

Predictors of Loneliness in a Population of Elderly

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Introduction: Living alone, limited personal social networks are, according to the literature, factors that contribute to experience loneliness. It is known that the last stage of the life cycle is strongly marked by generational loss, being marked in this phase, beyond the network shrinkage, reducing opportunities for renewal along with lower energy to activate, mobilize and maintain active links of the network (Sluzki, 1996).

Objectives: To determine the predictors of loneliness in a resident population in central Portugal.

Methods: 300 elderly people (mean age = 74.03/SD = ± 8.511) were surveyed. The sample was assessed with the UCLA Loneliness scale, EQ5D, Lubben social networks and a small sociodemographic questionnaire. The UCLA Loneliness presented reliability, measured by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.905).

Results: To determine loneliness predictors a binary logistic regression was performed, with seven independent variables "age", "sex", "see your family", "having spouse", "Lubben social networks", "level of education" and "EQ5 health". The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant, $\chi^2(15, N = 300) = 86.801, p < 0.001$. The model as a whole explained 26.1% (Cox and Snell R^2) and 39.2% (R^2 Nagelkerke) variation and correctly classified 84.3% of cases. Logistic regression showed that "age" ($p = 0.055$), "sex" ($p = 0.091$), "sees his family" ($p = 0.023$), "spouse" ($p < 0.001$), "Lubben social networks" ($p = 0.027$), "level of education" ($p = 0.038$) and "health EQ5" ($p < 0.001$) were loneliness predictors.

Conclusion: Given these results social intervention for active citizenship, networked, with the elderly population is suggested.