

ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns the problem of social isolation in older adults living alone. It authentically captures the unique experience of older people during the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim of this work is to understand whether older people think their needs changed during the period of Covid-19 pandemic in comparison with the time before it, and moreover to formulate recommendations for field workers providing health and social services, general practitioners and municipalities with extended powers. This thesis is processed by the method of interpretive phenomenological analysis. The theoretical part presents a view of social isolation in older adults, risk factors leading to it and possibilities of prevention through various social institutions. It focuses not only on the period of the Covid-19 pandemic when the risk of social isolation was significantly influenced by the emergency measures against the spread of the diseases but also on the period before its onset. The empirical part presents the issue of social isolation of older adults during the Covid-19 pandemic from the perspective of the adults themselves. The research survey is supplemented with the experience of experts working with the target group of older adults. The real experience of participants in the research survey shows that the social isolation of older adults during the Covid-19 pandemic interpreted through Maslow's pyramid affected all its levels and often intensified other preexisting issues. The connection between the social isolation of older adults and their loneliness and health condition has been proven. The findings of the research emphasize the importance of social contacts, the provision of appropriate information and the irreplaceable role of a social worker. This authentically conveyed view of the pandemic situation evokes an array of important focus points for the system of supportive integrated services (SIPS) in which it is essential to understand the diversity of personalities in older adults as diverse users of health and social services. The survey result also suggests it is essential to re-evaluate the system of coordination for provision of services in municipalities.

Keywords: older adult, social isolation, loneliness, heterogeneity, Covid-19 pandemic, social worker, needs, SIPS