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Socio-economic Differentials in the Extent of Social Isolation among the Aged

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ABSTRACT The present study is an attempt to assess the socio-economic differentials in the extent of social isolation among the aged. It is based upon 120 aged, drawn from an urban setting (Ludhiana city). The sample was distributed equally over the three socio-economic strata (High, Middle and Low) and the two sexes. Results revealed that the socio- economic status made an impact on the level of social isolation experienced by the aged, with the more number of males and females reporting 'High' social isolation from the middle and low socio- economic status. The reported 'High' levels of social isolation in both the sexes were impacted more by the 'family' and 'friends' dimension rather than the 'neighbours' and 'coping mechanism' dimensions. The high socio-economic status aged were found to be impacted most by 'family' dimension as a fairly high number of the aged reported high level of social isolation whereas 'High' level social isolation in middle socio- economic status was reported more because of 'friends' and 'neighbours' dimensions. However, the high levels of social isolation among the low socio-economic aged was significantly because of 'friends' dimension and moderately because of 'family', 'neighbours' and 'coping mechanism' dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

At present, India has nearly 81 million elderly and in about two decades the number will go up to a mind-boggling 150 million or more. Added to this, lower work participation rate among the elderly has increased their dependency ratio (proportion of the population aged 60 and above to that of the working age population in the age group 15-59 years). Elderly dependency ratio has risen from 9.8 in 1951 to 12.3 in 1991. Another indicator called index of ageing expresses ratio of elderly (60 plus) children (0 to 14 years) in the population. In 1951, it was 14.3 elderly per 100 children. In 2001, the corresponding figure rose to 24.72. Also, the projected population of elderly in India in the year 2021 will be 137 million (Begda and Kantharia 2006), hence the matter of life satisfaction of elderly will be of more importance. There is a need to be sensitive to this expanding ageism.

The trends in growth, structure and composition of elderly population reveal the emergence of ageing as a social concern. The "Squaring of Demographic Pyramid", affects most aspects of lives – economy, labour force, health care, social welfare, social attitudes and social institutions to mention a few. The sharp rise in the index of ageing demands readjustment in the welfare and development policies of the country. Thus, ageing in its varied ramifications has acquired importance worldwide.

The concept of ageing has a new meaning now. The traditional norms and values of Indian society stress respect and provision of care for the elderly. The 'son-preference' appears to be synonymous with old age security motive. But the ongoing processes of urbanization, industrialization, modernization, globalization and their concomitant processes have led to changes in the traditional support base of the elderly. However, due to several reasons, the aged today cannot take for granted that their children will look after them. It is especially in view of longer life span requiring a longer period of dependency and higher costs to meet health and other needs.

Hugo (1991) reported that economic growth and urbanization are likely to erode the family's ability or willingness to care for elderly members. In addition to the possible neglect of elderly people left behind in rural homes by their children migrating to urban areas, there might be negative consequences for the increasing number of elderly people living in urban areas. These include the enormous pressure on housing in urban areas that they may make it less possible for elderly people to live with their children. Singh (1999) reported that urbanization and advances in

technology have changed the social structure, thus restricting the social span. Present institutional care and other welfare services do not appear to be adequate in fulfilling the basic requirements. An integrated age care planner is required to look into the social, economic, emotional, and environmental aspects of the problems

Older people often feel alienated, neglected, marginalized and helpless. Many men and women in their old age 'feel lonely' even in the midst of people. They express that they do not have people with whom they can relate themselves to, pour out their woes to and get emotional support. As a person grows older and older, he gradually loses his cohorts and peers. The longer they live, the more loss they have.

Being isolated refers to having limited social ties while being lonely is a subjective state of feeling alone. While the act of living alone and/or being reclusive are not inherently problematic but are particular risk factors for social isolation. On the other hand, people with high levels of social support may experience less stress when they confront a stressful experience and they may cope with it more successfully.

An abundance of friends can help ensure that one does not become socially isolated after the death of a spouse or partner. Social isolation can result, however, when the threats and disruptions become overwhelming and can hinder social benefits from materializing. An aged who loses sustained contact with the outside world because of a health problem can lead to him being home bound and socially isolated.

Social isolation has negative effects for the functioning and well-being of an individual. It causes serious psychological and physiological transformations such as depression or physical symptoms. Also, the lack of personal network can result in a situation of marginalization or social exclusion, meaning that people no longer see a way to participate in the society.

Social isolation among the aged is mostly impacted by the family, friends and neighbours dimension. The strategies employed to combat social isolation is an added dimension. The number of studies reviewed has also emphasized the importance of these dimensions.

Jamuna and Lalitha (2004) reviewed and found that the major psychological problem faced by most of the older people is the feeling of loneliness. Results showed that the feeling of loneliness was high among the widowed, the rural old and those who were old-old. The intensity of the feeling of loneliness was significantly reduced in the older people after their exposure to counselling sessions.

Day-to-day activities of the urban elderly were studied by Ladusingh and Bijaya (2004) and Siva Raju (2004). The main findings on the day-to-day activities include assisting the spouse and other members in household activities, watching television, reading newspapers, taking morning and evening walks, interacting with friends and assisting grand children in their school work.

Kaur et al. (2005) also reported the adjustment patterns of elderly rural women and found that the aged have adjusted themselves by doing the activities, which were liked by them and the family members. They were socially satisfied and had good interaction with their friends. Economically, they were less satisfied because they were dependent on others but physically they were much satisfied from the treatment during illness.

Srivastava and Mishra (2005) analysed living arrangement and morbidity pattern among the elderly in rural India and found that majority of the elderly were living with their spouse and other family members. Another preferred category for the living arrangement was 'with children' but 'without spouse'. It was observed that the elderly, who were alone, preferred to stay independently in their respective homes.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study was conducted in Ludhiana City of Punjab state. The sample for the present study comprised of randomly selected 120 aged from Ludhiana city. The sample was equally distributed over the two sexes (males=60 and females=60) and the three socio- economic groups *viz.* high income group, middle income group and low income group (40 from each socio-economic group).The inclusion criteria for the aged were that he/she should be:

a. 65 years and above in age,
b. living in the given support system at least for one year,
c. residing in Ludhiana City.

Research Instruments

The following standardized tools were used to collect the relevant data for the study.

(i) Socio-economic Status Scale: Bharadwaj (1971) was used to assess the socio- economic status of the urban families. The scale consists of 7 main perspective areas—social, professional, family, educational, property, monthly income and caste. The present investigation scale was administrated individually to each family selected on the basis of inclusion criteria for the elderly. The elderly finally included in the sample were equally drawn from high, middle and low socio-economic status.

(ii) The Degree of Social Isolation among the Selected Respondents was Assessed as Elaborated Below: Anthropological Technique of Rapid Participatory Appraisal was used to assess the degree of social isolation among the aged. Social isolation were further assessed using a self-structured interview schedule and the information was obtained for the following dimensions (a) self- reported social isolation (b) social contacts and social networks and (c) factors associated with social isolation (physical and mental morbidity, bereavement and mobility) and standard socio-demo-graphic data (d) the strategies/mechanism employed by the aged to combat social isolation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I Socio-personal Characteristics of the Sample

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the socio-personal characteristics of the present sample of the aged (males and females combined) by socio-economic status separately and combined.

(i) Education of Aged (Males and Females): Majority of the aged from high-SES and middle-SES were graduates (42.5% and 32.5%, respectively) or matriculate (35% and 42.5% respectively). The proportion of graduate aged among low-SES was the lowest (2.5 %) and the majority (55%) among them was in fact, illiterate. None of the aged from low-SES was postgraduate as compared to the 5 per cent from the middle-SES and 10 percent from high–SES. From these observations it is clear that relatively more number of aged from high and middle-SES were either graduates or postgraduates. On the other hand, majority of aged from low-SES were matriculates or illiterate.

As regards the educational qualifications of the spouses, all the aged in the high-SES were either matriculate or graduate and none were illiterate or postgraduate. Similarly, the majority of the spouses in the middle–SES were either matriculate (37.04%) or graduates (33.33%) except for 22.22 per cent who were illiterate and 7.41 per cent postgraduates. But none in the low-SES was graduate or postgraduate and the majority was matriculate (63.16%) or illiterate (36.84%).

(ii) Marital Status: None of the subjects in the sample were unmarried or divorced. Majority of the aged from high-SES (57.5%) as well as middle-SES (67.5%) were married and their spouses were yet living. This observation stood in contrast to the majority in low-SES (52.5%) who were widowers/widows. However, 47.5 per cent in the low-SES were married and living with spouse.

(iii) Type of Social Support: It is evident from table 1 that a vast majority (55% in middle and low SES and 40 % in high SES) in all the levels of SES was living with their sons. In low-SES, 30 per cent were living with their daughters followed by 20 per cent and 25 per cent in middle-SES and high-SES, respectively. However, living alone (35%) was the second best choice of those in the high-SES and living with daughters was the last inclination (25%). Living alone emerged as the last choice of those from low-SES and middle-SES.

Assessed Social Isolation

Social isolation was studied across the four dimensions *viz.*, Family, Friends, Neighbours and Coping mechanisms. 'Family' refers to the basic social support system for the aged. 'Friends' and 'neighbours' are the extended family and form the vital social support system next to family. 'Coping mechanisms' are individualized patterns to cope up with the available social support and the declining resources but still having an integrated and generative outlook. All these dimensions are the major determinants of the 'social survival' of an individual during the later years.

Social isolation was expressed in count and percent under the three mentioned categories of social isolation as per the designated 'Score Range'. The designated score ranges indicate the extent of social isolation expressed by the aged. The category of 'Low' social isolation indicated

Table 1: Socio-personal profile of the aged (males & females combined) by socio-economic status separately and combined (N =120)

S. No.	Socio-personal characteristics	Socio-economic status			SEScombined count (%)
		Highcount (%)	Middlecount (%)	Lowcount (%)	
1. Age (years)					
	66-70	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	24(20.00)
	71-75	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	24(20.00)
	76-80	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	24(20.00)
	81-85	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	24(20.00)
	86 and above	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	8(20.00)	24(20.00)
2. Education					
	Illiterate	5(12.50)	8(20.00)	22(55.00)	35(29.17)
	Up to matric	14(35.00)	17(42.5)	17(42.5)	48(40.00)
	Graduate	17(42.5)	13(32.5)	1(2.5)	31(25.83)
	Post graduate	4(10.0)	2(5.00)	0(0.00)	6(5.00)
3. Marital Status					
	Married (Spouse living)	23(57.5)	27(67.5)	19(47.5)	69(57.5)
	Unmarried	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
	Widower/Widow	17(42.5)	13(32.5)	21(52.5)	51(42.5)
	Divorced	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
4. Living with Spouse					
	Yes	23(100.0)	27(100.0)	19(100.0)	69(100.0)
	No	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
5. Age (Years) of the Spouse					
	Below 70	9(39.13)	7(25.93)	6(31.57)	22(31.88)
	71-75	4(17.39)	9(33.33)	3(15.79)	16(23.19)
	76-80	6(26.08)	4(14.81)	5(26.32)	15(21.74)
	81-85	2(8.70)	5(18.52)	3(15.79)	10(14.49)
	86 and above	2(8.70)	2(7.41)	2(10.53)	6(8.70)
6. Educational Qualification of the Spouse					
	Illiterate	0(0.00)	6(22.22)	7(36.84)	13(18.84)
	Up to matric	13(56.52)	10(37.04)	12(63.16)	35(50.72)
	Graduate	10(43.48)	9(33.33)	0(0.00)	19(27.54)
	Post graduate	0(0.00)	2(7.41)	0(0.00)	2(2.90)
7. Type of Social Support					
	Living with son	16(40.00)	22(55.00)	22(55.00)	60(50.00)
	Living alone	14(35.00)	10(25.00)	6(15.00)	30(25.00)
	Living with daughter	10(25.00)	8(20.00)	12(30.00)	30(25.00)

negligible feeling of social isolation and was considered a satisfactory score, whereas the 'Medium' score range suggested the 'Medium' or 'Borderline' category of expressed social isolation and those falling in this were termed as 'at risk'. The last category of social isolation that is 'High' expressed the incidence of the grave social isolation felt by the sample aged, impacting their well being in multiplicity and calling for immediate remedial measures.

The aged who receive the social support from family, friends and neighbours benefit in terms of psychological well-being, life satisfaction and physical health. Yet, having social support is less about the quality and durability of them; the aged must be able to form and sustain strong inter-personal relationships. This often becomes more difficult with age and puts the elderly at particular risk of becoming socially isolated.

II Percentage Distribution of the Aged across Various Dimensions of Social Isolation by Levels of Socio-economic Status

Table 2 shows percent scores of the aged males and females by the levels of socio-economic status along various dimensions of social isolation. The distribution of the overall social isolation scores of male and female aged over the three socio-economic status revealed that the majority of the subjects irrespective of sex and socio-economic status were clustered in the 'Medium' category of social isolation. However, among the male respondents more number of respondents from low-SES (25%) reported the high-level of social isolation whereas the high-level social isolation was minimum (5%) in the high-SES aged. Similar trend was observable in the low- SES female respon-

Table 2: Percentage distribution of the aged males and females by levels of socio-economic status

Extent of social isolation by dimension	*Score range*	*Socio-economic status (SES)*					
		Males (n=60)			*Females (n=60)*		
		High-SES count(%)	*Middle-SES count(%)*	*Low-SES count(%)*	*High-SES count(%)*	*Middle-SES count(%)*	*Low-SES count(%)*
Family							
Low	>32	6(30.00)	6(30.00)	12(60.00)	8(40.00)	13(65.00)	10(50.00)
Medium	32-27	9(45.00)	8(40.00)	4(20.00)	8(40.00)	2(10.00)	2(10.00)
High	<27	5(25.00)	6(30.00)	4(20.00)	4(20.00)	5(25.00)	8(40.00)
Friends							
Low	>39	7(35.00)	6(30.00)	5(25.00)	8(40.00)	4(20.00)	2(10.00)
Medium	39-17	11(55.00)	8(40.00)	9(45.00)	8(40.00)	10(50.00)	10(50.00)
High	<17	2(10.00)	6(30.00)	6(30.00)	4(20.00)	6(30.00)	8(40.00)
Neighbours							
Low	>23	8(40.00)	5(25.00)	5(25.00)	11(55.00)	9(45.00)	6(30.00)
Medium	23-13	12(60.00)	11(55.00)	14(70.00)	8(40.00)	10(50.00)	10(50.00)
High	<13	0(0.00)	4(20.00)	1(5.00)	1(5.00)	1(5.00)	4(20.00)
Coping Mechanisms							
Low	>19	3(15.00)	1(5.00)	2(10.00)	6(30.00)	1(5.00)	1(5.00)
Medium	19-13	17(85.00)	18(90.00)	17(85.00)	14(70.00)	18(90.00)	16(80.00)
High	<13	0(0.00)	1(5.00)	1(5.00)	0(0.00)	1(5.00)	3(15.00)
Overall Social Isolation							
Low	>108	3(15.00)	4(20.00)	3(15.00)	4(20.00)	3(15.00)	0(0.00)
Medium	108-77	16(80.00)	12(60.00)	12(60.00)	16(80.00)	14(70.00)	14(70.00)
High	<77	1(5.00)	4(20.00)	5(25.00)	0(0.00)	3(15.00)	6(30.00)

dents with 30 per cent being placed in the 'High' level of social isolation whereas in contrast to this observation, none was reported in this category amongst high-SES. These findings are in line with the study conducted by Offer (2006) who found social isolation among low income populations is a more common phenomenon. He expressed that living below the poverty line, a low level of education and immigrant status, were all associated with an increased likelihood of social isolation. The implications of lacking social support for family functioning and well-being in the post reform era are discussed.

The dimension wise distribution of the percentage scores depicts that the reported 'High' levels of social isolation in both the sexes were impacted more by the 'family' and 'friends' dimension rather than the 'neighbours and coping mechanism' dimensions. Family dimension emerged as the most influencing factor in establishing levels of social isolation as even in the high–SES and middle-SES the percent scores were quite high in the category of 'High' social isolation, for both males (25% and 30%, respectively) as well as females (20% and 25%, respectively). However, the majority in all the dimensions and across both the sexes and the three socio-economic strata fell in the category of 'Medium' or 'Low' social isolation. Patil et al. (2000) studied depression among the elderly and its correlates. The results revealed that a larger proportion of the respondents had low level of depression. A negative and significant relationship was found between the depression level and health status, socio-economic status and family background. The religious activity was found to be positively and significantly related with the depression of the elderly.

III Extent of Social Isolation among Aged by Socio-economic Status

The percent scores presented in table 3 and Figure 2 describe the extent of social isolation among aged by socio-economic status. In the 'family' dimension across all SES the respondents were predominantly clustered in the category of 'Low' social isolation and negligible in the 'Medium' social isolation. The percent scores were fairly high in the high-SES and middle- SES in the category of 'High' social isolation (30.00% and 32.5%, respectively).This brings to light the strong influence of the family as the most looked forward to support in the high a well as middle SES but is waning in the modern day society. Anantharaman (1984) also found that negativity was greater among older people with respect to variables such as financial situation, the future and insecurity. A rural-urban comparison in Punjab revealed more positive attitudes towards

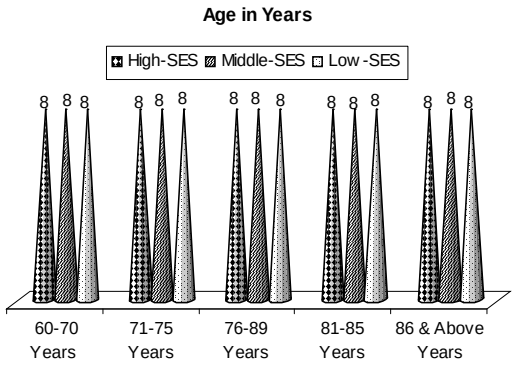

Fig. 1. Socio-personal profile of the aged (males and females combined) by socio-economic status

old age among the younger generation in the rural than in the urban area. Old people in the urban area expressed a greater sense of isolation and separation than in the rural area. Litwin and Zoabi (2003) examined interrelated indicators of modernization, urbanization and social isolation in relation to elder abuse. The analysis revealed that elderly persons who had been abused were more socially isolated than non-abused elders. Abused elders who resided in cities had lower network scores than abused elders from rural and semi- urban localities. The study provided backing to modernization explanations of elder abuse and neglect. The family support is still going strong in the low SES, so the results were not all that bad.

In the 'friends' dimension majority of the aged reported 'Medium' social isolation (46.66%) followed by rest an equal spread (26.67%) in the category of 'Low' and 'High' social isolation. The distribution within the three SES further brings to light that the more number of aged in the high-SES and middle-SES reported 'Low' social isolation whereas the 'High' social isolation was reported by those from low-SES.

High proportion of the aged of the present sample across all SES fell in the 'Medium' category of social isolation for the 'neighbours' (50.00%, 52.5%, 60.00 %) and 'coping mechanisms' (77.5%, 90.00 %, 82.5%) dimensions. The corresponding percentages for the 'Low' category of social isolation across three SES were 47.5%, 35.00%, 27.5% and 22.5%, 5.00%, 7.5% respectively. The percentage for the 'High' category of social isolation was observed to be 9.16 per cent and 5.00 per cent for the 'neighbours' and 'coping mechanisms' dimension of social isolation.

Thus, the above observations point out that the weak 'family' and 'friends' dimension had a more detrimental effect and predisposed the

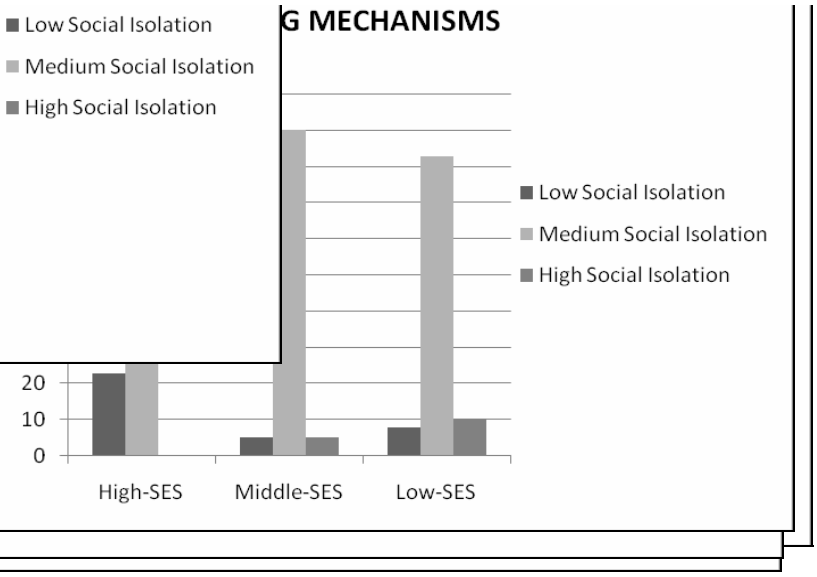

Fig. 2. Extent of social isolation among the aged by socio-economic status irrespective of sex

elderly to social isolation, in high and middle SES as compared to the other two dimensions namely, 'neighbours' and 'coping mechanisms 'which impacted Low SES more (Fig.2).

IV Extent of Overall Social Isolation among Aged by Socio-economic Status Irrespective of Sex and Dimensions of Social Isolation

The extent of overall social isolation among aged by socio-economic status irrespective of sex and dimensions of social isolation were explored through table 3 and Figure 3. The results depicted that irrespective of Sex and SES of the respondents the majority of the aged experienced medium levels of social isolation (84 percent). In high SES, only 2.5 percent experienced high level of social isolation and 17.5 percent reported low isolation. In middle SES, an equal number reported low and high (17.5%) level of social isolation. However, levels of high social isolation were quite high in low SES i.e. 27.5 percent with very few (7.5%) in the low social isolation category in the low SES. Overall picture depicted that in high SES 97.5 percent reported medium to low social isolation, whereas in middle SES 82.5 percent reported medium to low and in low SES only 72.5 percent reported medium to low social isolation. Thus, social isolation was found to be more pervasive in low SES as compared to high and middle SES.

Fig. 3. Extent of overall social isolation among the aged by socio-economic status irrespective of sex

V Multiple Comparisons Determining Which 'SES Means' are Significantly Different from Which Others for Various Dimensions of Social Isolation among the Aged Females and Aged Males

The results of Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) procedure are presented in table 4 and accordingly levels of 10 homogenous groups have been identified (across various dimensions of social isolation) which are indicated using columns of X's.

Table 4 shows multiple comparisons using Fisher's least significant difference (LSD)

Table 3: Extent of social isolation among the aged by socio-economic status

S. No.	*Extent of social isolation by dimension*	*Socio-economic status (SES)*			*Levels of SES combined count (%)*
		High (n=40) count(%)	*Middle (n=40) count (%)*	*Low (n=40) count (%)*	
1. Family					
	Low	26(65.00)	26(65.00)	27(67.5)	79(65.83)
	Medium	2(5.00)	1(2.5)	8(20.00)	11(9.17)
	High	12(30.00)	13(32.5)	5(12.5)	30(25.00)
2. Friends					
	Low	15(37.5)	10(25.00)	7(17.5)	32(26.67)
	Medium	19(47.5)	18(45.00)	19(47.5)	56(46.66)
	High	6(15.00)	12(30.00)	14(35.0)	32(26.67)
3. Neighbours					
	Low	19(47.5)	14(35.00)	11(27.5)	44(36.67)
	Medium	20(50.00)	21(52.5)	24(60.00)	65(54.17)
	High	1(2.5)	5(12.5)	5(12.5)	11(9.16)
4. Coping Mechanisms					
	Low	9(22.5)	2(5.00)	3(7.5)	14(11.67)
	Medium	31(77.5)	36(90.00)	33(82.5)	100(83.33)
	High	0(0.00)	2(5.00)	4(10.00)	6(5.00)
5. Overall Social Isolation					
	Low	7(17.5)	7(17.5)	3(7.5)	17(14.17)
	Medium	32(80.00)	26(65.00)	26(65.00)	84(70.00)
	High	1(2.5)	7(17.5)	11(27.5)	19(15.83)

Table 4: Multiple comparisons determining which 'SES means' are significantly different from which others for various dimensions of social isolation among the aged females

Socio-economic status (SES)	*The aged females: Multiple comparisons across 'SES means' of various dimensions of social isolation*					
	Homogenous SES groups			*Fisher's least significant difference (LSD)between each pair of SES means*		
	Count	*Mean*	*Homogeneous groups identified using columns of X's**	*Contrast*	*Significant or Non significant difference at the 95.0% confidence level*	*Difference between each pair of 'SES means'*
Family						
Low	20	28.9	X	High - Middle SES	Non significant	-0.8
High	20	30.15	X	High - Low SES	Non significant	1.25
Middle	20	30.95	X	Middle - Low SES	Non significant	2.05
Friends						
Low	20	23.25	X	High - Middle SES	Non significant	4.6
Middle	20	26.6	XX	High - Low SES	Significant	7.95
High	20	31.2	X	Middle - Low SES	Non significant	3.35
Neighbours						
Low	20	17.3	X	High - Middle SES	Non significant	1.85
Middle	20	19.2	XX	High - Low SES	Significant	3.75
High	20	21.05	X	Middle - Low SES	Non significant	1.9
Coping Mechanisms						
Low	20	15.2	X	High - Middle SES	Significant	1.7
Middle	20	16.3	X	High - Low SES	Significant	2.8
High	20	18.0	X	Middle - Low SES	Non significant	1.1

*Within each column, the levels containing X's form a group of means within which there are no statistically significant differences.

procedure to discriminate among the means i.e., to determine which means are significantly different from which others in the three socio-economic strata and for this purpose data for the female respondents were investigated for each socioeconomic strata. The purpose of applying this statistical procedure was to determine which of the dimensions of the social isolation were relatively stronger or weaker in the two socio-economic strata, irrespective of other socio-personal factors. It may be pointed out that very few sex related statistically significant differences were revealed in the respective analysis of the three socio-economic strata, separately (as evident in the forthcoming discussion of Table 7). The statistical output shown in table 4 displays the estimated difference between each pair of means of the three SES levels under four dimensions of social isolation. An asterisk has been placed next to 2 pairs, indicating that these pairs show statistically significant differences at 95.0% confidence level.

Along with this, the table 5 shows the homogenous groups (identified using columns of X's) across three SES (Male respondents) along the four dimensions of social isolation with respect to the extent of social isolation reported. The results presented in table 5 also emphasize the homogeneity in almost 10 pairs within three SES across different dimensions of social isolation. However, heterogeneity in 2 pairs was evident with in two dimensions (neighbours and coping mechanisms) for low-SES and middle-SES, respectively. An asterisk has been placed next to only one of these pairs, indicating that this pair shows statistically significant differences at 95.0 percent confidence level.

VI SES-Specific-Sex-Differences across Various Dimensions of Social Isolation among the Aged

Multiple comparisons determining SES-specific-sex-differences across various dimensions of social isolation among the aged are presented in table 6. The results showed statistically non-significant differences for both the sexes across all the dimensions of social isolation at all levels of SES except in friends, neighbours and coping mechanisms dimension of social isolation for the few selected dyads of SES. Sex differentials were found to be statistically significant for 'coping mechanisms' dimension of social isolation in three SES dyads namely, High-SES females vs. Middle-SES males, High-SES females vs. Low-SES males and Low-SES

Table 5: Multiple comparisons determining which 'SES means' are significantly different from which others for various dimensions of social isolation among the aged males

Socio-economic status (SES)	*The aged males: Multiple comparisons across 'SES means' of various dimensions of social isolation*					
	Homogenous SES groups			*Fisher's least significant difference (LSD)between each pair of SES means*		
	Count	*Mean*	*Homogeneous groups identified using columns of X's**	*Contrast*	*Significant or Non significant difference at the 95.0% confidence level*	*Difference between each pair of 'SES means'*
Family						
Middle	20	29.4	X	High - Middle SES	Non significant	0.1
Low	20	29.5	X	High - Low SES	Non significant	-0.8
High	20	30.3	X	Middle - Low SES	Non significant	-0.9
Friends						
Low	20	27.9	X	High - Middle SES	Non significant	3.95
Middle	20	28.0	X	High - Low SES	Non significant	4.05
High	20	31.95	X	Middle - Low SES	Non significant	0.1
Neighbours						
Middle	20	16.75	X	High - Middle SES	Significant	3.55
Low	20	18.15	XX	High - Low SES	Non significant	2.15
High	20	20.3	X	Middle - Low SES	Non significant	-1.4
Coping Mechanisms						
Low	20	15.45	X	High - Middle SES	Non significant	0.85
Middle	20	16.4	XX	High - Low SES	Significant	1.8
High	20	17.25	X	Middle - Low SES	Non significant	0.95

* Within each column, the levels containing X's form a group of means within which there are no statistically significant differences.

females vs. High-SES Males. Similarly, sex differentials were found to be statistically significant for 'neighbours' dimension of social isolation in the High-SES females vs. Middle-SES males' category and in Low-SES females vs. High-SES Males for 'friends' dimension of social isolation. Thus, it can be concluded that sex differences did not show up very strongly over the majority of sex specific SES groups across various dimensions of social isolation.

VII SES and Sex-Specific Homogeneous Groups across Various Dimensions of Social Isolation among the Aged

All the SES-specific-male and female groups were found to be identical in mean social isolation scores for the 'family' dimension of social isolation. Homogeneity in mean scores of reported social isolation was observed in two comparisons for the 'friends' dimension *viz.*, (Low-SES females, High-SES males and High-SES females) and (Middle-SES females, Low-SES males and Middle-SES males). In the 'neighbours' dimension of social isolation, homogeneity prevailed in three sets - middle-SES males and High-SES females, Low-SES females and High-SES males and the Low-SES males and middle-SES females. 'Coping mechanisms' dimension of social isolation displayed two homogenous groups-Low-SES females, Low-SES males and High-SES females and that of middle-SES males, middle-SES females and High-SES males. Thus, it can be concluded from this analysis of homogeneity across various SES and sex specific groups within the four dimensions of social isolation that homogeneity was highest among the groups in the 'family' dimension and lowest in neighbours' dimension of social isolation (Table 7).

Also, it is worthwhile to mention here that irrespective of the homogeneity observed, all the SES specific– male and female groups in all the dimensions of social isolation fell within the designated range of 'Medium' level of social isolation.

The social isolation in male and female aged from low-SES was convincingly elevated than their high-SES and middle-SES counterparts. In the low-SES, the 'coping mechanisms' dimension was the most impacted and the levels of social isolation were reasonably high. It indicates that the coping mechanisms employed by the elderly were either inappropriate or were missing completely in low SES. This can be understood better in light of the 'Bi-directional interpretation of old age' offered by Erikson (1967). Erikson was

Table 6: Multiple comparisons determining SES-specific-SEX-differences across various dimensions of social isolation among the aged

S. No. for each pair	Contrast between pairs of sex-specific SES groups	The SES-specific sex-differences: Multiple comparisons across various dimensions of social isolation											
		Family			Friends			Neighbours			Coping Mechanisms		
		Significant ornon significant difference at the 95.0% confidence level	Difference between each pair of 'means'	Significant ornon significant difference at the 95.0% confidence level	Difference between each pair of 'means'	Significant or non significant difference at the 95.0% confidence level	Difference between each pair of 'means'	Significant ornon significant difference at the 95.0% confidence level	Difference between] each pair of 'means'				
1	High-SES females vs.High-SES males	Non significant	0.65	Non significant	-0.75	Non significant	0.75	Non significant	0.75				
2.	High-SES females vs.Middle-SES males	Non significant	0.75	Non significant	3.2	Significant	4.3	Significant	1.6				
3.	High-SES females vs.Low-SES males	Non significant	-0.15	Non significant	3.3	Non significant	2.9	Significant	2.55				
4.	Middle-SES females vs.High-SES males	Non significant	1.45	Non significant	-5.35	Non significant	-1.1	Non significant	-0.95				
5.	Middle-SES females vs.Middle-SES males	Non significant	1.55	Non significant	-1.4	Non significant	2.45	Non significant	-0.1				
6.	Middle-SES females vs.Low-SES males	Non significant	0.65	Non significant	-1.3	Non significant	1.05	Non significant	0.85				
7.	Low-SES females vs.High-SES males	Non significant	-0.6	Significant	-8.7	Non significant	-3.0	Significant	-2.05				
8.	Low-SES females vs.Middle-SES males	Non significant	-0.5	Non significant	-4.75	Non significant	0.55	Non significant	-1.2				
9.	Low-SES females vs.Low-SES males	Non significant	-1.4	Non significant	-4.65	Non significant	-1.4	Non significant	-0.25				

Table 7: SES and sex-specific homogeneous groups across various dimensions of social isolation among the aged

SES-specific-male & female groups	Homogenous groups		Homogeneous groups identified using columns of X's*
	Count	Mean	
Family			
Low-SES females	20	28.9	X
Middle-SES males	20	29.4	X
High-SES males	20	29.5	X
High-SES females	20	30.15	X
Low-SES males	20	30.3	X
Middle-SES females	20	30.95	X
Friends			
Low-SES females	20	23.25	X
Middle-SES females	20	26.6	XX
Low-SES males	20	27.9	XX
Middle-SES males	20	28.0	XX
High-SES females	20	31.2	X
High-SES males	20	31.95	X
Neighbours			
Middle-SES males	20	16.75	X
Low-SES females	20	17.3	XX
Low-SES males	20	18.15	XXX
Middle-SES females	20	19.2	XXX
High-SES males	20	20.3	XX
High-SES females	20	21.05	X
Coping Mechanisms			
Low-SES females	20	15.2	X
Low-SES males	20	15.45	X
Middle-SES females	20	16.3	XX
Middle-SES males	20	16.4	XX
High-SES males	20	17.25	XX
High-SES females	20	18.0	X

of the view that if the core crisis during adult stages of life have been resolved in favour of 'intimacy and generativity', high ego integrity is thus made possible for old age .The possessor of this integrity can readily defend the dignity of his or her own life style against any threats. However, if the adult life was marked by a predominance of isolation and stagnation, old age will be filled with despair and isolation. Substantial ego damage and liable emotions are likely to produce the symptoms of delusion or other moderate to severe disturbances marking senility. The love of the ego implies an acceptance of the life one has lived with no regrets for what could have been or for what one should have done differently. It implies acceptance of one's self as person who did the best he could and thus are worthy of love, even though they were not perfect. It implies an acceptance of one's approaching death as inevitable.

Therefore, to eliminate the social isolation and loneliness during the old age across different SES, it is extremely important to plan interventions as

per the varying requirements of the three socio-economic strata. Specifically the intervention should focus on strengthening the mechanisms and strategies employed by the aged to overcome the avoidable social isolation in their lives. Aged should be motivated to create a personal network in their daily lives. Aged who are embedded in a network of personal relationships and remain busy, creative and generative experience a higher level of well being than those who are socially isolated. For the integrated and healthier lives during the dusk of life the old age should be active and well planned aiming towards self-actualization.

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