

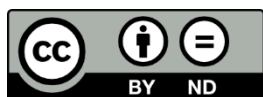
# Desocialization in and after the pandemic

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**Abstract**

Social isolation (desocialization) implies a complete or almost complete lack of contact between an individual and society. This can be a problem for people of any age, although the symptoms may differ depending on the age group. Social isolation can include staying home for long periods of time, and lack of face-to-face communication with family, acquaintances, friends, or co-workers. Social isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness, fear of others or negative self-esteem.

We cannot exist independently of our relationships with others. One's own humanity is reduced when others are treated without dignity and respect. At the same time, provoking harm to another person can also affect perceptions of oneself. It turns out that a person's humanity depends on the humanity of those around him.

### **Desocialization in and after the pandemic**

Social isolation (*desocialization*) implies a complete or almost complete lack of contact between an individual and society. This can be a problem for people of any age, although the symptoms may differ depending on the age group. (Khullar 2016) Social isolation can include staying home for long periods of time, and lack of face-to-face communication with family, acquaintances, friends, or co-workers. Social isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness, fear of others or negative self-esteem.

"The magnitude of risk associated with social isolation is comparable with that of cigarette smoking and other major biomedical and psychosocial risk factors. However, our understanding of how and why social isolation is risky for health – or conversely – how and why social ties and relationships are protective of health, still remains quite limited." (House 2001)

Social isolation can contribute to "poorer overall cognitive performance and poorer executive functioning, faster cognitive decline, more negative and depressive cognition, heightened sensitivity to social threats, and a self-protective confirmatory bias in social cognition." (Cacioppo and Hawkey 2009) Wilson et al. reported that social isolation increases cognitive decline and the risk of Alzheimer's disease, (Wilson et al. 2007) contributing to a vicious cycle in which the person becomes increasingly isolated.

Kanai et al. reported that loneliness was negatively correlated with the density of gray matter in an area involved in the perception of biological movement, mentalization, and social perception. (Kanai et al. 2012)

Juan Arnau Navarro says that one of the concepts discussed today is cosmopolitanism, a term invented by Diogenes, supported by Leibniz and Hume and criticized by Kant. (Navarro 2020) Psychologists in Spain call the symptoms developed by quarantine *cabaña*, a type of anxiety. Isolation has forced us to better assess our real needs and re-evaluate priorities. (Redacción MAPFRE 2020)

The word "*ubuntu*" in the Bantu language of South Africa literally means "I am because we are". It highlights the fact that we cannot exist independently of our relationships with others. (Bastian, Jetten, and Chen 2013) Our own humanity is reduced when others are treated us without dignity and respect. At the same time, according to Desmond Tutu, provoking harm to another person can also affect perceptions of oneself. (Tutu and Tutu 1999) It follows that a person's humanity depends on the humanity of those around him. And when people behave violently and aggressively, they tend to continue to behave more violently and aggressively in the future. (Martens et al. 2007)

Self-dehumanization arises from the recognition that one's actions have caused harm to others that cannot be justified. Bastian et al. argue that when people act in ways they perceive as immoral, it will affect the way they view their own humanity. (Bastian, Jetten, and Chen 2013) Concepts about morality and humanity are closely linked (Bastian et al. 2011) and dehumanization processes are usually rooted in moral judgments.

Social ostracism (social exclusion of an individual) can occur in the absence of challenge. (Williams 2007) Ostracization has negative consequences on the self: depletion of resources for self-regulation (Ciarocco, Sommer, and Baumeister 2001) and increased dissonance related to interpersonal relationships, (Zhou et al. 2009) leading to a convenient interpersonal transgression to explore the process of self-dehumanization.

Feeling human is a desirable and valuable resource; people thus tend to strengthen their humanity in order to protect themselves against existential threats. (Vaes, Heflick, and Goldenberg 2010)

In their study, Bastian et al. focused on three working hypotheses, of which, in the case of the pandemic, we are primarily interested in the perceived immorality of one's actions mediating

the relationship between ostracism and self-dehumanization, and the needs of social belonging. (Maner et al. 2007) Their prediction is that dehumanization will motivate prosocial behavior and self-sacrifice. Linking self-dehumanization with moral commitment suggests important relationships between dehumanization and self-centered emotions, such as guilt, shame, and embarrassment. (Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek 2007) These emotional responses may coincide, and even lead to self-dehumanization.

Jen Rushforth, in *Solitary Confinement - Social Death and Its Afterlives*, a review of Lisa Guenther's book, quote Guenther statement that

"To be socially dead is to be deprived of the network of social relations, particularly kinship relations, that would otherwise support, protect, and give meaning to one's precarious life as an individual. It is to be violently and permanently separated from one's kin, blocked from forming any meaningful relationship, not only to others in the present but also to the heritage of the past and the legacy of the future beyond one's own finite, individuated being." (Rushforth 2017) (Guenther 2013)

Regarding the isolation of detainees, Guenther notes that "deprived of meaningful human interaction, otherwise healthy prisoners become unhinged. They see things that do not exist. They do not see things that do." (Guenther 2013)

In a CIA textbook on sensory deprivation and isolation, the effects of isolation were listed as hallucinations, illusions, and, as mentioned directly in the CIA textbook, "an intense love of any other living thing." (Guenther 2013, 82) According to Maslow, people have a deep need for love and social belonging, and only then for safety and physiological needs. (Maslow 1943)

"The social death of prisoners in solitary confinement does not affect just the individual or the family or the local community; it affects all of us." (Guenther 2013, 253)

Massimo De Carolis, in *The threat of contagion*, (De Carolis 2020) states that the measures taken so far are disturbing, dissolve the social bond and impose a regime of loneliness and police control over the entire population, a strong reminder of the darkest experiences of our recent political past.

This leads to the destruction of the social bond and an obsessive control in the name of "public health", which certainly did not come from the coronavirus. " For at least a century, modern social mechanisms have tended to generate a society based on isolation, in which the spontaneity of social life is perceived as an obstacle or even as a threat to the stability of the system." (De Carolis 2020)

Against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in violence in society in general, and in the family in particular. (Deutsche Welle 2020) Violence is rampant against women as well as doctors, nurses and street vendors. (United Nations 2020b) Emergency calls increased by 25% during this period after social distancing measures were adopted. The European Parliament issued a press release calling on Member States to increase support for victims of domestic violence during the pandemic. (European Parliament 2020)

Quarantine and traffic restrictions continue to expose women to domestic violence, exacerbated by job losses and economic insecurity. Increased violence is also manifested in refugee camps, as is gender-based violence in public spaces. (United Nations 2020b)

At the same time, there has been a significant reduction in the spread of sexually transmitted infections in several countries, attributed to COVID-19 quarantines and social distancing measures. (NSW Government 2020) Common flu transmission rates also declined significantly during the pandemic. (Cowling et al. 2020)

De Carolis states that there is no social life that does not involve the risk of contagion, just as there is no organic life that does not involve the risk of illness and death. Thus, we will have to ask ourselves to what extent we are willing to put ourselves in danger, and risk our biological security” to have dinner with a friend, to embrace a child or simply to chat with the people hanging around in the square? Where do we place the bar when deciding that our social happiness has

precedence over safeguarding our health? Is political existence more important than biological survival?" (De Carolis 2020)

Thomas Hobbes introduced the concept of the *state of nature* (without government) in his 1651 book, *Leviathan*. (Hobbes 1651) Hobbes calls this situation the condition of simple nature," without a recognized authority: "no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society". (Hobbes 1651) (Bufacchi 2020) Everyone's right to everything invites a serious conflict, a competition for resources. The conflict will continue to be fueled by multiple disagreements, including moral ones. In such a case, the natural state will become a state of war, possibly a "war of all against all". (Lloyd and Sreedhar 2020) Whenever political stability falls apart, it can be replaced by anarchy.

"In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving." (Hobbes 1651)

We are not in a natural Hobbesian state, although at present there is no theater, no concerts, no trips and no sporting events. (Bufacchi 2020) But we are beginning to see initial manifestations of what Hobbes called the "war of all against all": countries competing aggressively on the world market for coronavirus protection equipment, for areas previously disputed but in which peace has recently spread, or strong rallies. "And which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." (Hobbes 1651)

COVID-19 instilled fear in all of us - the fear continues. But not everything is lost. The only way to survive is through social cooperation. But the state of nature is also a state of equality, in which we are all equally vulnerable. Thus, only through unity, teamwork and solidarity will we defeat this invisible enemy. (Bufacchi 2020)

For this, Vittorio Bufacchi proposes a new social contract, which will be the cornerstone of a new civil society, in *Coronavirus: it feels like we are sliding into a period of unrest, but political philosophy offers hope*. (Bufacchi 2020) Unprecedented sacrifice, trust and social

cooperation will be needed. Bufacchi believes that the biggest threat to social cooperation is the selfish actions of so-called "free-rider" passengers who benefit from cooperation without contributing anything to the common good.



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