

# Social Isolation as a Mediating Factor Between Social Mockery and Learning Disabilities in Young Adults

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## ABSTRACT

Learning disability in young adults is becoming more prominent as a multifaceted consequence that is influenced not just by cognitive factors but also by social and emotional environments. There are various forms of learning disabilities, executive functioning, and working memory deficits that are widespread in college-age populations because these skills are essential for planning, organizing, processing information, maintaining focus, remembering directions, and handling academic demands. This study aims to investigate how social mockery experienced by young adults in educational and peer group settings can result to increased levels of social isolation, which in turn contributes to the increased chance of developing learning disability patterns, particularly related to executive functioning and working memory difficulties. Social mockery usually triggers feelings of embarrassment, an inferiority complex, fear of being judged and poor academic self-image. As a result, young adults begin to socially withdraw from classroom participation, peer learning environments, group discussions, and collaborative activities, leading to acute social isolation. This isolation reduces opportunities for cognitive stimulation, peer learning, academic engagement, and support-seeking behavior. The results may contribute to developing preventive interventions based on peer environment modification, stigma reduction, emotional support building, and inclusion-based academic approaches for young adults.

**Keywords:** Social mockery; Social isolation; Executive functioning; Working memory deficits; Learning disabilities; Young adults; Mediating effect; Peer rejection; Academic self-concept.

## INTRODUCTION

Young adults with learning difficulties have an array of problems that impact their social functioning, academic performance, and mental well-being. Growing research indicates that environmental and social factors have a major impact on how learning disabilities develop and appear, although learning disabilities have previously been studied from cognitive and neurological perspectives. Experiences of social insult, mockery, taunting, or demeaning because of one's learning difficulties are among these social factors that are becoming more gradually recognized as significantly adverse influences that can affect a young person's emotional and behavioral responses.

Social mockery can lead to long-term behaviors of discomfort, fear of being judgmental, and withdrawal from social and educational possibilities. The growth of social isolation is one of the significant effects of frequent ridicule. They eventually detach themselves from their peers to protect themselves from further humiliation. This withdrawal can gradually evolve into chronic isolation, where individuals limit communication, avoid group learning environments, and restrict meaningful social relationships. In many cases, social isolation plays a role of psychological protection, but it also leads to a various negative developmental outcome. The absence of supportive peer networks may increase stress, reduce self-esteem, and limit access to collaborative learning experiences that are essential for academic growth.

According to new research, social mocking may have a mediating effect on the severity on the awareness of learning and when isolation becomes prolonged, young adults are deprived of stimulating social experiences and academic support systems, which may further become an obstacle for the cognitive engagement and adaptive learning strategies. These dynamics creates a cycle in which mockery fuels isolation, and isolation enhances the functional impact of learning disabilities. It becomes important to understand the mediating role during the transitional stage of young adulthood, especially when social identity formation becomes a academic constrains.

Despite its importance, the relationship between social mockery, social isolation, and learning disabilities has received limited empirical attention. Many of the available studies address these ideas separately, without examining how they influence to shape of developmental outcomes. Therefore, this study will look for addressing the gap by exploring how social isolation mediates the association between experiences of social mockery and learning disabilities among young adults. By identifying this mediating mechanism, the research aims to contribute to the development of more holistic interventions that focus not only on cognitive skill-building but also on creating socially supportive environments. In order to reduce the stigma and encourage diverse learning experiences, the educators, counsellors, and policymakers should be informed about the need to address social dynamics within educational settings.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Background and Rationale**

This research is anchored in two major theoretical perspectives, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and the Social Stress Theory (Pearlin, 1981). This supports how negative social experiences influence cognitive and emotional development in young adults. According to the Social Learning Theory, individuals adopt behaviours, attitudes, and expectations through social interactions. When a young adult is experiencing social mockery, they often adopt negative self-perception and unfavorable behavioral responses displayed by peers. These learned patterns may gradually limit their confidence in academic settings; amplifying difficulties associated with learning disabilities.

Social Stress Theory further explains that severe negative social experiences—such as mockery, exclusion, and treating someone to be not important—can function as severe stressors. Eventually accumulation of these stressors may promote young adults to withdraw from peer groups as a protective strategy, resulting in social isolation. Isolation, in turn, reduces access to emotional support, academic collaboration, and compensatory skill-building experiences that could otherwise lessens the challenges linked to learning disabilities.

This study explains how and why, social mockery intensifies and social isolation becomes as a mediating mechanism, for the functional impact of learning disabilities in young adults. Even though we understand

that learning disabilities have neurodevelopmental problems, but their academic severity and emotional consequences are strongly influenced by social environments.

Therefore, socio-emotional pathways boost the learning consequences, recognizing the mediating role of isolation.

### **Propositions**

Based on these theoretical foundations, the following conceptual propositions are advanced:

Proposition 1:

Young adults who experience higher levels of social mockery will demonstrate increased social isolation, as mockery functions as a persistent social stressor that triggers withdrawal and avoidance behaviours.

Proposition 2:

Higher levels of social isolation will be associated with greater severity or functional impairment related to learning disabilities, due to reduced exposure to peer learning, emotional support, and academic engagement.

Proposition 3:

Social isolation acts as a mediator between social mockery and learning disabilities. Specifically, social mockery contributes to increased isolation, which then exacerbates the academic and cognitive difficulties experienced by young adults with learning disabilities.

### **BIASES AND INFLUENCING FACTORS**

Recognizing various mediating role of social isolation between social mockery and learning disabilities requires several biases and contextual influences that shape this pathway. Individual differences in temperament, rejection sensitivity, and self-esteem can intensify reactions to mockery; while pre-existing cognitive vulnerabilities may heighten feelings of inadequacy and withdrawal. Cultural norms that tolerate sarcasm or ridicule can cause individuals to internalize negative experiences, especially when social support is limited. Digital environments may amplify mockery through public and persistent online interactions, increasing perceived social threat.

Academic environments that lack peer support structure and adapt to competing and teasing which further encourage isolation. A student's personal approach of coping may be avoidant or adaptive—also impacts whether a student withdraws or seeks help. Psychological factors such as stress, anxiety, and depression heighten sensitivity to social threat, while the developmental demands of young adulthood make individuals more vulnerable to peer evaluation. Finally, research using self-report measures may be affected by memory distortions, social desirability, or underreporting, all of which influence how mockery, isolation, and learning difficulties are expressed and documented.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY**

Hypotheses Derived from Literature-Based on a comprehensive review of existing psychological and educational research, this study proposes that social mockery is not merely a negative interpersonal experience but a significant predictor of young adults' academic and cognitive functioning. It is hypothesized that:

H1: Higher exposure to social mockery is associated with increased social isolation among young adults.

H2: Social isolation mediates the relationship between social mockery and learning disabilities, particularly deficits in working memory and executive functioning.

## Methodology and Analysis

As a conceptual research paper, this study employs a systematic, multi-stage theoretical analysis rather than empirical data collection. The methodology consists of three phases executed in sequence:

1. **Literature Review:** A thorough search of scholarly databases such as Google Scholar, Psych INFO, and PubMed was conducted using keywords including social mockery, peer aggression, social isolation, working memory, executive functioning, and learning disabilities. Over 60 relevant studies were analyzed to understand existing theoretical and empirical associations among the constructs.
2. **Reflective Analysis:** Findings from classical and contemporary research were synthesized to examine how social mockery contributes to emotional withdrawal, how isolation affects cognitive systems, and how learning disability are similar to or even become worse by this process.
3. **Model Integration:** The variables were organized into a structured conceptual sequence: Social Mockery was the antecedent, Social Isolation is the Mediating Process, and Outcome Learning Disabilities, particularly working memory and executive functioning deficits.

This integration creates a theoretical framework that can guide further empirical research.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FINDINGS

The review of literature consistently highlights that social interactions play a major role in shaping emotional and cognitive functioning in young adults. Foundational researchers such as Baumeister and Leary (1995) emphasize the essential human need for belonging, noting that social exclusion—including mockery—can disrupt emotional stability and academic engagement. Studies on interpersonal aggression further show that subtle ridicule or teasing undermines self-esteem and increases stress, thereby interfering with learning processes. This body of work supports the premise that social mockery is not merely harmless humor but a significant contributor to emotional strain and cognitive disruption.

Research also demonstrates that experiences of ridicule often lead to withdrawal from social settings, reinforcing patterns of avoidance. Cacioppo and Hawkley (2009) note that persistent social disconnection produces physiological and psychological effects that drain cognitive resources. Young adults who experience mockery frequently retreat from peer interactions, reducing opportunities for collaboration and academic participation.

This withdrawal is used as a initial coping mechanism, eventually into severe and long-term social isolation, which further causes into emotional and cognitive challenges. The research shows that social isolation has measurable effects on cognitive functions. Isolated individuals show deficits in working memory, concentration, and executive control due to heightened stress and reduced cognitive stimulation (Baddeley, 2003). These impairments resemble patterns found in learning disabilities, particularly in domains involving attention regulation, task planning, and cognitive flexibility. Thus, social isolation acts as a pathway through which mockery contributes to academic difficulties, worsening or mimicking symptoms of learning disabilities in young adults.

### The Mediating Role of Social Isolation

While isolation is often viewed as an outcome, this model positions it as a dynamic mediator linking social mockery to learning disabilities. Classic belongingness theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and cognitive load models propose that emotional strain from exclusion depletes cognitive resources required for academic tasks. When individuals feel isolated, they experience increased stress, diminished motivation, and reduced engagement, all of which directly affect cognitive performance. This strain contributes to

functional difficulties in learning, such as poor organization, reduced working memory efficiency, and weakened executive functioning.

### **SOCIAL PAIN OVERLAP THEORY (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004)**

This theory proposes that social pain—such as rejection, exclusion, or mockery—activates the same neural systems as physical pain, particularly the anterior cingulate cortex. Social mockery therefore, produces genuine psychological pain, elevating stress and reducing cognitive resources. This pain response increases vulnerability to social withdrawal, making social isolation more likely. Over time, the cognitive load associated with social pain may impair working memory and executive functioning, which are essential for learning.

### **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Preventive Social–Emotional Training Programs Educational institutions must move beyond generic anti-bullying initiatives and adopt targeted Social–Emotional Competency Training (SECT) to help young adults cope with social mockery and reduce vulnerability to isolation. Programs that enhance self-esteem, emotion regulation, assertive communication, and peer sensitivity can decrease the psychological impact of ridicule.

Training students to recognize harmful mockery and respond adaptively may reduce the transition from social discomfort to chronic isolation, lowering the risk of cognitive difficulties. Such interventions align with evidence indicating that supportive peer skills weaken the effects of exclusion (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cacioppo & Hawley, 2009).

2. Institutional Policy Enhancements and Supportive Peer Climate Colleges and universities should create structured policies that discourage ridicule, promote inclusive communication, and establish safe reporting channels for interpersonal aggression.

Academic environments that lack peer-support structures often escalate the negative effects of mockery, pushing vulnerable students toward withdrawal. Policies must emphasize psychological safety, collaborative learning environments, and peer mentoring systems, as supportive social climates have been shown to buffer against cognitive disruption caused by stress and exclusion (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bandura, 1977).

3. Cognitive and Social Risk Screening Protocols-Routine assessment of students for social isolation risk, peer victimization, and cognitive difficulties—particularly working memory and executive functioning—can help identify those at early stages of withdrawal. Screening tools for relational aggression, social connectedness, and executive functioning should be integrated into student support services. Early identification is essential, as prolonged isolation has been linked to significant impairments in attention, cognitive flexibility, and self-regulation (Baddeley, 2003; Barkley, 2012). Monitoring these indicators allows institutions to implement timely interventions before isolation develops into chronic academic difficulty.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

This conceptual paper sought to illuminate the interconnected relationships between social mockery, social isolation, and learning disabilities in young adults. By framing the issue as a process of progressive socio-cognitive disruption, the focus shifts from viewing learning difficulties solely as individual deficits to understanding how negative social environments contribute to cognitive strain over time. When young

adults experience persistent mockery, emotional distress accumulates and often leads to social withdrawal. This withdrawal gradually intensifies into social isolation, which restricts access to supportive interactions and contributes to impairments in working memory and executive functioning—key components of academic learning and performance.

The significance of the proposed model lies in its practical applicability. It suggests that reducing mockery and building supportive peer environments may prevent the emergence of isolation related cognitive difficulties. Similarly, strengthening social connectedness—through peer mentoring, inclusive teaching practices, and mental health support—isolation-related—can buffer the negative effects of mockery and help preserve cognitive and emotional resources essential for learning. It is this reinforcement of social belonging and psychological safety that ultimately maintains academic functioning and prevents the escalation of learning challenges. Future research should aim to empirically test the mediating role of social isolation through longitudinal and structural equation modeling approaches. Such studies are essential for validating the proposed pathways and informing intervention strategies that target both social dynamics and cognitive outcomes among young adults.

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