



University of Wales
Trinity Saint David
LONDON

Component 1: Written Assignment (Report)

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Module: Living with Care: The Older Person

Module Code: BMHP6009

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Introduction

This report provides a comprehensive analysis and critical evaluation of the impact of loneliness and social isolation on the elderly population. The report compares the current policy and provision for care of the older person in the UK with that of at least one other country. The aim of this report is to examine the effectiveness of the programs aimed at addressing the issue of loneliness among the elderly and explore the potential of technology in providing care for lonely older persons. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for improving the existing programs and policies for the elderly population.

Definition of Elderly person

According to conventional wisdom, an individual who has surpassed the age of 65 may be deemed an older person. This statement is made in recognition of the fact that the aging process is a natural phenomenon that affects all human beings, and the passage of time often brings with it a variety of physical, emotional, and cognitive changes that can impact an individual's quality of life. (NHS England, 2024) However, according to the official website of the Bolivian government, individuals aged 60 years or above are regarded as elderly people. It is important to keep in mind that these definitions may differ across various jurisdictions, countries, and cultures. (Mendizábal & Escobar, 2013)

statistics on the ageing population

Based on the latest census results of 2021, it has become apparent that the population of England and Wales has observed a consistent increase in age since 2011. Specifically, the number of individuals aged 65 years and over has risen from 9.2 million to over 11 million in 2021, with a notable increase in the proportion of people aged 65 years and over from 16.4% to 18.6%. (storey, 2023) However, according to the latest data, the population of Bolivia comprising individuals aged 65 years and above was recorded at 4.8% in 2022. As per the recent statistics, this figure has increased to 4.9% in 2023. (Knoema, 2023)

Loneliness and Isolation definitions, Disengagement and Modernization theories

Loneliness is the emotional state of feeling disconnected or isolated from others, usually caused by a lack of social interaction or companionship. It can manifest as either a transient sensation or a chronic state that impacts an individual's psychological and emotional welfare. Loneliness symptoms can differ among individuals, but commonly involve withdrawing from social interactions, experiencing sadness, anxiety, and struggling to

establish and sustain relationships. It is crucial to acknowledge the significance of addressing loneliness. Seeking assistance from a qualified professional or a trusted friend can be advantageous in managing this condition. (Hall, 2023)

Isolation is a condition that occurs when an individual is physically or emotionally disconnected from others. This can be attributed to various physical, social, or psychological obstacles. In social settings, isolation is often associated with solitude, alienation, and detachment from others. The consequences of isolation can harm an individual's overall mental and physical well-being, underscoring the importance of fostering solid social connections to counteract its effects. (Cherry, 2023)

The disengagement theory is a theoretical framework that suggests that as individuals grow older, they tend to retreat from their societal roles and responsibilities. This results in a reciprocal withdrawal between the individual and society, perceived as a natural and unavoidable aspect of the ageing process. The field of social gerontology has extensively examined the Disengagement theory, which has yielded valuable insights. (Nickerson, 2023) Modernization theories propose that social isolation and loneliness are more common in modern societies because of urbanization, weakened family connections, and a greater focus on individualism. These theories propose that conventional social frameworks have been disrupted, deteriorating social bonds and increased feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

The disengagement and modernization theories examine the ideas related to ageing and social connections, specifically loneliness and isolation. The disengagement theory posits that individuals tend to retreat from their social roles and obligations as they age, resulting in a reciprocal disconnection between the individual and society. This can lead to a feeling of deprivation of one's sense of self and meaning, contributing to emotions of solitude and seclusion.

Both the disengagement and modernization theories examine the intricate connections between ageing and social relationships, explicitly concerning loneliness and isolation. Although each theory possesses its merits and drawbacks, both provide valuable perspectives on the difficulties encountered by individuals as they grow older and the significance of social relationships in preserving overall welfare.

The impact of loneliness and isolation on an older person living within a care setting.

The experience of loneliness and isolation can profoundly affect an elderly individual residing in a care facility. It can result in various physical, emotional, and mental health problems,

such as depression, anxiety, and cognitive deterioration. Elderly individuals who experience social isolation and loneliness may face an increased susceptibility to chronic diseases and a reduced lifespan. (Taylor, 2019)

Loneliness and isolation can pose significant challenges in a care setting, as residents may experience separation from their families and friends, resulting in limited social interaction opportunities. Carers must prioritise emotional support and promote social interaction by arranging group activities, facilitating individual conversations, and offering access to technology that enables residents to maintain connections with their loved ones. By attending to feelings of solitude and seclusion, carers can enhance the overall standard of living for elderly individuals residing in a care facility.

Loneliness and isolation pose significant challenges for elderly individuals residing in care settings in the UK. Age UK reports that more than 1.4 million elderly individuals in the UK experience difficulties with loneliness, which can significantly affect their mental and physical well-being. Within care environments, elderly individuals may encounter social isolation as a result of factors such as restricted physical movement, absence of transportation options, and a dearth of opportunities for social interaction. (AgeUK, 2021) These factors can result in the development of depression, anxiety, and a deterioration in cognitive abilities. Carers and family members can assist by making regular visits, promoting engagement in activities, and facilitating connections with community resources for their loved ones.

Critically examine current legislation and policies that deal with or aim to raise awareness or reduce loneliness and isolation in the elderly population.

In the United Kingdom, loneliness and isolation are acknowledged as substantial concerns that impact the elderly demographic. As a reaction, the government has enacted various policies and legislative measures to tackle this issue. An important undertaking is the Loneliness Strategy, introduced in 2018. The strategy aims to offer assistance and increase awareness regarding loneliness and social isolation among the elderly. The strategy encompasses a variety of initiatives, including providing financial support for community projects that foster social cohesion, advocating for equal access to digital resources, and innovating new technologies to facilitate interpersonal connectivity. The Social Care Green Paper, released in 2018, is an additional measure that details the government's intentions to revamp the social care system. The paper presents suggestions to enhance accessibility to support and care services, specifically targeting the reduction of loneliness and isolation among older people. (Government, 2018) Furthermore, the Care Act of 2014 mandates that

local authorities must offer services that enhance the welfare of the elderly population, specifically targeting the reduction of loneliness and isolation. The legislation also strongly emphasises preventive measures to decrease the necessity for more advanced medical treatment in the future. (Care Quality, 2022) Although these policies and legislative measures represent progress, various challenges still require attention. For instance, the allocation of funds for these programmes may be restricted, and further research is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to loneliness and isolation among older people. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem of solitude and seclusion among the elderly. This has resulted in the shutdown of numerous community centres and services, thereby intensifying the difficulty for the elderly to establish social connections. Ultimately, although the UK has enacted various policies and legislative actions to diminish loneliness and social isolation among the elderly, further investigation, financial resources, and collaboration across different sectors are still required to tackle this issue effectively.

Critically evaluate and compare local, national, and global provision of services for the older person in line with current initiatives and policy

The delivery of services for elderly individuals is a crucial matter that necessitates focus at the local, national, and global scales. In the United Kingdom, various initiatives and policies have been implemented to tackle this problem. Service provision for older individuals varies locally and depends on the specific geographical area. Local authorities deliver home care, day centres, and residential care homes. Nevertheless, the calibre and accessibility of these services fluctuate based on the resources and funding allocated to each region. Moreover, there are several initiatives and policies in place that aim to support the well-being of the elderly population. These include the National Health Service (NHS), which provides healthcare services to all UK residents, including older adults. The NHS also offers specialized services for elderly patients, such as falls prevention programs and dementia care services. (Department of Health, 2001)

At the national level, the UK government has implemented policies to enhance the delivery of services for elderly individuals. The Care Act 2014, for instance, implemented alterations to how care and support are delivered to elderly individuals. The legislation obligates local authorities to evaluate an individual's requirements and offer appropriate services to fulfil those requirements. The government has implemented initiatives like the Ageing Society Grand Challenge, which seeks to foster innovation in delivering services for older people. On a global scale, the UK has committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by

the United Nations. One of these goals is to guarantee affordable and high-quality healthcare for everyone. The UK government has additionally pledged to advance the cause of healthy ageing through its international development initiatives. In addition, the government provides social security benefits to older adults, such as the State Pension and Pension Credit. There are also housing assistance programs, such as the Sheltered Housing Scheme, which provides affordable housing for older adults in need. (GOV.UK, 2019)

Thus, despite multiple initiatives and policies aimed at enhancing the delivery of services for elderly individuals in the UK, there remains potential for further enhancement. Local authorities must ensure high-quality services are accessible to all, regardless of geographical location. The government should persist in allocating resources towards the delivery of services for elderly individuals and advocating for the promotion of healthy ageing on a global scale.

In other hand, Bolivia has undertaken various initiatives and implemented policies to enhance the delivery of services for the elderly. An important measure implemented by the government is the passing of the Law for the Rights of Older Persons in 2017. The objective of this legislation is to safeguard the rights of elderly individuals, foster their engagement in the community, and ensure their availability to vital services. In addition, the government has established the National Council for Older Persons, tasked with coordinating and executing policies pertaining to the well-being of elderly individuals. The council endeavours to advance the rights of elderly individuals, enhance their healthcare accessibility, and furnish them with social security benefits. Furthermore, the government has instituted initiatives to offer economic support to elderly individuals who are experiencing destitution. The objective of these programmes is to furnish senior individuals with a fundamental income to sustain their daily necessities and enhance their quality of life. In general, Bolivia has undertaken various initiatives and implemented policies to enhance the delivery of services for the elderly. These initiatives demonstrate the government's dedication to advancing the rights and well-being of elderly individuals within the nation. (Bastia, 2010)

The future of the care of the older person

As the population ages, consideration of the future of care for the elderly becomes increasingly vital. Loneliness poses a significant obstacle for the elderly population, exerting detrimental effects on both their physical and mental well-being. A shift towards more person-centre care that emphasises social connections and relationships is required to address this issue. Efforts to combat loneliness among the elderly must incorporate greater adaptability and customisation into their programmes. This may entail a blend of conventional social engagements, including group excursions and gatherings, and more

recent technological advancements that enable virtual social interactions. For instance, social media platforms could assist older adults in maintaining relationships with friends and acquaintances, while video conferencing could enable them to communicate with distant family members. Additionally, technology could significantly impact the provision of care for elderly individuals who are lonely. Smart homes, wearable technology, and remote monitoring systems have the potential to enhance the security and welfare of elderly individuals, while concurrently offering reassurance to carers and family members. Furthermore, developments in artificial intelligence and robotics may facilitate the creation of more cost-effective and efficient care models.

In addition to leveraging technology to enhance safety, well-being, and quality of life, the future of care for the elderly must generally revolve around fostering social connections and interactions. (AspireUK, 2024)

Recommendation

There exist multiple strategies for enhancing programmes that furnish healthcare services and social support for the elderly. Increasing funding for community-based programmes that provide these services is one approach. This can contribute to the expansion of these programmes' reach and ensure that a greater number of seniors have access to essential healthcare and social support. A further method of enhancing these programmes is to augment the workforce of proficient healthcare practitioners who provide care for the elderly. This can aid in ensuring that seniors receive individualised, high-quality care. Seniors and their families must also be made aware of these programmes and services through promotion. This may be accomplished via educational materials, community outreach programmes, or other modes of communication. Finally, it is critical to ensure that the requirements of seniors are considered during the development of these programmes. This requires that when designing these programmes and services, consideration be given to cognitive ability, social isolation, and physical mobility, among other factors. We can ensure that seniors receive the necessary care and support to live happy, healthy lives by taking this action.

Moreover, it is strongly advised to encourage the utilisation of technology in delivering care for elderly individuals who are suffering from feelings of isolation. The integration of video conferencing, social media, and other communication technologies can have a crucial impact in maintaining their connection with their loved ones. The establishment of this connection is of utmost importance for their emotional well-being and can be facilitated through the use of technology that encourages a sense of community and support. Utilising

technology should be seen as a chance to improve the standard of care for elderly individuals, and it is crucial to promote its adoption for the improvement of their well-being. (Sen, et al., 2022)

Improving the training and support given to carers, including both family members and professional care providers, is crucial in order to ensure that they have the necessary skills and resources to provide excellent care and support to the elderly. By allocating resources towards carer training and support, we can enhance the overall well-being of the elderly population and ensure that they receive the necessary care and attention. (Anon., 2024)

It is crucial to enhance public consciousness regarding the difficulties encountered by the elderly population and the importance of tackling these matters. This can be accomplished by implementing public education campaigns, conducting media outreach, and employing other communication endeavours. Through increasing awareness, we can foster a deeper comprehension of the distinct requirements and worries of the elderly and collaborate to establish a more supportive and inclusive society for everyone.

Conclusion

In summary, the issue of loneliness and isolation among older people is a primary global concern that requires attention. An effective strategy to address this problem is to facilitate the use of video conferencing tools, which would allow older people to communicate with their loved ones and distant friends. Additionally, measures can be implemented to promote social activities and encourage community participation. Volunteer programs and community outreach initiatives can mitigate these problems and assist seniors. Also, raise awareness among people with campaigns that help understand how our elderly feel and help them not feel discriminated against or excluded. By implementing these measures, we can guarantee that our elderly people receive the care and attention necessary to lead a happy and satisfying life.

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