Linking old age loneliness to substance abuse: A Reflexive Approach

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

• Introduction
• Research aims and objectives
• Old age and loneliness
• Drugs
• Substance abuse by senior citizens
• Research approach
• Research findings
• Conclusion
Introduction

• Mother Theresa once said the feeling of being lonely and being unwanted is worse than TB.
• More often Senior Citizens are rejected by society as well as by their families by virtue of their age.
• Ageism is pervasive in our society.
• Some are placed at old age homes by their children or relatives and from there no one visits them.
• The Holy Scriptures say that it is not good for a man to live alone. Simply put, as human beings we need the company of other human beings.
Research aims

• The aim of the presentation is to raise awareness about the impact of old age loneliness with a view to coming with an intervention strategy to this scourge.
Research Objectives

• To raise awareness about old age loneliness;
• To empower society to understand that substance abuse is not the province of young people, but it affects every nook and cranny of society; and
• To empower social workers with skills to deal with this scourge.
Drugs

• Legal drugs approved by government – antibiotics, antidepressants, and painkillers

• Illicit/Illegal drugs include, heroin, cocaine and nyaope.

• More often Senior Citizens overuse antidepressants, caffeine, alcohol and painkillers out of heartfelt lack of alternatives. In the absence of good company these drugs become their friends.

• A drug is like a sin, it is something difficult to quantify, for example, when legal drugs are abused, is substance abuse which harms both the individual and society.
Action Research

1. First Encounters & Entry
2. Contracting
3. Data Collection & Diagnosis
4. Feedback
5. Joint intervention design
6. Implementation of intervention

Evaluation & re-diagnosis
Themes

• Senior Citizens feel depleted because no one is paying attention to them.
• They feel that the next phase of the lives is the grave and there is the fear of walking through the valley of the shadow of death.
• Most of them regret the opportunities they could not utilise when they were still active. They deal with guilt and shame.
• Failing health is another thorny issue, they have come to the realisation that health is more important than your previous social status.
• Dealing with the above issues is not easy that is why most of them abuse legal drugs
Conclusions and Recommendations

• Research in this area is curiously backwards and more work needs to be done.

• The government and faith-based organisations must come up with strategies to support senior citizens in their challenges.

• The way we prepare children for education, we should prepare people for old age
Two magic words – Thank you

• Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for the courtesy with which you listened to me.