Author’s response to reviews

Title: Loneliness and social isolation causal association with health-related lifestyle risk in older adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis protocol

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Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewer1 comments and author response

4-5: "… loneliness and SI affect …" (S/V agreement)
Author: revised

5-8: "However, there has not been … behaviours." Revise for clarity.
Author: revised

12: "quantitative [observational] studies"
Author: revised

15-16: "Data will be extracted and assessed for quality" Technically, it's not the data that is being appraised, but the included studies themselves. Also, favour the term "critical appraisal" or "risk of bias assessment."
Author: revised

19: "… [risk of] bias …"
Author: revised

21 -22: "Finally, any associations identified will be analysed using the Bradford-Hill criteria to explore causal relationships which, if any exist, will be reported using a computed causations score."
Author: revised
55: "Evidence of their adverse impacts on mental health is particularly strong, including outcomes such as …"

Author: revised

59-60: "… a link …" Specify: causation or statistical association?

Author: revised

72: "… ill health effects …" replace with "… adverse health impact …"

Author: revised

79-81: "Secondly … effects" Can you site to evidence for this claim?

Author: Included citations

104: "lon[e]liness" (typo)

Author: revised

110: "Review literature" should this not be "Literature review" or "Review of the literature"?

Author: To establish need for this review this section is focused on a summary review of the related 'Review literature' rather than the primary studies themselves hence the title

129: "… the extent of loneliness and/or SI association on …" Revise for clarity.

Author: revised

132: "association or causal relationship" Technically, a causal relationship is a form of association; maybe "causal relationship or other form of association"?

Author: revised

144: "… any observational study …" I presume you have excluded interventional studies because none exist? If so, please state this.

Author: revised to include such studies should they exist but not aware of any.

176-177: "… that do not report empirical associations …" The way this is phrased, it sounds like you are excluding any negative studies (i.e., studies that look for but don't find an association). Rephrase to clarify that you're only excluding studies that don't discuss/explore/otherwise examine relationships between your core concepts.

Author: revised
190-192: "… grey literature …" I think you could expand this beyond just grey literature found in the databases. For more detail on how to conduct and document a grey literature search please see: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4619264/

Author: amended to include additional searching of relevant websites and contacting key experts for further grey literature

306: "... associations and potential causal relationships between loneliness/SI and health-related behaviours …"

Author: revised

308: Among strengths, I'd also mention the diligent use of standard analysis and reporting instruments wherever possible (PRISMA, MOOSE, NOS, etc.)

Author: revised

310-311: "Additionally, reporting will be structured and comprehensive, including critical appraisal, narrative synthesis and, if appropriate, meta-analysis."

Author: revised

313-316: I think this could be written more persuasively to underscore the importance of this review.

Author: revised

Associate Editor comments:

Please reconsider the selection process of studies. You plan to only screen 20% of all abstracts and fulltext articles dually. I highly recommend to screen all abstract and fulltexts dually, as this will improve the quality of your systematic review.

Author response: Secondary reviewers will screen all abstracts/full texts