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Bachelor`s of social services
Thesis, 2020

LONELINESS AND ISOLATION AMONG THE SENIOR CITIZENS IN THE HELSINKI AREA DURING COVID-19

ABSTRACT

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38 and attachments 0

Published (November,2020)

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Bachelor`s degree programme in social services

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This study targets raising awareness about loneliness and isolation amongst the senior citizens aged 60 to 90 living alone and in senior homes in the Helsinki area during Covid-19 and while trying to discover methods and approaches through the personnel and caretakers.

The method used in this study is qualitative research in which records, data are collected through conducting a semi-structured interview. The interviewees are recruited by keeping in close contact with the participants and sending the interview questions beforehand so that the interviewees can familiarize themselves with the questions.

Interview questions are carried out in the Finnish language and later translated into English. In the data analysis, thematic codes theory used to assess, analyse, and break down data into thematic codes by placing the principles into categories while comparing the meaning and the relationship relating to the research questions.

The working life partner works with senior citizens with an immigrant background, and two professionals at the facilities participated in the study giving their experiences, approaches and methods used during Covid-19 thus contributing to the three key concepts of the research questions.

The study found that it is evident loneliness and isolation have affected the senior citizens more than ever in 2020 than in previous years because of COVID-19. Through the caregivers, new approaches in social work developed in order to provide services for the senior citizens during COVID-19.

Keywords: Loneliness and social isolation, Senior citizens, Covid-19

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1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis was to find out how loneliness and isolation are affecting the senior citizen in the Helsinki area during Covid-19. Loneliness and isolation, an important topic, especially for the seniors who have just retired. Lonely seniors are seen everywhere - on the metro, parks, and also at home with family members. The outbreak of the virus has caused people around the world of all ages to isolation marking the situation of loneliness and isolation very critical among the senior citizens. Helsinki is a vibrant and busy place, but due to Covid-19, it has become a ghost city in the spring of 2020, the government added movement restrictions and social distancing. The restriction measures keep on changing in the Autumn of 2020 the use of masks is suggested to control the spread of Covid-19. This thesis will focus on the consequences and challenges of loneliness and isolation, focusing on the Covid-19 situation since there is a restriction of movement and social activities. Dr. Hans Henri P. Kluge, who is the WHO Regional Director for Europe, argues that the amount of laboratory-confirmed cases reported across the Region has doubled to 464.859 cases.

In the spring of 2020, Europe along with North America were the most affected of the COVID-19. In many countries, especially inside the Western, a section of the Region is now experiencing vast community transmission. Italy- with over 105.792 notable instances and Spain with 94.417 cases- has far surpassed China. France and Germany even have a good-sized number of mentioned instances at 67.366 and 52.128, respectively, with other nations shut behind. Senior citizens are at a notably expanded chance of severe disorder following infection from COVID-19.

According to Dr. Hans (2020) a vital remark for the European Region: of the pinnacle 30 countries with the most significant share of older people, all but one (Japan) are our Member States in Europe. The nations most affected via the pandemic are amongst them Europe with 4.893.614 cases of COVID-19 and 226.524 deaths recorded in September. There has been an increase in cases among older age groups, 50-64 and 65-79 years in the first week of September 2020 (Dr. Hans Henri p. Kluge 2020).

Social Work and Community Development Work play an essential position to recognize social problems in a one of a kind spectrum. Social work aims at maintaining

human well-being and human needs enabling people to achieve personal and social well-being to achieve social justice through social development and change in the community. In order to raise awareness and to understand loneliness and isolation among the senior citizens in a social work context during COVID-19 in the Helsinki area and how the employees are dealing with the situation, the research questions below were formulated

1. How are loneliness and isolation affecting the elderly during COVID-19?
2. What are the methods used by social work professionals to prevent loneliness and isolation during Covid-19?

2 BACKGROUND

Victor (2009) argues that across the life course, social inclusion and social exclusion have been described in phrases to get an entry in social engagement and participation. These consist of getting admission to social relationships through family and friendship networks; get entry to cultural things to do (e.g., bingo halls and cinemas); access to civic things to do (e.g., membership of neighborhood religious, voluntary or leisure-based organizations); access nearby to services, and get entry to economic resources. In an attempt to address ageism, this policy rhetoric has started to highlight the significance of enabling older humans (and younger people) to have significant social roles and to take part more broadly in society (Victor, C. at al 2009).

Through greater social engagement, older residents will increase social capital for themselves, their households and their communities. While we do no longer share all the tenets of the social inclusion/ exclusion coverage discourse that engages the attention of national and neighborhood government, many of these ideas furnish a useful organizing framework and policy context for the cloth included within this book. However, 'loneliness' and 'social isolation' inside the broadest context of social engagement and social relationships remain our focus.

The work investigating 'social capital' is every other illustration of the giant physique of empirical and theoretical work which, while more obviously focusing upon social engagement, provides a partial standpoint solely upon the social world of older human beings (and indeed other age groups). The discipline of lookup investigating the definition and measurement of 'social capital' is vast, and there is a full distinction to be drawn between the monetary and sociological approaches (Victor, C. at al 2009).

According to the CDC, Social isolation changed related to approximately 50% in keeping with a cent expanded hazard of dementia. Poor social relationships (characterized via way of means of social isolation or loneliness) become related to a 29% developed hazard of coronary heart disorder and a 32% expanded threat of stroke. Loneliness becomes related to better charges of depression, anxiety, and suicide. Loneliness amongst coronary heart failure sufferers become related to most instances expanded hazard of dying, 68% raised risk of hospitalization, and 57% developed threat of emergency branch visits (CDC 2020).

According to Uotila and Matilainen, when relating to loneliness, due to the fact an individual might also experience poor emotions of loneliness when alone, however, this is not constantly the case (Uotila 2011, p.20–21, Kehalinna Suvi, Matilainen Sini 2012)

Before COVID-19, senior citizens actively participated in social activities and those that could not, the service providers encourage them to take part in social activities by providing transport for easy accessibility such as social activity centers, churches and social events. The seniors living alone home service workers may be the only people they interact with and with no family members visits are essential. However, due to the lock down and social distancing, most of the social activities and activity centers are not available, thus increasing loneliness and social isolation among seniors causing stress, anxiety, and depression.

The studies including this one that tackles the subject of loneliness and isolation agree on the risk factors that are linked to low physical and mental health status such as blood pressure, heart diseases, Alzheimer, obesity, and anxiety. In concentrating on the prevention measures on the spread of COVID-19, the negative outcome can impact the health and well-being of the senior citizen.

2.1 Work-life partner

The working life partner was an activity centre which is a meeting place for older people they offer group activities for those over the age of 50. Their aim is to prevent the challenges of aging that is to say loneliness and isolation and to promote inclusion and overall well-being of older people in the Helsinki area. They also offer individual guidance and counselling services to older people.

The researcher cannot mention the organisations' names because of the ethical reasons and the protection of the organisation data according to the data protection regulation, “A trade union may process the data of its own trade associations only. Processing of personal data is permitted if it concerns the data of the current or former members of these associations or people who have regular contacts with the associations linked to the purpose of these associations. According to the GDPR (2016), it is also required personal data not to be disclosed to a third party without the consent of the data subject

and that the processing concerns data to the processing of which the data subject has specifically consented” (General Data Protection Regulation 27 April 2016) therefore the researcher will not be able to leave any information, references that links to the organisation.

The work-life partner also promotes the visibility of senior citizens in services that promote well-being and health care they provide training for social and health care organizations and work for communities in old age services for the seniors. The training focuses in particular on professionals in welfare and health promotion services, service sector staff, students, and, organizations. Since the work-life partner is an NGO, they are open to volunteer of different ages and backgrounds.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW AND KEY CONCEPTS 1

The literature review shows what other people, scholars, and researchers have found on this topic. Many studies have been made on the topic of loneliness and isolation among the elderly and people in general such as the national institute on aging researched social isolation, loneliness in senior citizens, pose health risks. According to the NIH study, suggests that Social isolation and loneliness are not always associated with one another. About 28 per cent of the elderly in America, or 13.8 million people, stay alone, the report by the Administration for Community Living's Administration on Aging of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Still, many of them are not lonely or socially isolated. At the same time, some people feel lonely despite being surrounded by family and friends (NIH April 23, 2019).

It is not easy to determine or measure loneliness and isolation, what we may consider being lonely might not be the reason for other people. There has been research and studies that have attempted to tackle the topic of loneliness and isolation among the senior citizen, for example, An article by Fakoya published by BMC public health states that "Many interventions have been developed to combat loneliness and social isolation among older people. The individuality of the experience of loneliness and isolation may cause difficulty in the delivery of standardized interventions. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing loneliness or social isolation, and hence the need to tailor interventions to suit the needs of individuals, specific groups or the degree of loneliness experienced (Fakoya et al. 2020)". Since the outbreak of the virus (Covid-19), research and studies are looking for socially work approach methods, the UNICEF urge the social workers, policymakers, and people who use social work services to stay safe and healthy by publishing a guidebook for social work professionals (UNICEF 2020). This chapter will describe and define key concepts shortly.

Research made in Finland by Hanna Uotila (2011) to provide new knowledge about the interpretations, meanings, and explanations given to the subject of loneliness of senior citizens. The motive was to decide how senior citizens themselves describe and provide an explanation for their loneliness and, on the different hand, what sorts of

meanings and interpretations they give to loneliness. The research data was reasonably diverse, and there were three data units in which loneliness examined from a single point of view. Two of them were interviews, and the 1/3 consisted of texts written by older people. The first data set comprised interviews with women aged over 90 years, who had never been married, was childless and living alone (N = 24). The interviews targeted on the discussion about being alone.

The 2nd set interview material accumulated from the senior citizens who participated in the group exercise aimed at assuaging loneliness (15 women, five men). Members were aged over 75 years, and they lived independently alone in their residences or with a partner or a child. The texts of the older people who participated in the groups formed the third data set (N = 90) (Hanna Uotila 2011).

Hanna Uotila's research found that many meanings had linked with loneliness, and it was interpreted in distinctive methods relying on the contexts. Senior citizens, themselves explained that their loneliness was the result of diminished social relationships and weakening physical ability. Negative attitudes of society towards senior citizens as well as changes in identification and behaviour with age interpreted as the causes of loneliness. In the newspaper and journal texts, the reasons of loneliness defined with the aid of a lack of human relationship and meaning in life, neglect by loved ones as well as the low status of senior citizens in society. Loneliness was also absolutely described as an inevitable phase of ageing. Both in the interviews and texts written by the older people and the newspaper and journal texts, many negative connotations were attributed to loneliness. The senior citizens recognized loneliness with an eventfulness and with the journey of being an outsider. The lonely individual may also have experienced that he/she was unnecessary, useless and worthless after losing his/her place in the community, or more significant extensively in society. Loneliness developed as the trouble that reasons anxiety: loneliness is connected with depression, feelings of insecurity, and longing for earlier human relationships or unattainable dreams. Loneliness linked with experiences of worthlessness, being an outsider and isolation from other human beings and social activities (Hanna Uotila 2011).

Bevinn, Sarah J(2011) argue that loneliness is a multidimensional phenomenon that represents the extent to which an individual's perceived social network or social circle smaller and much less alluring than they desire (Jones, 1981; McWhirter, 1990; Nilsson, Lindstrom, & Naden, 2006, Bevinn, Sarah J. 2011). Consequently, loneliness represents an enormous contrast of an individual's suitable and preferred stage of

pleasure with their social neighbourhood and the potential discrepancy between these two (DiTommaso & Spinner, 1997, Bevinn, Sarah J. 2011). According to Bevinn, Sarah J. (2011) Researchers have recommended that experiences of loneliness characterized via using thoughts of sadness, boredom and, in some instances, isolation from the broader social place (Roberts & Quayle, 2001). This isolation, from the social world, can lead to decreased tiers of self -esteem (Bullock, 2001) and referred to difficulties in psychosocial adjustment (Rotenberg, Bartley, & Toivonen, 1997, Bevinn, Sarah J. 2011).

3.1 Loneliness and social isolation 2

Being lonely and loneliness is central to the human journey Loneliness is an emotional feeling of being alone, even though people around. Social isolation is a lack of a place socially or in the community. Social isolation is linked to loneliness in some people, while others can feel lonely without being socially isolated. Therefore, due to the fact loneliness is an inherent human condition, running on a cognitive and effective stage, most people experience loneliness at some time throughout the existence -span. Loneliness is a peculiar and multidimensional phenomenon that represents the extent to which an individual's perceived social community is either smaller or much less pleasurable than they desire (Bevinn,2011).

When talking about loneliness and social isolation among the senior citizens, the term senior citizen means an older person who has reached retirement, at what age do we become senior citizens? In most cases, aging is biological and psychological and a positive or negative attitude towards aging.

Routasalo states that loneliness, isolation and being alone can be one's desire or, on the different hand, brought about via the surroundings and conditions. Even though it is not easy to measure loneliness and social isolation, the proof there may be of adults in their 50's and older are socially isolated or lonely in ways that put their health at risk. Recent research discovered that: Social isolation extensively elevated a person's threat of premature loss of life from all causes, a danger which can rival those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity (Routasalo and Pitkälä 2005, p.20, Uotila 2011, p.20.).

When relating to loneliness, due to the fact an individual might also experience poor emotions of loneliness when alone, however, this is not constantly the case (Uotila

2011, p.20–21, Kehalinna Suvi, Matilainen Sini 2012) Psychological well-being generated through two dimensions which are the absence of depression and emotional loneliness; and presence of happiness, lifestyles satisfaction, a feeling of security, and plans for the future(Savikko,2008). An individual will be high in psychological well-being to the degree in which incredible outcomes predominate over the negative. On the other hand, when negative consequences are in a dominant position, the person will be low in well-being. That is to say, to obtain subjective wellbeing, pleasure usually predominates over the pain in one's lifestyles experiences (Seit-samo200, p.24-52). With age comes experiences in one's life most senior citizens that live alone and feel that they are lonely have gone through or experienced the loss of family members are sickness hindering them from socializing with Covid-19 at hand most senior citizens are an ability to socialize due to social distancing.

3.2 Senior citizens in Finland

Finland has the most senior citizen populations in Europe, and we are living in a historical era of four concurrent generations. It is impossible to define aging without categorizing it each person age differently. However, it could be that successful aging entails maintaining an optimal quality of life in the presence of biological, psychological, and social declines. In contrast, social aging is a change that happens in a person's role and relationship with social networks.

The population is rapidly aging as the Finnish people are living longer at the same time as the age of first-time mothers has risen and birth rates have declined. The baby boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1949, will pose a specific challenge to the service system despite the fact that they are likely to age with better health and functional ability than previous generations. The share of over-65-year-olds of the population will increase from the current 20 per cent to 26 per cent by 2030 and to 29 per cent by 2060 (Aging THL 7 Jul 2020).

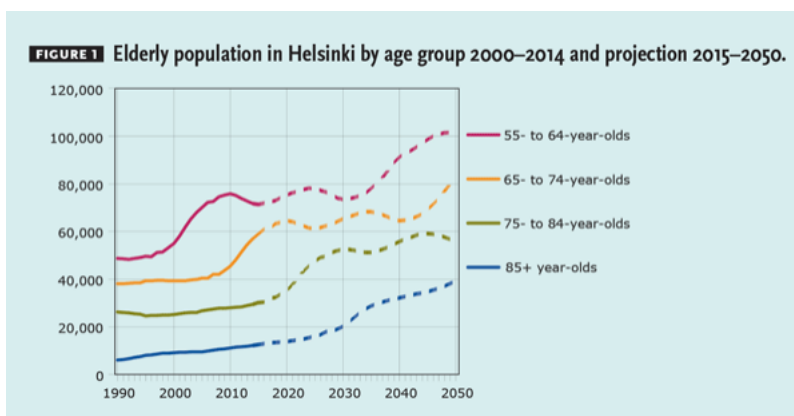
The share of 65+ year old in Helsinki remained higher than in Finland as a whole until the mid-1990s, but the proportion dropped as the city entered a period of rapid growth. The number of people aged 65 or over – and their share of the population –

began to increase rapidly in all parts of Finland in the early 2010s as the baby boom generation (those born between 1945 and 1950) entered retirement age.

During the current decade, the number of people aged 65 years or over has already increased in Helsinki by one third (25,000), which equals 40 per cent of the total population growth. The number of men and women belonging to this age group increased by over 50 per cent and 25 per cent respectively.

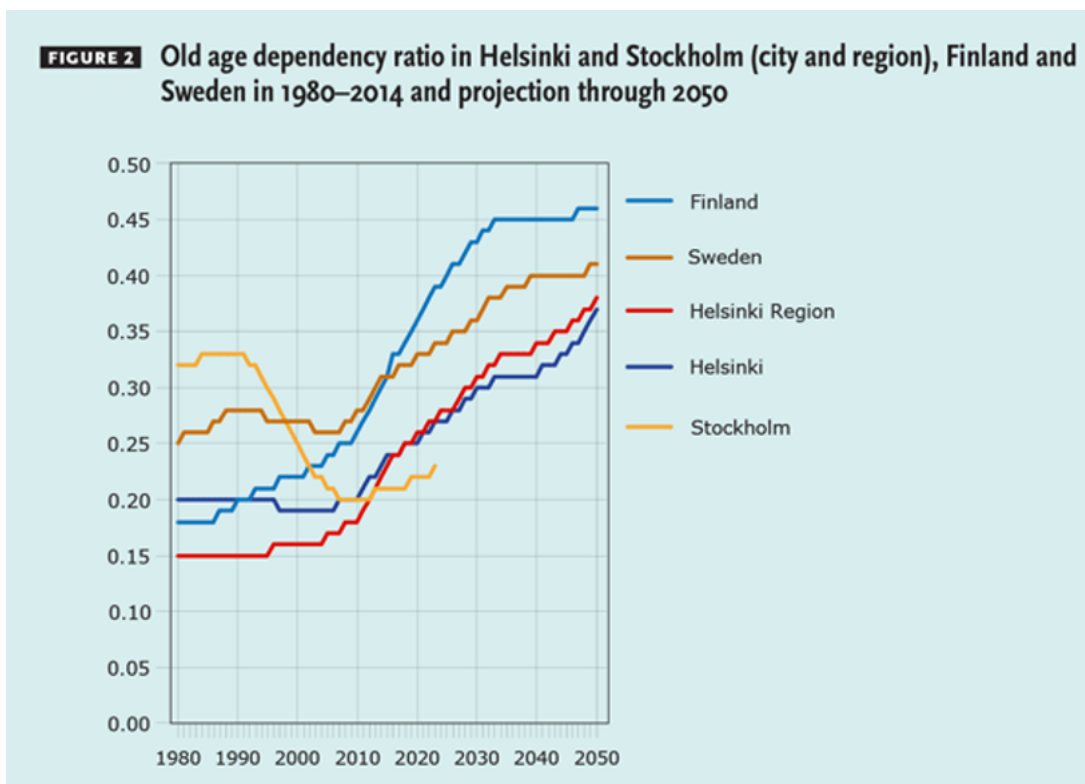
Finland, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, sets out the coverage concerning aging in its strategy, in legislation, the best recommendations, programs, and projects. The aging policy aims to promote older people's functional ability, independent living and active participation in society, subsequently reducing loneliness and isolation (Aging THL 7 Jul 2020).

Picture 1. Shows the senior citizens in Helsinki by the age group from 2000 to 2014 and the projection between 2015 and 2050. The picture shows the rise of 85 years-old from 1990 to 2050 then 75 to 84 years old decrease between 2040 and 2050 but the 65 to 74 years old increase. The seniors reaching retirement in the Helsinki area is high for example picture1. Shows 55 and 64 year old are high.



PICTURE 1. Senior citizen population in Helsinki by Pekka Vuori

In Picture 2 Pekka Vuori shows the comparison of seniors between Finland and Sweden. Finland holds a high rank of senior citizens than Sweden for example between the year 2040 to 2050 shows Finland a little bit is higher and in the capital area, they are on the same level.



PICTURE 2. Old age dependency ratio in Helsinki and Stockholm by Pekka Vuori

3.3 Covid-19

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus (the WHO 2020) Symptomatic transmission; By way of definition, asymptomatic COVID-19 case is a case who has developed symptoms and symptoms well-matched with COVID-19 virus infection. Symptomatic transmission is to transmission from an individual while they are experiencing symptoms. There is proof from data collected from published epidemiology and virologic research (Yasmin A. MALIK 2020).

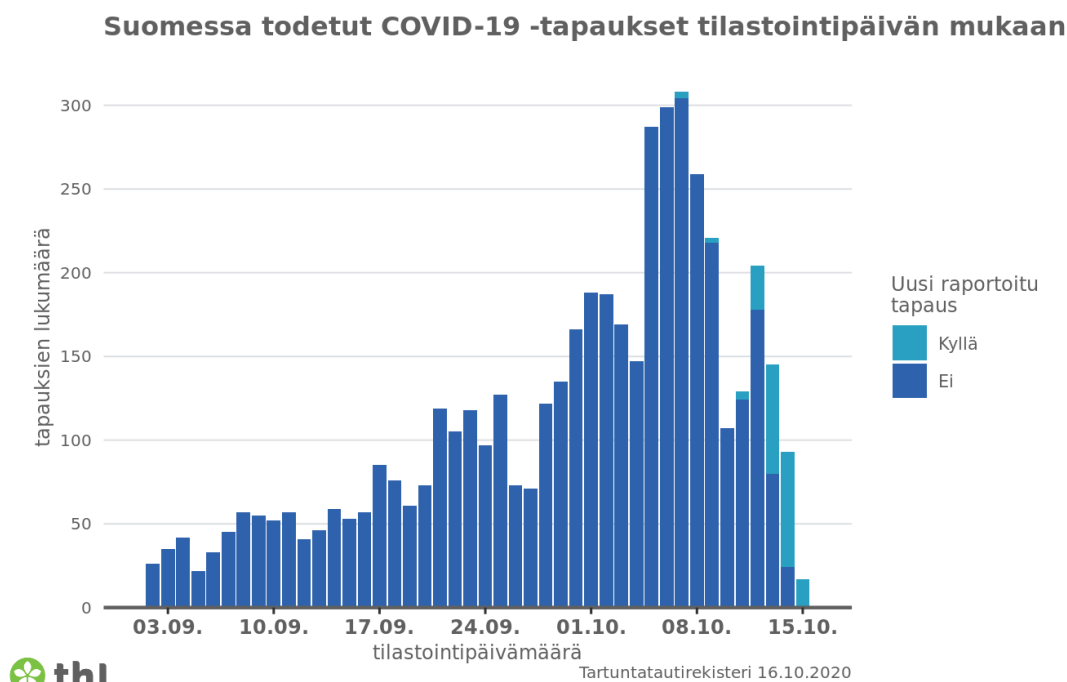
According to Yasmin, Covid-19 mainly transmitted from the symptomatic transmission. In most cases, people who are in close contact with others can contract the virus. Via respiratory droplets, by direct contact with contaminated people, or through contact with contaminated objects and surfaces, this is supported by distinctive experiences shared by using technical partners by the WHO global expert networks, reviews and shows by using Ministries of Health. Data from scientific and virologic studies that have accumulated repeated biological samples from proven patients provide proof that shedding of the COVID-19 virus is highest in the upper respiratory tract (nose and throat) early in the route of the disease. That is, within the first three days from onset

of symptoms. Preliminary facts suggest that people might also be extra contagious around the time of symptom onset as in contrast to later on in the disease (Yasmin A. MALIK 2020).

The W.H.O. defines Corona viruses as a large family of viruses which cause illness in mammals. In humans, several corona viruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered corona virus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries globally (The WHO 2020) During COVID-19, the healthcare system has changed thoroughly implementing virtual consultations and telemedicine (video-tools, telephone hot lines or online consultations, guaranteeing rapid access to health care. Additionally, assessment tools proposed for doing a telematics geriatric assessment. The senior citizens are finding it difficult to access healthcare services due to Covid-19 they are not familiar with virtual or digital tools.

The graph below presents the COVID-19 cases diagnosed in Finland as columns according to the statistical day. In the previous 24 hours, the distribution of cases reported to the Communicable Diseases Register for different statistical days is presented in a lighter color. The photograph updated on 16 October.

PICTURE 3 A graph presenting Covid-19 cases in Finland by THL from 16.10.2020



PICTURE 3 A graph presenting Covid-19 cases in Finland by THL from 16.10.2020

Approximately 9,100 people are estimated cured, or about 70 per cent of the cases of infection detected—the estimate on the monitoring of confirmed cases for three weeks (21 days). Healed persons for whom no other disease-related surveillance data are known on the infection detected after three weeks are defined as cured. Estimates are updated once a week on Wednesdays. The forecast has updated on 14 October.

4 METHODOLOGY

According to Pathak and Jena, qualitative as a methodology used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions (Pathak, Jena, & Kalra, 2013, p. 1). Qualitative research does not look for the causes or effects; instead, looks at meaning, perspectives, and motivations. In this qualitative study, interviews used as a method of data collection to examine, to understand and describe loneliness and isolation among the elderly during covid-19 in the Helsinki region.

A semi-structured interview used in this study for participants to open up more and give more information through their experiences in the work field without feeling pressured. In this kind of method, an interviewer prepares a list of questions but does not necessarily ask them all, or touch on them in any particular order, using them instead to guide the conversation. In some cases, the interviewer will prepare only a list of general topics on the subject to discuss. According to William Adams, the agenda for a semi-structured interview not always carved in stone. If dialogue turns from the first to the fourth topic, by using all means, reorder the subjects on the fly and return later to choose up the ones skipped. Nevertheless, when drafting the tentative question order, try to anticipate the most probably and smoothest sequence (William Adams 2015 p.9 and p. 498).

The target group interviewed in the study, are professionals at an activity center and have been working with the senior citizen for a long time. Due to the coronavirus, some of the interviews that are conducted in this study, are face to face interview with 2 employees from the activity center. The participants were able to experience and saw how loneliness and isolation among the senior citizens during covid-19 affected the senior citizens and how the social services and social activities and interactions changed.

The recruitment procedure of the participants for the interview was to give clear guidelines on how the meeting was going to be carried out while keeping in touch with the participants via the email and signed the consent forms. The participant's role and expertise were considered. The interviewer recorded the interview in order to be transcribed after wards and acquire the results using thematic code theory.

4.1 Procedure

At the beginning of the research, the interviewer wanted to interview four participants, but with the COVID-19 situation, it was not possible to get any interviews at the time. The researcher used a snowball sampling where the life work-partner referred the interviewer to a participant, and the participant referred to the colleague thus making the interview possible.

Snowball sampling is used to recruit research participants to tackle marginalized, criminalized or other stigmas. Exclusion from majority society or fear of exposure or of shaming makes it difficult to contact participants through usual means. However, the nature of many of these behavior's means that people engaging in them have contact with each other. Snowball sampling technique used to recruit participants for the qualitative interview in this case this study is conducted during Covid-19 outbreak which was difficult to get participants for the interview.

4.2 Data analysis

Thematic codes theory used to assess, analyze and break down data into thematic codes by placing the principles into categories while comparing the meaning and the relationship relating to the research questions. Cording as a method in this study was used in analyzing data got from a semi-structured interview. Coding is when a detailed revision of all the data collected during the interview, field notes, archival notes, and reflective notes.

According to Mary De Chesnay et al. define Coding as a process of early sense-making of the data; a component of data reduction, it may be thought of as a process annotating and disentangling a mass of data (Flick, 2009) or, as Madison (2012) de-scribed it, "the process of grouping together . . . categories that you have accumulated in the field (p. 43)" (Mary De Chesnay et all 2015 p.6).

Data generation, multiple source inputs of individually constructed data management:
Organizing, sorting, documenting

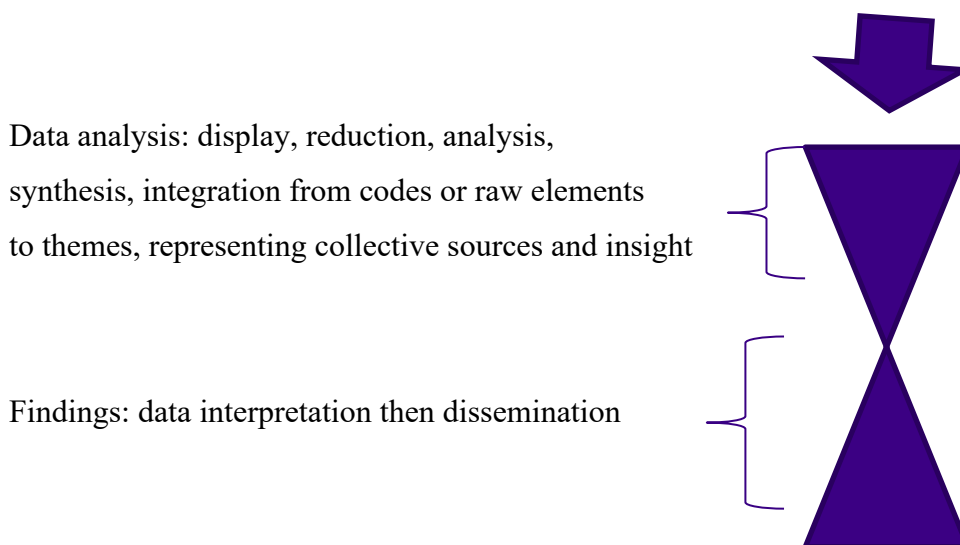


FIGURE 1. The basic form of coding (Mary De Chesnay et al 2015 p.6)

The main idea in coding is to shift from an original, untouched text to research concerns in small levels each level builds on the previous one. This shows the connection between the unprocessed text and the research main goals.” you have to see as far as your next step” (Auerbach, Carl F, Silverstein, Louise B 2003 p.35). Auerbach et al describes coding as a staircase moving from a lower level to a higher level to be exact the level of understanding (Auerbach 2003 p.35).

The researcher collected data by conducting a semi-structured interview and also recorded it. The researcher listened to the recorded interview many times through, data was sorted and then translated from Finnish to English then transcribed the researcher got 10 pages worth of data according to the key- concepts following Galletta and Anne thematic theory. They categorize thematic theory into three stages

- A. Breaking down the data into thematic codes
- B. Putting related codes into categories
- C. Exploring thematic relationship to the research questions

The themes got through thematic theory through the participants were written in quotes and defined answering the research questions of the thesis.

4.3 Validity and reliability

Close communication with the participants kept through email, and making the participants clarify their statements in the interview made the data more reliable. Probing for clarification makes the data accurate, for example, asking the participants to tell more tends to yield more results for data (Galletta, Anne 2012 p.82). Participants interviewed in this study are professionals in working with the elderly and people who have reached retirement and living alone they know all the services and the needs of service users marking the data reliable.

The literature research made on the topic of this study by different scholars helped in generating data. Information from search engines such as Google, libraries (Diakfinna) contributed to the sturdy.

Throughout this study, a lot of challenges were met due to corona virus; data collection was challenging. For instance, keeping safe distance measures (siting 5 ft apart) to collect data or conduct interviews, there were loud noises from the next room while recording and conducting the interview. In order to accumulate data, different means of carrying out the interviews (plan b, c and d) made formulating and interpreting interview questions in Finnish was challenging, participant and interviewer pronunciation and vocalizations and non-verbal communication, the use of irregular grammar made the transcription challenging.

There were a lot of interference of service users asking for the professionals, the professionals that answered the interview questions on paper, their handwriting was challenging to read. A lot of researchers are trying to study the corona virus phenomenon, when I began to carry out my study there was no research done on the topic therefore there was limited literature to dig deep on the topic.

5 ETHICS

In this study ethical guidelines for conducting research, interviews are followed. Before conducting the research, work cooperation agreements and research permits are applied for and approved by the work-life partner. In order to carry out the interviews, consent forms are sent to the professionals to be signed and prove that they have agreed to take part in this study. The professional's names and personal information were confidential following the personal data protection act Article 89(2) where the right to protect data subject and safeguard it Data Protection Act (1050/2018Finlex). When conducting the interview, professionals were not asked of any personal data and the recordings of the interview were destroyed within 14 days. The study will be sent to the board of education where it will be proofread.

According to Lo Piccolo, Ethics or morals, consequentialism is the position that the rightness or misleading quality of activities depends on the results, impacts or results, of actions. An ethical consequentialist is subsequently a person who holds that, in choosing what, ethically, to do, or how to act, to recognize and weigh up the likely results that would stream from elective courses of activity open, and after that select that activity which seems expected to create the foremost alluring consequence (Lo Piccolo et al. 2009 p.13). According to the code of ethics in social services and health care, human dignity and respect for individuals are very important therefore the code of ethics is followed in this study.

6 FINDINGS

In the outcomes of the interview, there were themes that addressed each of the key concepts. The professionals answered the questions in detail giving examples through their observations, experience, situations, and the services that they offer to service users. As social workers aspire to change the world through inclusion and no one is left out, the researcher interviewed the caretakers and service providers on how loneliness and isolation are affecting the senior citizens and what are the prevention methods used to prevent loneliness and isolation during covid-19. The analysis has tackled the three main key concepts: loneliness and isolation, senior citizens, covid-19 these are the main topics discussed during the interview and how the professionals (caregivers or service providers) come up with solutions to tackle loneliness and isolation. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer asks the professionals how they understand or define loneliness and isolation:

Professional 1

I think loneliness is when a person lacks a connection with people and, friends he or she feels lonely even when surrounded by people or family members. I have seen a lot of service users come in but don't talk much or interact with anyone and when we go visit them in their own homes, they talk freely and feel happy. Isolation is a person that stays home without coming outside for a long time does not talk to family or anyone in the society or take part in the community.

Professional 2

Is when senior citizens are alone with no one to interact with, for instance, I have seen many cases at my workplace and I usually direct them to the services that fit them.

Through the professional's understanding of loneliness and isolation, the theme of loneliness and isolation is connected with many scholars that have done research about the subject, for instance, Victor et al. explain "that loneliness and isolation reflect the

objective and subjective side of the same concept; namely a deficit of social interactions. It is often contended that loneliness and social isolation are common problems of later life that lead to widespread unhappiness and social exclusion" (Victor et al. 2009 p.31).

The researcher found that caretakers and service providers in this study have the same understanding of loneliness and isolation with different scholars that have researched on the subject.

6.1 Professional's view on the senior citizens and social exclusion

Social exclusion defined by many researchers, for instance, Madanipour et al. define it as a multi-dimensional process, in which different forms of exclusion combined, participation in decision-making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into standard cultural processes.

Due to numerous researches made, there is evidence that senior citizens experience exclusion in the variety of forms of segregation.

Another definition of social exclusion is a dynamic process of being left out, wholly or partly, from social, economic, political or cultural systems which the goal is the social integration of a person in society. According to Byrne, social exclusion is seen as the denial of the civil, political and social rights of citizenship (Byrne 2005 p.2). The researcher asked the participants what is considered old age and, how they define social exclusion?

Professional 1

Old age is when a person reaches retirement, but it depends on the environment or community a person lives in social exclusion is when a person is abandoned by the government or society. Senior citizens tend to have psychological problems, amnesia, and negative thoughts.

Professional 2

It is a person who no longer contributes to the community or society financially. social exclusion is when the community or society does not put a lot of effort into recognizing the issues faced by the senior citizens.

The researcher discovered in this study loneliness and social isolation is always associated with poor physical health, sickness and poor mental health. The significant elements are the economic situation of the senior citizens. Most of the senior citizens are retired trying to adjust their lives into the society without work which is a significant change and possibly the loss of one of the two spouses. The features make high-risk problems for the senior citizen.

The researcher found that psychological problems faced by the senior citizen a starting point to isolation due to health problems and indifference faced from the members of their family, but also the social environment towards the senior citizens lead the seniors to be more distant from his family, friends and the lack of access to services in the community due to lack of knowledge about the services they are entitled to have. The professionals were then asked what measures or means as employees to prevent loneliness, isolation and exclusion among the senior citizens during covid-19?

6.2 Professional side on Covid-19

Corona virus changed or affected the possibility to carry out services and the social work role; the restrictions have negatively affected service users. Responsibilities compromised because of the demand for services many employees are nervous and worried about getting sick. When it comes to normal fever or flue, they isolate themselves since it is a measure to prevent the spread of covid19 hence service users lacking services. Social care is very needed more than ever, and social isolation is magnified.

Around the world, nations are in lock down so that they can fight the spread of the corona virus (COVID-19), Social work and social care included. According to the British association of social workers, the effects caused by isolation in the care for senior citizens, the fear and alertness for people with long term mental health problems; families prohibited from embracing their loved ones and the employees of 'front line' practice, as we write and for the foreseeable future, Social care, employees have taken measures and solutions to continue services in the community for those who

need it the most, but what have the interviewee's done to improve and provide services to the elderly in the community (The British Association of Social Workers 2020).

Professional 1

Covid-19 has affected us much, but we have tried our best to take care of our service users. We have practiced social distancing the hand hygiene and followed the general instructions given by the ministry of health. We have shifted from meeting physically to virtual, for example, a WhatsApp group for the senior citizens was created.

Professional 2

“Covid-19 has affected us and the whole world in general, reduction in services and social distancing has been a challenge”.

The researcher has found that COVID-19 has affected the whole world but particularly the senior citizens who are more isolated due to social distancing and isolation as one of the measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19. The researcher also found how the virus has affected the caretakers that have been difficult to provide services to the ones that need it so new measures and strategies have been made by the caretakers, for instance, the use of digital services.

7 DISCUSSION

In the study, contributions from different kinds of sources, literature researches and other information were made about the topic studied. Social relationship and being active in the community vital at any stage in life.

The main aim of the study is to raise awareness about factors leading to loneliness and isolation among the senior citizens during covid19 in Helsinki area. The purpose was to discover new or updated solutions that can ease loneliness and isolation among the senior citizens. In this study, loneliness and isolation are defined as a lack of connection with people, friends he or she feels lonely even when surrounded by people, friends, and family. The researcher discovers that the senior citizen's needs are simple such as access to social relationships and services, to be involved in the community, family, and friendship, cultural activities voluntary leisure-based organizations which is difficult due to lack of access of services in general and in times of COVID-19.

For inclusion of the senior citizens in society, policymakers should make an effort to enable older folks to participate in society. Newly retired need to adjust into the community because it is hard to be retired after many years of employment, many feel like they do not have any purpose in the society hence loneliness and isolation. Factors that cause loneliness and isolation and that is mental health, physical health loss of loved ones and lack of access to services the participants have argued that lack of communication with their loved one's leaves them with a feeling of abandonment leading loneliness and isolation.

Covid-19 has highlighted loneliness and isolation both in the social work setting and among the senior citizens since the seniors are vulnerable in contacting covid19 strict measures taken into consideration. The professionals suggested that cheaper workshops and activities for senior citizens. They also suggested that caretakers should research new approaches to improve services for the seniors to make their lives easier. Instead of laying a retirement plan for them, they should be more involved in planning their own retirement plan. "now that the services shifted to the digital world, the

policymakers should find means that can help the senior citizens with digital services" professional one.

On a positive note, digital services are evolving, and new social work service strategies are being developed to fit the elderly in case of a new wave of coronavirus the future is promising.

7.1 Recommendations

There is a lot of research, studies were done on loneliness and isolation among senior citizen`s but it is not easy to measure loneliness because some service users might want solitude. How loneliness and isolation are affecting the senior citizens more than ever even though generations change so does the services and the environment, for instance, because of Covid-19 people, in general, are more in isolation and loneliness. The older adults have a hard time to integrate and adapt to the modern lifestyle, hence experiencing social exclusion. The research should be updated to address the attitudinal boundaries and how to overcome them. As social workers, our goal is to ensure equality and social inclusion and the well-being of service users.

As a researcher, recommending more research to explore awareness in the public sector and the attitude and expectation of the elderly towards social services. Provide service users with information about access to services. Empowering the elderly and equipping them with skills to access the services to meet what they want.

8 CONCLUSION

The outcomes of the interview in this study addressed loneliness and isolation among senior citizens in the Helsinki area during covid-19. Loneliness and isolation are likely to be the significant factors that affect the senior citizens in the time of covid-19. Through this study, professional workers interviewed to give their view on how loneliness and isolation are affecting the senior citizens during Covid-19 and what methods and strategies have the professionals used to prevent loneliness and isolation during Covid-19.

The literature research done on the topic of loneliness and isolation among the senior citizen, tackle the root cause of loneliness and social isolation. Savikko states that psychological well-being generated through two dimensions. The absence of depression and emotional loneliness, and the presence of happiness, lifestyles satisfaction, a feeling of safety, and plans for the future (Savikko,2008) An individual will be high in psychological well-being to the degree in which incredible outcomes predominate over the negative. On the other hand, when negative consequences are in a dominant position, the person will be low in well-being.

Through the interview, the researcher found that the caretakers understand social isolation as a deficit of social interactions and psychological problems faced by the senior citizen is a starting point to isolation due to health, and indifference faced from the members of their family, but also the social environment towards the senior citizens leads them to be more distant from their family, friends and the lack of access to services in the community due to lack of knowledge about the services they are entitled to have.

COVID-19 has affected the whole world, but particularly the senior citizens who are more isolated due to social distancing and isolation as one of the measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19. The professionals have come up with quick methods or strategies, and interventions to tackle loneliness and isolation among the senior citizens in

the Helsinki area the methods include, directing senior citizens services that fit them, visit senior citizens in their own homes; they talk freely and feel happy. The caretakers have practiced social distancing the hand hygiene and followed the general instructions given by the ministry of health. They shifted from meeting physically to virtual. That way they give the senior citizen`s tasks or a mission per day and they have educated the elderly about the virus not to cause fear but to prevent the spreading, by practicing the prevention methods and go around it. For senior citizens who cannot use digital means as communication, several calls are made to have conversations with them.

The caretakers have created different ways to provide services to the senior citizens, for example, outdoor activities such as naming different types of birds and talking walks to improve social isolation. They have improved communication skills to help the senior citizens access easy digital skills to develop the services they need to create activities and always with a second or several alternatives. Encouraging senior citizen`s to take part in activities in their community and get more involved. Giving or directing and making a plan with them to the services that they need, can improve the social services and health care services.

In conclusion, through this study loneliness and isolation are major risk factors that are affecting senior citizens health during Covid-19 due to social distancing and social isolation. Digital social service and peer support via social media have played a big part as a prevention method to loneliness and isolation among the senior citizens in the Helsinki area

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APPENDIX 1. Interview questions in Finnish

HAASTATTELUKYSYMYKSIÄ SUOMEKSI.

Opinnäytetyössä haetaan vastauksia seuraaviin kysymyksiin:

1. Miten yksinäisyys ja eristäytyminen vaikuttavat vanhuksiin covid-19-pandemian aikana?
2. Millä menetelmillä sosiaalityön ammattilaiset ehkäisevät yksinäisyyttä ja eristytymistä Covid-19-taudin aikana?

ESIMERKKEJÄ HAASTATTELUKYSYMYKSISTÄ.

YKSINÄISYYS

1. Mitä yksinäisyys tarkoittaa tai kuinka määrittäisit yksinäisyyden?
2. Kuinka yksinäisyys vaikuttaa palvelun käyttäjiin?
3. Mitä voidaan tehdä yksinäisyyden helpottamiseksi COVID-19 epidemian aikana?

SOSIAALINEN SYRJÄYTYMINEN

Sosiaalinen eristäminen voi olla menetelmä kansanterveyden parantamiseksi. Eristämisestä voi olla seurauksena sosiaalinen syrjäytyminen.

4. Miten määrittäisit sosiaalisen syrjäytymisen?
5. Mitä ovat sosiaalisen syrjäytymisen haitalliset vaikutukset?
6. Kuinka voidaan torjua sosiaalisen syrjäytymisen haitallisia vaikutuksia, etenkin vanhuksilla, COVID-19: n aikana ja pandemian jälkeen?

TYÖNTEKIJÄN KÄYTTÄMÄT KEINOT

7. Mitä keinoja olet itse käyttänyt vanhusten yksinäisyyden, eristyneisyyden ja syrjäytymisen ehkäisemiseksi COVID-19 aikana?
8. Kuinka olet valmistautunut pandemian toiseen aaltoon?
9. Miten kehittäisit palvelua?

APPENDIX 2. Interview questions in English

The thesis seeks answers to the following questions:

1. How is loneliness and isolation affecting the elderly during COVID-19?
2. What are the methods used by social work professionals to prevent loneliness and isolation during Covid-19?

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.

Loneliness

1. What does loneliness mean or how do you define loneliness?
2. How does loneliness affect users of the service?
3. What can be done to ease the loneliness during the COVID-19 epidemic?

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Social isolation can be a method for improving public health. Isolation can lead to social exclusion.

4. How would you define social exclusion?
5. What are the adverse effects of social exclusion?
6. How can the harmful effects of social exclusion be combated, especially among the senior citizen, during COVID-19 and after a pandemic?

MEANS USED BY THE EMPLOYEE

7. What means have you used yourself to prevent the loneliness, isolation and exclusion of the senior citizen during COVID-19?
8. How are you prepared for the second wave of a pandemic?
9. How would you develop a service?