

How Emotional Intelligence Can Mitigate Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Gen Z

As Generation Z becomes an increasingly significant part of the workforce, researchers are paying closer attention to how this generation experiences connection, isolation, and wellbeing at work.

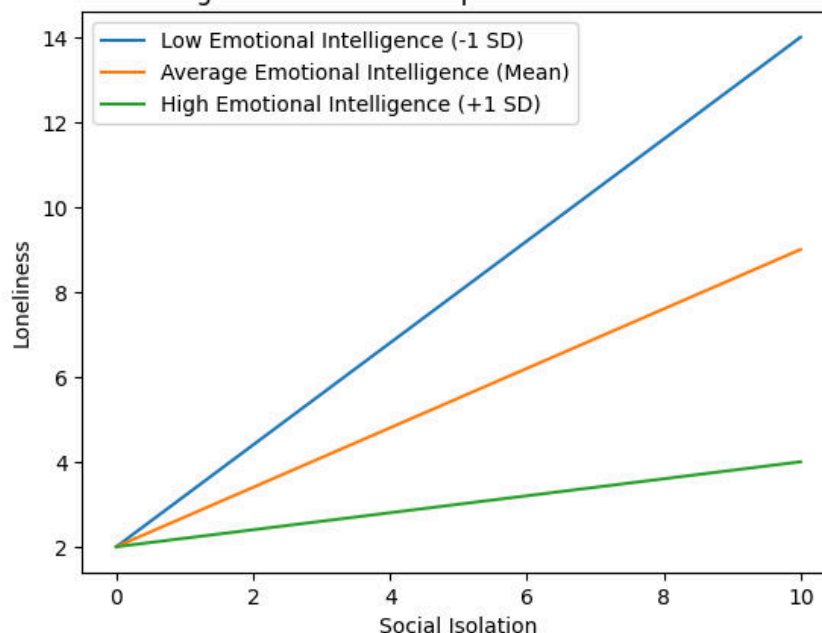
Rather than framing loneliness as a generational flaw, this study explored a more constructive question: **Can emotional intelligence act as a buffer against the negative effects of social isolation?**

The researchers surveyed 568 Gen Z employees and analysed the relationships between:

- Social isolation
- Loneliness
- Emotional intelligence
- Overall quality of life

Using well-established psychological measures, they tested whether EI changed the way isolation translated into loneliness and reduced wellbeing.

Emotional Intelligence Buffers the Impact of Social Isolation on Loneliness



Annamalai, S., Vasunandan, A., & Mehta, A. (2024). Social isolation and loneliness among Generation Z employees: can emotional intelligence help mitigate? *Cogent Business & Management*, 12(1), Article 2441474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2441474>

Key Insights

Emotional Intelligence Changes the Impact

Emotional intelligence did not eliminate social isolation. However, it weakened the link between isolation and loneliness. Gen Z employees with higher EI were better able to maintain their quality of life, even when socially isolated. Capability altered consequence.

Isolation and Loneliness Matter

Both isolation and loneliness were significant negative predictors of quality of life. However, the intensity of this impact depended on an individual's emotional intelligence. This suggests organisations may not be able to remove every contextual challenge, but they can strengthen people's capacity to navigate them.

Development Is a Practical Response

The authors note that elevated loneliness across a generation carries broader societal implications. They also acknowledge that growing up in a digitally connected environment may influence how emotional intelligence develops. Encouragingly, the findings suggest EI-based interventions can make a measurable difference.

What This Means for Leaders

Rather than asking how to eliminate isolation entirely, leaders might consider:

- How are we strengthening emotional awareness and regulation across our teams?
- Are we equipping people with the relational confidence to connect meaningfully?
- Do our cultures make open dialogue and emotional expression safe?

Emotional intelligence does not remove challenge. It builds resilience within it.

As workplaces continue to evolve, investing in EI may be one of the most constructive and human-centred strategies available as a foundation for sustainable wellbeing and performance.

Link to study: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2441474>