

# The Pronounced Loneliness Pandemic: A Systematic Review and Thematic Synthesis of Qualitative Studies

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## Abstract

Human beings are not meant to be lonely, but being lonely is human. From a prevalence estimated to be 11% to 17% in the 1970s, loneliness has increased to over 40% in middle-aged and older adults. There is consensus in the existing body of literature on risk factors for loneliness, which shows that demographics, socioeconomic status, mental health, disabilities, societal participation, and social contact are all correlates of loneliness. Since its designation as a pandemic in the 1990s, loneliness has been characterized in many ways: it has been referred to as 'the leprosy' of the 21st century; called a silent pandemic and a public health concern; and as a behavioral epidemic in the year 2020. Loneliness has been framed as the 'antithesis of happiness', increasingly regarded as a key global public health challenge; as well as being officially recognized by the World Health Organization as a priority policy matter, in particular, for older persons. Whereas most instances of loneliness are transient and may be dealt with through individual commitment and effort, persisting loneliness may require treatment from specialists. A comprehensive review of the literature on the effects of loneliness during pandemics was conducted through an extensive search using a variety of search engines. This used a combination of keywords and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terminology to capture the relevant literature. In a time of great social upheaval and unexpected pandemics, it becomes all the more important to understand how chronic loneliness shapes our physical and emotional health behaviors

**Keywords:** loneliness; isolation; alone; social isolation; depression; mental health; rest ; intervention

## Introduction

Human beings are not meant to be lonely but being lonely is human. There is consensus in the existing body of literature on risk factors for loneliness, which shows that demographics, socioeconomic status, mental health, disabilities, societal participation, and social contact are all correlates of loneliness [1]. The predicament raised by Pascal that just although being alone is a problem, so too is being with others is one that continues, as this volume suggests, to intrigue and tease us [2]. Everyone experiences loneliness at one point or another. Most loneliness is short-term and can be conquered with effort, but prolonged loneliness may need professional help. Loneliness has been associated with several adverse outcomes, such as sleep disturbances, impaired thinking, ill health, and possibly cardiovascular disease. It increases the risk of mortality and depressive symptoms and can affect people's physical and neurological health. It involved weakened immunity, high blood pressure, and inflammation. Loneliness may also contribute significantly to Alzheimer's disease [3].

Since it was labelled a pandemic in the 1990s, loneliness has gained attention by being framed as, amongst other things, 'the leprosy' of the 21st century; a silent pandemic; a public health problem and as a

behavioural epidemic in 2020. Loneliness has been positioned as the 'antithesis of happiness' and is now largely unquestioned as an international public health issue, recognised as a priority policy issue particularly for older people by the World Health Organization [4]. A billion-dollar loneliness industry has emerged ready to provide anti-loneliness products to the lost as to how to manage their loneliness, an industry benefitting from loneliness being depicted as 'spreading dangerously through the population', contagious and unstoppable [2].

Loneliness is a prevalent and harmful experience which is receiving a wealth of public, policy, and research attention [5]. The phenomenon is not new but one that is increasingly being viewed as a social and health concern. More recently, a US surgeon general called loneliness a public health crisis comparable to smoking, warning it is as damaging to physical health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day [6].

Loneliness occurs when social relations are deficient in quantity or quality, leaving a discrepancy between actual and ideal connections. In many parts of the world, loneliness is characterized as a painful and agonizing experience.

Loneliness is theoretically different from solitude i.e a momentary state of objective absence of other people, solitude is when being alone is perceived as pleasant and intentionally sought out and social isolation is the objective lack of social relationships and social contact [7].

Chronic and high loneliness has public health implications. Lonely people suffer from more illnesses, both depression and anxiety, major cognitive decline, dementia, and generally weaker physical health, such as motor dysfunctions, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and sleep disturbances. Loneliness increases the likelihood of unhealthy behaviours such as sedentarism, smoking, and substance abuse, exacerbating its detrimental health consequences [8].

From a prevalence estimated to be 11% to 17% in the 1970s, loneliness has increased to over 40% in middle-aged and older adults. Over the past 40 years, loneliness has also become more widespread overseas and is linked to poor physical and mental health outcomes [3]. Loneliness usually includes many negative emotions, including feeling undesirable, disliked, dismissed, miserable, and perceiving oneself as unattractive and vulnerable.

According to the reports presented by [9], study findings found 34% of adults in Australia were lonely, with 21% having episodic loneliness and 13% having chronic loneliness. In the United States, 43% of adults felt they lacked companionship, 43% felt that their relationships were not meaningful, 43% felt isolated from others, and 39% no longer felt close to anyone. Less research has examined country-level estimates of social isolation among the general population. However, a sample from Australia estimated 17% of the general population being socially isolated with 13% having episodic and 4% having chronic isolation. Research indicates that loneliness is a significant concern that transcends age boundaries, affecting individuals of all generations. As such, it is essential to adopt a life-course approach to effectively understand and mitigate the impact of loneliness on society [2]. Additionally, many of the studies examining the prevalence of social isolation are among older adults. For instance, one recent Canadian survey estimated about one in every four older adults was socially isolated [9].

Adolescents and young adults may be particularly vulnerable because socialization is a critical aspect of development, which may have long-lasting effects on their mental and physical well-being. A dedicated ministry has been created in both the United Kingdom and Japan to deal with the pressing issue of loneliness [6]. The UK appointed a Minister of Loneliness in 2018, while Japan followed suit in 2021. Loneliness can have profound effects on mental and physical health. It has been linked to depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, weakened immune response, and even early mortality. Loneliness is a significant public health concern that warrants attention and intervention, even more so in African countries where health systems are often stretched thin.

As [10] postulated, loneliness does not discriminate and may be experienced by anyone. Of interest, therefore, is to review who the lonely are. How do they feel, think and behave? Living in the new age, he noted that "we are losing touch. And we don't even realize it" and we may suggest that today the situation is even more serious. Those who feel lonely will often find themselves watching other people, e.g., on TV, in stores or on social media. However, loneliness being a subjective experience is experienced in a different manner from individual to individual [3].

In today's world, despite how connected we appear online, loneliness has become a silent epidemic. But by understanding this silent pandemic, we can break through the walls that separate us and build stronger bridges for healthier communities. Research consistently shows that social connection is one of the most significant contributors to our happiness and well-being. Being part of a group whether it's family, friends, or even a community gives us a sense of belonging and purpose. And when people experience strong connections, they feel less lonely and are better equipped to handle life's challenges [11].

Fighting loneliness isn't just an individual responsibility; it's a collective one. Imagine if we all, with great intention, did our part to build connections within our communities. Not only would we ameliorate loneliness, but we would also create an environment that beams with positivity, is supportive, and kind. Each one of us can be a contribution by sensitizing those around us: friends, family members, colleagues, and neighbors. A simple smile or kind word can open doors to companionship and remind someone they are not alone.

### **Methodology**

A comprehensive review of the available literature on the effects of pandemic loneliness was conducted through an extensive search of Google Scholar, BASE, CORE, Science.gov, Semantic Scholar, Baidu Scholar, and RefSeek. It was conducted using combined keywords and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms to capture the relevant literature. The main keywords utilized were "loneliness," "isolation," "pandemic," "physical health," "mental health," "emotional health," "well-being," and their synonyms. To find relevant literature, we limited the use of all keywords and MeSH terms to the title of the articles. This limitation was necessary to present only those articles that explicitly presented loneliness its physical, emotional, and health consequences. Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" were then used appropriately to combine terms. The search was then limited to those published within the last 10 years, ending in 2024, in order to include recent literature. In the search engines, the keywords generated a batch of over 300 articles. From these numbers, a total of 26 studies were considered to be relevant to the topic and included in this

paper. The articles were drawn from recent peer-reviewed journals published worldwide, which dealt with loneliness and its effects on health: mental, physical, emotional, and social. Articles in English, those that were originally published in English, or translations which were provided by foreign journals, and that were based on both quantitative and qualitative methods were included. Articles whose full texts were not in English were excluded. Each of the studies had a number of participants sufficient to represent the targeted population in order to enhance generalization of results. Only scientific articles describing experimental studies, descriptive or review articles which are published in peer-reviewed journals were included.

Exclusion: Any documents such as book chapters, doctoral theses, or conference/congress papers.

### **The Crux of Life Is People**

In recent years, the phenomenon of people passing away alone, with their absence going unnoticed for days, and sometimes even weeks, has been on the rise. This has become increasingly common in certain parts of the world, highlighting a range of social issues that can affect us all. It is a heartbreaking situation that raises questions not only about loneliness but

also about how modern society is structured. This phenomenon highlights social, health, and economic issues that impact our communities today. These cases tend to occur in situations where a person lives alone, with few, if any, regular social contacts. According to research, individuals who die alone often remain undiscovered until a neighbour notices a strange smell, a family member inquires after days without a response, or landlords and welfare agencies perform routine checks

Loneliness is often depicted as a general feeling related to overall isolation, but the present findings emphasize that the perceived lack or inadequacy of specific relationships or relationship types, such as having no close friends, the loss of a spouse, or lack of co-ethnic social network, could also cause loneliness [5]. As [6] reported, growing societal trends towards individualism, at the expense of collectivism, risk increasing feelings of loneliness and a lack of belonging. Despite its promise of connecting people, social media use has been linked to increased feelings of social disconnection. Austerity, the status quo, religious extremism, regionalism, poverty, racism, tribalism, and xenophobia create inequality and feelings of exclusion. We must focus on understanding how these root causes contribute to loneliness and explore ways to change or eliminate them to enhance connectedness and foster a sense of belonging.

The present study found that being male, having lower education levels, inadequacy of financial resources, higher risk of anxiety and depression, informal caregiving that is experienced as burdensome and social contact were associated with higher levels of loneliness across the life span. Having a migration background, living alone, having a physical disability, and having a paid job were found to be age-specific risk factors [1].

The negative health effects of loneliness are well-documented. Poor social connections are linked to a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, infectious diseases, impaired cognitive function, depression, and anxiety [6]. People who die alone and are discovered days later often share common characteristics: They may be elderly, disabled, or socially isolated, may have few or no close family members or friends or they may live in urban areas where neighbors are less likely to know each other. examples of such cases include: In London, 38-year-old Joyce Vincent passed away in her apartment, and her body remained undiscovered for over two years. She had family and friends, but over time had become isolated due to health and personal issues. Her story is a powerful example of urban isolation and the invisibility of some vulnerable people in densely populated areas. In Japan, "kodokushi," or "lonely death," is an increasingly common phenomenon, especially among the elderly population. Urbanization, an aging population, and shrinking family structures contribute to this trend, with many elderly individuals being found long after they've passed. In many cities, young adults dealing with mental health challenges, homelessness, or substance abuse are also at risk. Without regular social contacts or family connections, they may die alone in their apartments or other isolated locations [4].

The increasing frequency of unattended deaths reveals a troubling gap in social connection and community care. This phenomenon, affecting people of various ages and backgrounds, requires a multifaceted response from communities, governments, and individuals alike. Dying alone is not merely a matter of personal tragedy but a societal issue [6]. Addressing it calls for awareness, compassion, and a commitment to ensuring that no one falls through the cracks of modern society. By understanding and responding to the factors contributing to isolation, we can work toward a future where fewer people experience life and death in solitude. We can

accomplish things that we are unable to do by ourselves.' Imagine a stick that is so fragile it won't last long. It is nearly impossible to snap a bundle of sticks. The same applies to people, Being alone causes a decrease in our resilience.' Our spirits may be weighed down, dampened and disengaged. The act of standing together does not only make us stronger, but also gives us confidence, happiness, and hope.

### **Loneliness in a family setup.**

On the surface, the devaluation of family relationships might pose a risk for increased loneliness because the quantity and quality of family relationships might suffer when people are less invested in them. However, individualism does not devalue social relationships in general but rather is defined by a shift in the importance of different types of relationship [7].

Different cultural backgrounds and societies have different practices and expectations: We will briefly compare Africanism, westernization and easternization. These may lead to isolation and loneliness. Sibling rivalry can result to isolation and loneliness. As you grow older your circle of friends becomes thinner thus a risk. Men are the most affected, will go to bars, stadiums or make new friends depending on what they like [9]. Women will result to pets, friends favorite children et cetera, young adults will be at risk of developing new bad habits, spend more time with their new found friends or partners, adolescents need someone to talk to especially about the many changes they experience in their lives:body etc if they miss someone they result to locking themselves up, watching too much tv, ever on their phones or this is the point they learn substance abuse. Politics, tribalism and religionism have exacerbated isolation and loneliness

An early study of the internet and psychological well-being found that greater internet use was associated with a decline in participants' communication with family members, a decrease in their social circle, and an increase in depression and loneliness [11]. The African family setup is rooted in communal living, extended family systems, and collective responsibility. Relationships extend beyond the nuclear family, encompassing grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins, all of whom actively contribute to family life. Elders hold a revered status, offering guidance and leadership in decision-making. Marriage is often viewed as a communal affair, and polygamy is practiced in some cultures. Families prioritize child-rearing as a collective effort, ensuring strong cultural continuity through traditional practices like naming ceremonies and ancestral worship. This setup emphasizes unity, shared resources, and cultural identity.

Western family cultures typically emphasize individualism and nuclear family units, consisting of parents and children. Autonomy and personal freedom are key values, with children often encouraged to leave home and become independent at an early age. Gender roles are increasingly fluid, reflecting a shift toward equality. Marriage and partnerships tend to be more individual-centric, with divorce rates higher than in African or Eastern cultures. Western families prioritize personal aspirations, with cultural rituals like holidays and birthdays being celebrated more casually than community-centered events [9].

Eastern family cultures, especially in Asia, focus on hierarchical structures, filial piety, and respect for elders. The extended family plays a significant role, often living together or maintaining close ties. Arranged marriages are common in some regions, underscoring the importance of family alliances. Gender roles, though evolving, traditionally emphasize

distinct responsibilities for men and women. Collectivism is deeply ingrained, with family honor, obedience, and duty outweighing individual desires. Ceremonies like weddings and religious festivals are family-oriented and steeped in tradition, reflecting strong intergenerational bonds [12].

While African and Eastern families prioritize communal living and extended family ties, Western cultures emphasize independence and individualism. Respect for elders is central in African and Eastern systems but less pronounced in the West. Eastern cultures share a structured, hierarchical approach, whereas African families focus on collective equality. Westernization has influenced both African and Eastern setups, gradually introducing nuclear family ideals and shifting gender dynamics.

### **Loneliness in marriages and relationships.**

In our contemporary world, companionship is perhaps more relevant than ever, especially given our interconnected global landscape. The Internet, social media, and global trade have created a world where our actions impact others across the globe. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored how the health of one person can affect the health of an entire community, or even the world. Climate change, too, is a powerful reminder of our interdependence. Pollution, deforestation, and carbon emissions in one part of the world contribute to global warming, which affects all of us, regardless of borders. Loneliness differs significantly from simply being alone. It is not a binary state, and feelings of loneliness are deeply influenced by cultural norms. This subjectivity poses a fundamental challenge [6].

Marriage and loneliness are intricately connected, with their relationship influenced by factors such as emotional intimacy, communication, and individual well-being. Marriage is often perceived as a safeguard against loneliness, providing companionship, emotional support, and a shared life journey [13]. However, the correlation is complex, as loneliness can still exist within marital relationships, particularly when emotional connections weaken. Despite a stereotype association of loneliness with older adults, research has highlighted that loneliness is common in all life stages and peaks in adolescence and early adulthood just as in old age [1]. Loneliness is a complex feeling that goes beyond just being alone. You could be surrounded by people but still feel lonely if you lack meaningful connections. Loneliness is deeply personal, and it can affect anyone, regardless of age, background, or situation. The more divided we are by screens, schedules, or even by social differences, the more we may feel disconnected from others. Loneliness usually appears behaviorally through inhibition and ineffective social skills. Lonely individuals encounter difficulties facing social challenges, they are usually not assertive, and their social skills are lacking settings. Interestingly, in social intercourse, they tend to overly self-disclose, as a way of alerting the listener to their unheard cry, and that often sabotages the ability to make connections. The lonely people commonly withdraw and disengage socially, and instead seek help from others [3].

Studies suggest that the quality of the marriage significantly impacts loneliness. High-quality marriages characterized by mutual respect, effective communication, and shared goals tend to reduce loneliness. Conversely, low-quality marriages, marked by conflict, neglect, or lack of intimacy, can exacerbate feelings of isolation, sometimes leaving individuals lonelier than if they were single. According to [12], the Vedas, Bible and Quran, one of the purposes of creating a woman was

to provide companionship and address the issue of loneliness to man. This highlights the importance of relationships and connection in human life. Some individuals have adopted pets and gadgets to alleviate loneliness, even though these cannot replace human companionship. There are some notable gaps that exist in the research of loneliness and social isolation, especially in regard to certain racial/ethnic groups and the communities of immigrants. Other categories of persons suffering from extreme social disadvantage and marginalization include diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, people with disabilities, neurodivergent people, those with serious mental illness, and people in conditions of poverty. These groups have poorer mental health, with dampened hopes for a better life, thereby heightening their risk for loneliness and isolation [9]. It is possible to feel lonely and be socially isolated, lonely but not isolated, or isolated but not feeling lonely. Loneliness and social isolation are also related to diverging health effects.

Loneliness within marriage may stem from unmet emotional needs, lack of physical or emotional presence, or differing expectations between partners. Additionally, societal pressures to marry can sometimes lead individuals into unions that are not emotionally fulfilling, increasing the likelihood of loneliness. In their study findings, there was a correlation between loneliness and gender, age, and marital status. They found that older single adults were the most likely to spend time alone. Regarding loneliness, as partnered people get older, they get less lonely. There is a robust but small association between time spent alone and loneliness. Finally, age moderates the association between time spent alone and loneliness. As people get older, spending time alone is more highly associated with feelings of loneliness [13].

Marriage's protective effects against loneliness often depend on the broader support system. In cultures that emphasize extended family or community ties, marital loneliness may be less prevalent due to the availability of alternative social support. Conversely, in individualistic societies, spouses may rely heavily on each other for emotional fulfillment, heightening the risk of loneliness if the relationship falters. Thus, marriage can either alleviate or intensify loneliness, with its effects shaped by relational quality, cultural context, and personal expectations. Addressing loneliness in marriage often requires strengthening emotional bonds and fostering open communication between partners. It's important to recognize that being in a relationship doesn't always guarantee emotional connection, and sometimes we may feel lonely even when we're with someone. Conversely, being alone can provide a sense of peace and contentment. Understanding these feelings can help us foster deeper connections with ourselves and others

### **Are bosses, managers and leaders lonelier?**

Aristocracy and materialism are associated with negative correlates, such as poor well-being and increased loneliness. A population-wide increase in materialistic values might therefore lead to an increase in loneliness. Such an increase has been found in the USA. The majority of people in top positions reported loneliness: Lonely at the top. The austerity when performing their duties drives people away [7]. In addition, they are socially rejected; give up; and feel superiority. Cognitive attributes: Lonely persons reported primarily low self-esteem. Low self-esteem and loneliness have a reciprocal impact as both foster the emergence and perpetuation of each other. As such, these individuals perceive themselves as despite being or having power they feel inferior, worthless, and unattractive, and socially may be awkward



and hyper-sensitive to any sign of rejection while lacking important social skills. Unfortunately, many lonely people consider their condition as an unchangeable trait and hence feel powerless to bring about a change [3]. It is thus easy to see how this may create a negative feedback loop of misery, worthlessness, hopelessness and of course, further loneliness. Power, egocentrism conceitedness, pride and aristocracy build walls instead of bridges. No trust nor communication which are fundamental in any relationship consequently no one can freely talk or socialize with them. No wonder when you meet them at a personal level you ask yourself if it is the same person you see on screens and at the meetings.

Because of the COVID-19 epidemic, it is more important than ever to recognize the difference between social isolation and loneliness and to value social ties for overall well-being. There are serious physical and social repercussions associated with loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness is characterized as a painful absence or loss of companionship, even when particular persons are present. Social isolation is associated with the strength of social bonds [14]. In a study among top-level managers, the results highlighted the detrimental impacts of social isolation and loneliness on several health-related concerns, including physical health conditions like coronary artery disease and stroke, mental health conditions like anxiety and depression, and even an increased risk of death. Effective solutions are necessary as the impact of this issue extends beyond individual healthcare expenses [15].

We all have a need to belong. We can learn from the animal kingdom that, as individuals or as a community species we cannot survive without belonging to something greater than ourselves. The lion however mightier needs the pride for survival. When we do not belong, or when we perceive that we are separated from others, we feel the pain of loneliness. According to [16], Research indicates that a growing number of people have no one to confide in that is, a shrinkage of social ties so valued earlier in today's Western culture, which rewards individual acquisition of power and money mostly, people have no time or great interest in establishing social connections. Our lifestyle in the 21st century not only creates isolation but makes it more difficult to cope with, while in the past people looked for others to live, work and connect with, these days dating on-line and the explosive growth of Facebook are but two attempts at creating virtual communities that may replace, for many, flesh-and-blood friends [3].

In a study limited to Europe, the examination of the economic effects of social isolation and loneliness goes beyond the level of the person [17]. As per the report, these problems might result in noteworthy financial consequences, impacting not just productivity but also healthcare expenditures and general well-being. The financial ramifications might affect entire societies in addition to specific individuals. By highlighting the connections between social isolation, economic results, and loneliness, the research adds to the body of current material. Stereotypes regarding the economic contributions of single people are refuted, and the significance of social connections in boosting regional economies and promoting economic growth is highlighted. To sum up, the study offers a thorough comprehension of social isolation and loneliness, including important perspectives on its cultural, public health, and economic aspects. The results emphasize the importance of addressing these challenges for the well-being of individuals and society at large by adding to the continuing

conversation on interventions, geographical variances, and economic repercussions [15].

Loneliness is an unsolicited feeling because of the lack of companionship. Almost 1 in every 4 adults globally feel lonely[17].

As much as many are not able to treat loneliness as a potential issue, it is important to know that its effects can be intense and wide-ranging. About 52% of people are lonely in the United States, while young adults from ages 18-24 are lonely. Many people are turning to technology solutions, such as the AI Girlfriend app and Sexting AI Platforms, as a means to combat loneliness. The overwhelming majority of leaders who are lonely people are reluctant to admit, even to themselves, that they truly are lonely. They deny it because of feelings of shame or stigma in admitting loneliness. This denial of loneliness on both an individual and a societal level creates an inability to address and work through loneliness. Odds are we would hesitate to talk about a family, ill health, or even mental health concerns, though few would confess to being lonely [3].

### **No Man is an Island**

As a social species, humans need a safe and secure environment to be social. Social isolation or loneliness perceptions foster a sense of threat awareness and increase vulnerability while also stimulating the desire to reconnect [18]. The occurrence of implicit hypervigilance for social threat affects psychological processes that impact physiological functioning, decreases sleep quality, and increases morbidity and mortality. As [19] indicated, research findings showed that people mainly check for communication from and by others as soon as they open their mobiles. This is a big reminder that even with new technology, no person is an island and if they were they will still need to be surrounded by people; these gadgets can never replace the need for human interaction in our lives thus highlighting the poignant principle to maintaining that our nature is that of social animals.

According to [20], John Donne's poem "No man is an island" offers a powerful perspective on the nature of humanity and the significance of community. This line is present in Donne's "Meditation XVII" from the 17th century. Throughout time, it has become a potent representation of the unity of all people.' Donne's interpretation of the passage suggests that every individual is connected to a continent, and no one is isolated from its entirety. "We are all interdependent," according to his reflection. As the larger world is made up of oceans and islands, we are also linked to each other as individuals. According to Donne, the phrase implies that isolation is a false notion where we are not truly independent and are instead affected by those around us. This viewpoint was not merely a poetic reflection but also embodied incredibly spiritual concepts about the soul, death, and empathy. All individuals share a common bond with others in their lives.' From a philosophical perspective, it denotes the fact that humans are not entirely self-sufficient; we are all part of broader social and ethical systems. This idea is in contrast to the concept of radical individualism that emerged later in Western philosophy, particularly during the enlightenment [14].

The concept of being "self-made" is lauded in cultures that value individuality. Even so, Donne's thought process underscores that we don't have to rely on external factors alone. Our educational pursuits, social connections, families and opportunities are interdependent with the lives and endeavors of others [18]. The concept of interdependence has significant implications for ethics and moral duty. If we're all connected, then one person's suffering or happiness isn't an isolated experience [17].

That matters because it affects the common good. The principles outlined in different ethical frameworks, such as utilitarianism and communitarian ethics, are compatible with each other. For instance, in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, the fates of characters from various social classes and backgrounds are interconnected. In a chaotic society, Dickens examines how the actions and fates of individuals impact each other. Like *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, plays written by William Shakespeare explore how individual decisions impact families, communities, kingdoms, and beyond.

This phrase has been used in politics and pop culture as a call to unity, particularly in the present times. Why is it so? The phrase encourages us to unite in times of conflict, social turmoil, or natural calamities. That encourages action by all of us, empathy and the knowledge that our own well-being is linked with others' well-being. "Moving forward, we can consider: How do our everyday decisions reflect how we perceive people? Is our purpose self-serving, or do we prioritize external factors? If not, why? I am challenged to see beyond ourselves, embrace a sense of togetherness, and remember that every individual's decision shapes their own being.

As reported by [20], the statement "No man is an island" is not just a poetic expression but also reflects incredibly deep insights into human existence.' Through his writings, John Donne evoke the memory of our shared humanity and the significance of understanding that we're all one in the same. The recognition of this connection leads to a stronger sense of purpose, responsibility, and empathy towards others.'

My goal is always to strengthen our bonds, combat isolation effectively and genuinely connect with others. Let's work towards a world where isolation is rare, and genuine, heartfelt relationships are abundant. Our presence can make a difference between someone feeling invisible and someone experiencing value. Our preference is to be united rather than divided, collective rather than isolated and compassionate rather than indifferent. ". Standing together can lead to a more cohesive and joyful world for all of us.

### Breaking The Culture of Loneliness

Chronically lonely people are 26% more likely to die.' The experience of loneliness is influenced by culture. Age, loneliness, and the connection between retirement and age are highlighted in a [10] study. They also found that a third of people in industrialised countries feel lonely and that 8 per cent are very lonely. ". The experience of loneliness is universal according to [17] survey conducted in 113 countries in 2022. Despite the fact that young and middle-aged adults had lower rates of loneliness, their findings were not consistent with other studies. The findings uncovered that the rate of loneliness is highly diverse across different nations. However, They noted that the rate of loneliness was lowest in northern European countries and highest in eastern European nations. The reasons for the disparities were identified as cultural, demographic, and societal factors, while other studies linked them to social welfare systems and social security schemes in those countries.

A combination of high socioeconomic status, which is correlated with loneliness, general health, an efficient welfare system, and active social participation may be responsible for the lower rates of loneliness in northern European countries. However, in countries with poor health care systems located in the east of Europe, loneliness is more prevalent [18]. It was suggested that the high levels of loneliness experienced in

East European countries during socialism culture transition may be a result of reduced social trust and changing care arrangements. As part of the nimbyist groundswell, however, the rise of a privacy culture which is a byproduct of market capitalism and a cause of loneliness is primarily a conscious decision; the expansion of gated communities and high-security executive residences indicates the desire of the privileged to isolate and insulate [21].

According to [22], during the last decades, the prevalence of loneliness has skyrocketed, probably as a consequence of accelerated profound changes in family structure, workplace relationships, digital connectedness, sedentarism, and urban social lifestyles-all factors affecting not only the quantity and quality of social interactions but also our values and expectations related to them. Recent surveys report that between one and two out of every ten in the US, Japan, and Europe, adults often or always feel lonely [12]. This is an indication of an inherent yet deadly cultural practice. Our culture is result-oriented. With the obsession of over productivity, we are driven to go beyond the limits.

Life can be crowded with work, family, and personal aspirations.

Increasing demand and pressure strain our work-life balance. Hence, we are busy yet lonely.

Loneliness is widespread in many countries; however, there is a big data gap between high-income countries, especially in Europe and low- and middle-income countries resulting to equity issues [17]. There is scant evidence on trends in loneliness. Loneliness needs to be included in health surveillance with wider geographic and age coverage, using validated measurement tools.

Loneliness and social isolation cultures confer a risk of death similar to that of cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, physical inactivity and obesity. Other health effects include cardiovascular disease, dementia, cognitive decline, and amplifying observation of anxiety and depressive symptoms, to name a few [9]. According to the general estimation, loneliness is felt by as many as 20% to 30% of African adults. Africa's high rate may be an underestimate due to rapid urbanization, increased internet and social media usage (such as Twitter and Facebook), economic challenges such as political uncertainty, and the recent impact of COVID-19.

Loneliness is experienced by people around the globe, however, it gets expressed in different ways under the influence of culture and of course, other factors [12]. The interrelationship among physiological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors pertaining to loneliness necessitates interdisciplinary and comprehensive intervention to address the negative effects emanating from loneliness. Declaration recognition of loneliness as a public health risk will be the first step in tackling the ill-health effects of loneliness. There is an expanded need to develop and promote public awareness campaigns centered on social connectivity, including interventions fostering resilience and community-aiding activities to break the murky culture of loneliness [16].

Choice is always costly, and this impossible bargain, fraught with worry for many trying to liberate themselves from repressive family, cultural, religious, or institutional contexts, is not helped by the alarmist, deficit rhetoric of loneliness [2]. More egalitarian alternatives to the family have developed and such de-traditionalisation gains made in the 20th century, perhaps most notably for women did, and do, come

at a price. The trend of rising single-person households with its implications for loneliness, for example, appears to extend across all world regions [23].

### Rest Ameliorates Loneliness

Rest may be low down on the list of priorities. One study indicates that loneliness shares a link with fatigue and unexplained aches [25]. Some individuals opt for stressful jobs and busy lifestyles in an attempt to escape from the situation of loneliness.

A busy schedule and an inability to say 'no' do not guarantee a life free from loneliness [13]. God values rest, six days He worked and the seventh He rested. Rest including taking a day or weeks off work has brought to light innumerable life imbalances, along with the cost to their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being [24]. Balancing ourselves involves nurturing our whole being, and rest is a crucial part of it. Rest, in its physical, mental, and emotional forms, plays a crucial role in mitigating loneliness. Loneliness, characterized by a perceived lack of meaningful connections, is often exacerbated by stress, fatigue, and overcommitment [17]. Rest offers a pathway to self-reconnection, emotional regulation, and improved social engagement, thereby helping alleviate feelings of isolation.

Firstly, physical rest restores energy levels, enabling individuals to engage more meaningfully in social interactions. Chronic fatigue often diminishes the ability to nurture relationships, leaving individuals feeling disconnected. Adequate sleep, in particular, has been shown to improve mood and cognitive function, enhancing the capacity to build and maintain social bonds [25]. Secondly, mental rest such as taking breaks from work or digital distractions provides space for introspection and self-awareness. This helps individuals better understand their emotional needs and develop resilience against feelings of loneliness. Mindful practices, like meditation or quiet time, foster a sense of inner peace and self-companionship, reducing reliance on external validation.

Emotional rest, achieved by setting boundaries and sharing feelings with trusted individuals, further alleviates loneliness. It allows individuals to offload emotional burdens and seek support, deepening existing relationships. Moreover, rest enhances empathy, enabling individuals to connect more authentically with others [24].

Through its adverse effects, loneliness damages sleep, immunity, and health behaviors, which in the long run means cardiovascular diseases and shorter life spans. These effects are harmful to individual well-being and impose high economic costs on society. Accordingly, loneliness is recognized as a public health problem that calls for public policy intervention. Now, loneliness is a priority in the UK, Germany, Japan, and the EU for its societal impact and need for evidence-based public policy [7]. Traditionally, African culture emphasized sleeping at dusk for better sleep quality.

There is some evidence to suggest that loneliness varies across different age groups. Comparing the social networks of young and middle-aged adults revealed that young adults experienced twice as many days of loneliness and isolation as their late middle age counterparts [17]. According to interviews with a sample of English youth, individuals aged 10 to 24 describe loneliness as being characterized by exclusion, isolation, and dissatisfaction with relationships. The age distribution of loneliness in surveys based on population analysis shows a U-shaped pattern, with high levels of isolation observed in both young and elderly

individuals. Epidemiological research on loneliness's health effects has primarily focused on older individuals. The study of loneliness in older age groups cannot be generalized to younger people as the experiences of isolation differ across different demographics and cultural [2]. Additionally, regarding social dynamics, loneliness varies significantly between youth and adults as they mature. Children as young as 5 years old are familiar with the feeling of loneliness and sadness that comes from experiencing these emotions, which prompts them to seek out others [14].

Lonely people need to be reached individually, as loneliness is complex. It requires a societal response, and health communities have to be a part of it in developing awareness and reducing stigma. General practice will play a critical role in monitoring, surveillance, and administering interventions through possible social prescribing. The evidence for interventions is weak, and there is a need for evaluation frameworks [6]. There is a widespread appreciation of the health dimensions of loneliness. However, applying systems thinking, taking a life-course approach, and understanding loneliness as a global issue are all in their infancy. Plans to investigate these issues and synthesise evidence-based recommendations for research, practice, and policy need to be expedited [2]. Hence, loneliness might require different targeted interventions according to the stage of life of the sufferer [1]. In summary, rest acts as a holistic antidote to loneliness by revitalizing energy, fostering self-compassion, and improving social capacity. Integrating restorative practices into daily life can build resilience and create opportunities for more meaningful connections [24]. Rest is important for health and a must for the body to repair itself, boost the immune system, and recover from an illness or injury [25]. Adequate amounts of sleep will improve cognitive function, memory, and emotional regulation, resulting in a lower likelihood of disorders related to stress and burnout. Rest will help maintain cardiovascular health, decrease inflammation, and balance hormones, which will make one full of vitality [16]. It will also support mental clarity and creativity, improving productivity and decision-making. Emotionally, it builds resilience to help one stand against challenges. In a busy world, it is rest that one must never forego for the sake of a balanced and healthy life.

### Conclusion

When you stop being a man or woman and become a human being, things are extreme. Understanding the complexity of loneliness and its health consequences is not an academic pursuit, but a key public health imperative. In a time when the world is experiencing major social transformations and unexpected pandemics, it is critical to understand how endemic loneliness shapes our physical and emotional behavioral health. In this age of globalization, the notion of "one family" emphasizes our shared responsibilities. We cannot afford to ignore issues happening in other parts of the world because, sooner or later, they affect us all. This call for global empathy and responsibility reinforces the message that we are all "a piece of the continent, a part of the main." Life is not a solitary endeavor; we rely on communities, families, friendships, and networks to survive and thrive. This truth is seen in how economies function, how cities are built, and how families support each other. Additionally, it's a reminder to exercise empathy and act with an awareness of the impact our actions have on others. When we contribute to society, we contribute not only to our own success but also to the well-being of the whole. Small acts of kindness, helping others, and working for the common good are all part of acknowledging our interconnectedness. To break down these

walls of loneliness, we must act with intentionality. Often, people wait for others to make the first move but the clarion call is to make that move. A small gesture can sometimes mean the world to someone who feels isolated. With today's distractions, being truly present can be challenging. But when we actively listen to others, give them our full attention, and make them feel seen and valued, we create an environment where people feel safe and cared for. This simple act can make a huge difference in countering loneliness. Whether it's a hobby group, a sports team, or a book club, communities create opportunities for new connections. Join groups, communities or forums and you may find others with similar interests. These shared passions can spark meaningful friendships that fill the void loneliness often brings. Showing kindness, helping others, and allowing others to help us can create strong, lasting bonds. Sometimes, just knowing that someone is there to help during tough times is enough to keep loneliness at bay. Lastly, celebrate together as building community also means celebrating our lives together. Take the time to mark each other's milestones, birthdays, or achievements. These gatherings may seem small, but they're powerful reminders of the support system we have in each other.

### Disclaimer (Artificial Intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

### Consent

It is not applicable.

### Ethical Approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press. The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) established.

### Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

### Competing Interests

The Author has declared that no competing interests exist

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