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## Social isolation and identity processing styles among students living in orphanages

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### Abstract

The aim of the study was to understand the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Styles among students living in Orphanages. The study also aimed to understand relationship between Social Isolation and various Identity Processing Style, including Normative style, Diffuse-avoidant style and Informational Style. The study also helped to understand the impact of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages. A total of 100 students under the age of 10-26 were a part of the study and the data was collected through pen and paper method including the questionnaire for Social Isolation by Victor G.Cacioppo and William Patrick (2002), Identity Processing Style by Michael D. Berzonsky (2013). Informed consent was included while collecting the data and demographic details of the participants were taken. The results of the study showed that there was a relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing among students residing in Orphanages. The study also aimed to understand relationship between Social Isolation and various Identity Processing Style, including Normative style, Diffuse-avoidant style and Informational Style and it was found out that there was a positive relationship between Social Isolation and various Identity Styles among Students residing in Orphanages. The study also wanted to see the impact of Social Isolation on Identity Processing style among students residing in Orphanages and it was found that there is a significant impact of Social Isolation and Identity Processing style among students living in Orphanage. Which is helpful in understanding that Interventions and support systems target at resolving social isolation and foster healthy identity development among students living in orphanages

**Keywords:** Social Isolation; Identity Processing Style; Normative style; Diffuse-avoidant style; Informational style

### 1. Introduction

When talking about wellbeing and developmental outcomes, parenting has always been at the forefront. Because it contains the element of parent-child contact, the parent-child relationship is significant. Another group that experiences prejudice, marginalization, and isolation is orphan children. They are often mistreated, kept out of sight, and kept out of developmental activities. They might not engage with people very much and have low self-esteem. However, peer groups or other outside influences have a big impact on their behavior when they don't have parental guidance or orphanhood. The adolescent's identity is shaped by how they view themselves, their interactions with others, and how they think other people see them. According to Erikson, a significant developmental milestone that teenagers must reach is the formation of their sense of self and identity. Failure to overcome this stage results in "role confusion," a state in which an individual is unclear about their identity and future goals.

After looking into a few studies, it was shown that kids with poor self-esteem may not receive as many back pats because they don't seem to be eager for them (Cassidy et al., 2003). When it comes to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, sometimes known as "orphans," who would not have had parental guidance and who must learn to define and develop their identity and behavior at every turn in their lives. These kids would struggle to establish social connections and experience a great deal of rejection from society since people could view them more sympathetically than empathically.

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Erikson identified isolation as a negative outcome in his Socioemotional Development book, *Isolation vs. Intimacy*. He claimed that isolation was a reflection of an individual's reluctance to make relationships, possibly because of self-absorption or a fear of losing their identity. David Elskind, suggests that the adolescent's conviction in their own invincibility, which encourages risk-taking behaviors, is caused by the personal story.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) emphasizes that experiencing social isolation, strategic identity, fast societal change, socioeconomic stress, and demanding social and working environments can all increase the risk of mental illness. Erikson explains in his fifth stage *Identity vs. Role Confusion* that as teenagers move from childhood to maturity, they start to wonder "who" they are and what their place in the world is going to be. According to James Marcia's (1980) theory of identity and development, identifying oneself entails embracing one's sexual orientation, goals and values, and career opportunities. At the end of adolescence, after weighing their options, the young person must decide what they want to believe and become. The intricate process of forming an identity depends on social contact with peers, family, and the community.

Students in orphanages experience a tremendous impact on their identity development due to social isolation. Adolescents are more likely to raise and resolve identity issues than other adolescents if they have solidified mastery of formal operational thought, think in abstract and complex ways, are self-directed, and actively seek out pertinent information when making decisions (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000). Young adults who are orphaned may encounter difficulties being independent, self-sufficient, and forming mature relationships. Their identity development and emotional health can be greatly impacted by the social support they receive from friends, mentors, and community resources.

Ashiq and his colleagues conducted research. The objective was to compare orphans with mainstream teenagers in relation to identity and emotional behavior problems. A cross-sectional survey was carried out in four government schools and four orphanages in Lahore. Two hundred (200) people aged between 13 and 18 years were recruited, consisting of 100 orphans and a similar number of other teenage boys and girls from ordinary families. The findings revealed that mainstream adolescents had higher scores on positive identity whereas orphan adolescents had more negative and conceited identities. It was established that inhabitants of orphanages experienced high levels of emotional-behavioral problems besides having less sense of self.

Suri et al., (2023) conducted a study. The aim of this research was to find out how the adolescents from one of the orphanages perceive themselves and how much they accept themselves. The problem is teenagers in orphanages because their self-esteem affect the way they look at themselves. To address this, the study refers to Fitts' theory of self-concept and Sheerer's notion of self-acceptance. A data collection instrument that used Likert scale was employed, which was later analyzed quantitatively. The findings indicate that there exists a strong positive relationship between self-acceptance and self-concept.

Proscovia Nabunya conducted the study in 2023. People's well-being depends on their social support systems, especially during critical social transitions and crises. A total of 38 orphaned adolescents between the ages of 14 and 19. The results show that orphaned adolescents perceive support as helpful in dealing with other issues and giving and receiving support. According to the report, social support should be included in programs for orphaned youth groups.

In 2022, Irfan Ullah conducted qualitative research. The experiences and views of orphaned children living in an orphanage in Malakand district were the main focus of the study. Ten respondents aged between 5 and 12 years were selected. The study highlighted many challenges faced by orphaned children, including prejudice, social discrimination, stigma, food insecurity, exploitation, sexual abuse, adverse health outcomes and the study also suggested measures to address these problems and enhance the welfare of the orphanage.

Buensalida, (2000). This study used life history methods, journal exercises, and in-depth interviews to design research on identity formation in adolescent orphans. There were six individuals from orphanage two residences, case and case studies were used to analyze the data. Stressful circumstances prior to orphanage entry, adoption status, initial entry, experiences within the orphanage, and moving were all considered as contexts five needs. Their personalities revealed seven patterns: responsible parent, hateful people, people with opposite traits, their biological parents absent, classmates, people they knew well; The state of compassion and caring and the instability of relationships were two major factors that influenced identity formation. All things considered, the study provides insightful information about the struggles and experiences of adolescent orphans.

Anmol Shekhar Srivastava conducted a new study in 2022. Nursing has a profound effect on a child's developmental age; They feel helpless, lonely and insecure. When one or both parents die, one can face risks in terms of physical and

mental health, emotional pain and anxiety about the future. A child's development is highly dependent on the emotional, financial, and developmental support of caregivers, but the death of a parent can have long-term negative effects on their academic achievement. Given a high percentage of abandonment, economic hardship, and instability aside, this article defines the meaning of the term "orphan," examines the psychology of orphanhood, and explores the psychological consequences of loss.

Review of Paula Mayock (2023). Many view homelessness as a permanent state of struggle to cope with their lives and destiny. Nevertheless, a growing body of writing has produced a more complex view of the treatment of youth homelessness. Cross-sectional identity formation, which is heavily influenced by living on the streets and in shelters, has been the subject of most research. The relationship between identity and social stability has not been thoroughly examined in the literature on youth homelessness. Based on a six-year longitudinal study of life, explore the journey of identifying young people experiencing homelessness in Dublin, Ireland in this work. Themes of fracture, trust breakdown and self-reconstruction guide the organization of the analysis. In addition, the study looks at young people's experiences of entering and exiting homelessness and the issue of notions of ontological security. The study discusses implications for policy and highlights the value of understanding the identity profiles of young people experiencing homelessness through long-term social narratives.

A 2023 study by Victor Vedasto and his co-authors aimed to assess the psychosocial challenges of orphan's settlements in Tanzania. Abraham Maslow's theory of motivation was used. Four orphanages located in three blocks of Dar es Salaam district were sites of in-depth interviews. According to the study, orphaned children had to deal with various social problems such as lack of basic needs, lack of educational facilities, lack of sports facilities, adequate health facilities and psychologically, caretakers their being physically abused, bullied, isolated, isolated and not dealt with. These challenges illustrate the incompetence of caregivers in providing psychosocial support to orphaned children. Studies have shown that due to lack of funding and untrained staff, orphanages are not conducive to the psychological well-being of orphans. Rather than relying solely on institutional care, the study shows that the government formulates intervention policies and regulations to ensure the welfare of orphaned children.

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## 2. Materials and Method

### 2.1. Research Design

A Quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity processing styles among students living in orphanages. Inferential statistical techniques of correlation will be employed.

### 2.2. Statement of the problem

To understand the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages and study will be helpful in understanding if there lies a relationship between social Isolation and various Identity Processing Styles including Normative style, Diffuse-avoidant style and Informational style among students residing in Orphanages. The study will also help us to see if there is any impact of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages.

#### *Objectives of the study*

- To examine the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages.
- To study the relationship between Normative Identity Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages.
- To understand the relationship between Diffuse Avoidant Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages.
- To study the relationship between Informational Identity Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages.
- To study the influence of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages.

### 2.3. Hypotheses

- H01- There is no significant relationship between Social Isolation and Identity processing style among students living in Orphanages.
- H02- There is no significant relationship between Normative Identity Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages.

- H03- There is no significant relationship between Diffuse Avoidant Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages.
- H04- There is no significant relationship between Informational Identity Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages.
- H05- There is no significant influence of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages.

## 2.4. Operational Definition

### 2.4.1. Social Isolation

Social isolation pertains to a state in which an individual undergoes a dearth of social interaction, engagement, or connection with others.

### 2.4.2. Identity Processing style

The term " Identity Processing Style is a psychological construct that reflects an individual's approach to exploring, understanding, and integrating aspects of their identity, including values, beliefs, goals, and roles.

### 2.4.3. Variables

Social Isolation and Identity Processing style are the two variables of the study. Social Isolation is an Independent Variable and Identity Processing style is a dependent variable.

### Socio-Demographic Variables

The demographic variable used for the study was the age of the students residing in Orphanages.

## 2.5. Inclusion Criteria

- Students who are living in Orphanages.
- Minimum duration of 5 years in Orphanages
- Adolescents (10-18)
- Young Adults (19-26)

### Exclusion Criteria

- Students with history of trauma and abuse
- Students with Cognitive Impairment-Intellectual Disability
- Students with Severe Mental Health Problems
- Sample and Technique

A sample of 100 students have been taken for the study, the information has been collected through questionnaire in the form of pen and paper method. Convenient sampling is used in the research.

**Table 1** Classification of participants based on Gender

Sex	No. of Participants	Percentage %
Male	22	22%
Female	78	78%

## 2.6. Description of Tools

### 2.6.1. Social Isolation

It is a 15-item self-report scale that measures the degree of social isolation experienced by an individual. The scale was developed by Victor G. Cacioppo and William Patrick in 2002. The SIBS has good reliability and validity. The internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) is 0.91, indicating that the items on the scale are all measuring the same construct. The scale also has good test-retest reliability, with a correlation coefficient of 0.85. The SIBS has been shown to be a valid measure of social isolation in a variety of populations, including older adults, people with chronic diseases,

and people with mental health conditions. The scale has also been shown to be predictive of poor health outcomes, such as mortality, cardiovascular disease, and depression.

### 2.6.2. Identity Style Inventory

Identity styles were assessed with the Revised Identity Style Inventory (ISI-5) developed by Berzonsky et al. (2013). It is a 36- item scale, in this version, all items are worded in the present tense and refer to one's current identity processing style. Participants responded to the items on a 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me) Likert scale. The final three-factor solution, which accounted for 39% of the variance, consisted of a nine-item informational style (Cronbach alpha .77 and .74), a nine-item normative style (Cronbach alpha .75 and .79), a nine-item diffuse-avoidant style (Cronbach alpha .79 and .83), and a nine-item Strength of Commitment (Cronbach alpha .82 and .82).

### Procedure

To collect data for the study, Informed Consent letter was given to the Orphanage to seek permission for data collection. Social Isolation and Identity Processing style tools were given and responses were collected. Data was collected for the duration of 1 month. Following the data collection, analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistical Analysis.

### Statistical Technique

To study the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Style, the correlational analysis was used. And to see the impact of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style, regression analysis was used in SPSS.

### 2.6.3. Research ethics followed

The data collected will only be used for the research purpose with the consent of the participants and will not be shared or used for any other purpose. The consent of the participants were taken to fill the questionnaire.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The aim of the study was to understand the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Styles among students living in Orphanages. The study was conducted on 100 students. The analysis of the data is shown below.

**Table 2** Relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Style

Variable	M	SD	r	sig
Social Isolation	240.39	32.589	1	0.000
Identity processing style	109.18	15.101	0.994**	0.000

\*\*p<0.0

H01- There is no significant relationship between Social Isolation and Identity processing style among students living in Orphanages.

**Table 3** Relationship between Normative Identity Style and Social Isolation

Variable	M	SD	r	sig
Normative Identity Style	27.60	4.847	0.750**	
Social Isolation	240.39	32.589	1	0.000**

\*\*p<0.01

Table 2 presents the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Style. The mean for Social Isolation was found to be 240.39, with a standard deviation of 32.589. Similarly, the mean for Identity Processing Style was 109.18, with a standard deviation of 15.101. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Styles. The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.99 ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $\alpha = 0.00$ ). This indicates a highly significant relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Styles, where changes in one variable are strongly associated with changes in the other variables. Therefore, the null Hypothesis (H01) stating that there is no

significant relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages is rejected.

H02- There is no significant relationship between Normative Identity Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages.

Table 3 shows the relationship between Social Isolation and Normative Identity Processing Style. The mean for Social Isolation was found to be 240.39, with a standard deviation of 32.589. Similarly, the mean for Normative Identity Processing Style was 27.60, with a standard deviation of 4.847. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between Social Isolation and Normative Identity Processing Style. The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.75 ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $\alpha = 0.00$ ). This indicates a highly significant relationship between Social Isolation and Normative Identity Processing Style, where changes in one variable are strongly associated with changes in the other variables. Therefore, the null Hypothesis (H02) stating that there is no significant relationship between Social Isolation and Normative Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages is rejected.

**Table 4** Relationship between Diffuse-avoidant Identity Style and Social Isolation

Variable	M	SD	r	sig
Diffuse-avoidant Style	25.32	7.482	0.499**	
Social Isolation	240.39	32.589	1	0.000

\*\* $p < 0.01$

H03- There is no significant relationship between Diffuse Avoidant Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages.

Table 4 presents the relationship between Social Isolation and Diffuse-Avoidant Identity Processing Style. The mean for Social Isolation was found to be 240.39, with a standard deviation of 32.589. Similarly, the mean for Diffuse-Avoidant Identity Processing Style was 25.32, with a standard deviation of 7.482. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between Social Isolation and Diffuse-Avoidant Identity Processing Style. The analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.499 ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $\alpha = 0.00$ ). This indicates a moderately significant association between Social Isolation and Diffuse-Avoidant Identity Processing Style, indicating that variations in one variable are closely linked to changes in the other variable. Therefore, the null Hypothesis (H03) stating that there is no significant relationship between Social Isolation and Diffuse-Avoidant Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages is rejected.

**Table 5** Relationship between Informational Identity Style and Social Isolation

Variable	M	SD	r	sig
Informational Identity Style	28.95	5.935	0.675**	
Social Isolation	240.39	32.589	1	0.000

\*\* $p < 0.01$

H04- There is no significant relationship between Informational Identity Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages.

Table 5 shows the correlation between Informational Identity Processing Style and Social Isolation. From the table it is seen that mean for the Informational Identity Processing Style and Social Isolation is 28.95 and 240.39 respectively and the standard deviation for Informational Identity Processing Style and Social Isolation is 5.935 and 32.589 respectively. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between Social Isolation and Informational Identity Processing Style. The analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.675 ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $\alpha = 0.00$ ). This indicates a moderately significant association between Social Isolation and Informational Identity Processing Style, indicating that variations in one variable are closely linked to changes in the other variable. Hence the null Hypothesis (H04) which states that there is no significant relationship between Informational Identity Processing Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages is rejected.

**Table 6** Influence of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style

Variables	Regression weights	$\beta$ Beta Coefficient	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P value
Social Isolation	Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style	0.994	0.989	8677.277	0.000

H05- There is no significant influence of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages.

Table 6 shows the impact of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style. The table shows the dependent variable, Identity Processing Style was regressed on predicting variable Social Isolation to test the hypotheses H05. Social Isolation significantly predicted Identity Processing Style,  $F(1,98) = 8677.277$ ,  $P < 0.001$ , which indicates that the Social Isolation significantly influences Identity Processing Style ( $\beta = 0.994$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Moreover, The  $R^2 = 0.989$ , depicts that the model explains 98.9% of the Variance in Identity Processing Styles. Hence, the null hypotheses(H05) which states that there is no significant influence of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages in rejected.

The present study explores the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity processing styles among students living in the Orphanages. According to the results obtained, significant relationship exists between Social Isolation and Identity Processing styles among the students living in orphanage. Prior studies in various fields and population found concurrent results regarding the relationship between the variables (Patteswari Duraisamy et.al, Victor Vedasto et.al, Ridhoyanti Hidayah). A noteworthy finding of the present study is the significant relationships that existed between different identity Processing styles and Social Isolation. The significant relationship that existed between Social Isolation and different Identity processing styles i.e., Normative Identity processing style( $r=0.750$ ), Diffuse-avoidant identity processing style( $r=0.499$ ) and Informational Identity Processing Style( $r=0.675$ ).

Among the three identity processing styles, the strongest significant relationship existed between Normative Identity processing style and Social Isolation ( $\rho = 0.750$ ). Which means, children residing in orphanages and facing elevated degrees of social isolation could encounter challenges in developing a normative identity style, which is defined by conformity to established societal standards and expectations. Because there are unstable family and societal structures, which are known to aid in the creation of identity, people struggle to internalize and follow the norms and expectations of others during the identity building process. (Berzonsky, 2011; Smitset.al., 2008).

The study also tried to see the influence of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Styles among Students living in Orphanages and the results shows that there is a significant impact of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style with 98.9% of variance. According to Erik Erikson, James Marcia, Juith Rich Harris and Urie Bronfenbrenner, this can be understood that Since children living in orphanages lack the regular social connections and support networks that are generally found in family situations, social isolation has a substantial impact on how these pupils perceive their identities. These difficulties may be made worse by a lack of social comparison chances and possible stigmatization as a result of their orphanage status. As a result, students in orphanages could struggle to develop a healthy sense of self, make decisions about their identities, and effectively control their emotions. The importance of support networks and social contacts in forming identity development, especially for those who have been socially isolated as a result of circumstances like orphanhood (Pinquart et.al, (2004)).

#### 4. Summary

The research aims to study Social Isolation and Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages. The problem statement of the present study was, to understand the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing style among students living in Orphanages. A total of 100 samples were collected, consisting of males, females from two different Orphanages in Hyderabad. The hypothesis was as follows; H01- There is no significant relationship between Social Isolation and Identity processing style among students living in Orphanages. H02- There is no significant relationship between Normative Identity Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages. H03- There is no significant relationship between Diffuse Avoidant Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages. H04- There is no significant relationship between Informational Identity Style and Social Isolation among students living in Orphanages. H05- There is no significant influence of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Styles among students living in Orphanages. The data was collected and scored according to the manuals of both scales.

Statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) software was then used for data analysis. For finding the correlation, Pearson Correlation was used and for finding the impact of one variable on the other, Regression analysis was done.

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## 5. Conclusion

The study's goal was to investigate the relationship between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanage. A significant positive relationship was found between Social Isolation and Identity Processing Styles. This would mean that an increase in one variable causes an increase in another variable as well. A significant positive relationship was found between Social Isolation and different Identity Processing Styles, i.e., Normative, Diffuse-avoidant and Informational Identity processing. Among these styles there was a positive correlation between Social Isolation and Normative Identity Processing Style. Which indicates that the students living in Orphanages may face challenges while developing Normative Identity which involves various norms and expectations of others in the society due to lack of social and familial support. There was significant positive relationship was found between Informational Identity processing style and Social Isolation. Which indicates that individuals find it difficulty in actively seeking, processing, and utilizing identity-related information. This can include exploring different aspects of identity such as values, beliefs, goals, and roles. A significant positive relationship was found between Diffuse-avoidant Identity Processing Style and social Isolation among students living in Orphanage. Which means that individuals actively avoid engaging in identity exploration and commitment. Instead, they may exhibit a tendency to avoid thinking deeply about their identity or may feel overwhelmed by the complexity of identity-related issues. The results also showed that there is a significant influence of Social Isolation on Identity Processing Style among students living in Orphanages. Which means that social isolation significantly affects how children in orphanages view themselves since they do not have the consistent social networks and support systems that are often present in family settings.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

### *Statement of informed consent*

All the participants included in the study provided written informed consent prior to their participation in the study.

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