



Summary report Researchers workshop

Knowledge sharing process on
“Isolation and loneliness of older people
during the COVID-19 pandemic:
formal/informal care”

1. Background

Joint Programming Initiative ‘More Years, Better Lives’ (JPI MYBL) aims to complement, and provide a concrete perspective, to existing research on the issues regarding Isolation and loneliness of older people during the COVID-19 pandemic: formal/informal care” by involving policy makers, stakeholders, and researchers. The underlying document for the process is the red line document. The document provided a short background and summary of the state of the art on the topics of isolation and loneliness during the pandemic. During the knowledge sharing process this document would be expanded towards a state of the art document. The process consists of 4 workshops. All workshops will be attended by the whole group of stakeholders, researchers, and policy representatives

This report summarises the second workshop moderated by Johan fritzell chair of the JPI MYBL scientific Advisory board. After introductions from Johan fritzell and Bruno Arpino (coordinator of the knowledge sharing process) the researchers are invited to share their views on the redline document. There was also time for some questions and discussion.

The workshop was recorded and is available on the JPI MYBL you tube page.

2. Researchers’ presentations

Stability and change in the associations of risk factors with the development of loneliness across middle and late adulthood: An Analysis based on the German Aging Survey. – Oliver Huxhold

The German Aging Survey showed that the impact of certain risk factors for the development of loneliness may change systematically across the life span. With analyses focusing on shorter time-scales the researchers hoped to demonstrate that these changes in associations also occurred in the short-term if there is massive change in contextual conditions (e.g., corona pandemic, widowhood etc.)

Trends and risk factors of loneliness in older adults. – Lena Dahlberg

The Swedish Panel Study of Living Conditions of the Oldest Old and a Systematic review of longitudinal risk factors formed the basis of Lena’s presentation. The following five risk factors for loneliness were identified 1. emographic factors; 2. Socio-economic factors; 3. Social factors; 4. Health-related factors; 5. Psychological factors. One of the issues signalled was that some potential risk factors for instance social contact with children, informal care, quality in social relations were not included in longitudinal research performed.

Loneliness before and during the Covid-19 pandemic: prevalence and risk factors among Dutch older adults. – Theo van Tilburg

Theo van Tilburg's presentation highlighted that Combatting social isolation (or few contacts) is not the same as combatting loneliness. They need different approaches. More emphasis should be given to prevention and the though important the role of family should not be overestimated. There is also a role for home care helpers and informal contacts. It was also identified that targeted policies reducing the negative impact of vulnerabilities. During the pandemic the older adults mostly experienced the 'emptiness' and the diminishing close connectedness with people around them. Many dealt with this by lowering their expectations.

Research review on the association between social connection and health outcomes in longterm care home residents. - Jennifer Bethell

Jennifer Bethell's presentation introduced the participants to the term social connection and defined it as the structural, functional and quality aspects of how individuals connect to each other. The essential role of social connection in Long Term Care homes was highlighted during the pandemic. The review also showed that isolation and loneliness were/are important topics in Long Term Care homes before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also see Annex 2 for the slides of the individual presentations.

3. Conclusion

The presentations highlighted the importance of family, friends and other social contacts in preventing loneliness. The stakeholders signalled that the perspective of older persons themselves could be stronger embedded in research.

It also became clear that some research topics, methodologies, and research groups were overlooked in research performed. For example, we miss cross country research; we miss focus on urban, rural differences. These might be very important to understand what kind of welfare state or policy, or practices might reduce the impact of the pandemic or might impact on loneliness in general. So, what we are trying to do during this knowledge sharing process bringing research into policy and practice is very important.

Next steps

- The next workshop will bring the perspective from policy.
- The participants will consider publishing an E-book containing reflections and articles highlighting important findings from the research and the knowledge sharing process. The audience is the general public.

Annex I - List of participants

Participants who confirmed attendance are:

Clemens	Tesch-Roemer	German Centre of Gerontology (DZA)	Germany
Theo	Van Tilburg	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam	Netherlands
Elsa	Perdrix	Dauphine University	France
Heidrun	Mollenkopf	AGE Platform Europe	Belgium
Elke	Tippelmann	BAGSO e.V.	Germany
Tineke	Fokkema	Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI)	Netherlands
Jennifer	Bethell	KITE Research Institute, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute – University Health Network	Canada
Oliver	Huxhold	German Centre of Gerontology (DZA)	Germany
Vincent	Horn	University of Mainz	Germany
Lena	Dahlberg	Ageing research center	Sweden
Annemie	Drieskens	Coface Families Europe	Belgium

Organisation:

Bruno	Arpino	Coordinator JPI MYBL knowledge sharing Process
Giuseppe	Gabrielli	JPI MYBL General Assembly member
Denice	Moi Thuk Shung	MYBL secretariat
Johan	Fritzell	Moderator & Chair JPI MYBL scientific advisory board
Janice	Keefe	Vice chair JPI MYBL scientific advisory board

Annex II – Programme

Draft programme

A knowledge sharing process on “Isolation and loneliness of older people during the COVID-19 pandemic: formal/informal care”

Date and time: 10 March 2022 from 14.45 till 18.00H CET.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zomnw.zoom.us/j/92605232345?pwd=K1V5TmhQZFhEbGRma2hwNVJsZkxJUT09>

Meeting ID: 926 0523 2345, Passcode: c04y+Vn.

Organization: Bruno Arpino, Johan Fritzell, Giuseppe Gabrielli

Support and documentation: Denice Moi Thuk Shung and Emma Wilckens, MYBL secretariat

Participants: stakeholders, researchers, and policy representatives

Objectives of the knowledge sharing process:

- to complement, and provide a concrete perspective, to existing research on these issues by involving policy makers, stakeholders, and researchers.
- to disseminate knowledge, research, and practices; and contribute to the JPI visibility.

Setting:

The process consists of 4 workshops and is based on a redline document. All workshops will be attended by the whole group of stakeholders, researchers, and policy representatives. During each workshop one group gives its views on the redline document and after each workshop the document is revised. The process ends with a half day face to face event during which the participants make a synthesis of all the input and agree on needs for the future.

WORKSHOP 2: Researchers

Chair: Johan Fritzell (Chair of the scientific advisory board of JPI MYBL)

Time	
14.45 – 15.00	Welcome & Introduction
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About JPI MYBL: aim, activities, agenda (Johan Fritzell) • Introduction to the topic and aim of the knowledge sharing process (Bruno Arpino, chair of knowledge and sharing activities)
15.00	Presentation I
	15.00: Oliver Huxhold: “Stability and change in the associations of risk factors with the development of loneliness across middle and late adulthood - Analysis based on the German Aging Survey.”

	15.20: Lena Dahlberg: Trends and risk factors of loneliness in older adults.
15.40 – 15.50	<i>Screen break</i>
15.50 – 16.30	<p>Presentation II</p> <p>15.50: Theo van Tilburg: “Loneliness before and during the COVID-19 pandemic: Prevalence and risk factors among Dutch older adults”.</p> <p>16.10: Jennifer Bethell: "Research review on the association between social connection and health outcomes in long-term care home residents".</p>
16.20 – 17.45	<p>Plenary session</p> <p>Discussant: Bruno Arpino & Johan Fritzell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments from the stakeholders. • Discussion of the research questions of the redline document in relation to the presentations.
17.45 – 18.00	Next steps (Bruno Arpino)