



MIINA
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Loneliness experienced by low income older women

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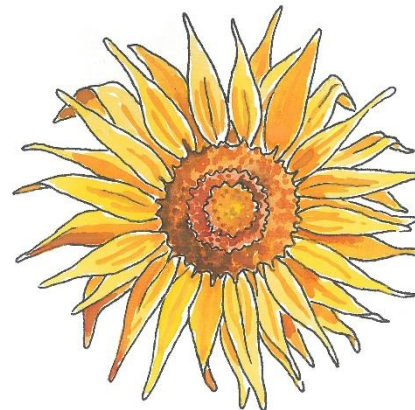
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Loneliness experienced by low income older women

- The Adept Women project (2015– 2017) aimed at improving the well-being and social participation of low income older women through a ten-week group intervention.
- Over 100 women from 50 to 88 years of age participated in the group intervention during the project.
- Most of the women who participated in the intervention groups were retired and lived alone.



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Aim and methods

The aim of the research project was to explore the experienced loneliness of the low income older women.

- The qualitative data consists of 9 thematic interviews.
- The interviewed women were from 60 to 76 years of age.
- In addition, we used questionnaires (n=54, which were collected at the beginning of each group intervention) to formulate the themes of the interviews.
- The data were analyzed with content analysis by encoding text sections dealing with loneliness and low income.



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Changes in the life situation

The interviewees had experienced different changes or hardships in their life situations:

- Widowhood, divorce, retirement (due to age or an illness) and geographical mobility

"...during my lifetime I have moved many times and the circle of friends has always changed --- when I retired I noticed that I really don't have anyone." (H5)



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Time and place of loneliness

- The feelings of loneliness were felt at home in the morning and in the evening, during the weekends and holidays.
- Feeling how all the days were alike and that there was no structure in the days.

"It [loneliness] is related to being at home. Then if I feel distressed I might just go out. I go to the library or for a coffee. Somehow there's life around because when you're between the four walls there's nothing. There's just me and 'the nothingness.'" (H3)



- Positive feelings were also attached to the home environment.



Unfulfilled social relationships

Most of the women had social relationships (friends, children, grandchildren) but lacked everyday contacts with them.

Many of the women missed someone

- to talk to,
- to help in daily decision-making,
- to share their daily life & experiences,
- to do the daily activities

" I do not have anyone with whom..." (H2)



For them, the loneliness meant being without needed everyday social relationships.



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Lifelong experience

- Loneliness as a lifelong experience

"I cry nearly every time I see an older couple or a young couple walking hand in hand, why doesn't anyone hold my hand?" (H5)



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Emotions and consequences of loneliness

- The emotions attached to loneliness were sadness, tearfulness, feelings of abandonment, exclusion, and depression.
- The women mentioned also physical pain.
- For some of the women, loneliness caused passivity and lack of initiative

“It feels like you’re having your insides ripped off and that they bleed because it hurts so much.” (H4)
“I completely felt like there’s no sense in anything. I had no schedule for any day of the week.” (H7)



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The effects of low income

- The women had small pensions and they couldn't afford private sector services or any other extra expenses (for instance theatres, gyms, hobbies or travelling).
 - > as a result, they had limited opportunities to spend an active life and meet other people of the same age.
- Small pensions also caused stress and concern about the future

*All my money goes to basic things (H3)
If I get sick, my personal budget collapses (H1)*



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Summary of the findings

- Loneliness appeared on the basis of the interviews as a very diverse phenomenon.
- For most of the women it was social loneliness but for some, it was also deep emotional loneliness.
- The women lacked fulfilling and meaningful social relationships and the loneliness was a response to this.
- The loneliness was mainly a life situational experience that was encountered in old age.



Conclusions

- Common for interviewed women was that they tried to find a solution to an unsatisfactory situation.
- They participated in the Adept women group because they looked for supplementary relationships and activities corresponding to their needs.



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Let's share the baskettips!

Thank you!

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