



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

Umeå University Medical Dissertations, New Series No 2236

---

# **HARNESSING TOGETHERNESS**

## **Perceptions of loneliness and promotion of social participation in the home care context**

Therése Nordin

### **Akademisk avhandling**

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av medicine doktorsexamen i arbetsterapi framläggs till offentligt försvar i Rotundan, Universumhuset, fredagen den 28 april 2023, kl. 09:00.

Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på svenska.

Fakultetsopponent: Docent, Sofi Fristedt

Avdelningen för kvalitetsförbättring och ledarskap, Hälsohögskolan Jönköping,  
Jönköping, Sverige

Institutionen för Samhällsmedicin och Rehabilitering,  
Avdelningen för Arbetsterapi, Umeå universitet, Sverige

**Organization**

Umeå University  
Department of occupational  
therapy

**Document type**

Doctoral thesis

**Date of publication**

06 04 2023

**Author**

Therése Nordin

**Title**

HARNESSING TOGETHERNESS Perceptions of loneliness and promotion of social participation in the home care context

**Abstract**

*Introduction* It is well known that older adults have a higher risk for loneliness, which is detrimental for health. Home care in Sweden has a responsibility to address social needs, but systematic approaches are lacking and there is a know–do gap. The overall aim of this thesis was to develop knowledge about older home care recipients' and home care providers' perceptions of loneliness and social participation among older adults, and furthermore, to develop a work model for supporting social participation in home care and explore that process.

*Methods* Four studies were included. In the first study, care recipient interviews explored perceptions of social participation. In the second, a total population survey investigated the association between perceived care quality and loneliness. The third study used individual and group interviews with home care providers to explore discourses on loneliness and social support. The fourth applied a participatory action research (PAR) process with care workers to develop strategies to alleviate care recipients' loneliness.

*Findings* Enjoying personally relevant occupations, both in solitude and with others, was found to be important for satisfactory social participation. Low perceived quality in home care quality was statistically associated with loneliness. Two discourses, one in which care recipients were described as valued but vulnerable "others", and another in which they were described as competent peers, were identified. A work model facilitating social participation was created, and the PAR process was applied to a "framework for occupational enablement for change in community practice".

*Conclusion* The understanding of loneliness and social participation in the complex home care context has been nuanced, as have discourses that affect home care practice. The work model itself could become a first step towards systematically addressing loneliness and social needs, and the application of an occupational enablement framework onto the PAR process ties the methodologies together and facilitates participatory research for occupational therapy and science.

**Keywords**

Loneliness; Older adults; Home care services; Home care delivery; Social participation

**Language**

English

**ISBN**

print: 978-91-8070-043-6  
PDF: 978-91-8070-044-3

**ISSN**

0346-6612

**Number of pages**

106 + 4 papers