Microsoft Word
OSI	Objective Social Isolation
PMSMA	Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan
PSI	Perceived Social Isolation
TB	Tuberculosis
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization

ABSTRACT

Background

Loneliness and social isolation have been recognised as a priority globally and endorsed by the World Health Organisation as a concern across all ages. While studies document this problem among older adults, emerging adults who face multiple challenges due to the transition to adulthood may experience newer problems in the current milieu of social media, personal aspirations and self-determination.

Objectives

This study aims to understand how emerging adults of the age group 18-29 years conceptualize loneliness and social isolation, the perceived causes, the coping mechanisms employed and the links between loneliness and social isolation.

Methodology

The study used a qualitative mode of inquiry. Data collection techniques included a Free Association Grid Elaboration Method (GEM) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI). Twenty IDIs were conducted. Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted to validate the findings. A hybrid coding approach was used to analyse the interviews and FGDs. The analysis was done using QualCoder version 3.5.

Results

Conceptualizations of loneliness include non-belongingness, helplessness, duration, intensity and triggers for loneliness, and an identified difference from 'being alone'. Sadness, anger, anxiety, restlessness, frustration, disappointment and guilt are the emotions associated with loneliness. Forms of social isolation included abandonment, pressurizing, ignoring, or emotional blackmailing. Both loneliness and social isolation were found to have negative consequences including a desperation to talk, insecurity, physical and emotional manifestations, self-harm, lingering trauma, substance abuse and

developing hatred. Self-isolation was seen as a protective measure which included distancing or engaging in productive activities.

Reasons for loneliness and isolation included pregnancy and migration induced isolation, not belonging because of one's identity, romantic breakups, loss of mentorship, not having people to talk to, financial distress and transitioning to adulthood and dealing with expectations. Reasons for self-isolation included preserving mental wellbeing, hiding socially difficult identities, avoiding consequences of anger and avoiding group-linked practices like substance abuse. Coping mechanisms included external measures like seeking professional help, reaching out to similar groups or communities, venting frustration at partners, and internal measures like giving it time or crying.

Conclusions

Loneliness is an emotional state while social isolation is experienced by individuals due to actions of others and this is beyond their control. Both produce negative emotions and consequences. While individuals exhibit resilience in dealing with loneliness, the difficulty in managing social isolation is evidenced through idioms of distress. Self-isolation is different from social isolation and is a protective factor employed by emerging adults.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Loneliness and social isolation have increasingly been recognised as a public health priority globally. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognised social isolation and loneliness as a concern across all age groups. Globally, 25% of older adults feel socially isolated and 5-15% of adolescents experience loneliness. Health risks of loneliness and social isolation include a 50% increased risk of dementia, 30% increased risk of stroke and cardiovascular diseases, and 25% increased risk of early death (WHO Commission on Social Connection, 2024).

The Annual Review of Public Health 2022 stresses on the importance of recognising social connections as being relevant for public health. Social isolation is considered a structural component of social connection, while loneliness is considered a functional one. The review presents substantial evidence on how social connections or in better terms, a lack of it, is related to mortality and morbidity, and the biological and behavioural pathways through which it affects health. In this light, they stress on the need to integrate social connections to the Social Determinants of Health framework, as well as the broader public health system (Holt-Lunstad, 2022).

The problem of loneliness and social isolation in elderly has been well documented with studies linking it to gender differences, existing disease conditions, depression, mortality and morbidity (Domènech-Abella et al., 2017; Freedman and Nicolle, 2020). However, studies now indicate that it may not be restricted to the elderly. It is something that affects people irrespective of age, condition, profession and place (Gloria, 2022). A review of studies on loneliness in the European Journal of Ageing found that the prevalence of loneliness was high in young adults as well as very old adults (Dykstra, 2009).

Recognising the impact of loneliness and social isolation, studies among young and emerging adults have picked up pace in the Global North. There has been an emphasis on emerging adulthood with its uncertainties, changes and transition from adolescence to adulthood, in the West. In contrast, the studies done in India are more focussed on loneliness and social isolation among the elderly (Hossain et al., 2020).

Loneliness and isolation have been the central theme in Indian mythology as well as creative forms like books and movies. Isolation from mainstream society through exile is a central theme of Indian epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana. Mythologies also talk about forced loneliness like sages practicing meditation and solitude to embrace enlightenment.

Numerous films also talk about loneliness. The Malayalam movie 'Aalkoottathil Thaniye' (Alone in a Crowd) talks about the effects of migration, urbanization and fast-paced life in inducing loneliness (*Aalkkoottathil Thaniye*, 1984). Being away from one's roots and ageing also isolate people and induce loneliness in them. A similar narrative is put forth by the movie 'A Real Pain' where loneliness stems from severed connections due to the differential responsibilities two cousins have (*A Real Pain*, 2024).

Another film 'Anantaram' (monologue) depicts how loneliness and social isolation from childhood builds up over the years and torments a person even during adulthood. The movie blends elements of lack of companionship, orphanhood and absence of a friend circle to loneliness, psychosis and self-harm (*Anantaram*, 1987).

Not only films, but music is also a source of information for loneliness. The song "lonely comin' down" by Dolly Parton describes the loneliness that stems from missing another person. The sadness that comes from losing a romantic partner, how she is reminded of her partner in different instances, how she finally ends up in tears, all provide a conceptualization of loneliness (Parton, 1972). Not only in English, notions of loneliness

induced by loss of a beloved have been part of Malayalam film songs, highlighted by the song in the classic film 'Manichitrathazhu' by Fazil 'Varuvanillarumee' sung by KS Chitra, a lament of loneliness '…. I know that no one will tread these pathways towards me….' (*Manichitrathazhu*, 1993).

These non-academic sources of loneliness and isolation indicate how it has been a subject of importance in art forms. Art is said to reflect life, and the presence of the theme of loneliness in younger ages is indicative of its effect on human beings and their mental health. Therefore, there is a need to explore such understandings with greater detail.

Rationale for the study

Emerging adulthood and the pressure it entails increases the chances of loneliness and isolation, which then may lead to physical ill health manifestations, risky behaviours like substance abuse, mental health issues such as depression, or even extreme actions like suicide.

Figures indicate the median age of people in the Global South nations to be almost 25, confirming an increase in the size of the emerging adult population (*World Economics*, 2024). However, there is a dearth of studies related to loneliness and social isolation among young and emerging adults, as suggested by the literature. Loneliness being very context specific, needs a separate evaluation in these countries. Most of the studies barring a few have used the understanding and tools developed in the Western context, which might not be apt for nations in this part of the world (Akhter-Khan et al., 2024). Therefore, it is necessary that exploratory studies be conducted to gain a better understanding of loneliness and social isolation in the context of Global South, particularly India. A qualitative analysis will help gain in-depth understanding of the issues, including its causes, so that future research can aim to find out statistical significance between them.

The state of Kerala in India is chosen as the study site. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of Kerala is 1.8, which is comparable to that of the United Kingdom (1.6) and the United States of America (1.7) (International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF, 2021; *World Bank Open Data*, 2022). It contains a sizeable adult population with 63.9 % of the total population in the working age group of 15-59 years (District Hand Book – 2022 Thiruvananthapuram, 2022).

The low fertility rate combined with the decreasing average household size (4.7 in 2001 to 3.9 in 2018) means that there is a higher risk of isolation and loneliness among emerging adults in Kerala. Kerala is also known for its high figures of migration, with approximately 25% of emigrants reported to be in the age group of 16-30 years (Rajan and Zachariah, 2019). Similarly, the suicide incidence rate (per 1,00,000 population) among 18-29-year olds was 23.8 in 2014-15, above the national rate of 17.2 (Shibukumar and Thavody, 2017).

A study published in 2022 to explore the changes in family structure in Kerala, and its effect on health, found that there is an increasing trend of nuclearization of families, tendency to have a single child, as well as a change in marriage age. It was found that nuclearization combined with the tendency to have a single child resulted in increased parental aspirations. This in turn led to peer pressure and competition, putting a toll on the emotional health of the children. Pressure so induced led to substance use, limited social interactions and deteriorating social health of children (Pillai et al., 2022).

All these risks point to the need of exploring perceptions of loneliness and social isolation among emerging adults in Kerala.

Research Question

How do emerging adults in Kerala perceive loneliness and social isolation and cope with it?

Objectives

1.1.1. Major Objectives

- To explain loneliness and social isolation from the perspective of emerging adults,
- To understand the perceived causes of loneliness and social isolation among them and
- To document the coping mechanisms employed by them in dealing with loneliness and social isolation.

1.1.2. Minor Objective

To explore the links between loneliness (subjective isolation) and social isolation (objective isolation) among emerging adults.

Chapterisation plan

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first one introduces the subject of loneliness and social isolation and provides the justification for undertaking a study on emerging adults' perceptions of loneliness and social isolation. The second chapter provides an overview of the available literature, both global and national on loneliness and social isolation. The third chapter describes the methodologies used for the study, including the study design, sampling strategies and data collection methods. The fourth chapter describes the results of the study and the last chapter discusses the findings, lists the limitations and strengths of the study and draws conclusions from the findings and identifies the possible implications for public policy and research from the conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Type of Review

The available and relevant literature was reviewed using a narrative review format. This was because the researcher wanted to build a comprehensive overview of loneliness and social isolation, without adhering to a strict structure for the review. The topic also entailed going beyond traditional search engines and sources, as the results for the keyword “loneliness” was usually associated with a disease condition in PubMed. Google Scholar provided more comprehensive results section compared to PubMed. Literature was also obtained from other unconventional sources like Google, newspaper articles, video series, chapters of books, etc.

2.2. Filters applied

The duration of the search in case of PubMed and Google Scholar was 2004 - 2024. This criterion was not applied to in-text references as much of the seminal work in this area predated the search duration. In terms of the site of study, articles related to India as well as other parts of the world were identified. Only free full text articles were selected from PubMed and Google Scholar as paid resources were not accessible. For the search in PubMed, an additional filter of ‘young adults’ was considered as the study group was also added in addition to an unfiltered search.

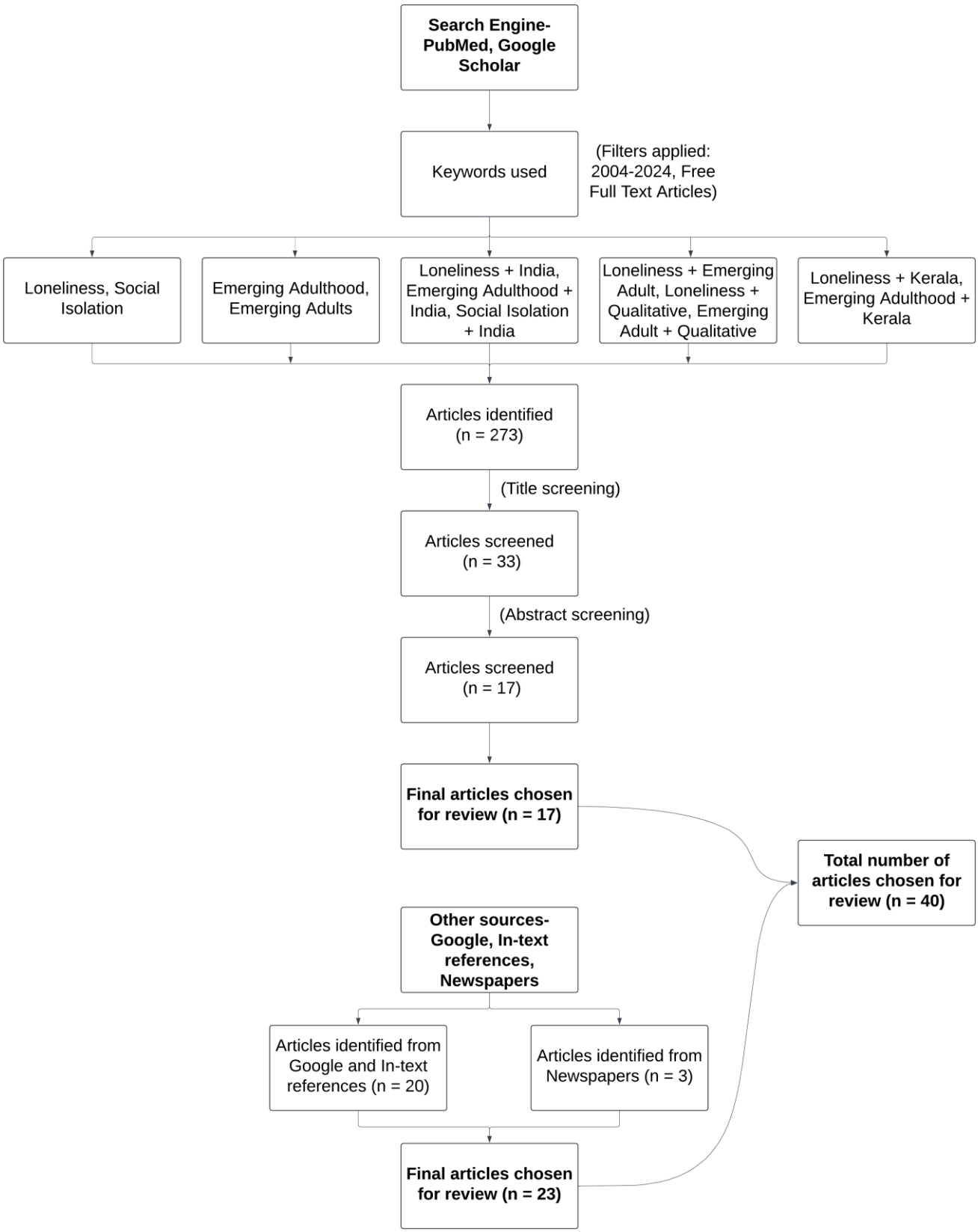


Figure 1. Flowchart of literature review process

2.3. Rationale for using Google

Google was used to familiarize the topic of concern, i.e., loneliness and social isolation. WHO's declaration of loneliness as a 'global public health concern' was the starting point. From there, articles related to loneliness in the WHO Commission on Social Connection website were analysed. Thereafter, newspaper articles related to loneliness and isolation with respect to India and the world were analysed. This helped the researcher to build a base regarding the topic, and also provided exposure to some research studies on loneliness.

Google was also used to get articles related to standard definitions like "youth", "young adult", "emerging adult", "loneliness" and "social isolation".

2.4. Rationale for using In-text References

Since the topic is related to the stream of psychology, it was difficult to find articles without relation to any disease condition in traditional search engines like PubMed and Google Scholar. For example, many results in PubMed for the keyword "loneliness" were "loneliness in HIV patients, TB patients, care-givers", etc. Hence in-text references were used to snowball similar articles.

A predefined criterion was not set for in-text references. Most of the important articles related to the concept of loneliness date prior to 2004. Hence, the duration criteria of 2004-2024 was also not applied for them. Google search or Digital Object Identifier (DOI) of the article was used to locate these articles.

2.5. Grouping the articles

Articles reviewed were grouped based on the broad themes they put forth. The initial literature reviewed consisted of theories, concepts and definitions surrounding loneliness, social isolation and who the study participants should be. Accordingly, these articles have been grouped under the section definitions. This is followed by a more analytic section

which includes relation and causes of loneliness and social isolation. This was done because understanding the concepts was necessary before going onto research studies. Studies were further categorized based on the location in which they were conducted- Global North, Global South and India. Finally, articles that documented the consequences or effects of loneliness and isolation were grouped together.

2.6. Definitions

2.6.1. Young adults or Youth

Young adults have been defined by various bodies and organizations in different ways. Almost all classifications place fifteen years of age as the lower cut off. The United Nations and the WHO defines youth as a person between the age of 15-24 years (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 2013). In India, as per the National Youth Policy, 2014, youth is defined as a person between 15-29 years (National Statistical Office, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India, 2022).

2.6.2. Emerging adults

The term “emerging adult” coined by American psychologist Jeffrey Arnett and he refers to an age group of 18-29 years. He stresses that the particular age group is to be seen as a separate entity that needs importance in the context of developed countries.

Emerging adulthood is characterized by features like exploring one’s identity, exposure to new avenues by virtue of going to universities, starting to work, meeting new people and entering into relationships, and the uncertainties centered around all of the above.

Arnett argues that all these uncertainties could lead to problems specific to this group, including loneliness. He further highlights the need for exploration of emerging adulthood in various cultural contexts and subsequent knowledge-sharing (Arnett, 2007, 2015).

Emerging adulthood is a period of gradual transition from adolescence to adulthood. Individuals during this age of transition experience many changes in their life, including migration for education or work, breaking of links, making new connections, and a host of other experiences which collectively affect them. People may or may not conform to what is "expected" of them at this age- going for higher studies, having romantic partners, earning a livelihood and so on. The inability to conform to such societal norms might induce stress on individuals.

It is also a period where one questions beliefs about politics, world, sexuality, faith, relationships, etc. Having views that differ from one's peers could lead to social or self-isolation (Grob et al., 2020).

Emerging adulthood needs greater examination especially in the Indian context. Hence, this definition is preferred over the definition of 'youth' or 'young adult'.

2.6.3. Loneliness

Loneliness is defined as "the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relations is deficient in some important way, either quantitatively or qualitatively" (Perlman and Peplau, 1981). Loneliness is "a situation experienced by the individual as one where there is an unpleasant or inadmissible lack of (quality of) certain relationships. This includes situations, in which the number of existing relationships is smaller than is considered desirable or admissible, as well as situations where the intimacy one wishes for has not been realized" (de Jong-Gierveld, 1987).

From both the definitions, it is clear that loneliness is a subjective phenomenon. Both quantity and quality of relationships also play a role in determining it.

Broadly, loneliness is classified into two- Emotional loneliness which is when you lack a personal, intimate relationship with someone, and Social loneliness which is when you lack social connections in general (Perlman and Peplau, 1981).

Literature also indicates a positive concept of ‘being alone’ or solitude, where one looks to introspect and develop mental peace, in line with spiritual thoughts (Pandit, 2020). A review of literature on the effect of solitude on emerging adult’s mental well-being finds that solitude can help one reflect, recognize one’s thoughts and feelings and make peace with oneself. Activities like learning a new skill, journaling, reflecting and improving, all are a part of it. Contrary to this, investing in something like social media may do more damage than help (Dixon, 2020). There is a need to distinguish this concept of solitude from loneliness, which is more of a negative connotation associated with emptiness (Tiwari, 2013).

Yet another type of loneliness exist which is much more nuanced and deeper, Existential loneliness. A study published in 2023 among 175 persons tried to explain existential loneliness and differentiate it from conventional loneliness. Existential loneliness was defined as one which comes through deep reflection and thinking. It is not bound by any particular instance/situation like the normal scenario, rather it is something that persists. Questions like what is the meaning of life, what is one’s purpose, and the realization that death is the only certain thing to humans induces a sort of loneliness. This leaves individuals deeply disconnected from the world around them (McKenna-Plumley et al., 2023).

This highlights the need to explain what loneliness is, and the multiple perspectives surrounding it.

2.6.4. Social isolation

Social isolation on the other hand is “the objective lack of social contact with others” (Umberson and Donnelly, 2023). It is concerned with having no or a very small amount of relationships with other people (Gierveld et al., 2006).

Social isolation can also be differentiated into two, Perceived social isolation (PSI) and Objective social isolation (OSI). PSI is where an individual lacks a sense of belonging, they feel distant from their immediate circle like friends and family. In case of OSI, there is an actual lack in the number of connections with social elements like friends, family, community, etc. (Tirukkovalluri et al., 2020) Since PSI is more dependent on feelings, it has been interpreted as loneliness in certain studies.

2.7. Relation between loneliness and social isolation

Social isolation is defined by objective characteristics like the number of people in one's social network. This could be friends, relatives or family. Loneliness on the other hand is perceived and subjective. There is a need to distinguish social isolation from loneliness (De Jong Gierveld and Van Tilburg, 2010). At the most, loneliness can be considered a component of perceived isolation (Cornwell and Waite, 2009). Social isolation indicates a quantitative isolation, whereas loneliness is more of a qualitative isolation (Grover, 2019). This highlights the need to explain how exactly both the phenomena are related. It also means that a single solution to loneliness and social isolation is not possible. People may be socially lonely; some others may be emotionally lonely. Likewise, some people may be socially isolated, while some others may self-isolate. Hence, tailormade responses may be necessary.

2.8. Causes of Loneliness and Social Isolation

Lack of social support is linked to feeling lonely and isolated. The period of emerging adulthood as a transition from adolescence to adulthood is heavily influenced by such social support systems and networks. When individuals like friends and family members who form this support system are cut off, there is a chance that people might get isolated or feel lonely. Having a difficult relationship with parents and not receiving care and

affection from them has been found to induce such negative feelings as well (McClelland et al., 2022; Tirukkovalluri et al., 2020).

A cross-sectional study conducted in 2019 tried to examine the factors associated with social isolation in a public university in USA. Students who indicated that they felt 'lonely' in the UCLA scale to measure loneliness had 26% higher odds of social isolation compared to those who didn't feel lonely. Similarly, the lack of a strong social support system increased the odds of social isolation by 5.56 times, compared to those who had a strong support system. Even something as simple as being able to discuss one's feelings with friends reduced the odds of social isolation by 32% compared to those who were not able to (Ray et al., 2019).

Emerging adulthood is a period of great uncertainties. These uncertainties can make individuals feel like they lack purpose, that they are not able to make sense of their lives. This can make them feel lonely. On the other hand, feeling lonely might inspire people to find their purpose and meaning of life. Hence, it might act as a positive catalyst as well. Individuals with a clear purpose and meaning in their life will probably value and cherish their connections more than others. This helps them to foster deep connections, and in turn, feel less lonely (Chandel and Kalonia, 2024).

Studies have also tried to determine the influence of individual factors like personality traits on loneliness. One such study published in 2011 among 100 students with a mean age of 22 years, finds significant negative correlation between extraversion and loneliness. There is also a positive correlation between neuroticism and loneliness, as well as anxiety and loneliness (Nayyar and Singh, 2011). This raises questions such as - do traits like extraversion act as a protective factor against loneliness? Does it help build more social connections and in turn, provide a buffer against loneliness and social isolation?

Sexuality can become a cause for loneliness or isolation. LGBTQ+ individuals or couples face much more difficulties in navigating through existing systems like marriage, property, financial rights, recognition by the law, etc. Absence of a support system in terms of family, friends, support groups, etc., could make them isolated (Macapagal et al., 2015). This highlights the need to look at loneliness and social isolation from an intersectional lens of gender, personality, sexuality, etc.

A study conducted in Iran in 2020 tried to document the lived experiences of homeless youth aged 18-29 years. Substance abuse, physical and mental disabilities were found to be causes that led families to disown youth. Forced to leave their homes, they felt like the society was also judging and disowning them. The youth here faced social isolation, both from families and the society in general (Johari et al., 2022).

Social media has also been found to be a driver of loneliness and social isolation in multiple studies. The odds of PSI was nearly double in people who used social media for more than two hours, compared to those who used it for less than 30 minutes according to a study done in India in 2020 (Tirukkovalluri et al., 2020). Increased digital time may hamper in person interaction, creating problems in emotionally connecting with people (Rana et al., 2023).

Literature thus points to a variety of causes of loneliness and social isolation, which warrants an in-depth exploration in the Indian context.

2.9. Studies on Loneliness and Social Isolation according to Location

2.9.1. Studies in the Global North

The Annual Review of Sociology, 2023 delves into social isolation as a health hazard. It finds that social isolation and loneliness are influenced heavily by structural factors like racism, ethnicity, socio-economic status and gender (Umberson and Donnelly, 2023).

The roles of culture and society have also been examined in a study done in Ireland in 2021. The study conducted among 27 emerging adults aged 18-25 years found that cultural norms largely driven by individualism is seen a contributor to loneliness. Societal perception that loneliness is not an issue that should affect youth who are able and confident, adds to the lack of support systems in combating the problem (Kirwan et al., 2023).

Another common discussion is around loneliness and comparisons, especially facilitated by social media. A study done among 18-24-year-old young adults in London's most deprived boroughs in 2019, finds that comparisons lead to a lack of self-worth and feeling of loneliness. The pressure to "fit in" and keep up the pace in life also seems to make certain individuals more isolated and lonely (Fardghassemi and Joffe, 2022).

2.9.2. Studies in the Global South

Studies in the Global South on loneliness among emerging adults are fewer in number when compared to the North, with some of them being conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the articles referenced for the study and literature review, the total number of studies related to loneliness, social isolation and emerging adults from India is 30, whereas those from other parts of the world amount to 88.

Prevalence studies of loneliness among adolescents have been conducted by the WHO in 10 countries of South-East Asia. The pooled 12-month prevalence of loneliness was 8.4%, while the percentage of students without any close friends was 8.6% (World Health Organization, Regional Office for South-East Asia, 2017).

A systematic review of qualitative studies done in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) compares the experience of loneliness in various countries, and the geographical and cultural factors surrounding it. Common themes revolving around loneliness include

rejection, alienation and abandonment. Loneliness has also been categorized based on the timing as situational, transient and persistent (Akhter-Khan et al., 2024).

2.9.3. Studies in India

"A review of loneliness among the Indian youth" stresses on examining the role of migration, profession, personality, relationships, physical health and social media on loneliness (Pandit, 2020). People who migrate have a difficult time creating a social circle from scratch and building relationships. Job related stress and failures have been linked to low self-esteem and self-worth, which further trigger isolation and feelings of loneliness. Not just professional failures, but personal failures and the inability to achieve pre-set goals also leads to poor self-esteem, again leading to isolation and loneliness.

Factors associated with loneliness is another domain that has been researched. A study in Punjab found correlation between deficiencies in friendships, romantic relationships and group relationships, with loneliness, among male university students (Upmanyu et al., 1994). Another study in Punjab found correlation between personality traits like neuroticism and extraversion, with loneliness (Nayyar and Singh, 2011). Association of loneliness with current substance abuse was found in a study done in rural Haryana (Malhotra et al., 2019).

With regard to prevalence studies, the only nation-wide statistics for loneliness in India, is through a study by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) among 6122 youth belonging to 19 states. The study revealed that 8% of Indian youth felt lonely very often. After pooling the responses for loneliness, depression, worthlessness and suicidal thoughts, it was found that about 7% of India's youth suffered from high emotional distress (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), 2017).

Various articles in 'The Hindu' newspaper also underscore the need to recognise the problem of loneliness among young adults in India. Psychologists consider loneliness as a

relatively “understudied” and “unacknowledged” public health and social concern in India (Kalia, 2023). Psychiatrists highlight the inability of young adults to recognise loneliness as a problem before it’s “too late”, leading to risk-taking behaviour, substance abuse and social media addiction (Vasudeva, 2019). They also stress on the need to make mental wellbeing a priority among the youth (Zachariah, 2023).

2.10. Effects of Loneliness and Social Isolation

A review on the physical and mental health consequences of loneliness by Hawkley and Cacioppo sums up the major effects of loneliness. Studies indicate a dose-response relationship between loneliness and cardio-vascular health risk in young adults. Similarly, loneliness was found to predict depression over 1-year intervals. The review also found that social isolation led to cognitive decline and dementia in older adults (Hawkley and Cacioppo, 2010).

Grob presents a different take on loneliness and depression with respect to emerging adults. Depression built their capacity to form a coherent identity and find purpose in their lives. Thus, loneliness, depression and emerging adulthood don’t necessarily negatively reinforce one another. Rather they can aid coping and resilience (Grob et al., 2020).

Studies have also looked at what social isolation can do if left unmanaged. One such study in 2015 looked at ‘Hikikomori syndrome’ among participants from India, USA, Japan and Korea. Hikikomori syndrome has been defined as when a person spends six months or longer at their home, avoiding any sort of social contact. This is associated with severe distress. In an extreme scenario, self-isolation if left unmanaged, could result in Hikikomori syndrome (Teo et al., 2015).

An extreme consequence of loneliness and social isolation was found to be the attempt to commit suicide. Social isolation, not being able to build friendships even when you want

to, lack of emotional connectedness with people, and a feeling of not being understood by others, all were found to be triggers to suicidal thoughts. (McClelland et al., 2022).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study Design

This study used a qualitative method of inquiry.

3.2. Study setting

The study was conducted in Kerala, India. Participants belonged to the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Kottayam and Malappuram. Participants who were from other states (Tamil Nadu and Bihar), but residing in Kerala were also recruited. Likewise, persons from Kerala residing in other states (Bangalore and Hyderabad) were also recruited.

3.3. Sample size

I planned to conduct 20-28 interviews until information saturation was attained. 20 interviews were carried out over the course of the data collection period. This comprised of 10 female and 10 male participants, each.

3.4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria: Adults in Kerala or from Kerala aged 18-29 years.

Exclusion criteria: Adults in Kerala or from Kerala below 18 years or above 29 years of age.

The profile of the study participants is provided in Annexure 1.

3.5. Sample selection

Data was collected from emerging adults in Kerala or from Kerala, aged 18-29 years. Initial participant selection was based on convenience in terms of whoever was available. Further participant selection was purposeful, guided by the emergent themes.

3.5.1. Sample selection procedure

Four interviews were conducted based on convenience. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English, following which they were coded. A thorough reading of the transcripts and codes were done. Perspectives that were missing, perspectives that could potentially add a new dimension to the study were searched. People having such characteristics were sought. For example, a male participant remarked that he felt lonely being around female colleagues because they had differential responsibilities due to age and gender. To build varying perspectives, I sought to find perspectives that emerged out of new mothers and pregnant women who belonged to the emerging adult criteria.

Another participant who was a bachelor felt lonely because he felt that married colleagues have differential priorities different from him. To look for perspectives of loneliness among those who were not bachelors, I searched for married couples to understand how their perceptions of loneliness and isolation would be.

The participants for the first four interviews done as per convenience were from nuclear families. For the fifth interview, a person living with a joint family was sought. Similarly, the first four interview participants belonged to middle or upper middle socio-economic status. Therefore, in order to bring in perspectives of loneliness and isolation from a person of lower socio-economic status, three such persons were sought. This process was iterative throughout the study period until the emerging perspectives were repetitive and a semblance of information saturation was attained.

3.6. Data collection

Data collection was carried out by the researcher from 20th January, 2025 to 23rd March, 2025.

3.6.1. Data collection techniques

3.6.1.1.Grid Elaboration Method (GEM)

A free association Grid Elaboration Method (GEM) was used to record what participants associated with loneliness and social isolation before the start of the interview. This method required participants to fill in four grids/boxes, what they associated with loneliness and social isolation. It could be expressed through words, sketches, flowcharts, drawings, poems, songs, etc. Grid Elaboration was preferred because it gave an opportunity to elicit responses from participants which were free of any influence or bias from the researcher. They were also free to choose their form of expression which provided high degree of flexibility to the method (Joffe and Elsey, 2014).

The participants were provided with the grids two days prior to the interview, so that they had ample time to fill it.

What do you associate with the term 'loneliness'? Could you try to describe these in the four grids/boxes given below? Even simple drawings or words can be effective in describing your thoughts or feelings.	

Figure 2. Grid Elaboration Method (GEM)

3.6.1.2.In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews were the primary means of data collection. IDIs were used because it presented a way to explore and discuss the topics in-depth with study participants. The

method gave the researcher liberty to probe dimensions which otherwise would have went unexamined. It also gave the researcher opportunity to clarify perspectives that needed additional insight.

The interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants, the researcher, coffee shops and open parks. For participants who weren't available in person, online meetings were conducted using the platform Zoom. The average duration of interviews was 1.5 hours.

3.6.1.3.Photovoice technique

Photovoice technique was proposed to supplement in-depth interviews, for demonstration/interpretation.

However, the response to the photovoice technique was abysmal with only 1 out of 20 participants sending photos related to the topic. Participants found it hard to ascribe frames to loneliness and social isolation. As the interviews progressed further, the researcher dropped the photovoice technique requirement altogether.

3.6.2. Data collection procedure

Preparations before the interview

The researcher contacted all participants via phone call or WhatsApp at least a day or two prior to the interviews. The objectives of the study and what the procedure entailed was explained to them. They were asked whether they preferred to read the participant information sheet offline or online. All participants confirmed that they would prefer to read it online. Information sheet was shared with them over WhatsApp. A time and place according to their convenience was fixed for interview. For persons that couldn't be accessed in person, online Zoom meetings were fixed.

Process of interviews

The researcher confirmed whether the participant had read the information sheet. All study information including the interview process was reiterated in detail by the researcher. The informed consent sheet was given to the participants, and their consent was sought after making sure that they read it. Oral consent was obtained from participants who were not comfortable with putting signature, or those who weren't available in person.

The researcher requested permission from the participants for recording the interviews. The interviews began with participants elaborating the grids/lists which they filled. Students responded to GEM in the manner that it was envisaged. Working professionals were apprehensive as they perceived the method to be time consuming. Therefore, minor changes were made to GEM in case of working professionals. The researcher requested participants who were working professionals to list down whatever they associate with loneliness and social isolation in a paper or on their mobile phones. Participants explained these lists during interviews.

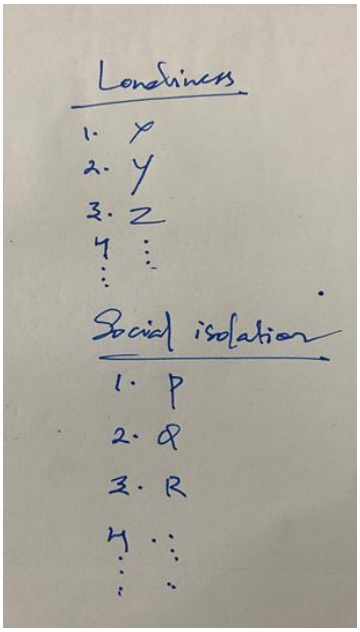


Figure 3. Version of GEM used for working professionals

Aspects that needed clarifications were sought by the researcher. Any aspect in GEM that needed probing was also examined. The researcher kept going back to the In-Depth Interview Guide (IDI Guide) to countercheck the aspects not yet covered by GEM. Questions from the IDI guide was asked to cover these.

The researcher also made it a point to summarize the points of the conversations during regular intervals of the interview. Water breaks were also offered for the participants to relax.

After the interview was completed, the researcher summarized the entire conversation. Any points that the participants felt was left out were covered afterwards. Constant feedback post each interview was also sought by the researcher to make the forthcoming interviews better.

3.7. Data analysis

Recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated into English in MS-Word. Certain phrases were retained in the local language to retain the essence of the conversation. The transcripts were exported as text files and analysed using the software QualCoder version 3.5. Inductive coding was used to code segments from the interviews. This was preferred because the study objectives required participants to share their perspectives of loneliness and isolation. Working based on a framework would have probably denied the opportunity to observe the two phenomena from a fresh lens. Large interview chunks were coded in QualCoder. Codes that exhibited similarity were grouped into larger axial codes, called ‘category’ in QualCoder.

For example-

> *“I never felt that I'm always lonely because (thinks), I'm generally somebody who can entertain myself even when I'm alone. I'm at peace. Even when I'm going through any emotional rollercoaster, I can sit with myself. I'm very confident in*

that space, it never overwhelmed me. So, loneliness is "passing thoughts". I haven't felt that as a constant thought during that point of time".

The chunk above was placed under the code "Loneliness could be transient as well as permanent". It was added to the larger category "Understanding of loneliness".

3.8. Validation using Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Two Focus Group Discussions (FGD)- one each with men and women was proposed after initial coding to confirm/correct emerging categories. This was carried out after the primary coding was completed and axial codes were generated. The researcher summarised the axial codes and the gist of primary codes that came under it into a PowerPoint presentation. This was presented before two focus groups, one female and the other male, after which, discussions followed.

The participants for the FGD comprised of emerging adults in Kerala, but who didn't participate in the interviews. The female FGD comprised of 4 participants and was conducted in a coffee shop. The average age of the female focus group was 25 years. The male FGD comprised of 5 participants and was conducted in the researcher's home. The average age of the male focus group was 24.6 years.

The researcher was the moderator of the discussion. Assistance from a recorder was not sought. The discussions were audio recorded after obtaining consent from the participants. The two recording were transcribed, translated and analysed. A hybrid coding process was used to analyse the findings from the FGDs (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Proudfoot, 2023).

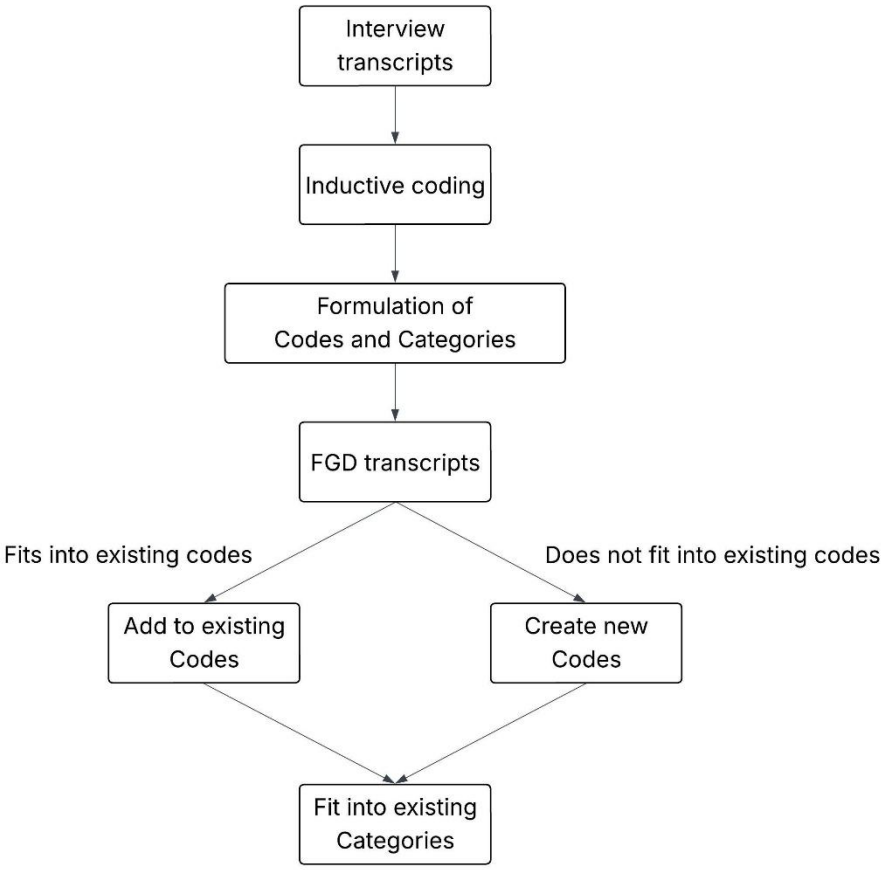


Figure 4. Hybrid coding process used for FGDs

Interviews were inductively coded to generate codes and broader categories. The transcripts of the FGDs were thoroughly analysed to examine which chunks add a new characteristic to already existing codes. Since the already existing codes were used as a framework, the process was deductive coding.

Further, chunks that brought in new characteristics, but different from existing codes were also searched. Since they were not analysed based on any existing coding framework, it represented an inductive approach. Thus, both coding processes were followed as part of the FGDs.

3.9. Ethical considerations

The study was reviewed by the Institute Ethics Committee of the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST)

(SCT/IEC/2326/DECEMBER/2024). The study looks into loneliness and social isolation which have negative connotations associated with it. Recalling instances when one felt either of these might be uncomfortable to some participants.

The researcher called the participants at least a day prior to the interviews and explained the aims of the study, the process of doing it and the approximate time it would consume. Privacy and confidentiality clauses were specifically elaborated to the participants, so that they wouldn't feel uncomfortable sharing personal aspects.

Participants were given the complete liberty to choose the place for conducting interview. Most of the places were public spaces such as coffee shops and open parks. Only five interviews were conducted in the homes of either the participant or the researcher.

The researcher also ensured that proper care was given during interviews to manage stress and discomfort that could have developed among the participants. The participants were allowed to take a break, pause and restart if they felt the need to. They were assured that they were free to stop the interview altogether, if they found it stressful. Drinking water was provided during all interviews as well as the FGD. The researcher had also facilitated the help from a psychologist working with the Government Mental Health Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, in case the participants felt uneasy. However, no participant felt the need to access this service.

3.10. Expected outcomes

Loneliness and social isolation among emerging adults are confirmed through anecdotal evidence, but less through research in the context of Kerala, India. This study aims to give more insights into what exactly both loneliness and social isolation mean for emerging adults. This includes a deeper understanding about how they contextualize loneliness and social isolation, what they perceive the reasons for it are, and how they deal with it.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter describes the findings of my study. The findings have been organized according to the objectives which include explaining the concept of loneliness and social isolation from the perspective of emerging adults, understanding the perceived causes, and documenting the coping mechanisms employed by emerging adults for the same. Another associated objective was to explore the links between loneliness and social isolation.

The results have been organized into four sections which includes conceptualization of loneliness, conceptualization of social isolation, perceived causes for loneliness and social isolation and lastly coping mechanisms used to deal with loneliness and social isolation. The results have been arrived at through the methods of Grid elaboration and follow-up In-depth interviews. Two focus group discussions were conducted for validation. New insights that matched the objectives, but hadn't emerged in the interviews were coded and added to the results through a hybrid-coding process.

4.1. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF LONELINESS

4.1.1. Conceptualization of Loneliness

Not feeling 'belonged'

Loneliness was a state of "non-belongingness". Non-belongingness was a state of unfamiliarity with the way people behaved and their gestures. One of the reasons was going back to the people who were once your go to circle and feeling indifferent. You felt lost because that was not how they were. This variation caused people to feel that they were not part of that circle which was once very familiar and comfortable.

People also felt like they didn't belong when there were people around them, but none to connect with. Having a connection meant you could talk about your feelings, be open and

vulnerable. Some others didn't feel belonged because literally they did not have anybody to rely on.

Another expression of non-belongingness was not having a friends' circle in one's city. This happened because of migration for academic activities or work. You went back to your apartment, but felt lonely as there was nobody to interact with. Even if you wanted to go out, it was a totally different city where you needed to build relationships from scratch.

Non-belongingness was also felt when an individual's group does not react in an expected way. This included not checking on you or lack of communication. In such situations even if any others reached out, people felt lonely. This feeling could only be rectified by that particular individual/group reaching out.

> "*Another thing I want to add on is... I have close relationship with very few persons. Only with those persons I feel this. Even if I engage with other people who are not very close, this feeling will be there. Loneliness is something I would associate with my very close circle*".
>
> - *25-year old female*

The lack of receptiveness or response was yet another reason. For pregnant mothers, loneliness was felt even with their babies near them in the initial months. Babies just felt like any other living being for which they were responsible. That loneliness disappeared only when the baby began to recognize the mother and respond to them.

The loss of a support system was another. People felt like they didn't belong when they lost their support systems like parents, partner or even a close friend.

Helplessness

Loneliness was a situation of helplessness. You understood that it is beyond your control and that you cannot do anything. When loneliness was 'too strong', people were unable to fight it. Giving it time was the only solution. But when the feeling of loneliness was not too strong, people tried to work their way around it. This included trying to do something productive, irrespective of the fact whether they were successful or not.

> "*When loneliness peaks, I feel helpless. I won't be able to manage it. Only thing I can do is giving time. When loneliness is not so strong, I try to do something productive and work it out. It might not work, but I still try*".
>
> - *26-year old female*

Pregnancy was another situation of helplessness which persisted for a long period because women were confined to their rooms because of surgeries like c-section. This meant that they weren't able to socialize at all, making them isolated from the world. The fact that they didn't have a choice about this, made them helpless.

> "*It was there continuously for at least 3 months. There is no switch off. For 3 months I'm in that room. You can't go out. Because of the surgery, I was not encouraged to move that much as well. I used to work, but that was also work from home. I just sat in one place and worked. Work, that was my "off switch*". *So, 3 months continuously. Throughout the day you had the feeling? Throughout the day!"*
>
> - *27-year old female*

Being alone

Being alone is associated with positivity. It is a space where you are by yourself. You engage in activities that give you happiness like your hobbies, learning new things like cooking, or even take time to rewind and relax. It also gave an opportunity to introspect and see things from a wider perspective, in case of problems. At the end of it, people were able to find solutions to problems by being alone.

> "*Even in sad situations, rather than somebody coming and consoling me, I prefer to sit alone. I become okay. When I'm angry, I sit and talk as if that person is right in front of me. Whatever anger I have to get out, I take it out as if the person is sitting right in front of me. If its sadness, sitting and crying a bit helps. I become okay very fast. I don't become okay so fast with people around me*".
>
> - *26-year old female*

However, being alone came with a caveat: it needed to be balanced with socialization. This included a balance between enforced socialization like work-based communication, socializing with relatives after marriage, and need-based socialization like informal communication with friends and others, engagements with one's family and so on. When it was enforced, people felt exhausted and healed themselves by staying home, not engaging in activities or taking off-days from work.

> "*You need to go back to your space occasionally. That solitude is where you engage in positive things. It is a need. As an after effect, sometimes I feel not to go into too much connection with people as well. I oscillate between these two positions*". *– Male FGD*

Self-isolation was another preferred way of being alone.

> "*Self-isolation is a good thing for me. That is my perspective. You stay away, you think about the problem at hand. You are able to recognize what to do to remedy the situation. Only thing is you shouldn't think of self-isolation as a problem. Try to think how to use it effectively. You self-isolate, you observe and learn things, you improve the situation or get used to it. It helps. It's all about the attitude. As a human, my character develops in that situation. Your perspectives change. I consider it a "god's touch", in an optimistic way*".
>
> - *25-year old male*

However, long-term self-isolation could have negative outcomes like difficulty socializing and disappointment from not interacting with anybody. Ultimately, it might even lead to the feeling of 'being lonely'.

Difference between being alone and being lonely

Both being alone and being lonely are associated mostly with being by yourself. While being alone is associated with positivity, being lonely is associated with negativity. There is a lack of productivity, low energy levels and disinterest. It also presented itself through negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety and many others.

While being alone required people to be by themselves, being lonely was not something that was felt necessarily in that context. You could be by yourself and feel lonely, or you could be surrounded by people and yet feel lonely.

Sometimes, being alone can also make people feel lonely. For some, being by yourself in public was lonely. They wished to have somebody by their side in public, but were comfortable being alone in their homes.

> "*Why do you find it uncomfortable to be alone in public?*
> *I don't have clear answers but it is only in public that you recognize that people have somebody, that we are alone, we don't have anybody to talk to, not even someone to express our emotions. We are just on our own in a corner*".
>
> - *20-year old male*

Loneliness within one's control

The extent to which loneliness is in one's control is another point that emerged. People felt that isolation is not something that they have control over. You do not decide who isolates you and who doesn't. But whether you feel lonely, whether you can do something to not feel lonely; people felt that they had more control over such matters. Managing loneliness is also something that you can build capacity for. It was more difficult to manage isolation.

> "*Isolation is not induced by me. It is beyond my control. Loneliness is in my control to an extent in ways I mentioned above. But there is no way to cope up when somebody decides to avoid you. If it's someone you don't see daily, it is not an issue. But if this person that's avoiding you is someone you meet daily, it is difficult*".
>
> - *27-year old male*

Some people also felt that the extent of professional help in combating loneliness is less. It had to come more from the person itself. This reaffirms the earlier point that loneliness is more about oneself and one's control over it.

> "*None of this can be resolved without we ourselves taking an initiative. Therapists, psychologists, none can help without we ourselves choosing to progress*".
>
> - *27-year old male*

However, the taboo around seeking help for mental healthcare made it difficult for people to seek professional help, to the extent of having to lie or hide the fact that they were visiting a therapist.

> "*Another problem is about visiting a psychologist. It's a big taboo. They still believe that only people with a lot of mental issues visit a psychologist*".
>
> - *26-year old male*

Loneliness as transient

The periodicity of loneliness is also something peculiar that emerged out of the interviews. Loneliness has been described as "passing thoughts", something that comes and goes away. People have felt that loneliness is something that they experience for as small a duration as seconds or minutes, or as long as hours, days or months.

> "*I never felt that I'm always lonely because (thinks), I'm generally somebody who can entertain myself even when I'm alone. I'm at peace. Even when I'm going through any emotional rollercoaster, I can sit with myself. I'm very confident in that space, it never overwhelmed me. So, loneliness is "passing thoughts". I haven't felt that as a constant thought during that point of time*".
>
> - *27-year old female*

Duration of loneliness

The duration of loneliness is largely shaped by its cause. Pregnancy was found to be a period that induces loneliness over a long period, say months.

Loneliness is also something that is permanent for some people. It is something that has stayed with people since their childhood because of abandonment at a young age. For others, it is something that has been sparked by an unfortunate event like the death of a strong support system. This feeling of loneliness is always there in the back of their minds. Certain events like talking about death or people getting angry triggers it. The feeling never fully disappears.

> *"This feeling of loneliness, is it something that comes and goes, or something that lasts for a long period?*
> *No, not something that comes and goes. From the time I got to know about the world, it is there on my mind ("njan arivu vecha kaalam thotte ente manassilundu"). Maybe since I was in 5th standard. There is no change in that. I have also thought why there isn't any change in that. Mostly, I think it's because you see and hear children talk to their parents, parents talking to their children, etc. There are elder ladies that work with me who have daughters as old as me. When I hear them talking to their children, it makes me sad. Again, I think about all those times".*
>
> - *27-year old female*

Intensity of the feeling of loneliness

People also found that loneliness peaks during certain situations and dips during others. During peaks, it was associated with high frustration and anxiety. When it dipped, people went into a situation of "numbness" where they realized that life is also about negative events; that it will all pass. Generally, loneliness peaked due to certain triggers.

Triggers for loneliness

Triggers for loneliness could be events like the death of a loved one. It could be actions like not reaching out to you, not checking on you, people getting angry at you or judging

you. Other triggers could be music, movies, pictures or even quotes that remind you of certain people.

> *"Say you are listening to music. If that music is about your father, mother or anybody close to you, it will lead you to tears. The other instance is when you talk about such topics. Anything remotely associated with this incident will trigger loneliness. It could even be a passing thought you get".*
>
> - *26-year old male*

4.1.2. Emotional expressions of loneliness

Sadness

The emotion most associated with loneliness was sadness. The feeling of sadness was mostly accompanied by crying. In such situations, people didn't feel like getting out of bed or facing the world. Participants confined themselves to their rooms and completely shut themselves off in certain cases. For people who felt this sadness because of the demise of a loved one, there was a constant feeling of "loss" associated with it.

> "*Predominantly it was sadness. you always feel like crying, you always cry. You constantly think about losses. The thought that "oh it's lost. I wouldn't get that anymore". Basically, if you ask me the single most defined emotion that I have is sadness. Then it's the feeling of loss. The feeling that you lost something*".
>
> - *26-year-old male*

Anger

People felt angry at the situations that made them lonely like excessive work or people talking behind your back. For a pregnant woman, it was the fact that her husband gets to go out and live his life, while she was confined to her home.

Anxiety, restlessness and frustration

Anxiety, restlessness and frustration triggered irritation towards others, especially one's family. In people with slight obsessive-compulsive disorder, the anxiety exacerbated this tendency. People also questioned their choices and became frustrated at the decisions they made.

Disappointment, regret and guilty

A closely related feeling was regret of your decisions and disappointment from giving certain people excess importance. People also felt guilty about feeling lonely. The fact that they felt lonely even when they were with others made them fall into a loop of loneliness, self-blame and guilt.

4.1.3 Consequences of loneliness

Need to talk

A natural consequence of loneliness was the desperation to talk. This was indicated by persons who migrated to other places due to academic or work-related reasons. The main reason behind it was that they couldn't have a circle like they did, in the new city. This made them desperate to reach out to others. It didn't matter whether the people they talked to were close people. The topics they talked also didn't matter. All that mattered was that they talk to someone. People reached out to others who stayed in the same apartment, telephoned distant persons or used online apps to meet new people.

> "*The desperation was when I went back after all this to my flat. I still had a lot of time. Even if I feel like I have to call and talk to someone, I can't call the same person every day. I went to a space where I started contacting and talking to people whom I rarely contacted*".
>
> - *27-year old male*

Loss of self-confidence and feeling insecure

Loneliness triggered anxiety in individuals. It took a toll on peoples' self-worth and self-confidence as they compared themselves to people who are 'not lonely'. This made them insecure.

> "*There was always this comparison that "hey see those people. They are not lonely, only I am lonely". I had low "self-worth" in such situations. I felt I was not lucky. There was a lack of self-confidence*".
>
> - *27-year old male*

Physical manifestations

Loneliness also manifested through physical difficulties like mouth ulcers and vomiting. Others developed chest and shoulder pain. An extreme consequence of feeling lonely was panic attacks.

> "*I think the most important reason is the demise of my father. I started getting panic attacks after that. I didn't have any idea about what it is or even that such a thing existed. One day I was casually having a conversation with my friends. Suddenly I felt a sudden sense of breathlessness; a feeling that I would die soon*".
>
> - *26-year old male*

Some people felt excessive sleepiness while others suffered from lack of sleep. Likewise, some people found it very difficult to eat food, while others indulged in binge eating.

Emotional manifestations

Loss of productivity and a general disinterest was an after-effect. For working professionals, it drove down their productivity.

> "*But you don't feel like doing anything. You are lazy. Your movements become slow. Things you did very swiftly feels like you are doing it for someone*".
>
> - *21-year old male*

Loneliness also affected peoples' personalities. Extroverted people decreased communication and sort of turned inward. They were also stuck in a world of their own. People got lost in their thoughts frequently. Even if they were present physically in spaces like work or universities, they were mentally not present.

> *"You see I was a very extroverted person, continuously chirping like a bird. From that person, I changed into a silent person".*
>
> - *27-year old male*

Another consequence of loneliness was having pessimistic thoughts. People felt that any decision they make will turn out to be wrong. They started judging their future negatively. These thoughts also triggered old traumas which proved to be problematic in newer relationships.

Self-harm

Some people also felt like physically hurting themselves to get rid of their mental pain. In extreme cases, people felt suicidal.

"Suicidal thoughts did come to me. I will never have a life like I did, so why live it? Such thoughts came, but they were very immature. I thought about such instances, but never dared to do anything. It was just thoughts. But post-partum, there were instances when I really wanted to do it. There is sleeplessness, there are no sane thoughts, so I really imagined such things".

- *27-year old mother*

Positive outcomes

Short term

Participants also added a whole new dimension to loneliness with some finding it to enhance their creative side; their artistic skills. They wrote poems, photographed more when they felt lonely. This brought them peace.

Long term

Some people also found the long-term consequences of loneliness to be positive. People started appreciating those who were there throughout their difficult journey. They started loving and appreciating themselves which boosted their self-confidence. Even though they lost some people from their lives, they understood that it is part of life, and the circle that remained is more valuable. People were also able to get more clarity about what they look for in people. Hence, communication became easier.

"*In the long run, consequences of loneliness could be positive. Loneliness helped bring gratitude for people who were there for you through your hardships. You start appreciating yourself for the journey you made. Your self-esteem and self-worth increases. It has a brighter side*".

- *Male FGD*

4.2. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ISOLATION

4.2.1. Forms of Social Isolation

Abandonment

Abandonment, refusal to talk, getting angry when you try to reach out were the first forms of social isolation experienced by a lady who was orphaned as a child. Her parents left her in an orphanage when she was 7-8 years old. As she grew up, this isolation of being left out by her parents increased. When she tried to reach out to her mother, she refused

any interaction. During the time she was permitted to meet her, she had to go no more than the boundary gate of the mother's house.

Ignoring

Another form of isolation was ignoring. Within a hostel setting, people were ignored because they were perceived as "padhippi" (extremely studious). They were kept out of conversations in which all others participated. Ignoring could also come from one's family. This includes not paying heed to your opinions or even taking decisions for you without consulting you.

> "*In hostel there are times when I sit alone in one room and all my classmates sit in another room and talk. The moment I walk into their room, the room becomes quiet. Out of 8 classmates in the hostel, only 2 people including me have cleared all subjects. Since I got the "*padhippi*" tag, I'm kept away. The other is a Bengali guy. He has language barriers as well. They change the topic of conversation when I come*".
>
> - *21-year old male*

Pressurizing to control

Other forms of social isolation include advice, emotional-blackmail and pressurizing. One of the participants who was gay suffered from being advised including visiting a psychologist to provide 'help' with his sexual preferences. Indirect pressure to push him into a heterosexual marriage also was part of this. People also resorted to using religious elements like notions of sinning to emotionally blackmail him.

> *"After I opened up about my sexuality, the conversation turned into an advice-game and emotional blackmailing. Religious elements also became part of the conversation".*
>
> *- 28-year old gay man*
>
> *"The reaction afterwards was like "we will give you counselling; this is abnormal, I know a famous psychologist from America who will be able to help you with this; we can change this by approaching a doctor". All this made me very upset. I reacted very rudely. The fact that such a learned person talked to me that way was upsetting. It got to a point where we didn't even look at each other. Both these are strong reasons for isolation".*
>
> *- 28-year old gay man*

Withholding favors as a form of bargaining

Another form of isolation was found to be not extending a favour even when you can. When people deviated from their religious faith, or became an atheist, family members stopped extending favours. This included aspects like job recommendations. Helping an atheist was seen as "believers" helping a "non-believer" to grow. This was perceived to be an indirect form of isolation, because families couldn't isolate in evident forms.

4.2.2. Consequences of social isolation

Lingering trauma

A person who was orphaned when she was 7-8 years old suffered from traumatic childhood experiences including abuse. She grew up in a hostel where she was the only person who didn't have a family. She was bullied and called "anadhe anadhe" (orphan). Inside the hostel, she was made to work in kitchens after school hours and when other children went for vacation. She also suffered from abuse within the hostel, with nobody to run to for help.

> "*I told earlier that there are children who stay there with their family sponsoring them, right? I had to help prepare food for them. For this, they made me wake up at 3 in the morning! By 9'45 am, I used to go to school. After reaching back around 4 pm, it was evening's work. After that, it would definitely be around 7'30-8 pm when I sat for studies. They switched off all lights by 10 pm. This was how it was".*
> *"There were priests within the hostel who exhibited undesirable behaviour ("vendatha swabhavangalum karyangalumullavar"). But nobody allowed us to talk about it. Even if we try to tell this to someone within the orphanage, they would only try to confine it or hide it. A lot of such things have taken place there*".
>
> - *27-year old female*

Substance abuse

Another consequence of social isolation was numbing oneself using intoxicants and narcotic substances.

> *"He did not know how to deal with his emotions, what he was feeling. He couldn't place it. He just had a lot of meltdowns. He even went into chain-smoking. Other than that, nothing positive that he did. He just talked to me. That was his only way out.*
> *Was this smoking triggered because of this?*

No no. He was a heavy weed user for a long time. He had cut down from it for a period. But this triggered it back. That was his coping mechanism, I guess. Numbing himself".

- 27-year old mother about her husband

Suicidal thoughts

People who experienced abandonment, abuse and bullying during childhood developed a pessimistic outlook towards life, and even suicidal thoughts.

Developing hatred

Similar to loneliness, people felt extremely sad in cases of social isolation. Additionally, there was an intense hatred whereby they didn't want to associate at all with the person or group that isolated them.

"*It was mostly extreme sadness in the instances where I was isolated. I've not felt angry. I have never became too humble and requested them for friendship again. It is their thing. Anger was not there, but extreme sadness. You could say that I've felt "hatred" towards them to an extent.*
Could you explain "hatred" for me?
Hatred in the sense there is no chance for a liaison between us now".

- *27-year old male*

4.2.3. Means of self-isolation

Distancing

Distancing was the primary method of isolating oneself from others. This included minimal interactions like "hi-bye", not engaging in messaging or calling, and talking only when absolutely necessary.

Giving excuses

Making excuses to escape from people and situations was also a means to self-isolate. Some people used inconvenience of family as an excuse. Mothers used their babies as an excuse.

"*I make my child the excuse mostly (laughs). In a way it is true. It's hard to manage when my child is around. My friends will also struggle. So, this is my excuse*".

- 27-year old mother

Engaging in productive activities

Engaging in productive activities like art, craft or photography was something people did to isolate themselves. They experimented by learning and implementing new techniques like photographing from a new angle, making dreamcatchers and so on.

4.3. PERCEIVED CAUSES FOR LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

4.3.1. Perceived causes for loneliness

Body dysmorphia

The body dysmorphia after pregnancy and comparisons to others who remained slim even post pregnancy was something that triggered loneliness in mothers.

> *"You see all these actresses that give birth. I know that they have money, but it seems inhuman. "Where is your belly, how are you standing up, running, dancing and shooting? How are you going to the gym? Where is all this energy coming from? Did you not birth the child?" I had a million questions for them. I felt like it was a very false sense of reality".*
>
> *- 27-year old female*

Pregnancy

The difficulties associated with pregnancy was another reason for loneliness. Not having people who relate to your situation, the shift of attention from mother to the baby once they deliver, not being able to move around when you want to, all contributed to significant loneliness among pregnant women and mothers. Having to learn the hardships of pregnancy on your own and not having other pregnant women to share the difficulties was one reason.

> "*But it started right after 5 months of pregnancy. You won't be able to sleep, you'll be awake. You feel lonely throughout that time. I remember once I got up at 3 am to walk so that I could tire myself to sleep. Those were dark times (laughs). First 5 months was good, but once the stomach starts growing, its difficult ("vayaru vannal paada"). There's vomiting, there difficulty in walking and sleeping*".
>
> *- 27-year old mother*

Not belonging

People didn't feel belonged either because of having to hide their identity, or because of not being able to express it fully. This made it difficult for them to fit in. Going back to

your former circle of friends or family after you were away for a certain period made you feel like things have changed, like they have changed. Similarly, not being able to be yourself, living in a predominantly heteronormative society meant that gay men couldn't express themselves to the fullest, be it thorough thoughts or actions. Such situations in which people judge you or don't understand you also lead to loneliness.

> "*If you look at it this way, there's multiple reasons why we are not able be ourselves and remain ourselves to the truest extent, a situation where we are able to enjoy, where we have freedom of expression. It is a situation where you are not able to lead a normal life*".
>
> *- 28-year old male*

Not belonging to a particular identity also induced loneliness in people. Coming from a relatively lower socio-economic household, a person couldn't relate to the extravagant lifestyle his peers followed. Difference in priorities of colleagues who were married and had a family, compared to you who was a bachelor was another. Being the only orphaned child among a hostel full of others also contributed to loneliness.

People also felt they didn't belong due to work as well. Not knowing how to deal with things during initial days at work or superiors burdening you with excess work contributed to this. For migrants working in other countries or night-shifts, the difference in work timings with their friends and family meant communication became harder. Being the only person in a particular city while one's work-team is elsewhere also isolated people.

> *"Even if I think that I will go meet my friends, they are busy with their jobs. It'll be late when they are free. Then it's of no use. I only meet them occasionally".*
>
> *- 31-year old male*

Not having anyone to talk to

Not having someone to talk to, especially when you migrated to a new city induced loneliness. It was also the case when one's friends or relatives migrated to a place elsewhere. For some, it was the inaccessibility via any means, be it phone or in-person. For people who migrated to foreign countries in search of better education or

employment, it was the inability to talk about issues there, or difference in time zones making phone calls difficult. For others, it was the fact that an in-person communication was not possible.

When people didn't have anyone to share their extremes of happiness or sadness, they felt lonely. When there was no one to check on them, they felt lonely. Equally, when people couldn't share everyday mundane moments or the little things in life with others, they felt lonely.

> *"Maybe talking to someone always helps for me. Whatever I feel, I try to tell that openly to someone. That works. However sometimes, you don't get that right person. It usually happens during that time. More than not knowing what to do, it is about expressing it to someone. Expressing makes me a bit relaxed".*
>
> *- 26-year old female*

Not only this, not being able to meaningfully engage even when people were around you induced loneliness. "Quality talks" which included talking about one's feelings and life was absent for many. Conversations got reduced to sending emojis or memes to friends.

> "*Look at the chat between best friends. Conversations are through reels, not even text messages. The reply to reels is smileys, not texts. I feel like we are "stuck in the virtual world". There is no real life. It is depressing*".
>
> *- 27-year old mother*

Loss of mentorship

The loss of someone very close was another reason for loneliness. People who lost their parents were triggered by conversations about parents or even seeing children with their parents. They felt they lost their guide. They had to make all the decisions. There was no one to take care of things. There was nobody to look up to anymore.

> *"Whenever I see someone else with their parents, it reminds me of my parents. I get tears in my eyes. I wish my parents were alive. It disturbs me inside that they are not there".*
>
> *- 26-year-old male*
>
> *"Everybody says that I have inherited my father's characteristics. When such a person went away, I felt that I don't have anybody. The post became vacant all the care and support that you got cease to exist. I definitely felt lonely at that point. Another thing is that my mother became bolder only after that incident. She was a totally different person before that. Show my emotional support until that point was my father. When such a person passed away, I definitely felt that loneliness".*
>
> *- 26-year-old male*

Socially challenged

A few people felt lonely because of their personality trait. For an introvert, it was the disappointment that he couldn't interact with a lot of people like other people did.

Breaking up from a romantic relationship

Breakup was another major reason for loneliness. It was the sudden absence of a person whom you were talking to on a daily basis, someone whom you were most vulnerable with. Romantic partnership was also a space for people to be emotionally dependent. They trusted their emotions and feelings with their partners. When that space wasn't available anymore, people felt a "void" which they associated with loneliness.

> "*See I had someone to talk every day. That suddenly came to a halt which made me feel lonely. It gave me a high level of loneliness. Every night I used to call and talk to a person, now there is a "void" there. A "routine" got broken which created a void. This void manifested as loneliness for me*".
>
> - *27-year old male*

Transitioning to adulthood and dealing with expectations

The transition from adolescence to adulthood which is a characteristic of emerging adulthood paved the way for feelings of loneliness. Expectation from the society about getting a job and taking care of the family, not getting the expected support from family during pregnancy, comparing one's life to others who have "moved ahead" in their careers, all added to this.

> *"My social circle lessened. I understood genuine and non-genuine people. People's priorities change and because of that, people change. This is the immediate change I experienced from college to PG and work. Also, all aspects related to a person become visible during this transition- personal, professional, family, friendship.*
> *The number of friends I have has been on a decreasing trend. It was initially hard to accept, but now I've accepted it. It is harder to build new friendships.*
> *There is a difference you feel with respect to family as well. The "kiddishness" you associate with it is not there anymore. You are serious there as well. You don't have a lot to talk to your parents. Even calling parents at times, is just because you have to. All you say is "hi, hello, did you eat, what did you eat"? It is also part of letting them know that we are all okay".*
>
> - *23-year old female*

The expectation-reality mismatch also manifested in other forms. For a person that was considered “bold” by others, it was the fact that she couldn’t get anybody else to take a decision for her. For an adult male, it was conforming to the society’s expectation that the eldest son has to take care of the household after the father’s demise. This meant that he couldn’t express his vulnerabilities or emotions in front of his family. A lot of people count on you, but you didn’t have anyone to count on.

> *“Even when you cry you wish you could say all this to somebody, but such a person is not there in my life right now. If you examine my home, I have a younger brother and my mother. I am the elder son. They look up to me. When they or sad, they convey that to me if I speak to them with the same intensity, I don’t think it would turn out to be good. Hence, I don’t have anybody to share just like what they do, I cry”.*
>
> - *26-year old male*

Being idle was also a factor for loneliness. Idleness was associated with overthinking about friendships, career-uncertainties, traumatic events of the past, or even scenarios that one builds inside their head. Such thoughts triggered feelings of loneliness. Living alone added to this.

4.3.2. Perceived causes for Social isolation

Identity

Sexual: Being homosexual in a heteronormative society was one of the reasons for social isolation.

Religious: Deviating from religious practices and being an atheist inside a religiously orthodox family isolated individuals from the rest of the family members.

Linguistic: There was a linguistic barrier that migrants experienced. People were unable to communicate properly because of language differences.

Migrant status: Because of the migrant identity, people were excluded from public services like ration or getting a BSNL sim.

Feeling ignored due to identity mismatch

Physical appearance: People felt they were isolated in situations where they were ignored or judged because of how they looked.

> *"When your "slim" friends discuss about dresses, you are ignored because they feel you don't have anything to discuss about it because of your body structure".*
>
> - *Female FGD*

Work: Professional jealousy in the workplace caused people to ignore and isolate others. When an individual got a promotion or was shifted to a 'better work team', their old teammates started ignoring them. Not inviting them to certain events, clicking group pictures without them, talking behind their back all were forms of this.

Racism: People also experienced subtle manifestations of racism in **foreign countries** which was perceived to be a reason for isolation.

> "*I've travelled to two foreign countries. Once while I was in a shop in Malaysia, I faced an incident. We were bargaining with one shop owner. The moment a White guy from America came, there was a switch. Even if we say there's no racism, the moment that guy came, the shop people went to them completely. We were like "why did we come here". The consideration that we got changed, just because of colour*".
>
> - *27-year old male*

Pregnancy status: The stage of pregnancy and motherhood was another reason. Physical difficulties of pregnancy meant that women were not able to go out and socialize. Procedures like c-sections made it difficult for mothers to even get out of bed. When they were in a situation to go out, infrastructural difficulties like lack of public breastfeeding spaces made them confine themselves to their homes.

> "*The problem was I couldn't go for walks that time because he was with me. I don't think I've even went to hotels. If I need to, I have to enquire whether the place is breastfeeding friendly, whether they have exclusive rooms. Breastfeeding publicly is not possible here in our place. That's a big issue. There are only 1-2 places where there are such spaces. I cannot take him on public transport as well. Only situation when feeding is possible is if we travel by our own car. I started this only after 1 month. Until then I was in isolation*".
>
> *- 27-year old mother*

Cultural norms regarding new mothers also prevented them from going outside, further isolating them.

> "*The mother shouldn't go out for 41 days. When she goes out and comes back after this period, she should only enter through the back-door of the house. There are a lot of such outdated customs that don't hold true in the present times. People don't understand that it's not possible*".
>
> *- 27-year old mother*

In the midst of all this, pregnancy induced social isolation also affected pregnant women and mothers. The only people who could relate to the situation of pregnancy was other pregnant women. Since they were undergoing challenges of their own, it was not possible for them to reach out and interact with each other. Not having a choice made them helpless.

> "*The pregnant ladies I knew were going through difficulties of their own. Talking wasn't feasible for them. I loved to watch movies and read books. I didn't feel like doing these. I didn't even feel like socializing. I wanted to share these difficulties with someone who would understand, but they are also leading the same difficulties. It's not easy for them ("avarkku vayya")*".
>
> *- 27-year old mother*

Financial distress

Disputes in terms of financial matters like who gets ancestral properties and land were reasons for family members to isolate others.

> *"My father had two brothers. They separated me and my parents from the whole house itself. I remember my father's younger brother telling me "this is not your house. You go away". We shifted to another house soon. My grandmother never came out of their house. I've never seen her. Immediately afterwards, my father passed away. Even while the rituals were happening, they portioned the land and took all the crops available. We didn't get anything".*
>
> *- 26-year old male*

4.3.3. Reasons for self-isolation

Preserving mental health

One of the most cited reasons for self-isolation was one's own mental well-being. People decided to stay away from people, groups or situations that affected their mental health.

> *"When is it okay to self-isolate?*
> *In one word, one's mental health. If it brings you happiness when you self-isolate, do it".*
>
> *- 29-year old male*

Hiding identity

Living in a society that is predominantly homophobic was another reason to isolate from that region for people who are gay. They felt that they could never be their actual self, that they could never express themselves.

> "*Look at social media. If you read the comments to a photo that two happily living gay couples post, you get heartbroken. I'm surprised that people can spread so much hatred. Why live in a place like this when you have other options? I'm not generalizing, but there are lots who have hatred*".
>
> - *21-year old male*

Avoiding consequences of anger

Anger was perceived to be a valid reason to self-isolate. Other emotions like sadness, anxiety and fear were not thought so. People were expected to reach out to others for help in case of the latter.

Avoiding group-linked practices

People also chose to stay away from groups because they deviated from the group tendency of consuming alcohol, cigarettes or other intoxicants.

Un-safe spaces

Un-safe spaces were those that triggered loneliness and negativity. These were as broad as homophobic societies, one's own apartment where they lived by themselves, home without certain people like mothers, or even individuals who are judgmental.

4.4. COPING MECHANISMS USED TO DEAL WITH LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

4.4.1. Coping- loneliness

Finding safety in identity linked groups, family and communities

One of the most preferred ways of dealing with loneliness was to find others like oneself, support systems or just being around people. It could be family members like mother or sister. It could be a close friend, friend-circle or partner. It could be communities or groups as well like an LGBTQIA+ support group. Sometimes, all it mattered was that you

have people around you. For some people, others need not talk to you or do anything for you; just being there helped.

Undertaking recreational activities to consciously distract

They undertook recreational activities like listening to music and podcasts, cooking and cleaning one's space, engaging in social media, watching content like news, series or movies, or even going for drives. Getting out of one's comfort zone was another form of distraction.

Undertaking productive/spiritual activities to consciously distract

Engaging in art and craft, reading, clearing exams, journaling one's feelings, writing poems and stories and other productive engagements were measures that brought relief to people. This also included self-grooming and activities like yoga, meditation or prayer.

Undertaking physical activities to consciously distract

Another measure was to involve in physical activity. This included walking, running or other forms of exercise. People did this to feel better or even tire themselves to sleep, so that they didn't have to embrace their feelings.

Seeking professional help

People also reached out for professional help of a psychologist. Comparing one's situation to a person who was in a worse situation or preparing oneself for the worst-case scenario were techniques that people adopted to cope up with loneliness.

Talking to self, AI assistants and pets

Increasing communication and talking to others was also helpful. This included friends, family, relatives, communities or groups. People also found it helpful to talk to AI assistants who could talk to them just like a normal person. Talking to oneself loudly also helped. People also sought comfort in pets like cats and dogs.

Giving time to heal

Some others felt that the only way to deal with loneliness is to deal with existing problems. Confronting relationship problems, work issues, or whatever the root cause was helped them to alleviate loneliness. For others, giving it time was the only measure. They felt that there was nothing to do from their part. Acceptance and giving it time were the only way.

Binge eating on chocolates

A slightly negative measure was indulging in binge eating, especially chocolate.

Crying

The act of crying was something that helped calm a lot of people.

> *"How did you deal with this situation?*
> *I went home and cried. Cried a lot".*
>
> - *27-year old female*

4.4.2. Coping- social isolation

Venting frustration through verbal fights

Quarrelling with partners to vent out frustration was one form of coping with isolation. This was a form of channeling the frustration to other people to feel better.

Throwing things

Throwing things especially kitchen-ware was another way of coping with isolation for women.

Other measures

Similar to dealing with loneliness, crying, reaching out to more people and comparing one's situation to those in worse situations were measures people adopted to deal with social isolation. People who usually had small circles also tried to be non-exclusive and interact with multiple people and groups.

As mentioned earlier, people felt that isolation is less in one's control when compared to loneliness because people can't decide who isolates you and who doesn't.

Safe spaces

Safe emotional spaces: Some individuals or groups were perceived to be safe by people. Close circles, mothers, friends who have seen you through the worst, a friend without any common friends, all came under this. Groups who were accepting of your identity like faith or sexuality also were considered safe.

Safe physical spaces: Certain physical spaces were also considered safe- one's room, home or even natural spaces like beaches.

> "*Home is more comfortable. It's a familiar space. You can be yourself in that place. Nobody is there to intrude; you don't become vulnerable in that space*".
>
> - *20-year-old male*

Learning, unlearning and relearning

Transitioning to adulthood- Gaining autonomy: This aspect was more related to personal growth. People started to do things by themselves and slowly started being comfortable with just themselves.

> "*Yes, but now I'm in the process of learning. That we shouldn't wait for others to come out. I should go out and enjoy my company. I'm in the kind of learning process now. Only one movie I've went out alone*".
>
> - *25-year old female*

Transitioning to adulthood: This included accepting things as it is, not denying them. It also included accepting that things become better with time. It was also the learning that people change, their priorities change. People started to notice the little things that others did for them. They turned more towards this close circle and started appreciating them more. It also meant appreciating the beauty in little things, especially nature.

Self-improvement as a means of overcoming social media induced anxiety

People also understood that social media triggers anxiety and they have to refrain from unnecessary comparisons with others' lives. Rather than getting disappointed from comparisons, working on individual betterment like learning a new language to communicate made better sense.

4.5. Validation

Two FGDs were conducted for validation, one each with men and women. This was to ensure verification of the emerging conceptualizations with other emerging adults through a process of information triangulation. The results mentioned above were summarized into PowerPoint and presented before each group. Agreement to the data generated through in-depth interviews was considered as validation.

People concurred with the finding that loneliness is a feeling with variation in strength according to the situation or reasons. They also agreed to its periodicity with most of the participants in both FGDs experiencing transient loneliness rather than a permanent one. The concept of being alone and being lonely was also not alien to them. Many of the participants indicated that they like to have their “alone time” occasionally. Self-isolation was again confirmed as one of the methods to do this.

While explaining the emotions associated with loneliness and isolation, most of the participants felt that they also faced sadness, anxiety and frustration. One of the participants in the female FGD expressed ‘disappointment’ as an emotion she associated with loneliness. Another participant in the male FGD indicated ‘guiltiness’ as one. As these findings were not part of the results from the interviews, they were added to the section ‘emotions associated with loneliness’.

While discussing about isolation, most participants agreed to forms of isolation such as ignoring, pressurizing and emotional blackmail. Consequences of loneliness and isolation was also something most people related to. Loss of productivity, disinterest, pessimistic thoughts and hatred, all were experienced by most participants. An interesting contrast was that among the participants of the female FGD, some experienced sleeplessness which was a finding from the interview. Another group had a contrasting experience of excessive sleep. Similarly, some participants felt like they couldn’t eat properly, while

others engaged in binge eating. This contrast was highlighted in the section 'consequences of loneliness'.

Another new finding in the male FGD was that the long-term consequences of loneliness was positive for many. This was a new perspective as all the findings from the interview were based on immediate consequences. This was also added to the section 'consequences of loneliness'.

Reasons for loneliness and isolation also resonated with the participants of the FGD. No new reasons emerged from either FGD.

Finally, while describing the coping mechanisms to deal with loneliness and social isolation, most of the participants agreed to increasing communication and reaching out. Additional coping measures that emerged were talking to oneself and AI assistants, engaging with pets and animals, self-grooming, getting out of one's comfort zone and going to spaces like beaches.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will summarize the findings of my study. Following this, I will discuss the importance of the findings including their comparisons with the existing literature on loneliness and social isolation. This will be followed by an explanation of the public health relevance of these findings. Lastly, I will list the limitations, strengths of my work, situate positionality and validation for the work and then lastly outline the policy implications of this analysis.

5.1. Summary

The defining characteristics of loneliness include a sense of not feeling “belonged”. It included a feeling of helplessness and being alone. Loneliness was also recognized as something within one’s control and it was seen as being transient, much of loneliness being short spells rather than long term. But when loneliness was long term, it was something that was lingering and affected one’s activities on an ongoing basis. That was shaped by the intensity of the feelings and the potential triggers that cause loneliness. There was a difference identified between ‘being lonely’ and ‘being alone’. Loneliness was seen as a negative conceptualization while being alone was something that one sought.

Emotional expressions of loneliness included sadness, anger, anxiety, restlessness and frustration. It also included disappointment, regret and a sense of feeling guilty. Often loneliness generated a need to talk to others as a means of redeeming themselves from the sense of loneliness, but it also had adverse consequences such as loss of self-confidence and feelings of insecurity. At times, it had physical manifestations or emotional manifestations which could even result in self-harm. However, there were some positive outcomes which were both short term and long term. Short term consequences included

an enhancement of creativity and artistic skills, while long term consequences included gratitude and increased self-confidence.

Social isolation is distinct from loneliness because social isolation is dependent on what others do to you, whereas loneliness is something that you feel. In that sense, forms of social isolation included being abandoned by others, being ignored by others or being pressurized to do something as a means of control, and also when others withhold favours as a form of bargaining with the individual. The consequences of such forms of social isolation could include trauma, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts and gradually developing a hatred for the people who tend to isolate people from a collective or even when it is a dyad such as a marriage or relationship.

On the other hand, self-isolation was a means of self-preservation from the adverse consequences of isolation by third parties. It could take the form of distancing from people who cause it, or it could result in giving excuses to avoid such people, or alternatively, it can take a very productive form of engaging in other forms of activities which actually enable one to gain something productive out of the whole negative process of isolation.

Loneliness was often caused by body dysmorphia. These forms of changes in the body could be due to pregnancy. This was particularly highlighted in the findings. In addition, a sense of not belonging because of either having moved away from once own group or entered into a new space where one didn't have "one's own group". This resulted in having no one to talk to, or it could also take the form of loss of mentorship that one had. On the other hand, causes of loneliness could be due to loss of mentorship which one depended on. Alternatively, it could be caused by people actually being socially challenged, or it could be due to a breakup from a romantic relationship, or gradually transitioning to younger age to adulthood which was phenomenally challenging in terms

of having to meet up with expectations of being an adult. Last but not the least, another cause was the mere fact of being idle which is associated with overthinking.

Perceived causes of social isolation included identity which could sexual, religious, linguistic or migrant. Or it could be due to one's appearance, the kind of work one did or prevalent racism on the basis of skin colour. All of this resulted in individuals feeling ignored by others. Another reason is the pregnancy status itself which called for social isolation by others as a safe guarding mechanism. However, the pregnant person felt isolated as a consequence. Financial distress and the need to hide this distress could have also been a reason for either social or self-isolation.

The reasons for self-isolation could be to preserve mental health or as a means of hiding an identity that is not mainstream. Self-isolation is also employed when one is experiencing anger and to avoid the adverse consequences that could result from demonstrating it. Finally, if the group a person belongs to indulged in substance abuse or using intoxicants which they did not wish to be a part of, self-isolation could be an alternative option of safeguarding oneself.

In general, people found certain physical spaces and persons to be 'unsafe' since they triggered negativity and loneliness.

Various coping mechanisms were employed to cope up with loneliness. Identity linked groups including friends, family or communities were considered safe to reach out to for communication. Individual recreational and spiritual activities like watching content or praying helped people deal with this feeling. Activities which boosted productivity like art and craft also made people comfortable.

When people felt they had to deal with loneliness themselves, talking was the most preferred coping mechanism, which included talking to self, AI assistants or even pets and other animals. Some let time do all the healing. In helpless situations people sought

comfort in binge eating, especially on chocolates. The last measure was to let it all out, and ‘cry’! When all such measures proved to be ineffective, people sought professional help of psychologists and therapists.

Coping with social isolation was more about channelling individual distress into actions. These idioms of distress included venting frustration through verbal fights with partners and throwing things especially kitchen-ware. Other ways of coping included crying and reaching out to more people.

Similar to un-safe spaces, individuals also felt positive and safe around certain people like their close friends, as well as physical spaces like beaches or their rooms. These were ‘safe spaces’ for individuals.

Finally, individuals underwent a learning curve in their transition to adulthood with acceptance, appreciating little things and efforts others make and focussing more on things in their control like self-improvement.

5.2 How are the findings important?

Findings of the study contribute to the scarce literature on loneliness and social isolation among emerging adults in India.

5.2.1 Loneliness among emerging adults in Kerala

Explaining non-belongingness: The study explained a core definition of loneliness- a state of feeling “non-belonged”. Though a feeling of ‘not mattering’ or ‘unimportant’ is recognized in existing literature, an in-depth explanation of what, how and why this non belongingness arises is undocumented (McComb et al., 2020). This study contributes to explaining it.

Emotional, Social, Quantitative and Qualitative components of loneliness: Another early conceptualization of loneliness is Weiss’s distinction of **emotional and social loneliness**. Emotional loneliness is based on lacking an intimate partner or a close friend,

while social loneliness is a lack of desired level of social networks. The study findings are in agreement to this with people feeling lonely because of the loss of strong support systems like death of a parent or breakup with their partners. In addition, not having people to connect to, to talk to, especially if they migrated to a new place also induced loneliness, in line with the concept of social loneliness (*Social and emotional loneliness: A re-examination of Weiss's typology of loneliness*, 1997).

Another frequently cited definition of loneliness is based on the **quantitative and qualitative discrepancies in one's ideal social relations and actual** (Perlman and Peplau, 1981). Although the study results indicate quantitative discrepancies like not having enough people to talk to, lack of mentors or not having romantic partners, it was more related to qualitative discrepancies. This included not having meaningful talks, not being able to express oneself, comparisons with others' lives or even overthinking. Quality more than quantity was the reason for loneliness here.

Pregnancy and loneliness: A systematic review and study of loneliness and pregnancy revealed that much of the attention during pregnancy and motherhood is diverted towards post-partum depression, neglecting loneliness during this period, although the prevalence of loneliness has been found to vary from 32 to 100% (Kent-Marvick et al., 2022). In this light, the study tries to explain how pregnancy causes a situation of isolation, which triggers loneliness.

Pregnancy as a reason for loneliness included both quantitative discrepancies in terms of not having contact with other pregnant women who relate to your situation, as well as qualitative discrepancies like mismatch in the expected familial support and actual.

Explaining positive loneliness: The study explains the positive concept of 'being alone' in depth. A clear distinction between loneliness and being alone is also provided so that

further research can take up these topics separately. This is of particular importance as states like solitude are very close to the concept of being alone.

The concept of being alone is similar to that of 'privacy' described by Gierveld et al. Privacy is a voluntary situation in which people choose to maintain less contact with other individuals. This time is devoted more for introspection and individual betterment through productive activities (Gierveld et al., 2006).

Intensity and duration of loneliness: The strength of loneliness in terms of its effect and duration is also something peculiar that emerged out of the studies. Explanations of what people experience when loneliness is 'strong' and 'weak' were obtained.

Similarly, how long loneliness lasts- whether it is fleeting thoughts or something persistent was understood. These findings are in concurrence with the understanding of loneliness in existing literature as 'temporary' or 'chronic' (Perlman and Peplau, 1981).

Physical manifestations of loneliness: Studies have documented physical effects of loneliness including cardiovascular issues in the long run, sleeplessness and general fatigue (Hawkley and Cacioppo, 2010). This study revealed more visible forms like ulcers, vomiting and panic attacks which could affect individuals, which people might not recognize as stemming from loneliness.

Positive consequences: Contrary to the view that loneliness always causes problems, the study findings report short term and long-term gains because of loneliness like enhancing creativity, increased gratitude for others or even a boost in self-confidence. However, care needs to be taken to not force this loneliness with the idea that such a boost will always be attained.

5.2.2 Social-isolation among emerging adults in Kerala

Forms of Social isolation- an added dimension: Existing literature indicates that social isolation is primarily an objective concept. One of the most widely used scales to measure

social isolation is the Lubben Social Network Scale-6 (LSNS6). It measures contact of each person to two dimensions- friends and family. It measures social isolation by checking how many people (friends/relatives) one talks to, can reach out to with ease, and call for a help. From the above, it is clear that the existing definition of social isolation places it with the lack of contact and support with people (Lubben et al., 2006).

In my findings, there is an overlap with respect to the dimensions people talked about. The participants experienced social isolation primarily from friends and family, in line with the existing concept. However, it was not limited to mere contact for them. Social isolation meant that they experience an action with a negative connotation from their friends or family. **Abandonment, exclusion, ignoring, pressurizing or emotional blackmailing** could be forms of social isolation.

Another new dimension that emerged was societal exclusion. Not having facilities like breast feeding rooms in public places was a form of social isolation for new mothers. Similarly, being excluded from the public distribution system was another version of it for a migrant labourer. This dimension of public/societal exclusion is not part of the existing concepts of social isolation.

This could be because of the Malayalam translation of social isolation used- “Samoohika ottapeduthal″. Ottapeduthal meaning ‘isolation’ might be more associated with actions like exclusion, ignoring or pressurizing, which participants experienced. While studies have focussed on the relationship between social isolation and health problems like early deaths, cardiovascular problems, or even documented the causes for it, very rarely has the forms of social isolation been discussed. Hence, future research could look to expand the scope of social isolation from the dual aspects of ‘contact’ and ‘support’ which is predominant in existing definitions, to such nuanced actions as well.

Determinants of Social isolation: The study also aligns with the broader literature that stresses the role of structural determinants like sex, gender, religion, culture, ethnicity on social isolation (Umberson and Donnelly, 2023). The study findings indicate that sex, gender, sexuality, religion, culture and skin colour are all reasons that trigger social isolation. While global studies further explain the behavioural pathways by which social isolation manifests problems, this study did not delve into such dimensions.

Self-isolation as a protective measure: The importance of self-isolation was a theme that was reiterated throughout the interviews and focus group discussions. While self-isolation as a disease containment measure has been discussed and debated in studies globally (Suppawittaya et al., 2020), literature is scare on the protective capacity of self-isolation of individuals.

Another neglected aspect is that self-isolation measures like keeping boundaries, focussing on self-care, learning new skills, confronting your emotions and thoughts, all add to personality development in the long run. While introverts would try to upskill themselves with socializing skills, extroverts could take a step back, reflect and build clarity about the social connections they need.

5.2.3. Coping mechanisms for loneliness and social isolation

The study findings indicate that coping mechanisms could be **both internal and external**. Internal coping strategies for loneliness included positive measures like engaging in recreational/spiritual/productive activities or idioms of distress like binge eating on chocolate and crying. External coping strategies including reaching out to people to talk to or seeking professional help. The study underscores the importance of 'talking' as a measure of dealing with loneliness. Technological solutions to talk have also started to emerge including talking to AI assistants.

The coping measures for social isolation are clearly **idioms of distress**. Venting frustration at partners, throwing things in the kitchen or crying all indicate a sense of heightened level of difficulty in dealing with social isolation, compared to loneliness. This could also be because of the fact that loneliness seemed to pick up intensity because of duration, while the intensity of social isolation was due to the reasons which included serious issues like abandonment or even trauma from sexual abuse. The coping mechanisms demonstrate resilience on the part of individuals who explain how they manage the loneliness and social isolation they experience. Further research could explore these in depth to analyse how coping strategies vary for subjective feelings of loneliness and objective isolation.

5.2.4. Gendered idioms of distress

The idioms of distress expressed by the study participants also indicate a highly gendered aspect related to coping. Venting frustration, throwing things, crying all were highlighted by women participants, with the first two actions primarily associated with married couples. This indicates the level of autonomy women have in terms of control of their partners as well their kitchens. It could also illustrate the helplessness they faced. While men reached out to other circles to talk in times of distress, the only way to channel distress for married women could be these. While these mechanisms may seem stereotypical, more research with a gendered lens is required to answer these questions. Another interesting aspect is that while crying as a coping measure was used by every female participant, only one male participant admitted to crying. Are there notions of masculinity preventing male participants from crying or admitting to crying? Or is it by chance that male participants didn't cry? These are other aspects of the findings that deserve detailed probing in future.

5.2.5. Emerging adulthood and loneliness

The study findings are in concurrence with the concept of emerging adulthood which drove this study's rationale. The transitioning to adulthood and the various aspects surrounding it including increased responsibilities, changing personalities, migration, varying social circles and connections, differential responsibilities due to gender, discovering oneself, all have been found to influence loneliness and social isolation either negatively or positively. The local cultural influences including the role of family in mitigating or exacerbating loneliness is something unique compared to the largely individualistic culture driven studies on loneliness and emerging adulthood globally. Emerging adulthood as a catalyst to get to know oneself better and shape oneself into a better personality also resonates with the ideas of self-care during the phases of 'being alone' or while self-isolating.

The findings have been validated through information triangulation by presenting the study findings to two focus groups consisting of new sets of emerging adults.

5.3. Importance of the findings from a Public Health perspective

5.3.1. Pregnancy, isolation and loneliness

The perspectives of how isolation and loneliness manifest and affects pregnant women and new mothers is something that needs more exploration. While isolation of pregnant women and new mothers are considered to be a protective factor for them as well as the new born baby, the mental toll it poses is often overlooked. Losing social connections over the long period of pregnancy and even afterwards can drive women to extreme situations including depression and self-harm. While postpartum depression is extensively discussed, the role that loneliness and social isolation might have in inducing it rarely finds a mention.

The situation of not having connection with other pregnant women could also be due to the declining fertility rates in Kerala. Lower fertility rate means lesser women in your locality or circle who are pregnant, with whom you can connect to. Thus, the declining fertility rates and decreasing household size pose a challenge to emerging adults who are pregnant (Vital Statistics Division, Department of Economics & Statistics, Govt of Kerala, 2022).

Another important aspect is the mental health issues posed due to loneliness. Women felt distressed because of being confined to their rooms and an active cut off from their socializing behaviours. From a public health standpoint, it is important to negotiate how support could be given for women during these periods. Though the Anganwadi program by the government provides a window of opportunity for pregnant women and new mothers to socialize with people like themselves, it is exclusive to families of a lower socio-economic status. Community support groups especially through online forums could play a role here to include those left out by the program.

The sudden responsibilities associated with motherhood, which often one is not prepared for, is another potential cause of loneliness. Proper counselling to both the mothers and their partners, and immediate family members could work to address this issue. The issue surrounding breastfeeding and sleeplessness during the initial months after the baby is born has been particularly highlighted as challenging. Programs like Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) which all pregnant women are eligible for is a welcome step for this.

Making pregnant women and new mothers socially connected is also another step needed. Women indicated being confined to their rooms as a huge form of isolation. Facilitating low intensity group activities like walking could help them mitigate this to an extent.

Finally, as friends and family, just being there for them, checking on them and caring for them along with the baby goes a long way in ensuring that the mother also gets the attention she deserves.

5.3.2. Loneliness, isolation and Depression

Many of the emotions that the study found including prolonged sadness, anxiety, restlessness, helplessness and sleeplessness have been found to be precursors to depression (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2024). Studies have also linked isolation and loneliness to depressive symptoms. If unattended, chronic loneliness whose duration is almost permanent could drive persons to depression and other mental health issues. This can further manifest into pessimistic thoughts or even self-harm. Hence, the word depression needs to be taken in a much more serious way than it is perceived now. Encouraging people to seek mental health care when experiencing any or all of the emotions mentioned above can help people not fall into this negative state.

If unattended, emerging adults being in the transition phase to adulthood, might not know what to do. This might make them fall prey to undesirable means of coping like substance abuse. The issue of substance abuse in Kerala particularly in this age group is alarming. Cases of substance abuse and violence is increasing drastically. Hence, addressing the root cause which could include loneliness and isolation is a necessity.

5.3.3. Stigma of mental health care

The stigma behind seeking mental health care, especially among the older generations prevents emerging adults from seeking adequate care. The study findings highlight how emerging adults had to hide the fact that they were visiting psychologists in front of their parents. This could add more pressure to them. Not having people who understand mental health issues, but also blame you for seeking care might drive individuals to a state of helplessness.

Though the National Mental Health Policy 2014 brings in de-stigmatization of mental health as an integral component, there is still a long way to go in order to achieve it. Public health practioners and mental health organizations could play a role in spreading its importance. Debunking notions related to mental health like its film portrayal as something extreme, is a welcome step. Similarly, getting people acquainted to treatment options like 'therapy' is another measure.

5.4. Limitations and strengths of the study

The effect of caste on loneliness and social isolation couldn't be examined, though it emerged as a theme in one of the interviews. Although the perspectives of gay men were captured through interviews, perspectives of lesbians couldn't be achieved within the stipulated data collection period. The effect of physical health conditions like chronic diseases on loneliness and isolation couldn't be examined.

The study findings indicate how individuals themselves perceived and conceptualized loneliness and social isolation. An additional perspective to look into would be how other people might react to loneliness, or even how lonely individuals are perceived by others.

5.4.1. Strengths of the study

Multiple data collection techniques like GEM and In-depth interviews were used. Data collected was validated through FGDs. In order to ensure transparency and comfort of participants, the two FGDs were conducted separately for male and female participants. Ongoing discussions with the research guide and feedback from professors enhanced the conceptualizations of the topic.

5.5. Positionality

I am a cis-male belonging to an upper socio-economic background which might influence the response from both female and male participants. Being an emerging adult myself, I have an insider perspective with respect to emerging adulthood. Being an insider, I do not

consider emerging adulthood to be an easy transition to go through. As a person who has experienced loneliness as passing thoughts, I relate more to it than understanding it as something permanent. As a non-medical professional, I do not have an in-depth understanding of psychological conditions like depression. I have not referred to any theoretical underpinnings of psychology during the study. I believe that we as individuals in the society have a big role to play in addressing loneliness and social isolation, which might shape the solutions and policy implications I suggest.

5.6. Establishing Trustworthiness

The four aspects of trustworthiness related to qualitative research studies- credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were ensured through the following strategies (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Table 1. Strategies to ensure trustworthiness

Sl. No.	Criteria	Strategies
1	Credibility	1. Triangulation using two methods of data-collection GEM and IDI, and validating it by conducting 2 FGDs 2. Peer debriefing with Guide and Professors to obtain varying perspectives
2	Transferability	1. Thick descriptions in terms of study context and participants selected 2. Transparent methodology in terms of methods adopted, improvisations made, sampling strategy adopted and data analysis process and software used
3	Dependability	1. Code-recode procedure to build consistency in segments coded 2. Abiding by research protocols and maintaining proper documentation of all process followed and data collected
4	Confirmability	1. Reflectivity by continuously engaging with assumptions and asking questions to oneself 2. Triangulation using FGDs to minimize researcher's bias and to confirm findings from IDIs

5.7. Conclusions

Loneliness is seen as passing or a permanent feeling which induces negative emotions like sadness and anxiety in individuals. It might make them insecure, less productive or physically and mentally unfit. Social isolation includes negative actions like abandonment or ignoring that keep people away, and induces hatred, frustration and extreme sadness in individuals. While loneliness is something felt by the individual, social isolation is something experienced by the individual through actions or lack of actions from others. While loneliness is in a person's control to a large extent, social isolation is beyond their control as it depends on how other people treat them.

The coping mechanisms employed for loneliness are largely individualistic with the goal being to mitigate it. However, the coping mechanisms against social isolation indicate a sense of helplessness and distress.

Self-isolation unlike social isolation is a protective measure that is employed by emerging adults. Walking away from undesirable activities, maintaining boundaries, finding creative strategies all illustrate a form of resilience against loneliness. Thus, it is a space to rewind, introspect and find solutions to problems posed by loneliness and isolation.

Loneliness and social isolation are problems affecting emerging adults in Kerala. These problems could be exacerbated by situations like pregnancy or migration. Therefore, tailormade interventions are necessary to find solutions to these issues.

5.8. Policy and Research Implications

5.8.1. Implications for loneliness

The study findings indicate a need to care of pregnant women and new mothers, especially building social connections and support for them. Including a module on pregnancy and loneliness as part of ante-natal care and post-natal care, particularly in low fertility settings could be one step.

Training emerging adults in self-help strategies is another area that can be tapped into. Training in protective self-isolation, avoiding toxic circumstances, finding creative and productive options to cope with loneliness could be a strategy. This includes techniques like journaling, developing social and communication skills or even pursuing hobbies like art, craft and music.

The potential of technology especially AI including AI chatbots as a platform to talk and engage is another dimension worth examining (*Her*, 2014).

Studies on the impact of migration and the health and wellness status of migrants could also include social connectedness and social support as dimensions to be examined in the future. Recognising the need for professional help among migrant workers especially those from different cultures in work places and offering safe environments to adapt, could be explored.

5.8.2. Implications for social isolation

Technological solutions like online forums or WhatsApp communities for pregnant women and new mothers can help them engage with other women in the same situation, thus making them less isolated.

Offering local language training programs to migrants in their new cities could be explored to reduce linguistics induced isolation. Encouraging community level activities is another possible intervention zone. Reading clubs, heritage walks, photography walks or other common-interest activities can be promoted at regular intervals in public spaces for emerging adults to engage.

Equally feasible means of mitigating against loneliness and social isolation would be group physical health interventions like walks, yoga or jogging sessions (Gupta, 2025).

Potential for Further Research

Both loneliness and social isolation need to be taken up as a potential topic for research. A quantitative study to explain the extent to which the problems affect emerging adults could be explored. For this, developing scales to measure loneliness and isolation including aspects that emerged in the study like exclusion and ignoring is required. Future research could look to develop such scales and validate them in the local settings.

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ANNEXES

ANNEXURE 1: Profile of informants for the study

Characteristics	Total n (%) N of cases =20
Age, years, mean ± SD	26.15 ± 2.495495943
Sex	
Female	10 (50)
Male	10 (50)
Sexual identity	
Straight	14 (70)
Gay	2 (10)
Don't know	4 (20)
Relationship status	
Committed	5 (25)
Married	5 (25)
Single	9 (45)
Don't know	1 (5)
Migrant status	
Yes	6 (30)
No	
Employment status	
Full-time work	9 (45)
Contractual work	2 (10)
Part-time work	2 (10)
Unemployed	3 (15)
Students	4 (20)

ANNEXURE 2: Codebook

Sl. No	Code	Meaning	Example
1	Anger is the only valid reason to self isolate. Sadness, anxiety and fear are not	A person should self-isolate only when angry. He/she should seek the company or help of others in all other situations	Anger to me is a valid reason. It will help to cool them down. To avoid any outbursts. At the same time, if someone is upset and shattered, I feel they will only break down more if left alone, right? I am saying this from what I have experienced. I have only thought about worse things when alone. Someone really upset should definitely speak to somebody.
2	Anxiety, restlessness, depression, sleeplessness, helplessness	Feelings that people associate with loneliness	I was helpless. It was “helplessness and despair”. Anxiety was also very high.
3	Breakup	Breaking up with a partner was found to be one of the reasons for loneliness	H- Have you ever thought about when your loneliness peaks and when it goes down? S- Within this context, it is when I think about that person and the memories. The more I think about it, the more I feel that I’m lonely.
4	Crying to cope up	Crying helps alleviate feelings of loneliness. You are able to think more clearly after you cry and let it all out.	And when the threshold reaches, I start crying. Once I cry, I feel like something has ran out.
5	Desperation to talk	Not having someone to talk to was a reason for loneliness. At the same time, it was used as a coping measure to alleviate it as well.	I was desperate. Desperate to talk to someone, to connect with someone
6	Differences due to age, responsibilities and gender	Factors that differentiated the way people behaved, their priorities, interests and topics of discussion, etc. The differences caused due to these factors made people lonely.	Another funny thing is that people who were working with me were some ladies of early thirties. They had very little children aged 2-3 years. They were talking about this mostly. I was also hearing things like the diseases these children were getting and so on. I was around 24 back then. I felt I didn’t need to hear any of those at that age. They didn’t interest me.
7	Difficulty fitting in	Having difficulty understanding people and places that were familiar to you because of the changes they underwent. It might feel like you have not changed, but everything that you knew changed. A kind of overwhelming feeling.	So, the first time I came back for holidays, it was so difficult. You feel like you don't "fit in", you feel like you're coming from elsewhere, you no more know the people whom you literally grew up with. I used to feel very "alienated" during that time. And then, when I came back after completing my course as well; I put in so much effort to "fit in". I was trying to fit back into the space that was present 3 years back, which did not obviously exist because even though the timeline for me and my friends were the same, the experiences and exposure they had were poles apart.
8	Distancing, engaging in activities, making excuses	Staying away from people by not going out with them, not responding via phone calls, etc. to isolate yourself from people.	Say friends are inviting me to go out, I don’t go out with them. I don’t pickup calls. If I’m at home, I avoid chances of going out with them.
9	Distractions, engagements, physical activities, actions, eating	Using social media content, art and craft, food, TV, etc. to distract yourself from thoughts of loneliness.	Basically it was about how I spent my time. Rather than simply scrolling, watching more content made sense. It gave me a “sense of accomplishment”. I don’t do anything creative, but seeing creativity attracts me. It made me happy. Could be distraction, I don’t know how to explain. It was a good way of coping.
10	Engaging in productive activities	Isolating yourself, but doing productive activities like art and craft to keep yourself engaged.	Photovoice caption: This I made when I wanted to isolate myself from a situation and whenever I see this that reminds me of that situation. I made this as a coping mechanism to avoid interaction with others and enjoy my self company.

11	Sadness, extreme irritation, low energy, difficulty interacting with people	Feelings that people associate with loneliness. Even the slightest of things triggered and irritated the person during this situation. They didn't feel like meeting anybody as well.	My irritation level increased. I wanted to be alone. It feltYes yes. My irritation level increased. I wanted to be alone. It felt very difficult to interact with people. My energy levels were too less. When there are people around, I need to be positive, but I'm not able to do that.
12	Feeling like you don't belong	Unable to resonate with "people, patterns and behaviours" because they seem to vary.	Why did I not feel that belongingness? Could be the presence of new people, or maybe the "depth of conversations" changed- depth/ intensity of conversations changed, things you used to talk changed, and new people of course.
13	Financial implications leading to isolation	Actions that have financial implications were a reason for a group isolating a person.	There was a situation in college. In a group of 7 people including me, 5 people backed out of it while 2 remained. I was in the remaining 2. It had a little bit of financial implications. What happened was these 5 people isolated me. I'm a guy who thinks that "I don't want anyone that doesn't want me". I never begged them to take me back. I was like "let it be". They don't invite me to any events even now. It still goes on. Those 5 became a new subset of friends
14	Finding others like oneself in certain respects, support systems	People with similarities in terms of age could help reduce loneliness. Creating a strong support system also helps.	Over the years, like you pointed out, I've found a support system over the years. Even now when I find a problem, I know whom to pivot to for support. | After that two youngsters came. They didn't live with me, but enjoyed time with them, in spite of the fact that they were not Malayalis. We used to get together at one of the guy's flat, talk about things.
15	Giving it time	Not doing anything and understanding that the loneliness one feels will fade with time.	These feelings of loneliness, what do you do to cope up with it? S- I take time. Let it be, let me give it time. It will fade when its time. H- What exactly do you do when you say you "give it time"? S- Nothing, literally nothing. I can sit idle for any time.
16	Identity crisis due to self-induced expectations	Trying to change your basic nature in order to satisfy others (here, parents). The person is unable to find a balance between their actual identity and the new one they are trying to create.	A lot of decisions I took was based on the assumption "this would make my mother happy; this would make my father happy". This has caused an "identity crisis" in me. I'm not able to be myself, I can't become the person I'm trying to mould myself into. I'm always midway between both of these. Loneliness is heavily connected to this.
17	Unable to be 'emotionally dependent' on someone	When the person doesn't get their "emotional needs" satisfied from the person they expect it from.	When the person at the other end cannot give me the emotional dependency I require. Obviously, the other person has other things to manage, but I expect it only from that person. When I don't get it from them, it is hard because I don't expect it from anyone else. I cannot ask anyone else. It affects me a lot.
18	Increasing communication	People who were lonely/isolated stopped being exclusive to certain groups. They started interacting and communicating with a lot of people, be it family, old friends, people who were easily accessible, etc.	After this incident, I didn't go join a different group. I stayed common, keeping friendship in every circle. I became more open minded, talking to more people. I felt it was better.
19	Insecurity, low self-worth and self-confidence, self-doubt	This is a reason for loneliness as well as a consequence of it.	There was always this comparison that "hey see those people. They are not lonely, only I am lonely". I had low "self-worth" in such situations. I felt I was not lucky. There was a lack of self-confidence.

20	Learning, unlearning and relearning	Includes new skills and attitudes that people built. It also includes changing their existing beliefs and rewiring themselves.	My engagements in activities was not an "escape". There happened to be opportunities, I explored those, Yea, but now I'm in the process of learning. That we shouldn't wait for others to come out. I should go out and enjoy my company. I'm in the kind of learning process now, Initially, I was not able to do anything, literally. After some time, I accepted that I do get anxious, I do get negative thoughts. I told myself that if I don't work, it will affect my life a lot. Then I started working hard even in such situations, even though concentration was low. It affected me academically as well, I do many things that I love and excite me, but I don't post those on social media. I don't think it gives any purpose now.
21	Loneliness is in one's control, while isolation is not	The person to an extent has control over loneliness, but not isolation. There are things you can do yourself if you feel lonely, but you might not be able to if its social isolation.	Isolation is not induced by me. It is beyond my control. Loneliness is in my control to an extent in ways I mentioned above. But there is no way to cope up when somebody decides to avoid you.
22	Loneliness is transient as well as permanent	Different people have differing duration of loneliness	loneliness is "passing thoughts", Sometimes it comes and goes immediately. Sometimes it goes on continuously for some days with little breaks in between. Sometimes it is permanent.
23	Loneliness of different nature	Loneliness is experienced differently by people. There could be difference in the feelings they associate with loneliness, its intensity, the set of people who might induce it, etc.	Loneliness is something I would associate with my very close circle, I feel that the loneliness of each person is different. Some might have a lot of people around them, but they may not be able to connect with them. There may be people who literally don't have anyone.
24	Loss of dear ones, strong support systems	The death of a dear one who was a strong support to the person. It also includes losing dear ones or supportive people from your life.	Yes, when my best friend moved abroad. That was a big shock. I was pregnant and needed her. It was like there was a blank, a hole. | My father's death took a huge toll on me. I was in Ernakulam back then. My father passed away almost 2 years back.
25	Low productivity, difficulty eating	Loneliness-driven anxiety makes the person less productive. They don't even feel like having food which they like.	I have a slight obsession with numbers and patterns. I don't know whether its OCD, but it is definitely related to it. If I do something like knocking, I will do it thrice. Similarly, if something like a carpet is slightly diagonal, I will make it straight. When I'm anxious, this behaviour is exacerbated. It drives down my productivity drastically because it is time consuming. This pattern is what affects me the most when I am anxious.
26	Mental well-being, emotional saturation as reasons to isolate	If people affect your mental health or in situations your mind is piled up with emotions (especially negative), you isolate them.	If I feel that the person is causing harm to my mental well-being, I will keep them away from me
27	Moving from being an extrovert to an introvert	Experiences of loneliness made people turn inward. People who were extroverted started being that only with their "close circles" and remained a bit introverted with others.	You see I was a very extroverted person, continuously chirping like a bird. From that person, I changed into a silent person. H- Was this transition during these 2 years in Ernakulam? S- Hmm maybe. I think so. Now I'm an extrovert to people who I'm really comfortable with, in some other space, I'll be an introvert.
28	Not having someone to share things	A reason for loneliness.	Another thing is if I went through some sad situations in my day, I feel like I have to go and tell this to somebody. If there is no person available, there is no threshold and all. It will just burst out, sadness or happiness. I feel like I desperately want to tell them.
29	Person being away weakening relationship	Person going away weakened relationship, which acted as a reason for loneliness when the person returned. The dynamics of the relationship had changed.	There's this saying, right? "Away from eyes, away from mind", I was thinking it is all that. I was connecting all this to my absence.

30	Pessimistic outlook, suicidal thoughts	Being lonely makes one judge everything negatively. One would assume that every decision they make will turn out to be bad.	H- What exactly are these negative thoughts? S- I judge my future with the negative events in my life. When something happens, instead of seeing the natural outcome, I go for the opposite negative one. Thoughts about me would also be negative. I judge myself negatively.
31	Individuals, groups or physical spaces that feel safe	People and physical spaces that are comfort for people. They provide a way out of loneliness. People go back to these when they are lonely.	For me, social isolation equals to my room. It is my safe space now. No other place gives me so much peace. I always get in my room and lock my door. It gives me peace. | The other group who are already your friends, who are there no matter what. Probably when I came back, I was trying to connect more with the latter circle. That helped.
32	Self analysis as a learning point	How they managed to discover more about their loneliness, about themselves, and how they learned to manage and overcome loneliness.	Yea, but now I'm in the process of learning. That we shouldn't wait for others to come out. I should go out and enjoy my company. I'm in the kind of learning process now
33	Self-isolation could be positive as well as negative	Outcome of self-isolation could be positive or negative. If its negative, it induces anxiety. A positive apsect is that it indicates time to introspect and grow.	H- Okay. Let's say you manage to self-isolate. What happens next? S- I think about what's happening in my life and what stresses me out. Then like I said earlier, think about probability of what might help, what might not, etc. H- During this thinking process, does anxiety also occur? S- Depends, but yes. Sometimes I get anxious as well.
34	Self-isolation is possible only when people are not around you	If people are accessible only by telephone or social media, it is possible to isolate yourself from them. Isolating yourself from them in person is not possible	H- Can I ask what you did in situations where these people you wanted to isolated yourself from, were actually around you? S- I have not done that. It was only when they were far away and accessible by phone. In person I can never isolate myself.
35	Social isolation causes extreme sadness and hatred	Extreme sadness and hatred wherein the person gave no chance for a patching up with those that isolated them.	It was mostly extreme sadness in the instances where I was isolated. I've not felt angry. I have never became too humble and requested them for friendship again. It is their thing. Anger was not there, but extreme sadness. You could say that I've felt "hatred" towards them to an extent.
36	Social media triggers comparison and creates "social anxiety"	Seeing your peers enjoying with people of your age, while you are working with persons elder than you triggered comparisions about what your life lacks.	During this time of loneliness, I told you about, I saw on social media my friends who had a much more "happening" life, people who went out a lot and enjoyed. This made me compare my life with theirs, which made me sad.
37	Feeling lonely when there's no one to check on you	Somebody to just be there, to ask you whether you are doing alright, reassuring you that everything's going to be okay.	Someone should talk about me; they should ask something to me. | Like I said earlier, what my family did was witness me cry when I was breastfeeding. Nobody was there to console me saying "its okay, it will be alright" because the fact that I was sitting and crying made them sad.
38	Spaces that build loneliness and negativity	Spaces without certain people, those which invoke negative feelings, spaces in which you are forced to be, spaces that decrease person-to-person contact.	Some spaces give you a positive feeling while others give negative. The place where I stayed gave me a bit of negative feelings. | If you look back, I don't think we had phones till tenth standard. It was in person conversation in schools, landline phone calls to each other's home, etc. All these are conversations. Not like these text messages or reels on Instagram. Look at the chat between best friends. Conversations are through reels, not even text messages. The reply to reels is smileys, not texts. I feel like we are "stuck in the virtual world". There is no real life. It is depressing.
39	Staying alone, being idle, overthinking	Living alone, being in your room alone without any work to do, all made people feel lonely.	I was leading a solitary lifestyle in Ernakulam. I lived alone in a flat. I had friends socially, but I felt lonely while coming back to my flat. This is one of the situations in my life when I felt lonely. | One thing I've noticed is when I don't have work. If I'm busy with something, if I have a deadline, I'll be concentrating on that. If I finish that, I'll start thinking about all these.

40	Stuck in a world of their own	Physically present, but mentally lost in your thoughts and a different world.	Whatever time I spent there; my mind was preoccupied. I was in another world. I am able to connect this with loneliness. When I was lonely, I was stuck in a world of my own. Emotions are the guiding factor there. Even when so much people were around me, I was in a world of my own, a loner.
41	Ulcer, vomiting, disinterest, stress	This is how loneliness affects people physically and mentally.	I get ulcer when I'm stressed. Once I overthink these stuffs, I get vomiting in the morning. Not only this, any stress induces it. This will be one of the reasons for it.
42	Work enhancing isolation and loneliness	Too much work can make you isolated because your schedule can't match with others timings. This might make you isolated or lonely, or both. Too much work can also make you isolate yourself because you are tired.	When my schedule is tightly packed and I've availability issues and can't prioritise, I decide "okay, I'm not seeing anybody". | See the system that prevailed there was to give the most amount of work to the person who is junior-most. I was that person, so I got the most amount of work. People never isolated me as such. They were friendly to me. But I got stuck with a lot of work, some of which were not even my responsibility in the first place.
43	Culture and customs that sanction isolation	Cultural practices and customs that prevent persons from going out into public, which in turn isolates them.	The mother shouldn't go out for 41 days. When she goes out and comes back after this period, she should only enter through the back-door of the house. There are a lot of such outdated customs that don't hold true in the present times.
44	Difficulties associated with pregnancy	Difficulties during pregnancy that make you feel lonely.	It started right after 5 months of pregnancy. You won't be able to sleep, you'll be awake. You feel lonely throughout that time. I remember once I got up at 3 am to walk so that I could tire myself to sleep. Those were dark times
45	Expectation-reality mismatch	When you expect certain persons or institutions to do something for you, but they don't, you feel lonely. Institutions could be family, marriage, etc.	I wanted to settle outside. But then I felt that with a kid and everything, it would be good to be with family. I felt there would be family support with looking after the kid and everything. But there was nothing (giggles). Once we become parents, it will be just us. It's the same way for all families, I guess. | The thing is I did a lot of research on how to care for the child, but not about how to care for the mother. How to care about myself. I should have done that. I thought that my family is there, that they'll take care of me, I just need to take care of my child. But that's not the case.
46	Lack of breastfeeding spaces	Lack of breastfeeding spaces in public places in turn prevents ladies from going out. Social isolation could thus be through lack of facilities and not just people.	I don't think I've even went to hotels. If I need to, I have to enquire whether the place is breastfeeding friendly, whether they have exclusive rooms. Breastfeeding publicly is not possible here in our place. That's a big issue. There are only 1-2 places where there are such spaces. I cannot take him on public transport as well. Only situation when feeding is possible is if we travel by our own car. I started this only after 1 month. Until then I was in isolation.
47	Lack of meaningful conversations	Quality of conversations are deteriorating. Even in person talks are becoming about content people saw on social media. This deterioration in quality of conversations makes people lonely.	If you look back, I don't think we had phones till tenth standard. It was in person conversation in schools, landline phone calls to each other's home, etc. All these are conversations. Not like these text messages or reels on Instagram. Look at the chat between best friends. Conversations are through reels, not even text messages. The reply to reels is smileys, not texts. I feel like we are "stuck in the virtual world". There is no real life. It is depressing.
48	Motherhood	The fact that small children are difficult to handle is used as an excuse to isolate oneself from people and events.	I make my child the excuse mostly (laughs). In a way it is true. Its hard to manage when my child is around. My friends will also struggle. So, this is my excuse.

49	Not being able to be yourself	You need to fulfil societal norms if you go out in public like looking good, wearing makeup, doing your hair, etc. It's like you are projecting how society wants you to be, not how you actually are. This position makes people isolate themselves.	When I go out with someone else, I try to please him/her. I sit in such a way, talk in ways that please them. Now, I don't have to pretend. H- Why do you think you have to pretend when you go out? S- I think its culturally sanctioned. When I'm home I can put my hair messily. When I go out, I have to dress-up, put on makeup. I need to be presentable. I can sit with dark circles in my house. But if I go out like that, people will ask me whether I am getting enough sleep. I like avoid such talks. So, I pretend.
50	Not having people who "relate" to your situation	Not having people that can relate or are undergoing the same journey as you are in your life can make you lonely or isolated. It might feel as if nobody understands you. Even if people listen to you, you still feel something is missing as they can never be in your shoes.	Yes. I wanted to share these feelings with somebody. I didn't have anyone relating to this in my friends' gang, not even girls. Not being able to relate made me lonely.
51	Not having somebody to look up to, guide you or take a decision for you	Loss of somebody who was very protective of you from your life induced loneliness. You feel that you are all by yourself in pacing through life, that nobody is there anymore to show you the way or hand-hold you.	There was this belief that no matter what I did, my father was there to take care of things. It changed to a point where I knew that I have to lookout for myself.
52	Understanding pregnancy, the challenges it poses and ways to deal with them	A lady who is pregnant should prepare herself for what is to come. There should be someone to tell her all these beforehand itself. This might help reduce chances of situations that make them feel lonely.	I will tell you as if I am guiding a friend who's about to conceive. Around 7 months, I will tell them these are the things to note, these are the situations. That you won't get sleep, so take maximum rest. Prepare yourself. Tell them about breast pump. Then I will tell them about post-partum. The thing is I did a lot of research on how to care for the child, but not about how to care for the mother. How to care about myself. I should have done that.
53	Realization that there is no one anymore to 'take care of things'	Loss of somebody who was very protective of you from your life induced loneliness. You feel that you are by yourself and you are to take all decisions in your life. So you become a bit more cautioned.	Yes. There was a belief that there's this person. There was this confidence that this person will save me whatever trap I fall into. That was a different kind of life. My brother was a little rebellious. He got this confidence to be rebellious because he also believed that my father was there for him. After his death, my brother changed completely. He went college, studied and came back. Until then, my brother used to be named in any issue that occurred in his college (smiles). Same thing with me. Say eve teasing which is so prevalent here. I had this confidence to react because "papa was there". After his death, I didn't react. I was scared. It was a feeling of protection. Fathers are a source of protection, right? That wasn't there anymore.
54	Self-care is important	Loving and caring for yourself is very important.	The thing is I did a lot of research on how to care for the child, but not about how to care for the mother. How to care about myself. I should have done that. I thought that my family is there, that they'll take care of me, I just need to take care of my child. But that's not the case. Only if the mother is happy and healthy will she be able to take good care of her child.
55	Suicidal thoughts	Loneliness in a worst-case scenario induced suicidal thoughts.	During the demise of my father, I didn't do anything. I didn't know anything; I was only 19. Mental health and all were not things I thought about. Suicidal thoughts did come to me. I will never have a life like I did, so why live it?

56	Medicines make you tired	People consult psychologists because of loneliness. The medicines that they prescribe wear the person down.	I have always had a loneliness or a mild depression in me so whatever I told you earlier is based on what I have felt. I did consult a psychologist for this for which he prescribed medicines. I didn't continue those medicines for too long because I felt that it is putting me down that I am becoming totally weak and not able to do anything so I stopped the medicines and started focusing more on physical activity.
57	Panic attacks	Panic attacks wherein the person felt breathless and uneasy was a consequence of loneliness	I started getting panic attacks after that. I didn't have any idea about what it is or even that such a thing existed. One day. I was casually having a conversation with my friends. Suddenly I felt a sudden sense of breathlessness; a feeling that I would die soon. It is only later that I understood that it's just a feeling and it's called panic attacks and people do get these.
58	Feeling of loss	The feeling that you lost someone important is associated with loneliness	You constantly think about losses. The thought that "oh it's lost. I wouldn't get that anymore". Basically, if you ask me the single most defined emotion that I have is sadness. Then it's the feeling of loss. The feeling that you lost something.
59	Seeking the help of a psychologist	Participants went to therapists and psychologists for help. Some were helpful, others weren't. There are taboos associated with mental health issues and seeking their help.	Another problem is about visiting a psychologist. It's a big taboo. They still believe that only people with a lot of mental issues visit a psychologist. But that changed once my brother got into college. He initially started studying at the central university Karnataka but he couldn't do it there. He had some issues there and he came back home. I was adamant that he should attend some counselling and hence we took him for counselling. Then my family began to accept such things.
60	Helplessness	You can't do anything. You don't have anything to do about it. Only thing you can do is accept it.	
61	Problems with social behaviour as a result of "pampering" being a single child	Parents are over-protective and pamper their child because he/she is a single child. This leads to them not developing necessary social skills, ideal social behaviour, etc., which might be a reason for social isolation.	Too much pampering is a snake that will bite you with time. Today I saw this reel in which a famous actor says this "if your teachers and parents say that he is a nice child, he doesn't speak to anyone", it is one of the biggest poison. He is totally disconnected from the society, no one will help him when he needs help, he won't know whom to approach when he needs help. I wouldn't say my parents did grave injustice, but pampering definitely brought a lot of restrictions with respect to social connections and behaviour.
62	Friends getting scattered because of migration, work, etc.	The friendship group you had since childhood got scattered when people went different ways because of education, work, other reasons.	A lot of people in my circles got scattered. Some went abroad, some went into medical practice. It was initially okay for me because of the excitement of getting your first job. After sometime, I understood that office people are corporate friends. At this point I missed my old friends, even though there was social media contact. I didn't have anything to do during weekends. This for a person who used to be out in the streets till midnight usually, was hard. In such situations, you feel down, maybe even without a reason. I have felt lonely during such situations. It has affected me.

63	Dissipation of joint family causing sadness	Joint family got dissipated because of out migration. Kids whom you brought up from the time they were born were not there with you anymore. This feeling of missing caused sadness.	I should talk about my family then. I have 2 brothers. My elder brother has 2 kids. The kids were in my house, while both brothers are abroad. It was a joint family kind of situation, always happy. Initially it was one kid, then another. Home is always fun, always happy. Even when we are sitting idle, kids will be there to play with us.[SEP]This elder brother is settled in X. A year and a half back, his kids and wife also shifted with him. That induced a lot of sadness suddenly. Because my niece who is 7 years old now; until she turned 5, she was with me. I was there with her from the day she was born. I admitted her to school, used to drop her and pick her from school. When they left, there was sadness. Not just for me, but my parents as they missed their grandchildren. Whenever I came back home from my workplace, they used to come running as they heard the sound of my vehicle. The next day onwards, there was nobody like that. I felt all alone in my room.
64	Professional jealousy causing people to ignore/isolate you	Works circle change because of promotions or change in roles. This might not be taken in a healthy sense by one's prior team, leading to the person being ignored/isolated from the usual team activities.	One of my colleagues got a promotion. He had the option to choose two people to his team. I was one among those who got selected. I suddenly felt like those whom I worked with prior became a separate team.
65	Ill experiences of people who migrated	People who migrated outside for education/work faced loneliness because of not having people to talk to, work hours mismatch, and difference in time zones between home and their place of stay.	Going for a job in the morning and coming back home, studies in between, stuck between studies and work, assignments. Even those who have roommates will have conflicting schedules such that one wouldn't be home when the other is. They don't have anyone to talk to. Because of the time zone difference, they cannot call anyone here. Many have shared their experiences of this loneliness.
66	People judging you	Reason for loneliness and isolation. Could be based on appearance, dressing or your decisions.	It could also happen when people around you are judgemental of you based on your appearance- the way you look or the clothes you wear. People do say "don't judge a book but it's cover". But I feel it's a lie, everybody does that.
67	Hatred, anger, sadness, frustration and suffocation	Consequences and emotions associated with social isolation and also loneliness.	
68	Being alone is associated with peace, positivity and productivity	Being alone is different from being lonely. It is associated with positive attributes like learning/doing new things, sorting your thoughts, doing hobbies and just being comfortable with yourself.	I don't have any problem sitting alone. This is the first word I associate with loneliness, my flat. The next point includes activities I do when I'm alone. Lately, I've started cooking by myself. It depends on my mood. If I'm tired after work, I order food. Else, I try out new things. It's also a conscious effort to eat healthy from home. Other times, I watch new series on TV.
69	Unexpected remarks like being scolded	When the person gets a sudden unexpected negative remark like somebody getting angry, they feel blank and lonely. It is a reason for loneliness.	H- Any other situation in which this comes?[SEP]S- When I get scolded all of a sudden. When such remarks come unexpected, my movements slow down. I literally become blank. [SEP]H- And you feel it as loneliness, right?[SEP]S- Hmm yes.
70	Preparing oneself for the worst case scenario	In order to reduce the fear and anxiety associated with loneliness, people prepared themselves for the worst case scenario. In case it did happen, they'd have planned it already. In case it didn't happen, it is good for them.	Nowadays, I plan the worst case that can happen earlier. If that happens, it is not a problem because I expected it. This is one of the things I do in my morning alone time. I plan for best case and think about the worst case as well.

71	People count on you, but you don't have anyone to count on	You understand people and the situation they are going through. They come to you for help. But when you need something, either they expect you to do it yourself because you are strong, or they don't understand you need help unless you tell them. It is a reason for loneliness.	Especially given that I understand their situation, but they aren't able to understand mine. It goes when I realize that these arise because of expectations. But I have felt that.
72	Angry when lonely	Emotion associated with lonliness.	Anger. A lot of anger.
73	Transition from adolescence to adulthood	Changes in the emerging adulthood period centered around change in environment like university, workplace, etc., change in personalities, change in nature of relationships, etc. It is a reason for loneliness.	My social circle lessened. I understood genuine and non-genuine people. People's priorities change and because of that, people change. This is the immediate change I experienced from college to PG and work. Also, all aspects related to a person become visible during this transition- personal, professional, family, friendship.
74	Sharing one's problems with partner	Talking to one's husband/wife about the problems related to loneliness one face helps in coping with it.	H- When you got this feeling, how long did it last?S- I used to share these things with my husband. It gave me relief. The moment I told him these things, I used to realize that all these arose because I expected things. Even if I don't feel that, my husband would tell me that.
75	Quarrelling, throwing things around	Coping mechanism for loneliness and isolation.	What do you do in such situations?S- (immediately answers) Fight with him ("adi koodum")
76	People don't understand you	Even when you tell people things that might help them, they don't understand you. It makes you lonely.	I get very sad when my parents don't understand me. When my mother and father don't get something that I say, it is a big problem for me.
77	Artisitic side and creativity increased	Long term consequence of loneliness	writing poetry, photography, etc
78	Guarded responses	You do not act normally and guard yourself because you don't want others to know you are lonely	I really get scared and panicked. But I do not show it outside. So, people don't understand that I'm finding that situation problematic.
79	Hurting oneself physically	Consequence of loneliness	Feeling like hurting oneself. Physically hurting oneself to get rid of internal pain
80	Long-term consequences of loneliness is positive	Consequence of loneliness	Loneliness helped bring gratitude for people who were there for you through your hardships. You start appreciating yourself for the journey you made. Your self-esteem and self-worth increases. It has a brighter side
81	Using intoxicants and narcotic substances	Using inxoticants to alleivate the feeling of loneliness and isolation	I was constantly thinking how to get some peace. Once when my friends called me for drinking, I went with this state. Only once in my life have, I drank beyond my capacity. That was during this stage.
82	Teased for being an orphan	Consequence of social isolation and being abandoned at a young age in an orphanage	Since what age did you become a victim of all this teasing? S- Since my 3rd standard when I got admitted to the orphanage.
83	Traumatic childhood experiences including abuse	Consequence of social isolation and being abandoned at a young age in an orphanage	There were priests within the hostel who exhibited undesirable behaviour ("vendatha swabhavangalum karyangalum ullavar"). But nobody allowed us to talk about it. Even if we try to tell this to someone within the orphanage, they would only try to confine it or hide it.
84	Feeling "blank", "void"	A form of helplessness when you can't do anything. It is an emotion associated with loneliness	When you know everything there is to know possibly about a situation, and yet there is a difficulty in taking a decision.
85	Guilty of feeling lonely	An emotion associated with loneliness because you felt lonely inspite of your friends and others trying to help you	whether it is because of your fault. It will go back to blaming yourself. It is a circle

86	Regret, disappointment and vulnerable	All because you felt you gave the wrong people your time and attention, that you took the wrong decision	a. Regret- about the decisions that you took. Why is this happening to me, why did I take that decision? b. Disappointment- that you chose a particular person, etc. c. Vulnerability- you don't know what to do
87	Abandonment, refusal to talk, getting angry when you try to reach out	Ways by which people socially isolated a person	In my case, in spite of them being alive, they don't want me. I don't know the reason even now.
88	Advice, emotional blackmail, pressurizing and ignoring	Ways by which people socially isolated a person, especially your family because they can't make it too obvious	things are indirect. All these advices about counselling and stuff, poking my mother to fix my marriage with a girl, etc.
89	Not extending a favour even when you can	Ways by which people socially isolated a person, especially your family because they can't make it too obvious	With my current educational qualifications and research qualifications, its very easy for me to get a reference (referral). But they won't do it. Why? Because of this faith issue.
90	Being comfortable with yourself, doing things yourself	A learning that you do not have to depend on others for your happiness beyond an extent. You can learn to be okay with yourself	but now I'm in the process of learning. That we shouldn't wait for others to come out. I should go out and enjoy my company.
91	Close circles are comfortable	You begin to recognize those who bring out the good in you and understand that its more important to have a good quality circle than bigger numbers	Now I am at a different stage of life. Even though we don't contact regularly, there is some sort of contact. I have a pre-set list of people. They are a close circle. Whatever the situation is, I am still in contact.
92	Learning new languagest to tackle linguistic barriers	Learning to cope with difficulties	
93	Learning to accept things especially difficult ones	Reconciling with the fact that life is difficult and sometimes, you have to wade through	I take time. Let it be, let me give it time. It will fade when its time.
94	Noticing little things	Finding happiness in little things, little efforts that people take for you and being grateful for it	Noticing little things happening around you- somebody smiling, a flower, nature, etc.
95	Recognising that priorities, responsiblities and views change with time	Learning that come to you with time and experiences	Initially there were thoughts that people change. I also wondered whether I was the one that changed. Then I understood that it is a phase in everyone's life.
96	Attention shift from mother to the baby	The sudden change in attention given to you, change in priority makes you feel not-belonged and lonely	One small example was once when I craved fish curry. After I expressed that, I got fish curry daily. It stopped once I delivered. I know that they are catering to the need when I'm pregnant, and that it is different. But I feel the needs of a post-partum mother are overlooked.
97	Body dysmorphia	The change in your physical body structure during and after pregnancy makes you feel uncomfortable	Looking back, it could have been because I was thin all my life. You are not used to seeing the change with the hormones. You don't just become fat; you puff up for at least two years.
98	Identity leading to isolation	Your identity triggered others which made you insecure and lonely	
99	Issues within family	Personal issues within family made you feel lonely	Small tussles are bound to occur within a family. When me and my husband quarrel, it doesn't last long. But certain words that we say; they cannot be taken back.

100	Manifestation of homophobia among younger emerging adults		In this age category, almost 60-70% are homophobic (H interrupts “what would be this age category?”) S- 18-19 years right now.
101	Cultural and religious customs that sanction isolation	Especially those that restrict pregnant women and new mothers	The mother shouldn’t go out for 41 days. When she goes out and comes back after this period, she should only enter through the back-door of the house. There are a lot of such outdated customs that don’t hold true in the present times.
102	Subtle manifestations of casteism, racism	Reasons for social isolation	Once while I was in a shop in Malaysia, I faced an incident. We were bargaining with one shop owner. The moment a White guy from America came, there was a switch. Even if we say there’s no racism, the moment that guy came, the shop people went to them completely. We were like “why did we come here”. The consideration that we got changed, just because of colour.
103	Balance between socializing and "alone time" is the key	You need to socialize as well has have time on your own to "reacharge your batteries"	When I’m exhausted, I try to isolate myself. I’m a person who plans and takes leaves.
104	Being with people doesn't make you feel lonely		Someone just being there helps. It is not a requirement that they should talk to me. Somebody being near you helps- could be friends or family
105	Comparing your problems with a bigger problem to feel relief	Coping mechanism for loneliness and isolation.	Another escapism is by relating my issues with theirs. I feel like when compared to them, my problems are nothing. I shouldn’t overreact. I’ll feel okay.
106	Dealing with things		
107	Finding comfort in people		I have become parts of groups here. You don’t feel the void when you are with them. But after they leave, you do.
108	Relating with movie characters	Relating with what a character from a movie would in a particular situation helps people to deal with difficult situations	
109	Seeking comfort in pets or animals	Engaging with pets or animals helps people combat loneliness	
110	Self-grooming	Grooming yourself physically helps boost self-confidence and alleviate loneliness	
111	Talking to AI assistants	Having conversations with AI chatbots just like you would with a normal person when you feel lonely, helps you alleviate it	
112	Yoga, meditation and prayers		Along with yoga and meditation, prayer also helped. Prayer has helped a lot. I go to temples a lot. It helps reduce loneliness. You will have good peace of mind.
113	Alcoholism, using intoxicants as reasons to self-isolate	Reasons for people to self-isolate and stay away from people	

ANNEXURE 3: Participant Information Sheet for IDI (English)

Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS)

Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST)

Trivandrum- 11

Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala

Informant serial number:

Participant Information Sheet

Greetings, I'm Harigovind, a Master of Public Health (MPH) student at the Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS), Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), Kerala. This study is being conducted as part of my thesis dissertation in partial fulfilment of my MPH degree. The topic I'm working on is "Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala". I work under the guidance of Dr. Mala Ramanathan, Professor Senior Grade, AMCHSS.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. I describe below, why I wish to do this study, the procedure it entails and information related to privacy and confidentiality during the study. I request you to carefully go through it, before you decide whether or not to participate in my study.

Please read the information sheet and consent form carefully. I would be happy to answer any clarifications you might have.

Purpose of the study

I want to understand what loneliness and social isolation mean to emerging adults in Kerala. I will look into what exactly emerging adults feel when they are lonely. I will also look at what causes this feeling of loneliness or social isolation. Finally, I wish to explore what measures people take to cope with loneliness and social isolation.

I wish to pursue this topic as it is something that has not been explored well in the Indian context, especially Kerala. Much of the information available publicly on this topic is based on studies from the Western countries. Therefore, we need to understand both these phenomena here in our local settings. It is also a topic close to my heart as I have seen people who find it difficult to cope with loneliness and isolation. I hope this study becomes the first step towards defining these problems, so that future studies can look at finding solutions for them.

Procedure

If you consent to working with me, I will start with a Grid Elaboration Method (GEM). It will require you to fill in four grids/boxes, what you associate with loneliness and social isolation. It could be expressed through words, sketches, flowcharts, drawings, poems, songs, or any other method of expression. This will be followed by an in-depth interview. The interview will involve your answering questions that deal with feelings associated with loneliness, isolation that you might have encountered, narration of particular instances, etc. I will write down relevant points during the interview. If you are willing, I will also record the audio of our interview. This is to ensure that all aspects of our conversation are captured and represented to the full extent. Similarly, if you are willing to click photos, share them and discuss with me over Zoom call or in-person, I will also try to use a method called Photovoice. I will request you to take photos that you associate with loneliness. This will be followed by a discussion of what the photograph means to you and why it is important. May I call upon you later to discuss the interpretation of these photographs? I believe this will help in better understanding of what you are trying to explain about loneliness and social isolation.

After I finish the interviews and analyse my data, I will have some idea of what people like you experience as loneliness and social isolation.

To confirm my understandings from the study, I will try to hold a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with emerging adults later on.

I will also ensure utmost care to see that your privacy and confidentiality is upheld.

Potential risks and discomforts

The topic of the study is one that might touch your feelings. There is a chance you might feel a discomfort while thinking about negative feelings or instances when you felt lonely or isolated.

Possible benefits

Loneliness and social isolation among younger adults are confirmed through anecdotal evidence, but less through research in the context of Kerala and India. This study will give more insight into what exactly both phenomena are. Future studies could look at finding statistical significance between various factors and loneliness.

Cost and financial benefit

Any cost that may arise for transportation, recording, or arranging a venue will be borne by the researcher. There is no provision of financial benefits for participating in the study. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Confidentiality

Care will be taken to ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of all the participants are maintained. The recordings will be deleted after transcription and translation. No details that may disclose your identity will be put out openly in the final thesis document.

Withdrawal from the study

You are free to withdraw from the study at any point of time. This includes instances like the interview or the FGD. No form of penalty will be yielded for the same.

Contact information

If you have any questions related to the study or would like to verify my credentials, you may contact me, my research guide or the member secretary of our institute's ethics committee.

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Would you be willing to participate in the study?

ANNEXURE 4: Participant Information Sheet for IDI (Malayalam)

അച്യുത മേനോൻ സെന്റർ ഫോർ ഹെൽത്ത് സയൻസ് സ്റ്റഡീസ്, ശ്രീചിത്ര തിരുനാൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഫോർ മെഡിക്കൽ സയൻസസ് ആൻഡ് ടെക്നോളജി

കേരളത്തിലെ വളർന്നുവരുന്ന യുവാക്കളിൽ ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലുമെന്നാലെന്ത്?

വിവരണ രേഖ

നമസ്കാരം. ഞാൻ ബി ഹരിഗോവിന്ദ്, ശ്രീചിത്ര തിരുനാൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഫോർ മെഡിക്കൽ സയൻസസ് ആൻഡ് ടെക്നോളജിയുടെ കീഴിലുള്ള അച്യുത മേനോൻ സെന്റർ ഫോർ ഹെൽത്ത് സയൻസ് സ്റ്റഡീസ്സിലെ ഒരു മാസ്റ്റർ ഓഫ് പബ്ലിക് ഹെൽത്ത് (എംപിഎച്ച്) ബിരുദാനന്തര ബിരുദ വിദ്യാർഥിയാണ്. ഈ പഠനം എന്റെ കോഴ്സ് വർക്കിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി നടത്തുന്നതാണ്. അച്യുത മേനോൻ സെന്റർ ഫോർ ഹെൽത്ത് സയൻസ് സ്റ്റഡീസ്സിലെ സീനിയർ ഗ്രേഡ് പ്രൊഫസറായ ഡോ. മാല രാമനാഥന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിലാണ് ഞാൻ ഈ പഠനം നടത്തുന്നത്.

ഈ ഗവേഷണത്തിൽ പങ്കുചേരാൻ ഞാൻ താങ്കളെ ക്ഷണിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു. എന്തുകൊണ്ട് ഈ പഠനം ചെയ്യുന്നു, അതുൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന നടപടിക്രമങ്ങളെന്ത്, പഠന സമയത്ത് നടപ്പാക്കേണ്ട സ്വകാര്യത എന്നിവയെക്കുറിച്ചാണ് ഞാൻ താഴെ വിവരിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്നോ ഇല്ലയോ എന്നു തീരുമാനിക്കുന്നതിന് മുൻപ് ഇവയിലൂടെ ശ്രദ്ധാപൂർവം കടന്നുപോകാൻ ഞാൻ അഭ്യർത്തിക്കുന്നു.

ദയവായി വിവരണ രേഖയും സമ്മതപത്രവും ശ്രദ്ധാപൂർവ്വം വായിച്ചു നോക്കുക. താങ്കൾക്കെന്ത് സംശയമുണ്ടെങ്കിലും എന്നോട് ചോദിക്കാവുന്നതാണ്.

പഠനത്തിൻറെ ഉദ്ദേശ്യം

കേരളത്തിലെ വളർന്നുവരുന്ന യുവാക്കളിൽ ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലുമെന്നാലെന്തെന്ന് മനസിലാക്കാൻ ഞാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. തനിച്ചാണെന്ന തോന്നൽ വരുമ്പോൾ യുവാക്കൾക്ക് അനുഭവപ്പെടുന്നതെന്ത്, ഈ വികാരതിനും ഒറ്റപ്പെടലിനും കാരണമാകുന്നതെന്തൊക്കെ, ഏകാന്തതയും

സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തലും നേരിടാൻ യുവാക്കൾ സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന രീതികളെന്തൊക്കെ, ഇവയെല്ലാം ഈ പഠനത്തിലൂടെ കണ്ടെത്താൻ ഞാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു.

ഈ വിഷയത്തിലുള്ള പഠനങ്ങളിൽ ഭൂരിഭാഗവും പാശ്ചാത്യ രാജ്യങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നുള്ളവയാണ്. അതുകൊണ്ടു തന്നെ ഈ വിഷയങ്ങൾ കേരളത്തിൻറ്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ പഠിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. ഒറ്റപ്പെടലും തനിച്ചാണെന്ന തോന്നലുമുണ്ടാക്കുന്ന ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുകൾ കൂട്ടുകാരിലും മറ്റുള്ളവരിലും കണ്ടിട്ടുള്ളതുകൊണ്ടുതന്നെ ഇവ എൻറ്റെ ഹൃദയത്തോട് ചേർന്നുള്ള വിഷയങ്ങളാണ്. ഈ പഠനം കേരളത്തിൽ ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തലും മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരു തുടക്കമായ് മാറുമെന്ന് ഞാൻ പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കുന്നു. ഭാവിയിൽ ഇവ പരിഹരിക്കാനുള്ള മാർഗങ്ങൾ ചിട്ടപ്പെടുത്താൻ ഉപയോഗപ്രദമാകുമെന്നും ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു.

നടപടിക്രമം

താങ്കൾക്ക് ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കുചേരാൻ സമ്മതമാണെങ്കിൽ ഗ്രിഡ് ഇലാബ്രേഷൻ മെത്തേഡ് എന്നൊരു രീതിവെച്ചു പഠനം തുടങ്ങുന്നതായിരിക്കും. 'ഏകാന്തത', 'സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടൽ' എന്നീ പദങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് കേൾക്കുമ്പോൾ / ചിന്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ മനസ്സിൽ വരുന്ന ഏതെങ്കിലും വാക്കോ, ചിത്രമോ, വികാരമോ 4 ചതുരങ്ങളിലായി പൂരിപ്പിക്കാവുന്നതാണ്. വാക്കുകൾ, ചിത്രങ്ങൾ, കവിതകൾ, പാട്ടുകൾ, കഥകൾ, ഫ്ലോ ചാർട്ടുകൾ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ മറ്റേതെങ്കിലും ആവിഷ്കാര രീതിയിലൂടെ ഇത് പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കാം.

ഇതിനുശേഷം താങ്കളുമായുള്ള അഭിമുഖം നടത്തും. തനിച്ചാണെന്ന തോന്നൽ, ഒറ്റപ്പെടൽ ഉണ്ടായ സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ, അതുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട സംഭവങ്ങളുടെ വിവരണം, ഇത്തരം സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ വികാരങ്ങൾ കൈകാര്യം ചെയ്യുന്ന വിധം; ഇവയുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ അഭിമുഖത്തിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടും. താങ്കൾക്ക് ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടില്ലെങ്കിൽ അഭിമുഖത്തിൻറ്റെ ഓഡിയോ ഞാൻ റെക്കോർഡ് ചെയ്യുന്നതായിരിക്കും. സംഭാഷണത്തിൻറ്റെ ഒരു ഭാഗവും നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടിട്ടില്ലെന്ന് ഉറപ്പാക്കുന്നതിനാണിത്. താങ്കൾക്ക് ഫോട്ടോ ക്ലിക്കുചെയ്യാനും, അവ പങ്കിടാനും, ഫോൺ കോളിലൂടെ എന്നോട് ചർച്ച ചെയ്യാനും ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടില്ലെങ്കിൽ ഞാൻ ഫോട്ടോവോയ്സ് എന്നൊരു മാർഗ്ഗം ഉപയോഗിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കും. തനിച്ചാണെന്ന തോന്നലും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തലുമായ്

ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് ഏതാനും ചിത്രങ്ങൾ പകർത്താൻ ഞാൻ താങ്കളോട് അഭ്യർത്ഥിക്കുന്നു. ശേഷം ഓരോ ഫോട്ടോ കൊണ്ടു താങ്കൾക്ക് എന്താണ് അർത്ഥമാക്കുന്നത്, അത് എന്തുകൊണ്ട് പ്രധാനമാകുന്നു എന്നതിനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ചർച്ച ചെയ്യും. ഇതിനായി താങ്കളെ പിന്നീട് Zoom വഴിയോ, നേരിട്ടോ ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടാൽ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുണ്ടോ? ചർച്ചാവിഷയങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് കൂടുതൽ വിവരങ്ങൾ ശേഖരിക്കാൻ ഇതെന്നെ സഹായിക്കും.

എല്ലാ അഭിമുഖങ്ങളും ട്രാൻസ്ക്രൈബ് ചെയ്യുകയും ഇംഗ്ലീഷിലേക്ക് വിവർത്തനം ചെയ്യുകയും ചെയ്യും. അതിനു ശേഷം വിഷയവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട പ്രധാന പ്രമേയങ്ങൾ മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ കോഡുചെയ്യുകയും ചെയ്യും.

പഠനത്തിൻറ്റെ അവസാനം എൻറ്റെ കണ്ടെത്തലുകൾ ശരിയാണോ എന്ന് പരിശോധിക്കാൻ മറ്റ് യുവാക്കളുമായി ഒരു ഫോക്കസ് ഗ്രൂപ്പ് ചർച്ച (എഫ്ജിഡി) നടത്താൻ ഞാൻ ശ്രമിക്കും.

പഠനത്തിൻറ്റെ എല്ലാ ഘട്ടങ്ങളിലും താങ്കളുടെ സ്വകാര്യത സംരക്ഷിക്കുമെന്ന് ഞാൻ ഉറപ്പ് തരുന്നു.

അസ്വസ്ഥത ഉണ്ടാകാനുള്ള സാധ്യതകൾ

ഏകാന്തതയും ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തലും താങ്കളുടെ വികാരങ്ങളെ സ്വാധീനിക്കാൻ കേൾപ്പുള്ള വിഷയങ്ങളാണ്. ഇത്തരം വികാരങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചോ സംഭവങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചോ ചിന്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ താങ്കൾക്ക് അസ്വസ്ഥത അനുഭവപ്പെടാനുള്ള സാധ്യതയുണ്ട്.

പഠന സാധ്യതകൾ

ഈ പഠനം ഏകാന്തത, സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തൽ എന്ന രണ്ട് പ്രതിഭാസങ്ങൾ കൃത്യമായി എന്താണെന്ന് കൂടുതൽ ഉൾക്കാഴ്ച നൽകുമെന്ന് ഞാൻ കരുതുന്നു.

ചെലവും സാമ്പത്തിക ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങളും

ഗതാഗതം, റിക്കോർഡിംഗ്, വേദി ക്രമീകരിക്കൽ എന്നിവയുടെ ചിലവുകൾ ഗവേഷകൻ വഹിക്കും. പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്നതിന് സാമ്പത്തിക ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങൾ ഒന്നും തന്നെയില്ല. താങ്കളുടെ പങ്കാളിത്തം തികച്ചും സ്വമേധയാ ഉള്ളതാണ്.

വിശ്വസ്തത/സ്വകാര്യത

പങ്കെടുക്കുന്ന എല്ലാവരുടെയും സ്വകാര്യത നിലനിർത്താനും അവരോട് വിശ്വസ്തത പുലർത്താനും ഗവേഷകൻ പൂരണമായും ശ്രദ്ധിക്കും. ട്രാൻസ്ക്രിപ്ഷനും വിവർത്തനവും കഴിഞ്ഞ് റിക്കോർഡിങ്ങുകൾ ഇല്ലാതാക്കും. താങ്കളുടെ വ്യക്തിത്വം വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന വിശദാംശങ്ങൾ അന്തിമ പഠന പത്രത്തിൽ പരസ്യമായി അവതരിപ്പിക്കില്ലെന്ന് ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തും.

പഠനത്തിൽ നിന്നുള്ള പിന്മാറൽ

ഏത് സമയത്തും പഠനത്തിൽ നിന്ന് പിന്മാറാൻ താങ്കൾക്ക് അവകാശമുണ്ട്. ഒരു തരത്തിലുള്ള പിഴയും ഇതിനീടാക്കുന്നതല്ല.

വിലാസം

താങ്കൾക്ക് പഠനവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടെന്തെങ്കിലും ചോദ്യങ്ങളുണ്ടെങ്കിലോ എൻറ്റെ യോഗ്യത പരിശോധിക്കാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നുവെങ്കിലോ എന്നെയോ, എൻറ്റെ ഗൈഡിനെയോ, ഞങ്ങളുടെ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് എത്തിക്സ് കമ്മിറ്റിയുടെ മെമ്പർ സെക്രട്ടറിയുമായോ ബന്ധപ്പെടാം.

ബി ഹരിഗോവിന്ദ്
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കമ്മിറ്റി, എസ്.സി.ടി.ഐ.എം.എസ്.ടി,
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ഇമെയിൽ: iec.mem.sec@sctimst.ac.in

ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ താങ്കൾ തയ്യാറാണോ?

ANNEXURE 5: Participant Information Sheet for FGD (English)

Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS)

Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST)

Trivandrum- 11

Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala

Informant serial number:

Participant Information Sheet (Focus Group Discussion)

Greetings, I'm Harigovind, a Master of Public Health (MPH) student at the Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS), Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), Kerala. This study is being conducted as part of my thesis dissertation in partial fulfilment of my MPH degree. The topic I'm working on is "Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala". I work under the guidance of Dr. Mala Ramanathan, Professor Senior Grade, AMCHSS.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. I describe below, why I wish to do this study, the procedure it entails and information related to privacy and confidentiality during the study. I request you to carefully go through it, before you decide whether or not to participate in my study.

Please read the information sheet and consent form carefully. I would be happy to answer any clarifications you might have.

Purpose of the study

I want to understand what loneliness and social isolation mean to emerging adults in Kerala. I will look into what exactly emerging adults feel when they are lonely. I will also look at what causes this feeling of loneliness or social isolation. Finally, I wish to explore what measures people take to cope with loneliness and social isolation.

I wish to pursue this topic as it is something that has not been explored well in the Indian context, especially Kerala. Much of the information available publicly on this topic is based on studies from the Western countries. Therefore, we need to understand both these phenomena here in our local settings. It is also a topic close to my heart as I have seen people who find it difficult to cope with loneliness and isolation. I hope this study becomes the first step towards defining these problems, so that future studies can look at finding solutions for them.

Procedure

If you consent to working with me, I will hold a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with emerging adults like you. This will be held separately for both male and female participants in a venue that is feasible for all. I will be discussing the initial findings of my study with you, and trying to understand whether it makes sense to emerging adults like you. May I call upon you to participate in the FGD?

I will also ensure utmost care to see that your privacy and confidentiality is upheld.

Potential risks and discomforts

The topic of the study is one that might touch your feelings. There is a chance you might feel a discomfort while thinking about negative feelings or instances when you felt lonely or isolated.

Possible benefits

Loneliness and social isolation among younger adults are confirmed through anecdotal evidence, but less through research in the context of Kerala and India. This study will give more insight into what exactly both phenomena are. Future studies could look at finding statistical significance between various factors and loneliness.

Cost and financial benefit

Any cost that may arise for transportation, recording, or arranging a venue will be borne by the researcher. There is no provision of financial benefits for participating in the study. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Confidentiality

Care will be taken to ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of all the participants are maintained. The recordings will be deleted after transcription and translation. No details that may disclose your identity will be put out openly in the final thesis document.

Withdrawal from the study

You are free to withdraw from the study at any point of time. No form of penalty will be yielded for the same.

Contact information

If you have any questions related to the study or would like to verify my credentials, you may contact me, my research guide or the member secretary of our institute's ethics committee.

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Would you be willing to participate in the study?

ANNEXURE 6: Participant Information Sheet for FGD (Malayalam)

അച്യുത മേനോൻ സെന്റർ ഫോർ ഹെൽത്ത് സയൻസ് സ്റ്റഡീസ്, ശ്രീചിത്ര തിരുനാൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഫോർ മെഡിക്കൽ സയൻസസ് ആൻഡ് ടെക്നോളജി

കേരളത്തിലെ വളർന്നുവരുന്ന യുവാക്കളിൽ ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലുമെന്നാലെന്ത്?

വിവരണ രേഖ (ഫോക്കസ് ഗ്രൂപ്പ് ചർച്ചകൾ)

നമസ്കാരം. ഞാൻ ബി ഹരിഗോവിന്ദ്, ശ്രീചിത്ര തിരുനാൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഫോർ മെഡിക്കൽ സയൻസസ് ആൻഡ് ടെക്നോളജിയുടെ കീഴിലുള്ള അച്യുത മേനോൻ സെന്റർ ഫോർ ഹെൽത്ത് സയൻസ് സ്റ്റഡീസ്സിലെ ഒരു മാസ്റ്റർ ഓഫ് പബ്ലിക് ഹെൽത്ത് (എംപിഎച്ച്) ബിരുദാനന്തര ബിരുദ വിദ്യാർഥിയാണ്. ഈ പഠനം എന്റെ കോഴ്സ് വർക്കിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി നടത്തുന്നതാണ്. അച്യുത മേനോൻ സെന്റർ ഫോർ ഹെൽത്ത് സയൻസ് സ്റ്റഡീസ്സിലെ സീനിയർ ഗ്രേഡ് പ്രൊഫസറായ ഡോ. മാല രാമനാഥന്റെ നേതൃത്വത്തിലാണ് ഞാൻ ഈ പഠനം നടത്തുന്നത്.

ഈ ഗവേഷണത്തിൽ പങ്കുചേരാൻ ഞാൻ താങ്കളെ ക്ഷണിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു. എന്തുകൊണ്ട് ഈ പഠനം ചെയ്യുന്നു, അതുൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന നടപടിക്രമങ്ങളെന്ത്, പഠന സമയത്ത് നടപ്പാക്കേണ്ട സ്വകാര്യത എന്നിവയെക്കുറിച്ചാണ് ഞാൻ താഴെ വിവരിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്നോ ഇല്ലയോ എന്നു തീരുമാനിക്കുന്നതിന് മുൻപ് ഇവയിലൂടെ ശ്രദ്ധാപൂർവം കടന്നുപോകാൻ ഞാൻ അഭ്യർത്തിക്കുന്നു.

ദയവായി വിവരണ രേഖയും സമ്മതപത്രവും ശ്രദ്ധാപൂർവ്വം വായിച്ചു നോക്കുക. താങ്കൾക്കെന്ത് സംശയമുണ്ടെങ്കിലും എന്നോട് ചോദിക്കാവുന്നതാണ്.

പഠനത്തിൻറെ ഉദ്ദേശ്യം

കേരളത്തിലെ വളർന്നുവരുന്ന യുവാക്കളിൽ ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലുമെന്നാലെന്തെന്ന് മനസിലാക്കാൻ ഞാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. തനിച്ചാണെന്ന തോന്നൽ വരുമ്പോൾ യുവാക്കൾക്ക് അനുഭവപ്പെടുന്നതെന്ത്, ഈ വികാരതിനും ഒറ്റപ്പെടലിനും കാരണമാകുന്നതെന്തൊക്കെ, ഏകാന്തതയും

സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തലും നേരിടാൻ യുവാക്കൾ സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന രീതികളെന്തൊക്കെ, ഇവയെല്ലാം ഈ പഠനത്തിലൂടെ കണ്ടെത്താൻ ഞാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു.

ഈ വിഷയത്തിലുള്ള പഠനങ്ങളിൽ ഭൂരിഭാഗവും പാശ്ചാത്യ രാജ്യങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നുള്ളവയാണ്. അതുകൊണ്ടു തന്നെ ഈ വിഷയങ്ങൾ കേരളത്തിൻറ്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ പഠിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. ഒറ്റപ്പെടലും തനിച്ചാണെന്ന തോന്നലുമുണ്ടാക്കുന്ന ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുകൾ കൂട്ടുകാരിലും മറ്റുള്ളവരിലും കണ്ടിട്ടുള്ളതുകൊണ്ടുതന്നെ ഇവ എൻറ്റെ ഹൃദയത്തോട് ചേർന്നുള്ള വിഷയങ്ങളാണ്. ഈ പഠനം കേരളത്തിൽ ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തലും മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരു തുടക്കമായ് മാറുമെന്ന് ഞാൻ പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കുന്നു. ഭാവിയിൽ ഇവ പരിഹരിക്കാനുള്ള മാർഗങ്ങൾ ചിട്ടപ്പെടുത്താൻ ഉപയോഗപ്രദമാകുമെന്നും ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു.

നടപടിക്രമം

താങ്കൾക്ക് ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കുചേരാൻ സമ്മതമാണെങ്കിൽ താങ്കളെ ഒരു ഫോക്കസ് ഗ്രൂപ്പ് ചർച്ചയ്ക്ക് (എഫ്ജിഡി) ക്ഷണിക്കുന്നു. പഠനത്തിൻറ്റെ അവസാനം എൻറ്റെ കണ്ടെത്തലുകൾ ശരിയാണോ എന്ന് പരിശോധിക്കാനാണ് മറ്റ് യുവാക്കളുമായി ഈ ചർച്ച. സ്ത്രീകൾക്കും പുരുഷന്മാർക്കും വെവ്വേറെയായിട്ടായിരിക്കും ചർച്ച നടത്തുന്നത്. എഫ്ജിഡിയിൽ പങ്കുചേരാൻ താങ്കൾക്ക് താല്പര്യമുണ്ടോ?

പഠനത്തിൻറ്റെ എല്ലാ ഘട്ടങ്ങളിലും താങ്കളുടെ സ്വകാര്യത സംരക്ഷിക്കുമെന്ന് ഞാൻ ഉറപ്പ് തരുന്നു.

അസ്വസ്ഥത ഉണ്ടാകാനുള്ള സാധ്യതകൾ

ഏകാന്തതയും ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തലും താങ്കളുടെ വികാരങ്ങളെ സ്വാധീനിക്കാൻ കേൾപ്പുള്ള വിഷയങ്ങളാണ്. ഇത്തരം വികാരങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചോ സംഭവങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചോ ചിന്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ താങ്കൾക്ക് അസ്വസ്ഥത അനുഭവപ്പെടാനുള്ള സാധ്യതയുണ്ട്.

പഠന സാധ്യതകൾ

ഈ പഠനം ഏകാന്തത, സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തൽ എന്ന രണ്ട് പ്രതിഭാസങ്ങൾ കൃത്യമായി എന്താണെന്ന് കൂടുതൽ ഉൾക്കാഴ്ച നൽകുമെന്ന് ഞാൻ കരുതുന്നു.

ചെലവും സാമ്പത്തിക ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങളും

ഗതാഗതം, റിക്കോർഡിംഗ്, വേദി ക്രമീകരിക്കൽ എന്നിവയുടെ ചിലവുകൾ ഗവേഷകൻ വഹിക്കും. പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുന്നതിന് സാമ്പത്തിക ആനുകൂല്യങ്ങൾ ഒന്നും തന്നെയില്ല. താങ്കളുടെ പങ്കാളിത്തം തികച്ചും സ്വമേധയാ ഉള്ളതാണ്.

വിശ്വസ്തത/സ്വകാര്യത

പങ്കെടുക്കുന്ന എല്ലാവരുടെയും സ്വകാര്യത നിലനിർത്താനും അവരോട് വിശ്വസ്തത പുലർത്താനും ഗവേഷകൻ പൂരണമായും ശ്രദ്ധിക്കും. ട്രാൻസ്ക്രിപ്ഷനും വിവർത്തനവും കഴിഞ്ഞ് റിക്കോർഡിങ്ങുകൾ ഇല്ലാതാക്കും. താങ്കളുടെ വ്യക്തിത്വം വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന വിശദാംശങ്ങൾ അന്തിമ പഠന പത്രത്തിൽ പരസ്യമായി അവതരിപ്പിക്കില്ലെന്ന് ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തും.

പഠനത്തിൽ നിന്നുള്ള പിന്മാറൽ

ഏത് സമയത്തും പഠനത്തിൽ നിന്ന് പിന്മാറാൻ താങ്കൾക്ക് അവകാശമുണ്ട്. ഒരു തരത്തിലുള്ള പിഴയും ഇതിനീടാക്കുന്നതല്ല.

വിലാസം

താങ്കൾക്ക് പഠനവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടെന്തെങ്കിലും ചോദ്യങ്ങളുണ്ടെങ്കിലോ എൻറ്റെ യോഗ്യത പരിശോധിക്കാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നുവെങ്കിലോ എന്നെയോ, എൻറ്റെ ഗൈഡിനെയോ, ഞങ്ങളുടെ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് എത്തിക്സ് കമ്മിറ്റിയുടെ മെമ്പർ സെക്രട്ടറിയുമായോ ബന്ധപ്പെടാം.

ബി ഹരിഗോവിന്ദ്
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എ.എം.സി.എച്ച്.എസ്.എസ്,
എസ്.സി.ടി.ഐ.എം.എസ്.ടി
ബന്ധപ്പെടേണ്ട നമ്പർ: 9495968040
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ഡോ. മാല രാമനാഥൻ
ഗൈഡ്,
എ.എം.സി.എച്ച്.എസ്.എസ്,
എസ്.സി.ടി.ഐ.എം.എസ്.ടി
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ഡോ ശ്രീനിവാസ് ജി
മെമ്പർ സെക്രട്ടറി
ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂഷണൽ എത്തിക്സ്
കമ്മിറ്റി, എസ്.സി.ടി.ഐ.എം.എസ്.ടി,
തിരുവനന്തപുരം - 695011
ഓഫീസ്: 04712524689
ഇമെയിൽ: iec.mem.sec@sctimst.ac.in

ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ താങ്കൾ തയ്യാറാണോ?

ANNEXURE 7: Informed Consent form for IDI (English)

Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS)

Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST)

Trivandrum- 11

Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala

Informant serial number:

Informed Consent Form

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the study "Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala", and have had the opportunity to clarify my doubts and concerns. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without consequences. I also understand that my privacy and confidentiality shall be maintained throughout the study, including the time of submission of the final document.

By signing this form, I agree to participate in this study.

I agree to be interviewed

I agree to be recorded

I agree to participate in photovoice method

A copy of this form has been given to me.

Date:

Place:

Name of the participant	Signature/Thumb impression
Witness (in case of thumb impression)	
Principal Investigator	Signature

ANNEXURE 8: Informed Consent form for IDI (Malayalam)

സമ്മതപത്രം

"കേരളത്തിലെ വളർന്നുവരുന്ന യുവാക്കളിൽ ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലുമെന്നാൽ എന്ത്?" എന്ന പഠനത്തിനായുള്ള വിവരണ രേഖ ഞാൻ വായിക്കുകയും മനസ്സിലാക്കുകയും ചെയ്തുവെന്ന് ഞാൻ സ്ഥിരീകരിക്കുന്നു. എൻറ്റെ എല്ലാ സംശയങ്ങളും, ചോദ്യങ്ങളും വ്യക്തമാക്കാൻ അവസരം ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ എൻറ്റെ പങ്കാളിത്തം സ്വമേധയാ ഉള്ളതാണെന്നും ഒരു കാരണവും പറയാതെ എപ്പോൾ വേണമെങ്കിലും പിൻവാങ്ങാൻ എനിക്ക് അവകാശമുണ്ടെന്നും ഞാൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു. എൻറ്റെ സ്വകാര്യത പഠനത്തിലുടനീളം നിലനിർത്തുമെന്ന് ഞാൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു.

ഈ ഫോമിൽ ഒപ്പുവയ്ക്കുന്നതിലൂടെ, ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ ഞാൻ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു.

ഞാൻ അഭിമുഖത്തിന് സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു

അഭിമുഖം റിക്കോർഡ് ചെയ്യാൻ ഞാൻ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു

ഫോട്ടോവോയിസ്സിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ ഞാൻ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു

ഈ ഫോമിന്റെ ഒരു പകർപ്പ് എനിക്ക് നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

തീയതി:

സ്ഥലം:

പങ്കെടുക്കുന്ന ആളുടെ പേര്	ഒപ്പ്/വിരലടയാളം
സാക്ഷി (വിരലടയാളമെങ്കിൽ)	
പ്രധാന ഗവേഷകൻ	ഒപ്പ്

ANNEXURE 9: Informed Consent form for FGD (English)

Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS)
Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST)
Trivandrum- 11
Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala

Informant serial number:

Informed Consent Form (Focus Group Discussions)

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the study "Exploring Loneliness and Social Isolation Among Emerging Adults in Kerala", and have had the opportunity to clarify my doubts and concerns. I understand that my participation in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without consequences. I also understand that my privacy and confidentiality shall be maintained throughout the study, including the time of submission of the final document.

By signing this form, I agree to participate in this study.

I agree to participate in the Focus Group Discussion

A copy of this form has been given to me.

Date:

Place:

Name of the participant	Signature/Thumb impression
Witness (in case of thumb impression)	
Principal Investigator	Signature

ANNEXURE 10: Informed Consent form for FGD (Malayalam)

അച്യുത മേനോൻ സെന്ററർ ഫോർ ഹെൽത്ത് സയൻസ് സ്റ്റഡീസ്സ്,
ശ്രീചിത്ര തിരുനാൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഫോർ മെഡിക്കൽ സയൻസസ് ആൻഡ് ടെക്നോളജി
കേരളത്തിലെ വളർന്നുവരുന്ന യുവാക്കളിൽ ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലുമെന്നാലെന്ത്?

സമ്മതപത്രം (ഫോക്കസ് ഗ്രൂപ്പ് ചർച്ചകൾ)

"കേരളത്തിലെ വളർന്നുവരുന്ന യുവാക്കളിൽ ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലുമെന്നാൽ എന്ത്?" എന്ന പഠനത്തിനായുള്ള വിവരണ രേഖ ഞാൻ വായിക്കുകയും മനസ്സിലാക്കുകയും ചെയ്തുവെന്ന് ഞാൻ സ്ഥിരീകരിക്കുന്നു. എൻറ്റെ എല്ലാ സംശയങ്ങളും, ചോദ്യങ്ങളും വ്യക്തമാക്കാൻ അവസരം ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഈ ഫോക്കസ് ഗ്രൂപ്പ് ചർച്ചയിൽ എൻറ്റെ പങ്കാളിത്തം സ്വമേധയാ ഉള്ളതാണെന്നും ഒരു കാരണവും പറയാതെ എപ്പോൾ വേണമെങ്കിലും പിൻവാങ്ങാൻ എനിക്ക് അവകാശമുണ്ടെന്നും ഞാൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു. എൻറ്റെ സ്വകാര്യത പഠനത്തിലുടനീളം നിലനിർത്തുമെന്ന് ഞാൻ മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നു.

ഈ ഫോമിൽ ഒപ്പുവയ്ക്കുന്നതിലൂടെ, ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ ഞാൻ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു.

ഫോക്കസ് ഗ്രൂപ്പ് ചർച്ചകളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ ഞാൻ സമ്മതിക്കുന്നു

ഈ ഫോമിന്റെ ഒരു പകർപ്പ് എനിക്ക് നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

തീയതി:

സ്ഥലം:

പങ്കെടുക്കുന്ന ആളുടെ പേര്	ഒപ്പ്/വിരലടയാളം
സാക്ഷി (വിരലടയാളമാണെങ്കിൽ)	
പ്രധാന ഗവേഷകൻ	ഒപ്പ്

ANNEXURE 11: In-Depth Interview (IDI) Guide and FGD guidelines (English)

In-Depth Interview Guide- English

As I mentioned earlier, I will be asking you questions about your experiences with loneliness and social isolation.

I would like to start with a method called Grid Elaboration. Here, I try to understand what you associate with the topic we will be discussing, i.e., loneliness and social isolation.

[Make sure to have two papers, one for loneliness and social isolation each. The name of the informant or his/her unique ID should be entered in both. Hand over the grids to the informant].

Instructions for Grid Elaboration Method

There are four grids or boxes given below. Could you try to write or draw any word, image or feeling that comes to mind when you hear/think of the terms 'loneliness' and 'social isolation'?

For the ease of understanding, I will try to describe the difference between loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness is a feeling, whereas social isolation is simply lesser number of people in your life, be it family, friends, relatives or even a companion. It is not a feeling, but a situation where actually the number of friends, family members or relatives are few or none at all.

You are free to use any forms to describe the feeling- writings, pictures, sketches, poems, songs, stories, flowcharts, etc.

Grid for Loneliness

What do you associate with the term 'loneliness'? Could you try to describe these in the four grids/boxes given below? Even simple drawings or words can be effective in describing your thoughts or feelings.	

Grid for Social Isolation

What do you associate with the term 'social isolation'? Could you try to describe these in the four grids/boxes given below? Even simple drawings or words can be effective in describing your thoughts or feelings.	

I would like to talk to you now about what you have written in the grids/boxes, if that's okay with you. I will then proceed to other questions about your ideas of loneliness and social isolation. You are free to stop the interview at any point if you don't feel comfortable. If you do not have any queries, shall we proceed with the interview? Is it okay if I record our conversation for further analysis?

[Make sure that the informant has read the information sheet and given consent in the informed consent form. Reiterate points from the consent form to confirm.]

Questions

1. I see that you associate "XYZ" with loneliness in the first grid. Could you tell me more about this?
2. At times, some people feel that they have no one with whom they can share their feelings with and at other times, they feel there are some with whom they can share their feelings and rely on. On what kind of situations have you felt like you have no one to share with? Can you try to remember and describe that situation for me?
3. How did that make you feel?
4. How long does this feeling last?

   Clarification- Is it something that comes and goes away occasionally? Or is it something that persists for a long time?

5. How would you describe that feeling?
6. How does this feeling of 'loneliness' affect you? Is it something that reflects in your body?

   Clarification- something like a headache, rashes, joint pain, etc.?

7. How does it affect the way you work or behave with others?
8. How does it affect your thoughts and mind?
9. This feeling you are talking about, let's say, what you are calling 'loneliness' (or any other word the informant chooses to describe it), what causes it, particularly for you?

   Clues- Is it something that others did to you, or you did to them? Because of the way other people made you feel? Reminds you of something bad? Related to something that you do as a part of your daily routine? You want to say something to people, but are unable to do so?

10. What do you usually do when you get this feeling of ‘loneliness’ (or any other word the informant chooses to describe it)?
11. Is it something you have to work on very often, or once in a while?
12. During the times you get this feeling of ‘loneliness’ (or any other word the informant has used earlier), how do your parents/teachers/co-workers support you?
13. Can you describe an occasion when you felt everyone in your group ignored you and your feelings? How did that make you feel? How did you come to realise that you are being ignored?

    Probes- Use dimensions of social isolation like friends, family, relatives, companion.

    Clues- Elicit based on description whether it was a feeling, or actual isolation, or both. Feeling will indicate loneliness than isolation.

14. What do you do when you think people are ignoring you? What have you done in the past to work on this? Did it work?
15. Have there been occasions when your group of friends and/or family isolated you? When was that?
16. Have there been occasions when you yourself went away and isolated yourself from your group of friends and/or family? When was that?
17. What do you do when you don’t want to be around people? What kind of strategies do you use to keep yourself away?

I will now try to summarize the main points that we have discussed.

[Summarize the key contents of the interview].

Is there anything else about these issues that you would like to talk about? Something that I have left out but you feel is important?

[If the answer is yes, continue discussion on the topic that the informant feels has been left out. If the answer is no, proceed to Photovoice].

I would also like to try a method called ‘photovoice’ with you. I would like to ask you to take pictures that you associate with loneliness and social isolation. You could then share the pictures with me, along with a description of what they mean to you. I will discuss the interpretation of these photos with you through Zoom interviews as it would help me to understand what you say better. If that is not feasible, may I come to meet you in person

for the same? The photos will be used only for further elicitation of information, and would not be shared with anyone else.

Initiating photovoice

If you have a smartphone and are willing to take photos and share it with me, may I request your participation for this method?

[If the answer is yes, proceed with instructions on photovoice. If not, thank the informant and ask permission to contact for any clarification in the future].

Instructions for Photovoice

1. Could you try to click pictures of things you associate with loneliness? It could be related to what loneliness means to you, or what causes loneliness. It could also be related to the ways you manage this feeling.
2. Please try to describe the photos - what the photo means to you and why it is important in a few words so that I can understand. Can you send them, both the photos and the captions to my WhatsApp number?
3. Please provide a time which may be feasible for you to discuss the interpretation of these photos, over a Zoom call. My mobile number is “XYZ”.

Thank you for all your inputs. Are you okay if I contact you through this number for any clarifications in the future?

Thanks again.

Script for Photovoice to be conducted through Zoom meetings or in-person

Hello. Am I speaking to “XYZ”? This is Harigovind. We had conducted an interview on loneliness and social isolation some days back on xx/xx/xxxx (mention date). This is to follow up on the photos you shared with me over WhatsApp. Is this an ideal time for you to talk to me?

[If yes, proceed with photo interpretation]

You had used the caption “PQR” for the first photo. That is an interesting take. This is what I understood from it. What do you think? Is this a correct interpretation?

Thank you very much for all the inputs you've given me, and taking so much of time to explain these. Have a good day.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guidelines

Hello everyone. How're you all today? Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this FGD.

I'm Harigovind, a post graduate student of public health at Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology. This is my colleague "XYZ" who will be assisting me in writing down major points we discuss today. As I mentioned earlier, I'm doing a study on loneliness and social isolation among emerging adults in Kerala. I have collected and analyzed data from "X" number of participants over the last month.

The purpose of this FGD is to do something called 'validation' in research. Here I'm trying to check whether the findings of my study feel apt to emerging adults like you. I encourage you all to take part in this discussion fully and speak whatever you feel without any hesitation. I would greatly benefit hearing your views on this.

We have water kept near; in case you want. I also want to assure you that you are free to stop participating in the discussion, if at any point you feel uncomfortable. For the purpose of easy analysis, may I record our discussion? I assure you that it will not be shared with anyone else, and your identity will also not be revealed.

Can we start by introducing ourselves? Sir/madam, can you start?

Thank you. Let's get started with our discussion now.

[Describe the various findings from the initial analysis of the data one by one. After the description, switch to facilitation of discussion among the participants].

What do you think sir? Is this a reasonable explanation? What else do you think is necessary here? It seems “ABC” madam has something to add. Madam, could you share it with us?

[In case of a dominant participant, ensure that others are also given chance. In case of a quiet participant, try to engage them more, get their confirmation, nod and give positive affirmations to encourage their involvement].

Do you think anything has been missed out?

Is it right to describe “EFG” as “TYU”?

Is there something wrong in saying “PQR”?

I think the FGD has brought some very valid points and suggestions. I will try and incorporate all possible changes that all of you have suggested into my final analysis. Thank you everyone for taking the effort to come to this place and engage in this discussion with me.

NB: Points enclosed in ‘[ ]’ represent instructions to the Principal Investigator.

ANNEXURE 12: In-Depth Interview (IDI) Guide and FGD guidelines (Malayalam)

ഇൻറ്റർവ്യൂ ഗൈഡ്- മലയാളം

ഏകാന്തത, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ തനിച്ചാണെന്ന തോന്നൽ, സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടൽ എന്നീ വിഷയങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് താങ്കളോട് ചർച്ച ചെയ്യാൻ ഞാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. ഗ്രിഡ് ഇലാബ്രേഷൻ മെത്തേഡ് എന്നൊരു രീതിവെച്ചു തുടങ്ങാനാണ് ഉദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നത്.

[ഗ്രിഡ് ഇൻഫോർമ്മന്റിന് കൈമാറുക].

ഗ്രിഡ് ഇലാബ്രേഷൻ മെത്തേഡ് നടത്താനായിട്ടുള്ള നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ

താഴെ കാണുന്ന പേജ് 4 ചതുരങ്ങളായി വേർത്തിരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. 'ഏകാന്തത', 'സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടൽ' എന്നീ പദങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് കേൾക്കുമ്പോൾ / ചിന്തിക്കുമ്പോൾ മനസ്സിൽ വരുന്ന ഏതെങ്കിലും വാക്കോ ചിത്രമോ വികാരമോ എഴുതാനോ വരയ്ക്കാനോ താങ്കൾക്ക് ശ്രമിക്കാമോ?

എളുപ്പത്തിനായി, ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലും തമ്മിലുള്ള വ്യത്യാസം വിവരിക്കാൻ ഞാൻ ശ്രമിക്കാം. ഏകാന്തത ഒരു വികാരമാണ്, ഞാൻ തനിച്ചാണെന്നുള്ള തോന്നൽ. അതേസമയം സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടൽ എന്നാൽ താങ്കളുടെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ കുടുംബം, സുഹൃത്തുക്കൾ, ബന്ധുക്കൾ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ഒരു കൂട്ടാളി, എന്നിവർ കുറവാണെന്നാണ് അർത്ഥം. ഇതൊരു വികാരമല്ല, മറിച്ച് യഥാർത്ഥത്തിൽ സുഹൃത്തുക്കളുടെയോ കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങളുടെയോ ബന്ധുക്കളുടെയോ എണ്ണം കുറവോ ഇല്ലാത്തതോ ആയിട്ടുള്ളൊരു സാഹചര്യമാണ്.

വികാരങ്ങൾ വിവരിക്കാൻ താങ്കൾക്ക് പൂർണ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യമുണ്ട് - വാക്കുകൾ, ചിത്രങ്ങൾ, കവിതകൾ, പാട്ടുകൾ, കഥകൾ, ഫ്ലോ ചാർട്ടുകൾ മുതലായവ എന്തും ഉപയോഗിക്കാം.

ഏകാന്തതയെക്കുറിച്ച് വിവരിക്കാനുള്ള ഗ്രിഡ്

'ഏകാന്തത', 'തനിച്ചാവുക' എന്നീ പദങ്ങളുമായി നിങ്ങൾ എന്താണ് ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത്? താഴെ നൽകിയിരിക്കുന്ന നാല് ബോക്സുകളിൽ ഇവ വിവരിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കാമോ? ചിത്രങ്ങൾ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ വാക്കുകൾ പോലും നിങ്ങളുടെ ചിന്തകളോ വികാരങ്ങളോ വിവരിക്കുന്നതിൽ ഫലപ്രദമാകും.	

സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തലിനെക്കുറിച്ച് വിവരിക്കാനുള്ള ഗ്രിഡ്

'സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടുത്തൽ', 'മാറ്റി നിർത്തപ്പെടുക' എന്നീ പദങ്ങളുമായി നിങ്ങൾ എന്താണ് ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത്? താഴെ നൽകിയിരിക്കുന്ന നാല് ബോക്സുകളിൽ ഇവ വിവരിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കാമോ? ചിത്രങ്ങൾ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ വാക്കുകൾ പോലും നിങ്ങളുടെ ചിന്തകളോ വികാരങ്ങളോ വിവരിക്കുന്നതിൽ ഫലപ്രദമാകും.	

ബോക്സുകളിൽ നിങ്ങൾ എഴുതിയ കാര്യങ്ങളെ ആസ്പദമാക്കി നമുക്ക് ചർച്ച തുടങ്ങാം? ഇതിലുൾപ്പെടാത്ത ചോദ്യങ്ങളിലേക്ക് ശേഷം പോകാവുന്നതാണ്.

ഇൻറ്റർവ്യൂവിന്റെ ഏതെങ്കിലും ഘട്ടത്തിൽ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ട് തോന്നിയാൽ ഇൻറർവ്യു നിർത്താനുള്ള അവകാശം താങ്കൾക്കുണ്ട്. മറ്റു ചോദ്യങ്ങളൊന്നുമില്ലെങ്കിൽ ഇൻറ്റർവ്യൂ ആരംഭിക്കാമോ? ഈ ചർച്ച റിക്കോർഡ് ചെയ്യുന്നതിൽ താങ്കൾക്കെതിർപ്പുണ്ടോ?

[ഇൻഫോർമ്മന്റ് വിവരണ രേഖയും സമ്മതപത്രവും വായിച്ചുവെന്നും സമ്മതം നൽകിയെന്നും ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തുക. സമ്മതപത്രത്തിൽ ഉൾപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുള്ള വ്യവസ്ഥകൾ ഒന്നുകൂടെ വിവരിക്കുക].

ഇൻറ്റർവ്യൂ ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ

1. ആദ്യത്തെ ഗ്രിഡ്ഡിൽ താങ്കൾ “xyz” എന്നാണ് വിവരിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത്. ഇതിനെക്കുറിച്ച് കൂടുതൽ വിശദീകരിക്കാമോ?
2. ചില സമയങ്ങളിൽ നമുക്ക് ആശ്രയിക്കാൻ ആരുമില്ലെന്ന് തോന്നും, നമ്മൾ തനിച്ചാണെന്ന് തോന്നും. മറ്റ് സമയങ്ങളിൽ നമ്മുടെ വികാരങ്ങൾ പങ്കിടാനും ആശ്രയിക്കാനും ചിലരുണ്ടെന്ന് നമ്മൾ കരുതുന്നു. ഏതു തരത്തിലുള്ള സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിലാണ് നിങ്ങൾ തനിച്ചാണെന്ന തോന്നൽ ഉണ്ടായത്? ആ സാഹചര്യം ഓർത്തെടുക്കാൻ കഴിയുന്നുണ്ടോ?
3. എന്താണ് ആ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ അനുഭവപ്പെട്ടത്?
4. ഈയൊരു വികാരം, അത് എത്രനേരം നിലനിൽക്കാറുണ്ട്?

   വിശദീകരണം- ഇടക്കൊക്കെ വന്നുപോകുന്ന ഒരു കാര്യമാണോ?

   അതോ കുറെ നേരമോ ദിവസങ്ങളോ നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന ഒന്നാണോ?

5. ഈ ഒരു വികാരത്തെ താങ്കൾ എങ്ങനെ വിവരിക്കും?
6. ഈ 'ഏകാന്തത' എന്ന വികാരം നിങ്ങളെ എങ്ങനെയാണ് ബാധിക്കാറുള്ളത്? ശാരീരികമായ എന്തെങ്കിലും അസ്വസ്ഥത തോന്നാറുണ്ടോ?
7. അതോ താങ്കളുടെ ജോലിയെയോ മറ്റുള്ളവരുമായുള്ള ഇടപെടലുകളെയോ ബാധിക്കാറുണ്ടോ?
8. താങ്കളുടെ മനസ്സിനെയോ ചിന്താഗതിയെയോ ബാധിക്കാറുണ്ടോ?
9. നിങ്ങൾ തനിച്ചാവുകയെന്ന് വിശേഷിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ഈ വികാരം, (അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ഇൻഫോർമ്മന്റ് അത് വിശേഷിപ്പിക്കാൻ തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്ന

മറ്റേതെങ്കിലും വാക്ക്), അതിന് കാരണമാകുന്നത് എന്താണെന്ന് ആലോചിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടോ?

സൂചനകൾ- മറ്റുള്ളവർ താങ്കളോട് ചെയ്ത എന്തെങ്കിലും കാര്യമാണോ, അതോ താങ്കൾ അവരോട് ചെയ്തതാണോ? മോശം കാര്യം ഓർമ്മ വരുന്നതുകൊണ്ടാണോ? താങ്കളുടെ ദൈനംദിന ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായിട്ടുള്ള കാര്യങ്ങളുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടതാണോ? താങ്കൾക്ക് ആളുകളോട് എന്തെങ്കിലും പറയാനുണ്ട്, പക്ഷേ അതിനു കഴിയുന്നില്ലേ?

10. തനിച്ചാണെന്നുള്ള തോന്നൽ (അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ഇൻഫോർമ്മന്റ് തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്ന മറ്റേതെങ്കിലും വാക്ക്) വരുമ്പോൾ സാധാരണ എന്താണ് താങ്കൾ ചെയ്യാറുള്ളത്?
11. ഇത്തരം തോന്നലുകൾ മറികടക്കാൻ ഇടക്കിടെ ശ്രമിക്കേണ്ട ആവശ്യം വരാറുണ്ടോ, അതോ വല്ലപ്പോഴും മാത്രമോ?
12. തനിച്ചാണെന്നുള്ള തോന്നൽ (അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ഇൻഫോർമ്മന്റ് തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്ന മറ്റേതെങ്കിലും വാക്ക്) വരുമ്പോൾ താങ്കളുടെ മാതാപിതാക്കൾ/അധ്യാപകർ/സഹപ്രവർത്തകർ എങ്ങനെയാണ് പിന്തുണയ്ക്കാറുള്ളത്?
13. താങ്കളുടെ കൂടെയുള്ളവർ താങ്കളെയും താങ്കളുടെ വികാരങ്ങളെയും അവഗണിച്ചതായി തോന്നിയ സന്ദർഭങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ടോ? എന്താണപ്പോൾ തോന്നിയത്? താങ്കൾ അവഗണിക്കപ്പെടുകയാണെന്ന് എങ്ങനെ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞു?

പ്രോബുകൾ- സുഹൃത്തുക്കൾ, കുടുംബം, ബന്ധുക്കൾ, കൂട്ടാളി തുടങ്ങിയ സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലിന്റെ മാനങ്ങൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കുക.

സൂചനകൾ- അതൊരു വികാരമാണോ യഥാർത്ഥ ഒറ്റപ്പെടലാണോ അതോ രണ്ടും ആണോ എന്ന് വിവരണത്തെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കി കണ്ടെത്തുക.

14. ആളുകൾ അവഗണിക്കുമ്പോൾ താങ്കൾ എന്തുചെയ്യും? മുൻപിങ്ങനെ ഉണ്ടായപ്പോൾ എന്താണ് ചെയ്തത്? അതുകൊണ്ട് ഗുണമുണ്ടായോ?
15. താങ്കളുടെ സുഹൃത്തുക്കളോ കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങളോ താങ്കളെ മാറ്റി നിർത്തിയ സന്ദർഭങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ടോ? അതെപ്പോഴായിരുന്നു?
16. താങ്കളുടെ സുഹൃത്തുക്കളിൽ നിന്നോ കുടുംബത്തിൽ നിന്നോ സ്വയം മാറി നിന്ന സന്ദർഭങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ടോ? അതെപ്പോഴായിരുന്നു?

17. താങ്കൾ ആളുകളിൽ നിന്നു മാറി നിൽക്കാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുമ്പോൾ എന്താണ് ചെയ്യാറുള്ളത്?

നമ്മൾ ഇതുവരെ ചർച്ച ചെയ്ത വിഷയങ്ങൾ ഞാൻ ചുരുക്കിപ്പറയാൻ ശ്രമിക്കാം.

[ഇൻറ്റർവ്യൂവിലെ പ്രധാന ഉള്ളടക്കങ്ങൾ ചുരുക്കി പറയുക].

എന്തെങ്കിലും വിട്ടുപോയതായി തോന്നുന്നുണ്ടോ? ഇതുവരെ ചർച്ച ചെയ്യപ്പെടാത്ത ഏതെങ്കിലുമൊരു വിഷയം ബാക്കിയുണ്ടോ ഉണ്ടോ?

[ഉത്തരം 'അതെ' എന്നാണെങ്കിൽ ഇൻഫോർമ്മന്റ് പരിചയപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന വിഷയത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് ചർച്ച തുടരുക. 'ഇല്ല' എന്നാണുത്തരമെങ്കിൽ ഫോട്ടോ വോയ്സ് എന്ന മാർഗത്തിലേക്ക് പ്രവേശിക്കാം].

ഈ ഗവേഷണത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായി 'ഫോട്ടോ വോയിസ്' എന്നൊരു രീതി കൂടി ഉൾപ്പെടുത്താൻ ഞാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നു. ഏകാന്തതയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലുമായി താങ്കൾ ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ചിത്രങ്ങൾ എടുക്കാൻ താങ്കളോട് അഭ്യർത്ഥിക്കുന്നു. ഇത്തരം ചിത്രങ്ങൾ ഞാനുമായി പങ്കിടാം, ഒപ്പം അവ താങ്കൾക്ക് എന്താണ് അർത്ഥമാക്കുന്നത് എന്നതിനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിവരണവും. ഈ ഫോട്ടോകളുടെ വ്യാഖ്യാനം Zoom-ഇന്റർവ്യൂ വഴി താങ്കളുമായി ചർച്ച ചെയ്യും. അത് ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടാണെങ്കിൽ ഞാൻ താങ്കളെ നേരിട്ട് കാണാൻ വരട്ടെ? കൂടുതൽ വിവരങ്ങൾ ലഭ്യമാക്കുന്നതിന് മാത്രമേ ഫോട്ടോ ഉപയോഗിക്കൂ, മാത്രമല്ല അവ മറ്റാരുമായ് പങ്കിടുകയുമില്ല.

ഫോട്ടോ വോയിസ് ആരംഭിക്കുന്ന വിധം

താങ്കൾക്കൊരു സ്മാർട്ട്ഫോൺ ഉണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ ഫോട്ടോകൾ എടുക്കുന്നതിലും അതെന്നോടൊപ്പം പങ്കിടുന്നതിലും ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുണ്ടോ? ഇല്ലെങ്കിൽ താങ്കളുടെ പങ്കാളിത്തം ഞാൻ അഭ്യർത്തിക്കുന്നു.

[ഉത്തരം 'അതെ' എന്നാണെങ്കിൽ ഫോട്ടോ വോയ്സിലെ നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങളുമായി മുന്നോട്ട് പോകുക. ഇല്ലെങ്കിൽ, ഇൻഫോർമ്മൻറ്റിനോട് നന്ദി പറയുക, ഭാവിയിൽ എന്തെങ്കിലും വിശദീകരണത്തിനായി ബന്ധപ്പെടാൻ അനുവാദം ചോദിക്കുക].

ഫോട്ടോവോയ്സിനായുള്ള നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ

1. ഏകാന്തതയുമായി താങ്കൾ ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ചില കാര്യങ്ങളുടെ ഫോട്ടോയെടുക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കാമോ? ഏകാന്തത എന്നാൽ താങ്കൾക്കെന്ത്, അതിനു കാരണമാകുന്നതെന്ത് എന്നിവയുമായി ഇത് ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കാം. അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ഈ വികാരത്തെ കൈകാര്യം ചെയ്യുന്ന രീതികളുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കാം.
2. ദയവായി ഫോട്ടോകൾ ഓരോ ക്യാപ്ഷൻ മുഖേന വിവരിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുക- എന്തുകൊണ്ട് ആ ഫോട്ടോ പ്രധാനമാണ്. ഫോട്ടോകളും ക്യാപ്ഷനുകളും എന്റെ വാട്സ്ആപ്പ് നമ്പറിലേക്ക് അയയ്ക്കാമോ?
3. ഈ ഫോട്ടോകളുടെ വ്യാഖ്യാനത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് Zoom കോളിലൂടെ ചർച്ച ചെയ്യാൻ കഴിയുന്ന ഒരു സമയം പറയാമോ? എന്റെ മൊബൈൽ നമ്പർ "xyz" ആണ്.

താങ്കളുടെ എല്ലാ ഇൻപുട്ടുകൾക്കും നന്ദി. ഭാവിയിൽ എന്തെങ്കിലും വിശദീകരണങ്ങൾക്കായി ഈ നമ്പറിലൂടെ താങ്കളെ ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടാൽ കുഴപ്പമുണ്ടോ?

വീണ്ടും നന്ദി.

സൂം മീറ്റിംഗുകളിലൂടെയോ നേരിട്ടോ ഫോട്ടോവോയ്സിനായി സ്ക്രിപ്റ്റ് നടത്തണം

ഹലോ. ഞാൻ "XYZ" ന്നോടാണോ സംസാരിക്കുന്നത്? ഞാൻ ഹരിഗോവിന്ദ് ആണ്. ഏകാന്തതയെയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലിനെപ്പറ്റിയും കുറച്ച് ദിവസങ്ങൾക്ക് മുമ്പ് xx/xx/xxxx എന്ന തീയതിയിൽ നമ്മൾ ഒരു അഭിമുഖം നടത്തിയിരുന്നു. വാട്ട്സ്ആപ്പിലൂടെ താങ്കൾ എന്നോട് പങ്കിട്ട ഫോട്ടോകൾ

ചർച്ചചെയ്യാൻ ആണ് ee Zoom call. താങ്കൾക്ക് സംസാരിക്കാൻ പറ്റിയ സമയമാണോ ഇത്?

[അതെയെങ്കിൽ, ഫോട്ടോ വ്യാഖ്യാനവുമായി മുന്നോട്ട് പോകുക]

ആദ്യത്തെ ഫോട്ടോയ്ക്ക് താങ്കൾ "pqr" എന്ന അടിക്കുറിപ്പ് ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരുന്നു. ഞാൻ അതിൽ നിന്ന് മനസ്സിലാക്കിയത് “abc” ആണ്. എന്ത് തോന്നുന്നു? ഈ പറഞ്ഞത് ശരിയായി തോന്നുന്നുണ്ടോ?

താങ്കൾ എനിക്ക് നൽകിയ എല്ലാ ഇൻപുട്ടുകൾക്കും, അവ വിശദീകരിക്കാൻ ചിലവഴിച്ച സമയത്തിനും നന്ദി.

ഫോക്കസ് ഗ്രൂപ്പ് ചർച്ച (FGD) മാർഗ്ഗനിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ

എല്ലാവർക്കും നമസ്കാരം. എല്ലാവരും സുഖമായിരിക്കുന്നുവെന്ന് വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു? ഈ FGD-യിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാൻ സമ്മതിച്ചതിന് വളരെ അധികം നന്ദി.

ഞാൻ ഹരിഗോവിന്ദ്, ശ്രീ ചിത്ര തിരുനാൾ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ഫോർ മെഡിക്കൽ സയൻസസ് ആൻഡ് ടെക്നോളജിയിലെ പബ്ലിക് ഹെൽത്ത് വിദ്യാർത്ഥിയാണ്. എൻ്റെ കൂടെയുള്ളത് ഇന്ന് നമ്മൾ ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുന്ന പ്രധാന പോയിന്റുകൾ വിട്ടുപോകാതെയിരിക്കാൻ സഹായിക്കുന്ന എന്റെ സഹപ്രവർത്തകൻ/പ്രവർത്തക "XYZ" ആണ്. ഞാൻ നേരത്തെ സൂചിപ്പിച്ചതുപോലെ, കേരളത്തിലെ വളർന്നുവരുന്ന യുവാക്കൾക്കിടയിലെ ഏകാന്തതയെയും സാമൂഹിക ഒറ്റപ്പെടലിനെയും പറ്റി ഞാനൊരു പഠനം നടത്തുകയാണ്. കഴിഞ്ഞ മാസത്തിൽ നടത്തിയ ഏതാനും അഭിമുഖങ്ങൾ വഴി ഞാൻ ഡാറ്റ ശേഖരിക്കുകയും വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുകയും ചെയ്തു.

ഗവേഷണത്തിലെ 'വാലിഡേഷൻ' ചെയ്യുക എന്നതാണ് ഈ എഫ്ജിഡിയുടെ ഉദ്ദേശ്യം. എന്റെ പഠനത്തിലെ കണ്ടെത്തലുകൾ നിങ്ങളെപ്പോലുള്ള

വളർന്നുവരുന്ന യുവാക്കൾക്ക് ശരിയായി തോന്നുന്നുണ്ടോ എന്ന് പരിശോധിക്കാൻ ഞാൻ ഇവിടെ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു. ഈ ചർച്ചയിൽ പൂർണ്ണമായി പങ്കെടുക്കാനും നിങ്ങൾക്ക് തോന്നുന്നതെന്തും യാതൊരു മടിയും കൂടാതെ സംസാരിക്കാനും ഞാൻ അഭ്യർത്തിക്കുന്നു. ഈ വിഷയത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് നിങ്ങളുടെ അഭിപ്രായങ്ങൾ കേൾക്കുന്നത് എനിക്ക് വളരെയധികം പ്രയോജനം ചെയ്യും.

ഏതെങ്കിലും ഘട്ടത്തിൽ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് അസ്വസ്ഥത അനുഭവപ്പെടുകയാണെങ്കിൽ, ചർച്ചയിൽ നിന്ന് പിന്മാറാൻ അവകാശമുണ്ട്. ഈ ചർച്ച റിക്കോർഡ് ചെയ്യുന്നതിൽ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുണ്ടോ? ഇത് മറ്റാരുമായും പങ്കിടില്ലെന്നും നിങ്ങളുടെ ഐഡന്റിറ്റി വെളിപ്പെടുത്തില്ലെന്നും ഞാൻ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ഉറപ്പ് നൽകുന്നു.

സ്വയം പരിചയപ്പെടുത്തിക്കൊണ്ട് നമുക്ക് ആരംഭിക്കാം? സർ / മാഡം, നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ആരംഭിക്കാമോ?

നന്ദി. ഇനി നമ്മുടെ ചർച്ച തുടങ്ങാം.

[ഡാറ്റയുടെ പ്രാരംഭ വിശകലനത്തിൽ നിന്നുള്ള വിവിധ കണ്ടെത്തലുകൾ ഓരോന്നായി വിവരിക്കുക. വിവരണത്തിനുശേഷം, ഇൻഫോർമനറ്റിലേക്ക് ചർച്ച സുഗമമാക്കുന്നതിലേക്ക് തിരിയുക].

എന്തു തോന്നുന്നു സാർ/മാഡം? ഇതൊരു ന്യായമായ വിശദീകരണമാണോ? ഇവിടെ മറ്റെന്താണ് ആവശ്യമെന്ന് നിങ്ങൾ കരുതുന്നു? സർ/മാഡത്തിന് എന്തോ കൂട്ടിച്ചേർക്കാനുണ്ടെന്ന് തോന്നുന്നു? സർ/മാഡം, അത് ഞങ്ങളുമായി പങ്കിടാമോ?

[പ്രബലമായ ഇൻഫോർമന്റ്സ് ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ മറ്റുള്ളവർക്കും അവസരം നൽകിയിട്ടുണ്ടെന്ന് ഉറപ്പാക്കുക. സംസാരിക്കാതെയിരിക്കുന്നവരെയും കൂടുതൽ ഇടപഴകാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുക, പങ്കാളിത്തം പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കുക].

എന്തെങ്കിലും നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ടതായി നിങ്ങൾ കരുതുന്നുണ്ടോ?

"EFG" യെ "TYU" എന്ന് വിശേഷിപ്പിക്കുന്നത് ശരിയാണോ?

"PQR" എന്ന് പറയുന്നതിൽ എന്തെങ്കിലും തെറ്റുണ്ടോ?

എഫ്ജിഡി വളരെ സാധുതയുള്ള ചില പോയിന്റുകളും നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങളും കൊണ്ടുവന്നിട്ടുണ്ടെന്ന് ഞാൻ കരുതുന്നു. എന്റെ അന്തിമ വിശകലനത്തിൽ നിങ്ങളെല്ലാവരും നിർദ്ദേശിച്ച സാധ്യമായ എല്ലാ മാറ്റങ്ങളും ഉൾപ്പെടുത്താൻ ഞാൻ ശ്രമിക്കും. ഈ സ്ഥലത്തേക്ക് വരാനും ചർച്ചയിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാനും പരിശ്രമിച്ച എല്ലാവർക്കും നന്ദി.

NB: '[]' ൽ ചേർത്തിരിക്കുന്ന പോയിന്റുകൾ പ്രധാന അന്വേഷകനുള്ള നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങളെ പ്രതിനിധീകരിക്കുന്നു.

ANNEXURE 13: IEC Clearance

श्री चित्रा तिरुनाल आयुर्विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, त्रिवेन्द्रम
तिरुवनन्तपुरम - ६९५०११, केरल, इंडिया
SREE CHITRA TIRUNAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY, TRIVANDRUM
Thiruvananthapuram - 695 011, Kerala, India
(An Institute of National Importance under Govt. of India)
Grams : Chitramet, Phone : +91-471-2443152, Fax : +91-471-2550728 / 2446433, E-mail : sct@sctimst.ac.in, Website : www.sctimst.ac.in

Institutional Ethics Committee

CDSCO Registration No: ECR/189/Inst/KL/2013/RR-24
DHR Registration No:EC/NEW/INST/2022/2775

SCT/IEC/2326/DECEMBER/2024 17.01.2025

Mr. B. Harigovind
MPH Student, AMCHSS
SCTIMST, Thiruvananathapuram

Dear Mr. Harigovind,

The Institutional Ethics Committee held on 30th December, 2024, reviewed and discussed your application to conduct the study titled "**EXPLORING LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONG EMERGING ADULTS IN KERALA**" **(IEC /2326)** .

Principal Investigator	Mr. B Harigovind, MPH Student, AMCHSS, SCTIMST
Co-Principal Investigator(s)	Dr. Mala Ramanathan, Professor, AMCHSS, SCTIMST
Duration of the study	6 months

The following members of the Ethics Committee were present at the meeting held on 30th December, 2024

SL. No.	Member Name	Highest Degree	Gender	Scientific /Non Scientific	Affiliation with Institution(s)
1.	Dr. Manoj Murhekar	MD (Preventive & Social Medicine)	Male	Social Scientist	No
2.	Dr. Annapurna.Y	MD	Female	Basic Medical Scientist	No
3.	Adv. Priya Kaimal	LLM, MBL	Female	Legal Expert	No
4.	Dr. Indu PV	MBBS, DPM, MPhil, PhD	Female	Clinician	No
5.	Dr. Rejnish Kumar	MBBS,MD ,DNB	Male	Clinician	No
6.	Smt. Rekha Radhakrishnan	M.A (Eng.), B.Ed	Female	Lay person	No
7.	Dr. Biju Soman	MBBS,MD, DPH, MSc, DLSHTM	Male	Basic Medical Scientist	Yes
8.	Dr. Syam K	MBBS, MD, DM	Male	Clinician	Yes
9.	Dr. Srinivas G	PhD	Male	Basic Medical Scientist (Member Secretary)	Yes

1

The following documents were reviewed:

Original submission

1. *IEC Application Form*
2. *Funding details and Budget*
3. *Covering letter addressed to the Chairperson, IEC, SCTIMST dated 09.12.2024 forwarded by HOD*
4. *In-depth Interview guide in English and Malayalam*
5. *Informed Consent Forms in English and Malayalam*
6. *Participant Information Sheets in English and Malayalam*
7. *Checklist Form*
8. *Proposal*
9. *Declaration Form*
10. *CV of PI and Co-PI*

Revised submission

1. *Covering letter addressed to the Member Secretary, IEC, SCTIMST dated 13.01.2025*
2. *Response to IEC comments*
3. *IEC recommendation letter dated 09.01.2025*
4. *Proposal*
5. *Participant Information Sheets in English and Malayalam*
6. *Informed Consent Forms in English and Malayalam*
7. *In-depth Interview guide in English and Malayalam*

IEC Decision
The IEC approved the conduct of the study in the present form.

Remarks:
The Institutional Ethics Committee expects to be informed about the progress of the study, any SAE occurring in the course of the study, any changes in the protocol and patient information/informed consent and asks to be provided a copy of the final report.

There was no member of the study team / Guide who participated in voting / decision making process. The ethics committee is organized and operated according to the requirements of Good Clinical Practice and the requirements of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Sincerely,

Dr. G. Srinivas
Member Secretary, IEC

MEMBER SECRETARY
INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS COMMITTEE (IEC)
SCTIMST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

SREE CHITRA TIRUNAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES & TECHNOLOGY
INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS COMMITTEE (IEC)
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ANNEXURE 14: Plagiarism Certificate

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