

Enhancing the Quality of Life of Older People in Poverty

with particular reference to those living alone

Dr. Margaret Hodgins, Ms. Verna McKenna, Ms. Maureen D'Eath

Health Promotion Research Centre,
NUI Galway

Background

- Need to move away from narrow focus on income to
- Broader understanding of experiences of older people
- Taking into account their social and family supports, perceived access to services, social inclusion and general expectations

Study Aims

- To identify and explore non-monetary factors that effect the quality of life of older people living in poverty
- To analyse the efficacy of existing policy from the perspective of older people
- To build on existing evidence and to inform an evidence-based policy process

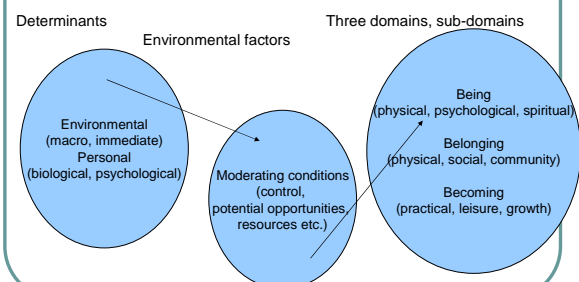
Study Objectives

- To consult with older people, living alone and on state pension, in order to identify what they consider to be non-monetary factors that influence QoL
- To explore the perceived importance of health, social and community supports and housing condition in achieving positive health and QoL
- To explore the experience of social exclusion and how it impacts on health and QoL
- To review existing health, housing, and social welfare policy with regard to provisions for older people
- To make recommendations for policies which will enhance the QoL of older people in poverty

Context (QoL)

- The study of Quality of Life
 - Different approaches, assumptions, methodologies, measures
 - Approach taken here is that of CHPS, University of Toronto
 - Comprehensive, includes determinants and environmental factors, is dynamic, is consistent with principles of Health Promotion
 - Definition: *The degree to which a person enjoys the important possibilities of his or her life*

CHPS Model of QoL



QoL and Older People

- Studies of QoL of older people
 - Consistently identify social relationships and activities, independence and control as important, also ability to cope financially

Determinants of QoL in Older People

- Social relationships
- Well-being and Outlook
- Health
- Home and neighbourhood
- Social activities
- Income

Poverty context

- *National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1997)*
 - Explicit relative definition of poverty
 - Important policy focus
- *PPF (1999)*-social inclusion measures
 - Review of NAPS
- *NAPs/incl 2003-2005*
- *Building an Inclusive Society 2002*
- *Sustaining Progress 2003-2005 Social Partnership Agreement*
- *NAPs/inl 2006-08*

- Unprecedented economic growth
- Dropping poverty rates
- Consistent vs relative
- Poverty and older people
 - NAPs/incl 2006- 2008-specific group
 - Greatest increase in poverty risk (1994-2001)
 - EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2005
 - SLAN data

At Risk of Poverty Rates General Population and Over 65s (CSO, '06)

	2003	2004	2005
General Pop	19.7	19.4	18.5
Over 65s	29.8	27.1	20.1

- Vincentian Partnership 2006 report
 - Consensual budget standard methodology
 - Budget costs outweigh income
 - All female lone pensioner income scenario left shortfalls (€49-€89 per week).

Policy response

- One fifth older people live in relative poverty
- Consistent poverty and deprivation-issue for some groups over others
- Older people report reasonable high levels of overall QoL

- Broader focus on non-monetary aspects of poverty
- Increase income (real terms)
- Fully accessible state services
- Those living alone
- Real social inclusion
 - (NAPs/incl 2003-2005).

- Overcoming loneliness and isolation
- Adequate provision of housing supports
- Access to services
- Participation
- Income support
 - (Consultation for the NAPs/incl 2006-2008)

Methods

- Design
 - Qualitative: interviews with older people
 - Documentary analysis of policy documents
- Instrument
 - Developed based on review of relevant literature
 - Built around the Toronto QoL domains
- Sample
 - 36 persons, using maximum variation sampling
 - Sampling strategy
- Validation exercises

Nine areas of life (CHPS, Toronto)

Being	Physical	Body & health
	Psychological	Thoughts & feelings
	Spiritual	Beliefs & values
Belonging	Physical	Where I live and spend my time
	Social	The people around me
	Community	Access to community resources
Becoming	Practical	Daily things I do
	Leisure	Things I do for fun and enjoyment
	Growth	Things I do to cope and change

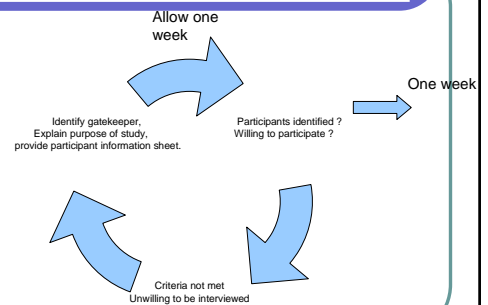
Sample

	Urban (n)	Rural (n)	Total
Age group 1 (65-74 years)	65-75 F (2) 65-75 M (3)	65-75 F (6) 65-75 M (4)	8 7
Age group 2 (75 and more)	75 + F (7) 75 + M (1)	75 + F (7) 75 + M (6)	14 7
Total	13	23	36

Recruitment to sample

- Considerations
 - Study requirements: persons living alone and on state pension
 - Sensitivity, confidentiality
 - 'Information rich' subjects, persons interested, willing to engage in research process
 - Importance of 'gatekeepers'
 - Ethical considerations
 - *Participant Information sheets*

Recruitment process



Gatekeepers

- Dublin, Galway, Sligo, Cork, Waterford (Urban)
- Mayo, Co. Galway (Rural)
- Statutory (HSE, PHN)
- Voluntary (Social Services, meals-on-wheels, large number of organisations, active retirement groups)
- Community Development Projects (Galway, Dublin, Cork)

Recruitment issues

- Parameters of inclusion criteria
- Persons not engaged with services
- Older men
- Lengthy recruitment process
- Interest in participation
- Sensitivity around 'poverty'

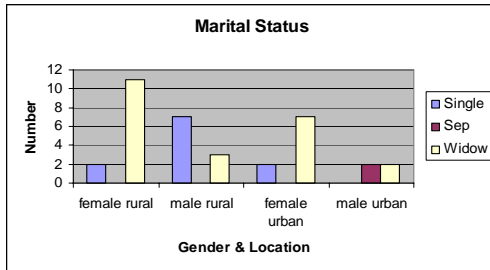
Validation exercises

- Two set up
- Interest and satisfaction with findings
- No issues raised

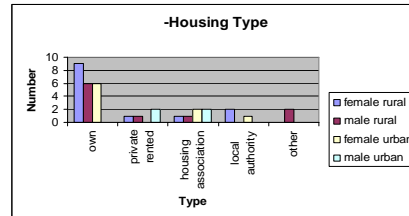
Findings

- Outcomes across Being, Belonging and Becoming-reasonably good
 - But...
- Aspects of life that impact on life quality that need more attention
- Cross-cutting themes

Marital Status of Participants



Type of Accommodation



Cross-cutting themes

- Social Relations
 - Family, neighbours, overall community
 - Generally positive terms re neighbourhood
 - Lack of people and community
 - Social networks..engagement with life
 - Need for comprehensive befriending service

- Importance of getting out & independence
 - Linked to everyday routines
 - Access to appropriate transport
- Living conditions and security
 - Satisfaction, access to support
 - Low installation rates for smoke and security alarms

- Well-being and outlook
 - Maintaining a positive attitude critical to 'keeping going'
- Health
 - Striving to be active
 - Engagement with services/groups
 - Loneliness-impact on emotional well-being

- Income
 - Some reported hardship
 - Challenge of budgeting on limited income
 - Fuel costs
 - Living from 'week to week' and 'surviving'
 - Cost of taxis

- Importance of services and schemes
 - Reliance on health and social services
 - Assistance with making ends meet
 - Day centres (practical and social supports)
 - Highly valued
 - Increase flexibility of home help service

- Pride in managing on meagre resources
 - Ability to manage
 - Avoid debt
 - Careful budgeting and modest lifestyle
 - Integration of free-schemes
- Expectations
 - Attitude of forbearance
 - Diminished expectation for a good life in old age
 - Temporal dimension to QoL

- Social exclusion
 - Limitations of sampling process
 - Role of transport
 - Loneliness

Recommendations

- Access to socially isolated persons
- Social needs assessment
- Transport
- Positive mental health promotion
- Befriending service
- Access to information
- Assessment of housing and security needs
- Income supports linked to inflation/cost of living