

# **Loneliness Among Elderly in Nursing Care Homes**

**A Scoping Review**

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## BACHELOR'S THESIS

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### Abstract

This study sought to establish the prevalence of loneliness among elderly residents in nursing care homes, identify the contributing factors, and explore effective interventions. This review is timely since the population of elderly people in care homes is increasing and loneliness has severe implications for the quality of life. The main goal was to try and give a broad understanding of loneliness among elderly in the homecare settings, with the help of caregivers and how nursing care homes tackle issues arising due to loneliness and improving the general care given.

A scoping review methodology was used, where studies from 2010 to 2024 were explored using the following databases: CINAHL Complete, PubMed, Sage Open Nurse, Semantic scholar, and Journals. The analysis of the findings for the 10 articles that met inclusion criteria employed thematic analysis.

The review identified that the prevalence of loneliness among elderly residents in nursing care homes ranged from 35% to 61%. The major determinants of loneliness are age, health status, and lack of social support. Evidence-based interventions recommended for alleviating loneliness include facilitating social activities and group interactions, video conferencing using technology to interact with family and friends, conducting music therapy programs, and promoting exercise programs. This review also outlines that the multi-component approach should be tailored to individual needs and interests. These strategies, once implemented by caregivers, tend to improve the quality of life among elderly residents and reduce the psychological burdens associated with loneliness.

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**Language:** English

**Key words:** Loneliness, Elderly, Prevalence, Nursing home, Nursing roles.

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# 1 Introduction

We equally deal with loneliness in different ways since it is experienced in our lives somehow. This is probably because there is some disparity in the perception, definition, and understanding of loneliness from different people, cultures, and backgrounds. Loneliness can place one in distressing and irritating positions that can reduce the person's life span due to some predicaments such as mental health crises, stress, and depression (Ypsilanti et al., 2020).

Loneliness is one of the most pervasive concerns about older adults throughout the world, and Finland certainly has no exception. Taking into consideration the aging of the population, causes of loneliness are an important aspect in the design of effective interventions. For this reason, the following paper will explain the causes, prevalence, and consequences of loneliness in elderly people. Considering the graying of the population worldwide, it's a phenomenon that needs to be understood and also looked into to bring betterment in well-being and quality of life for our elderly population (Surkalim et al., 2022).

Loneliness is, to a great extent, observed worldwide among elderly people; at least one-third of the older population is lonely, especially in nursing homes. Thus, addressing loneliness is necessary to enhance their health and well-being generally. Specific interventions focusing on the development of social networks will help improve their quality of life (Gardiner et al., 2020).

Loneliness among the elderly adults in nursing care homes is common, and the prevalence rates vary. The prevalence rates for moderate loneliness are 31-100%, whereas for severe loneliness is 9-81%. The mean prevalence is 61% for moderate loneliness and 35% for severe loneliness (Gardiner et al., 2020a). Various factors such as relationship with family, mobility, illness, acceptance, and life satisfaction are responsible for variation in loneliness (Trybusińska & Saracen, 2019).

According to the (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2020), the well-being and needs of elderly persons are organized and supported in various dimensions. Despite all these, there are a lot of lonely elderly people in Finland. Some stay in their houses alone, while many others have ended up in nursing care homes, where they feel lonely. The author has

witnessed this scenario in some homes and pointed out that the experiences triggered her interest in the matter.

The interest in this topic cropped up when the researcher was discussing the personal experiences while practicing in nursing care homes with the aged. It was observed that due to tight and hectic schedules many a time, nurses do not get enough time to spend with the aged and to listen to their feelings or thoughts. This, in turn, lessened the opportunities that the aged had with the nurses. The aged miss having somebody to talk to and be with them, like a family member, a relative, or a personal assistant of some type. But it seemed seldom for nurses available simply because of so many chores they needed to attend to. Surprisingly, this companionship needs for the aged is filled by the students on placement and part-time workers more than by the overtly busy nurses.

## 2 Background

Among the negative feelings, loneliness, depressive symptoms, depression, and anxiety are most familiar among older residents while living in Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCFs) stated, (Amzat & Jayawardena 2016; Elias, 2018). Among these negative feelings, loneliness is the most frequent feeling experienced by the residents due to the increase in chronic illnesses and functional decline, loss of independence in carrying out their activities, separation from their families, friends, and neighbours living around them, and death of a spouse or significant others (Cohen-Mansfield et al. 2016; Ong et al. 2016). One review concluded that loneliness was related to poor physical and psychological health among older adults, including high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, stroke, depression, hastened cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease, poor quality of life, and an increased risk of mortality (Valtorta et al., 2018).

A recent scoping review and meta-analysis showed that loneliness among elderly adults living in residential and nursing care homes was alarmingly high. The estimated mean prevalence of 'moderate loneliness' and 'severe loneliness' was 61% and 35%, respectively (Gardiner et al., 2020). Since the prevalence of loneliness among the elderly people residing in (LTCFs) is high, it has turned out to be pivotal on the part of healthcare professionals to address and solve this issue.

Loneliness is a subjective feeling; hence, it is relevant to consider the perspective of the older resident about loneliness. It can help catch the opinions and thoughts of the residents, which might be useful to healthcare professionals to ensure a better quality of life and care for the residents in the (LTCFs). Although a few studies have explored the experiences or perceptions of loneliness of older residents in the (LTCFs), all of them were from Western countries ((Neves et al. 2019; Paque et al., 2018), while only a few were in Eastern countries including Taiwan.

### 2.1 Definitions of loneliness

Loneliness is a big and important phenomenon that one experiences at various stages in his or her life. Though it may be momentary in the case of a teenager or adolescent, it becomes extended and continuous for the elderly. In this context, this paper discusses loneliness in nursing care homes. On the contrary, loneliness is the major concern among aged patients in old age homes. Being away from their families, limited interaction with others, and

sometimes physical health problems contribute to the risk factors of their bouts with loneliness (Hicks, 2000).

Because of the process of aging, most elderly people tend to undergo biological, psychological, social, and spiritual changes. Changes in their psychology make them feel lonely and depressed, which hurts their physical health and well-being. As a care provider, nurses should always be beside them in order not to allow loneliness among the elderly (Sya'diyah et al., 2020).

## **2.2 Impact of Loneliness on the Mental Health of Elderly Nursing Home**

According to Ausín et al. (2017), loneliness is one of those subjective problems in mental health based on feelings of distress. To most of the elderly residents in nursing homes, loneliness is an empty feeling in one's social life because of the loss of family or friends inability to fit into a new environment, or the physical disability of hindering interacting with others. Yet loneliness in this context does not necessarily mean an absence of one's fellow residents, for residents feel lonely even if other residents are physically present in the same place. Loneliness may be a risk factor both for morbidity as well as for mortality.

The feelings of loneliness may be more pronounced in older persons because of the many changes and losses associated with aging. This study analyzed sociodemographic, psychosocial, and mental health variables that concern loneliness among the elderly. Most elderly people living in care institutions may be socially isolated by nature because of factors such as illness, movement problems, or lack of transportation. This can make them have little contact with family and friends, hence developing feelings of loneliness. One may feel social loneliness in cases where the wants of being, creating, or having a relationship are not satisfactorily met. Loneliness is best described by the person experiencing it since it is a subjective experience (Zhao et al., 2018).

At any rate, loneliness among elderly residents seems to be a relatively wide-spread phenomenon in the Nordics in prevalence terms. (Nyqvist et al. 2013) estimated that as many as 55% of the elderly residents in care facilities in northern Sweden suffer from loneliness, and Drageset et al. (2011) report a corresponding figure of 56% for western Norway. Other international studies give a conservative estimate of at least one-third of older people who admit to feelings of loneliness to some extent, but the same studies note that such a proportion is higher in those residing in nursing homes thus lending credence to the figures suggested by the Scandinavian studies.

## **2.3 Mitigating Loneliness Among Elderly through Social Engagement Programs**

It is important to note that social relations, especially those bonds derived from a network, attachment, or belonging to a group, are a basic need for healthy old age. While living in a nursing home is meant to reduce loneliness, many elderly still describe a feeling of loneliness with its negative implications of associated loss of social skills and growing social isolation. Ironically, elderly people may feel vulnerable in the nursing home because they are staying there to avoid social loneliness but actually, nobody takes proper care of them there (Morlett Paredes et al., 2021).

Loneliness can become a vicious cycle because a lonely person usually retreats further into social settings. (Drageset et al. 2015) Earlier studies have indicated that loneliness is linked with several psychological effects which extend from anxiety to depression. Loneliness has also been identified as a predictor for declining physical health that may manifest as cognitive impairment and increased hospital emergency care (Geller et al., 1999). Loneliness, if left untreated, appears to have serious consequences in the form of a state of general sadness, a lack of meaning, and a lack of motivation. Several studies uphold such a description while pointing out a linkage between loneliness and heightened mortality risk. Various types of social engagements have been known to take away lonely feelings. Some pragmatic recommendations likely to help combat loneliness sound like encouraging the lonely individual to teach somebody their favorite skill, participating in a topic-of-interest group, and animal-assisted therapy programs (Brimelow & Wollin, 2017).

How the nurses perceive loneliness amongst aging residents is curiously seldom reported in the literature. Given this position of primary caretaker, it is surprising that a more complete exploration of the nurses' perspective has not taken place. These insights can provide possible reasons as to why the interest of the wider research community in engaging nurses for new knowledge concerning the loneliness of the elderly seems so far rather muted. On the other hand, one of the few relevant studies on how nurses view loneliness among nursing home residents, shows problems for the staff to detect and prevent loneliness systematically; hence, it resulted in a living environment with heightened risk that the nurses unconsciously overlooked loneliness. Briefly, loneliness is a serious threat among the elderly who stay in nursing homes. Besides, increasing requirements are given to providing institutional care for an aging population to enhance the quality of healthcare services offered to the aged population (Anvik et al., 2020).

Loneliness among older individuals has been a subject of considerable research. However, surprisingly few studies on how to handle loneliness among elderly residents have included the nurses' perspective, with work published in the public domain.

In addition, there exists an area that requires prompting since the magnitude of existence and prospectively lonely residents is on a global scale. Therefore, the current research study is pertinent and timely to the extent that it seeks to fill the foregoing lacuna by mining knowledge and experiences from professional nurses in trying to shed new light on how residents cope with loneliness (Vadseth, 2009). Loneliness is the painful feeling associated with the perception that an individual's social relationships are inadequate or unsupportive. Loneliness is associated with a range of unfavorable physiological and psychological effects throughout an individual's life. Yet, given that loneliness tends to rise in later years, it applies to research its repercussions among such a population (Pinquart and Sorensen, 2001).

Lonely people have been found to engage, among other things, in less activity, smoking, and other health-risk behaviors Shankar et al., (2011) and also have increasing blood pressure, which makes them more susceptible to illness (Hawkley et al., 2010).

It has also been linked with poorer levels of self-rated health and predicted cognitive decline in both normal, that is dementia-free, and clinical populations. Loneliness is further associated with lower subjective well-being and aging satisfaction during old age. To date, loneliness is related consistently and strongly to depressive symptoms consistently and powerfully (van Beljouw et al., 2014).

This link appears to be causal as loneliness predicts greater depressive symptoms across time but the opposite direction is not significantly associated (Cacioppo et al., 2010). This association might also carry clinical significance insofar as depressed older adults are 2-3 times more likely to report loneliness compared with their non-depressed counterparts. However, very little is currently known about potential mechanisms which might moderate this association. Elderly persons living in elderly homes experience loneliness in different ways, and to prevent this phenomenon, the lonely elderly and nurses must work together. The nurses have the role of educators and facilitators to enable these individuals to meet their needs of self-care, thus promoting their mental and psychological well-being.

The author, therefore, found Dorothea Orem's self-care nursing theory as evidence that patients and nurses play different roles in the restoration of mental and emotional conditions of lonely elderly. An individual would define Self-care as those activities that a lonely adult

or any human being would do by themselves to stay healthy, safe, and happy. Thus, our surroundings, different communities, cultures, and families can serve to be of great importance in securing the process of recovery of the health and well-being of a lonely person (Fawcett 2017.).

## **2.4 Existential loneliness among the elderly**

Loneliness is a feeling or sense that cannot be derived from relationships, interactions, contact, or meeting with people. Existential loneliness comes about when a person harbors a feeling of incompleteness that is permanent, deep-seated feelings of inadequacy, self-hatred, and low self-esteem. This kind of loneliness can permeate into every aspect of one's being because these thoughts or feelings cause the individual to be permanently disconnected from other people (Sundström et al., 2018).

Loneliness isn't merely an experience of older people; it is a universal human experience. Even romantic relationships and social acquaintances sometimes cannot be remedies for existential loneliness. People still feel lonely while being surrounded by many people. In this regard, the foregoing analysis confirms that loneliness, though an unappealing emotion that could maybe result in grave health problems, can be present when we want quiet time for ourselves (Ejlskov et al., 2018).

On the other hand, social, emotional, or existential signs and symptoms can be different from each because mostly, those are influenced by personal experiences or personality traits. Common signs that one is not coping well with social life include feelings of being socially exhausted due to efforts to be social, an inability to be able to connect with people if feelings are not mutual, severe feelings of loneliness despite being surrounded by many, not having close friends who know you, and finding interactions with people superficial. Such signs help point out people who need professional help. Feel free to modify any part of the text, if needed, to serve your purpose best (Ong et al. 2016).

## **2.5 Loneliness and nursing role**

Elderly persons living in elderly homes experience loneliness in different ways and to prevent this phenomenon, lonely elderly and nurses must collaborate. Nurses act as educators and facilitators to assist individuals in meeting their self-care needs thereby, enhancing their psychological and mental well-being. Thus, the author Younas, (2017)

highlighted Dorothea Orem's self-care nursing theory to show that patients and nurses have different roles in reinstating the mental and emotional well-being of lonely elderly. Self-care entails those activities that lonely adults or any human being would perform by themselves to remain healthy, safe, and happy. Thus, our environments, various communities, cultures, and families play important roles in safeguarding the recovery process of a lonely person's health and well-being (Fawcett 2017.).

Moreover, a nurse talking with the patient's family helps reveal the interest and the kind of activities that the patient enjoys, and the objective is to encourage habits and actions like self-care, and creating new friends that promote health. Nurses need to work with multidisciplinary teams in order to set and meet the goals of care. Their leading role is to educate, support, and encourage the patient though the patient should collaborate with the nurse to realize these goals (Sya'diyah et al, 2020.).

Similarly, talking about loneliness should not be a taboo subject among nurses when giving care to the elderly, thus enhancing education and skills is very important for nurses and other health care professionals in identifying the symptoms of loneliness among the elderly. Confronted with many health challenges, elderly do not generally admit experiencing loneliness when the subject is brought up for the first time. Some level of trust must be established between the nurse and the patient then, it becomes easier for the elderly to express their feelings. Therefore, nurses should have a grip about the phenomenon of loneliness while they pursue their education and equally participate in workshops to gain more talents to communicate, interact and handle loneliness in those elderly under their care (Fawcett 2017.).

### **3 Aim & Research question**

The aim is to provide an understanding of loneliness among the elderly in nursing care homes. The goal is to help caregivers and nursing care homes address issues arising from loneliness thus improving care.

- 1) What is the prevalence of loneliness among the elderly residing in nursing care homes?
- 2) How can nurses help reduce loneliness among elderly residents in nursing care homes?

## **4 Theoretical framework**

In the recent years, the care provided by nurses was good but much of what was done had not been evaluated or applied equally in practices or education. Therefore, in the 20th century, a goal was set to put together nursing leaders to advance nursing knowledge that would serve as a basis for nursing practice, enhancing the quality of life and establishing nursing as a recognized profession (Alligood, 2018, pg.2).

### **4.1 Dorothea Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory**

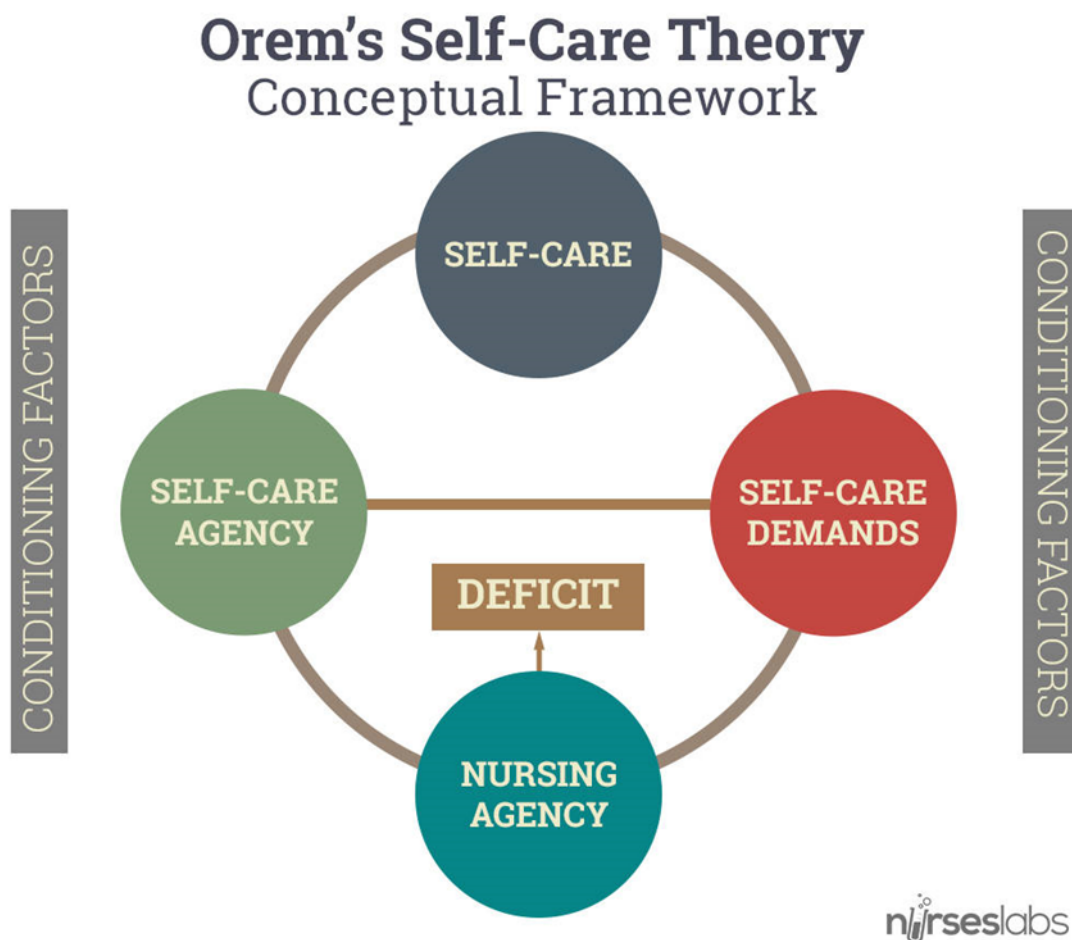
My interest in this theory provides a clear explanation and rationale for nursing interventions to resolve self-care deficits. Therefore enables nurses to play an active role in the identification of lonely residents and implementation of specific strategies to assist these residents to overcome loneliness through facilitation of social activities, emotional support, and linking of residents to community resources.

Dorothea Orem's self-care deficit nursing theory is an important framework that espouses the view that individuals should take care of themselves to achieve and maintain optimal health and well-being. About loneliness among the elderly, the theory by Orem can be applied to understanding how the promotion of self-care and independence contributes toward the mitigation of loneliness feelings and improves overall well-being. It is the theory of self-care requisites, self-care deficits, and nursing systems that focuses on the importance of individuals in performing self-care activities, as well as nurses in supporting them in these performances (Alligood, 2018, pg.2).

According to Orem's theory, the patient inherently possesses the capability and responsibility for self-care, and nurses should support the patient in regaining independence and confidence. With emphasis on activities of self-care including basic activities but also those extending to maintain general well-being, the theory of Orem offers a comprehensive approach to the needs of persons receiving nursing (Younas, 2017).

The theory of Orem can therefore be applied in the thesis on loneliness among the elderly in nursing care homes by providing the theoretical framework on how the promotion of self-care practices and independence can contribute to mitigation of feelings of loneliness and improvement of quality of life among the aged in such settings (Alligood, 2018, pg.2).

Caregivers and nurses can, therefore, by their understanding and application of Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory, devise ways whereby aged residents in care nursing homes can sustain their physical, mental, and emotional well-being through the practice of self-care (Younas, 2017).



**Figure 1: The Dorothea E...Orem: Self-Care Deficit Theory of Nursing (Alligood, 10th Edition, pg. 206).**

## 5 Methodology

The methodology section in research is where you discuss and describe the ways of collecting and analyzing data that you put into practice in the course of your research work. With the ever-growing evidence-based healthcare and an increase in accessibility of firsthand research, there has been a rise and development of reviews. There are a variety of grounds for conducting a scoping review. This review unlike other reviews has broader inclusion criteria, is flexible, has different types of questions, and informs on policy and practice. A scoping review can be conducted to plan the main concepts of particular research and also give an explanation of definitions and concepts of a topic. This review is conducted to identify what type of information and studies are available for the topic selected, find missing gaps on the topic or study being researched, look into how other research has been done before about the topic, and look for important elements that are associated with the topic that have been done in the prior knowledge (Peters et al., 2022).

In conducting this research on the Loneliness among elderly living in nursing care homes, it is crucial to select a methodology that aligns with the research question. The chosen approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic as an emerging field and facilitate the extraction of relevant information from the literature. This approach will explore the extent of the previous studies done and provide valuable insights into the Prevalence of loneliness among the elderly living in nursing care homes, as well as the coping strategies for Loneliness among elderly people living in nursing care homes.(Zhang et al., 2023).

### 5.1 A Scoping Review

A scoping review is a systematic method used to map existing literature on a broad topic, identifying key concepts, gaps in knowledge, and types of evidence available. This approach is particularly valuable in complex or emerging fields, as it helps clarify definitions and conceptual boundaries (Peters et al., 2015).

The process typically involves defining a research question, conducting a comprehensive literature search, charting data, and summarizing findings without assessing the quality of individual studies. In the context of loneliness among elderly individuals in nursing care homes, a scoping review can provide insights into the prevalence, causes, and effective interventions for loneliness (Munn et al., 2018; Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Peters et al., 2015).

## 5.2 Data collection

The data collection process for this study began with defining the research topic and developing research questions focused on loneliness among elderly living in nursing care homes. A comprehensive literature search was conducted using multiple databases, including Online Wiley Library, CINAHL, PubMed Central, Journals, Sage Open Nurse and EBSCO. The researcher employed relevant keywords and phrases to retrieve pertinent information. Articles were carefully selected based on their relevance to the study's aim and research questions. This rigorous selection process resulted in 10 articles that collectively address the research questions and provide a strong foundation for the study. These chosen articles, listed in **Appendix 1**, offer valuable insights and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of loneliness among elderly residents in nursing care homes. This systematic approach ensured that the selected literature not only answered the research questions but also established a robust basis for the study's findings and conclusions.

The review focused on both qualitative and quantitative studies to ensure a diverse range of perspectives on loneliness among elderly residents and interventions aimed at alleviating this issue. To enhance the comprehensiveness of the review, reference lists from selected articles were also examined to capture potentially omitted studies. This scopic approach aims to provide a robust overview of the current state of research on loneliness in nursing homes, highlighting significant findings and identifying gaps for future inquiry (Peters et al., 2015).

## 5.3 Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for a scoping review have to be clear and transparent. The researcher has to report a detailed search process and time frame for the articles. A wider range of sources is considered in this type of review (Peters et al., 2022). In the process of gathering data, some sources are not applicable or useful to the research due to various reasons and to determine which sources should be included or excluded; specific criteria for selection need to be established. For this study, certain criteria were established to determine which articles would be included.

These criteria included the articles; that explained the prevalence of loneliness among the elderly and strategies to alleviate loneliness among the elderly written in English and those available in full text. Articles selection was then done by reading the titles, and abstracts, those in full texts were considered. Additionally, the articles had to have been published between the years 2010- 2024. Using this criterion, a total of 259 articles were initially

identified before undergoing a rigorous filtering process. The exclusion criteria for this study included articles that were written in any language other than English, and articles that were not available in full text. The 10 selected articles for the study were presented in a table in **Appendix 1**, showing their titles, and aims used in the study. The procedure of data retrieval from the first hits to the articles chosen for this study is represented in the Prisma chart in **Figure 2**.

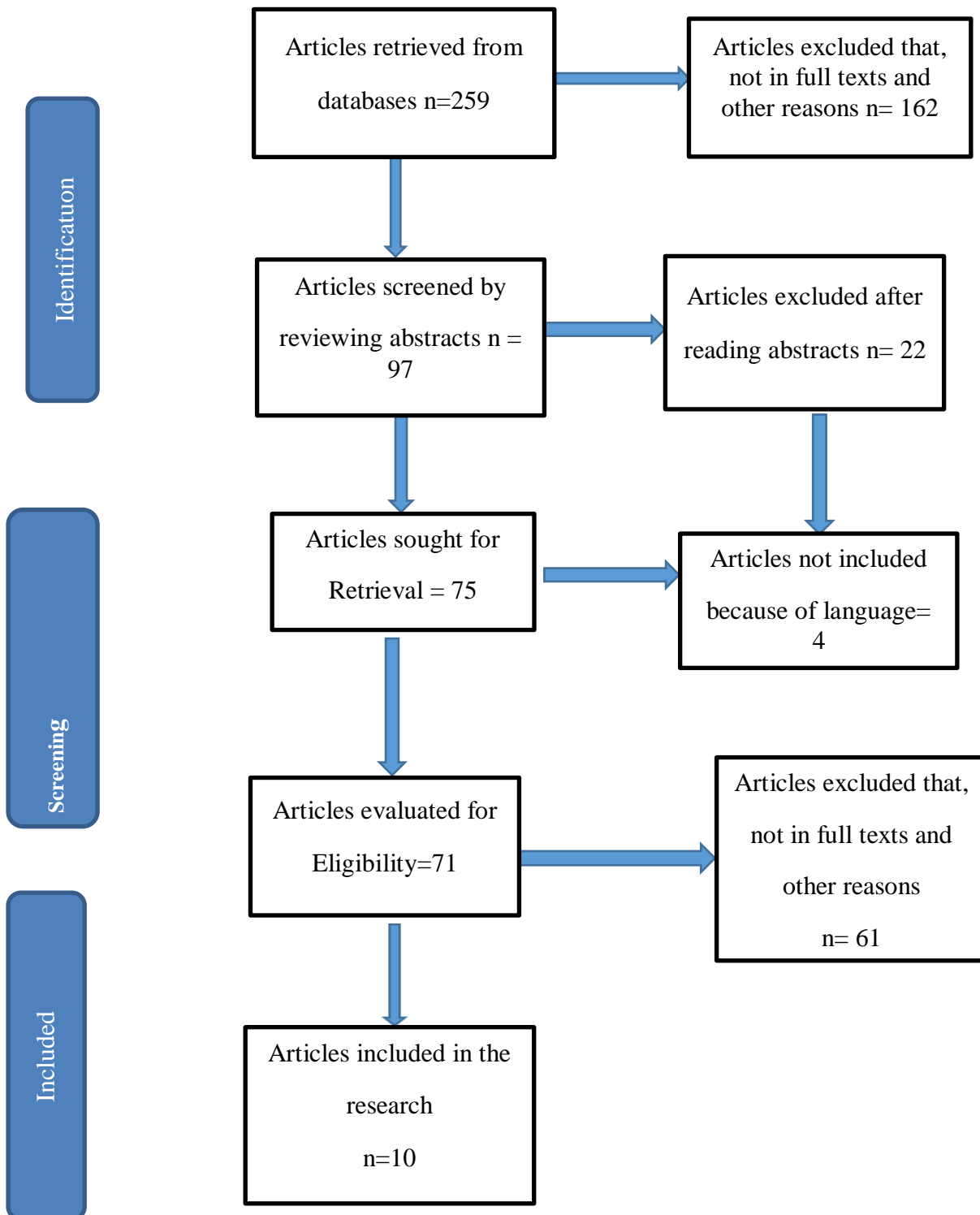


Figure 2: Prisma chart (AJE, 2023).

## 5.4 Data analysis

Loneliness among elderly individuals in nursing homes is a pressing issue, with significant implications for their mental and physical health. A scoping review indicates that the prevalence of moderate loneliness in nursing home residents can reach as high as 61%, while severe loneliness affects approximately 35% of this population (Cohen-Mansfield et al., 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated feelings of isolation, highlighting the urgent need for effective interventions to address this problem. Research shows that loneliness is linked to increased risks of depression, suicidal ideation, and frailty among older adults living in long-term care settings (BMC Geriatrics, 2024).

Factors contributing to loneliness include limited family support and difficulties in adapting to the nursing home environment, which can hinder social interactions. Moreover, the role of caregivers is crucial; studies suggest that higher levels of care from nursing staff can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness among residents (Sanjaya & Rusdi, 2020). Therefore, understanding the mechanisms through which interventions can foster social connections and enhance well-being is essential for improving the quality of life for elderly individuals in nursing homes.

The motive of this approach was to adequately explore and break down the research question and constructively investigate how loneliness has been survived by some elderly adults. This approach to research enables the author to theoretically and objectively describe the phenomenon under research since usually, human experiences are described from different perspectives of their background (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Using this approach facilitated the investigations, analysis, and a vivid presentation of the research findings, recommendations, and conclusion to highlight the significance of the study. This approach is aimed at creating concepts, categories, and themes from the data that has been collected for analysis which involve open coding or open data reduction, making categories and abstraction, and formation of concepts by outlining the similarities and differences between coded data. The purpose of this is to be able to bring out an abstract that gives a synopsis of the categories, and concepts and brings out the results (Kyngäs et al, 2020.).

### **5.4.1 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research methodology that articulates systematic procedures for the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns or themes in qualitative data. The approach was found to be particularly fitting in examining complex topics, such as loneliness among the elderly living in nursing care homes since thematic analysis allows flexibility in interpreting data and encompasses a wide range of divergent perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This scoping review applied thematic analysis to the findings from multiple studies, each of which allowed the identification of recurring themes associated with causes, experiences, and possible interventions linked to loneliness within a care home setting (Nowell et al., 2017).

## **5.5 Ethical considerations**

The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) which is appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland provides a set of ethical requirements that recommends that every research should be conducted honestly, diligently, and with accuracy as this guarantees credible and reliable research. The findings of the research should be reported openly and responsibly and deserved credit awarded to the work of other researchers. Integrity and ethical considerations in the research process are encouraged by TENK, with the focus of ensuring that every research is performed within responsible research conduct and action taken for the violation of the set conducts (TENK, 2023).

Ethical issues form part of the very important aspects of research. In carrying out literature research based on what has already been done, there exist some ethical considerations. Such arguments as what more needs to be studied and why might come up during the literature review. It could also result from previous studies in reviewing that the research question has already been answered and hence doing the research would be unethical. The researcher must treat the existing research correctly and honestly. Three larger ethical issues to be aware of are plagiarism, fraud, and misrepresentation of results. Plagiarism is when somebody else's words, pictures, data; or ideas are used without permission or state them as your work. Fraud and misrepresentation of results means for example that the author is making up new results or the article has been published with new authors or translated to a foreign language. Always having to use carefully other author's work and having responsibilities. Ethics should be followed and being aware of issues that can come up (Wager & Wiffen, 2011).

Therefore, for this study to be valid, accurate and acceptable, the author has got to stick with the guidelines, reference other author's work correctly, and value the results accurately. It is important for results not to be explained in another way, and the author not to plagiarise from other authors' work, and to be honest and responsible in writing down the results of other authors' works.

## 6 Results

This chapter is based on the analyzed results obtained from 10 selected articles as shown in Appendix 1, which provide answers to the research questions, related to loneliness among elderly residents in nursing care homes, After a critical analysis, themes and sub themes were created as shown in **Table 1**.

| No. | Themes                          | Sub themes  |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|
| 1.  | Prevalence of loneliness        | Rate of loneliness<br>Variability in Prevalance<br>Correlates of Loneliness Among Older Adults  |
| 2   | Strategies to reduce loneliness | Social Therapeutic Interventions<br>Use of new technologies<br>Communication skills<br>Nursing perspectives<br>Group based participation<br>Educational interventions |

**Table 1: Thematic analysis procedure**

### 6.1 Prevalence of loneliness

#### 6.1.1 Rate of loneliness

Overall, the prevalence was higher in specific populations, including those residing in senior housing communities and with impairments, with a mean of 47.8%. In the COVID-19 pandemic period, the mean prevalence was 39.4%. A study by Aung et al. (2018) even reported: 75% of elderly residents of nursing homes described their loneliness as very high and 25% as moderately lonely. Contrasting results have been seen in the large-scale study in India, where it was recorded that 13.4% of elderly reported frequent loneliness, though there

were significant variations across different states and union territories. Studies have showed that the prevalence of severe loneliness among adults aged 65 and over usually ranges between 2% and 16%, though up to 32% of people aged over 55 may feel lonely at any point in time. These diverse estimates underline the complexity surrounding the measurement of loneliness and the relevance of contextual factors when interpreting estimates of prevalence.

### 6.1.2 Variability in prevalence

In contrast, some studies indicate that the prevalence rates of loneliness among elderly residents in nursing care homes vary. For instance, Jansson et al. (2017) found that 9% of residents reported feeling lonely often or always and 26% sometimes, indicating a notable presence of loneliness in this population.

On the other hand, Hajek et al. (2024) found that approximately 25.7% were moderately lonely, whereas about 17.8% were already severely lonely. This further illustrates variability across different studies on the levels of loneliness experienced by older adults in institutional settings. Such inconsistency in the prevalence rates underlines the complexity of loneliness among the elderly and points toward tailored interventions that address each individual's or group's unique circumstances (Hajek et al., 2024).

Below is a **table** that illustrates the prevalence of loneliness among elderly residents in nursing care homes according to the context provided.

| Study                 | Sometimes Lonely | Moderate Loneliness | Severe Loneliness |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Jansson et al. (2017) | 26%              | -                   | 9%                |
| Hajek et al. (2024)   | -                | 25.7%               | 17.8%             |

**Table 2: Variability in prevalence of loneliness among elderly residents**

The above table gives an overview of how prevalence rates differ in various studies. (Jansson et al. (2017) estimated loneliness as *"often or always"* as one category, severe and

"sometimes," while Hajek et al. (2024) estimated "moderate" and "severe" loneliness. Again, discrepancies in categorization and the percentage that is reported within the table above would mean that consistency among prevalence rates reviewed by the author remains low and could reflect complexities in loneliness among elderly residents in care homes.

### **6.1.3 Correlates of Loneliness Among Older Adults**

Social isolation and loneliness are considered important risk factors that lead to deteriorating physical and mental health in the elderly. Recent reviews indicate that loneliness has been strongly associated with depression, impaired cognitive functioning, a rise in chronic illness, and even death. However, much less is known about how this would affect psychosocial constructs and healthcare outcomes. The current study aimed at estimating the prevalence of loneliness and its correlations with sociodemographic, medical, and psychosocial characteristics by using a large nationally representative survey of 4,525 older adults. Overall, 43% of the participants reported either moderate or severe loneliness. Older age, female sex, income, depression, hearing difficulty, and poorer health were all related to loneliness. (Barnes et al. 2021)

## **6.2 Strategies to reduce loneliness**

### **6.2.1 Social Therapeutic Interventions**

According to Hagan et al. (2014) social therapeutic interventions have been a case of effectiveness in keeping loneliness at bay among the elderly. A review identifies group activities and community engagement initiatives that tend to move participants into social contact and promote participants' emotional well-being. Such interventions aim to provide an enabling environment for supporting older people's interactions with others, sharing experiences, and forming relationships that will assist in combating lonely feelings.

These findings indicate that organized social activities reduce loneliness and increase feelings of belonging and community among the elderly. If these social therapeutic interventions are implemented in nursing and assisted living facilities, the quality of life for residents will significantly improve and will go a long way toward addressing this prevalent

issue of loneliness effectively. It also aligns with the greater literature on community engagement, pointing out the need for the building of social connections to improve mental health and well-being among older populations (Tsai et al., 2010).

### **6.2.2 Use of new technologies**

Hagan et al. (2014) review newly emergent technologies that aim to reduce loneliness in older adults through the use of online communication tools and social media. This review identified that several studies incorporating such technologies into their intervention found significant reductions in loneliness. These tools allow older adults to virtually maintain relationships with family and friends, thus helping to reduce a sense of isolation. This also agrees with the broader literature on technology interventions, in which digital platforms are said to improve social engagement since older persons can engage in social activities from the comfort of their homes.

Various reviews, for example, have documented that technology-based interventions reported social connectedness and reduced loneliness, with success depending largely on the kind of technology used and its context. In general, the results of Hagan et al. (2014) give a significant basis for technology to act as a positive tool in the struggle against loneliness for older adults and, therefore, justify further research and incorporation of these types of interventions within care environments (Jin et al., 2021).

### **6.2.3 Communication skills**

Contact with family and friends, as well as contact with social groups, is a significant constituent in decreasing the level of loneliness among the elderly. Nowadays, there are multiple ways of doing that: from telephone calls and text messaging to social media. According to a study, carried out by (Chen & Schulz 2016), communication via technology could assist older adults. It would make them feel more supported, connected to others, and less lonely in general. This evidences that even trifles like a phone call or at least a message may make a significant difference in an older person's life, making him closer to his beloved people. Before the Covid pandemic, residents in nursing homes suffered loneliness and lack of contact with family members and loved ones.

(Noone et al., 2020), with the growing challenges brought forth by COVID-19, elderly people are facing higher levels of loneliness. Face-to-face contact through video calls will reduce the degree of loneliness among older adults. Such video calls at a nursing facility are an

outstanding intervention, which can have a well-trained research assistant spend some time with the residents who can meet their daily living activities on an appointment basis. With once or twice-a-month usage and in other events like birthdays and special family events, the elderly will be better connected with their social contacts and family, and the feeling of loneliness is reduced (Tsai et al., 2010). The telephone outreach programs can help lonely feelings among older adults.

Many of them depend on volunteers, like students of healthcare, to call the older adults who would like to have somebody to talk to once a week. The volunteers engage in storytelling with the older adult about his or her life and experiences. In this way, it helps develop a friendly rapport between them. Such regular conversations make all the difference in the life of an older adult. It gives them something to look forward to each week-the feeling of belonging, that there is someone who can care. Just knowing there is a friendly voice on the other end of the line may reduce the feeling of worry restlessness and loneliness (Gardiner et al., 2018).

#### **6.2.4 Nursing perspectives**

According to (Naik, MHSc & Ueland, PhD, 2020) the study underscores how loneliness among nursing home elderly residents is addressed by nurses and provide three significant categories that would allow such residents to deal with feelings of loneliness. First, there is a need for a connection with one's earlier life; inviting the resident into contact with their earlier experiences and memories may help facilitate the experience of belonging and identity.

Second, recreational activities rank high; encouraging activities the residents enjoy lifts their mood and advances avenues for them to interact socially with peers. Finally, the development of new networks is important in fighting loneliness; any opportunity given to the residents to make new friends or connect themselves within the nursing home setting goes a long way in improving social functioning. These insights detect the need for addressing loneliness among aged residents of care institutions using a multiapproach method (Hagan et al. (2014).

### **6.2.5 Educational interventions**

This intervention focuses on the maintenance and improvement of social networks. Such interventions have shown great promise in easing loneliness among the elderly. These interventions target the improvement of social connections, so important in battling isolation and fostering good psychological health at an advanced age. Although supportive evidence exists for their effectiveness, variations in the quality of studies indicate that more rigorous studies are required to help identify best practices in this area (Cohen-Mansfield & Perach, 2015).

### **6.2.6 Group based participation**

According to (Noone et al., 2020) More comprehensive research was needed to understand how these video call interventions work in the improvement of loneliness among older adults. They also mentioned that training on social conduct can be based on such measures, such as a teaching course on friendship and the development of one's social conduct. Equally, other groups like to find team spirit, Trust, encouragement, mourning, and plans just to name a few scenarios that bring older people together depending on their interest to express their likes and feelings in art, music, movies that re-echoed reminiscence in life, text reading that brought about loneliness. Encouragement and confidence building amongst the older persons, let them express freely their various experiences and through this, the aim of making new friends and eliminating loneliness is achieved (Pitkälä, Routasalo & Savikko 2014.).

## 7 Discussion

This chapter explains how the research was conducted, what was discovered, the theories that guided the study, and the challenges encountered. It covers the methods that were used to collect data, the key findings, how these findings relate to established theories faced during the research process.

### 7.1 Results & theoretical framework discussion

The prevalence of Loneliness among older adults in nursing care homes is alarmingly high, as 35% to 61% of the residents report moderate to severe loneliness (Gardiner et al., 2020; Trybusińska & Saracen, 2019). The extent of the issue corresponds with Orem's Self-Care Theory explaining how self-care leads to optimum health and well-being. The residents of nursing homes face a lot of challenges that limit their self-care ability and therefore decrease their lonely experiences.

In that direction, nurses can implement the following evidence-based interventions to reduce feelings of loneliness for elderly people living in nursing care homes, promote social activities and group interaction, use modern technologies to help residents keep in touch with their friends and family, and even music therapy programs (Trybusińska & Saracen, 2019). Furthermore, nurses should ensure interventions are focused on an individualized approach to residents' needs, considering family involvement, recreation types, and psychological status of patients (Jansson et al., 2023).

These findings give clear answers to the research questions about the prevalence of loneliness among elderly and possible interventions for reducing loneliness in nursing care homes. The high prevalence rates confirm the importance of the concern, while the different intervention strategies provide ways through which nurses and caregivers can handle the challenge. Therefore, nurses can help lonely older adults in nursing care facilities by systematically implementing these methods to help such populations engage in self-care activities that promote improvement in their overall health conditions, as Aroh et al. (2016) suggested.

## **7.2 Method Discussion**

Scoping review was helpful in studying loneliness in elderly patients in nursing homes because it explore the existent literature on the subject with both qualitative and quantitative studies. The flexibility within the nature of a scoping review allows for different types of evidence, which are needed in the performance of appropriate research into the nature of loneliness as experienced in this demographic group. It also helps in highlighting the gaps in the existing studies, which is most befitting for a new research domain, like elderly loneliness in care homes.

The scoping review process followed a predefined structured approach guided by the definition of the research question, an extensive literature search, the selection of studies based on predefined selection criteria, data charting, and summarizing. This process ensured that the review captures relevant and updated information regarding the prevalence of loneliness and coping strategies among elderly residents. This systematic mapping thus, provides a basis for the development of evidence that will inform future research and interventions in this important area of care for the elderly (Levac et al. 2010).

## **7.3 Limitations of the study**

Study limitations are the weaknesses or challenges that a researcher goes through during the process of the study. This is important, as it provides meaning to the reader (Ross & Zaidi, 2019). In doing this study, the researcher had intended to use a systematic literature review, but in the process of data collection, the researcher had a challenge in finding enough quality articles for this review. The nature of this research title is emergent, and the study initially began in the middle hence, the methodology was changed to a scoping review. Though the type of review used bears a risk of bias, the researcher worked hard to ensure the articles that would feature in this study were chosen and analyzed without bias.

Another important problem faced was language barrier, some of the significant articles were in Finnish, and thus, could be understood by the author only partially. This limitation restricted the collection of critical data concerning loneliness among elderly residents in nursing homes. In addition, the limited number of studies about loneliness in the nursing care context made it hard to fully understand the issue and thus relied on quantitative data or those from other contexts, which may not necessarily define the experiences of elderly residents living in nursing care homes (Ong et al., 2016).

## 8 Conclusions & Recommendations

In conclusion, Loneliness among elderly individuals living in nursing homes represents a serious public health problem because it seriously jeopardizes their mental and physical health by fostering negative outcomes, such as depression and diminished cognitive performance. This scoping review, therefore, brings to the fore the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the unique needs of this population.

Effective loneliness reduction should be promoted in nursing homes through well-rounded social programs that encourage interactions between residents themselves through group games and arts and crafts. The feeling of isolation can also be cured by increasing family engagement through regular visits and virtual communication. Increasing staffing resources will provide more time for building a good relationship between the nurses and the residents, and training staff on the importance of social support equips them to identify any signs of loneliness.

Second, the use of technology to facilitate periodic contacts through social security institutions, such as KELA in Finland, may contribute to the inclusion of feelings of loneliness among aged residents. Finally, further qualitative research on residents' personal experiences of loneliness should be conducted to base interventions on participants' unique conditions. When these recommendations are put into place, a nursing home will be fully able to provide a supportive environment that will enhance the quality of life of elderly residents.

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### Appendices 1: Articles Analyzed

| <b>Databases</b> | <b>Articles</b>  | <b>Year</b> | <b>Aim</b>   | <b>Method</b>                                   | <b>Findings</b>   |
|------------------|--|-------------|--|---|---|
| Pub Med          | Prevalence and determinants of loneliness among the oldest old living in institutionalized settings Hajek, A., Zwar, L., Gyasi, R. M., Kretzler, B., & König, H. H. (2024).  | 2024        | To examine the prevalence and determinants of loneliness among the oldest old living in institutionalized settings in Germany.                         | Data were taken from the representative survey. | Approximately 56.6% of the individuals were not lonely, 25.7% and 17.8% of the individuals were moderately and severely lonely, respectively. |
| Semantic scholar | Loneliness in nursing homes and assisted living facilities: prevalence, associated factors and prognosis. (Jansson, Anu & Muurinen, Seija & Savikko, Niina & Soini, Helena & Suominen, Merja & Kautiainen, Hannu & Pitkälä, Kaisu. (2017). | 2017        | The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence, associated factors, and prognosis of loneliness among older people in institutional settings. | A cross-sectional study.                        | Of the residents, 9% stated that they suffered from loneliness often or always, and 26%, sometimes.   |

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| Pub Med       | The Effect of Information Communication Technology Interventions on Reducing Social Isolation in the Elderly Chen, Y.-R. R., & Schulz, P. J. (2016).        | 2016 | This systematic review explored the effects of ICT interventions on reducing social isolation of the elderly.  | Quantitative and qualitative studies   | Information Communication Technology (ICT) was found to alleviate the elderly's social isolation through four mechanisms: connecting to the outside world, gaining social support, engaging in activities of interests, and boosting self-confidence. |
| Pub Med       | Loneliness and associated outcomes in a large survey of older adults (Barnes T, Bhattarai G, Kraemer S, Musich S, Schaeffer J, Yeh CS)<br><br>Abstract only | 2019 | The purpose of this study was to estimate the prevalence of loneliness and examine associations with socio-demographic, medical, and psychosocial characteristics in a large national survey of older adults | Large national Survey.                 | Overall, 43% of participants reported either moderate or severe loneliness.   |
| Research gate | Aung, Khin & Nurumal, Mohd & Wan, Nurumal & Syakirah, Nur & Bukhari, Wan. (2018). Loneliness  | 2018 | This study aimed to explore the level of loneliness among the elderly in nursing homes   | A quantitative cross-sectional design. | The result indicates all elderly experience loneliness at nursing homes.<br><br>While only 25% (N=20) feel loneliness   |

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|         | among elderly in Nursing homes.   |      | using the UCLA loneliness scale.  |  | moderately and 75% (N=60) feel very lonely.  |
| Pub Med | How Elderly Residents in Nursing Homes Handle Loneliness-From the Nurses' Perspective. (Naik MHSc P, Ueland PhD VI.)  | 2020 | The objective of the study was to identify, based on the nurses' experience, how elderly residents handle loneliness in the nursing home.                       | This study used a qualitative explorative approach with data collected through two focus group interviews. | Three main categories emerged as crucial to help lonely nursing home residents cope with day-to-day life: (i) maintaining ties to one's earlier life; (ii) engaging in recreational pursuits; and (iii) building new networks. |
| PubMed  | Interventions to reduce social isolation and loneliness among older people: an integrative review. Health & social care in the community, (Gardiner, C., Geldenhuys, G., & Gott, M. (2018). | 2018 | The study aimed to conduct an integrative review to identify the range and scope of interventions targeting social isolation and loneliness among older people. | Integrative review methodology   | The review identified a total of 38 studies that included various interventions aimed at older adults experiencing social isolation and loneliness.  |

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| CINAHL  | Videoconference program enhances social support, loneliness, and depressive status of elderly nursing home residents. Aging & mental health,( Tsai, H. H., Tsai, Y. F., Wang, H. H., Chang, Y. C., & Chu, H. H. (2010). | 2010 | The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a videoconference intervention program in improving nursing home residents' social support, loneliness, and depressive status. | Generalized estimating equation approach. | Elderly people with social contacts used video calls with assistance from staff to remain better connected with family and friends. |
| Pub Med | Video calls for reducing social isolation and loneliness in older people: a rapid review. Noone, C., McSharry, J., Smalle, M., Burns, A., Dwan, K., Devane, D., & Morrissey, E. C. (2020).                              | 2020 | The objective of this rapid review is to assess the effectiveness of video calls in reducing social isolation and loneliness in older adults.  | Quantitative analysis approach.           | A review of three studies involving 201 people in nursing homes found that video calls didn't really help reduce loneliness.        |
| Pub Med | Interventions for alleviating loneliness among older persons: a critical review. American journal of health. Cohen-Mansfield, J., &   | 2015 | The aim is to examine the utility of loneliness interventions among older persons.   | Qualitative reviews                       | The findings suggest that it is possible to reduce loneliness by using educational interventions focused on social networks         |

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|  | Perach, R.<br>(2015).Abstract only |  |  |  | maintenance and<br>enhancement. |
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