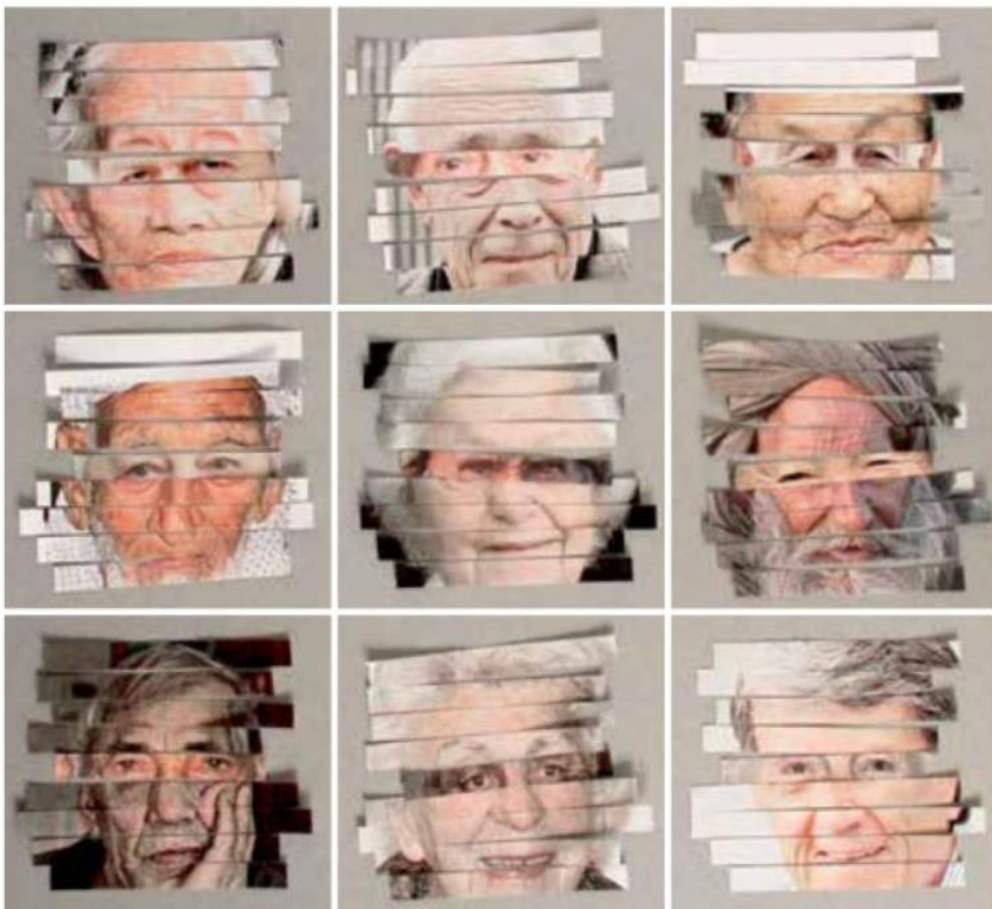


COPe-Culture and Older People Research Center



Artwork at the front page by:

Elliot Silva

Muthesius Kunsthochschule

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The COPE research center is a multifaceted research initiative focused on exploring and understanding the unique challenges faced by older people in vulnerable situations. The center's primary objective is to improve and promote policies and practices that address the needs of older people with different cultural backgrounds experiencing vulnerability in various forms and degrees, such as social isolation, loneliness, poverty, disability, and chronic illness.

The center will mature and work with different perspectives on vulnerability in a cross-cultural context. An etic perspective on vulnerability in older people is the perspective of increased risk due to i.e. physical, social, or economic factors. In contrast, an emic perspective considers the subjective experiences and perspectives of older people themselves, i.e., recognizing that vulnerability can be more nuanced, affecting aspects such as autonomy, dignity, and identity. Both perspectives are important for developing effective interventions that address the unique needs of older adults and promote their well-being (see fig 1.)

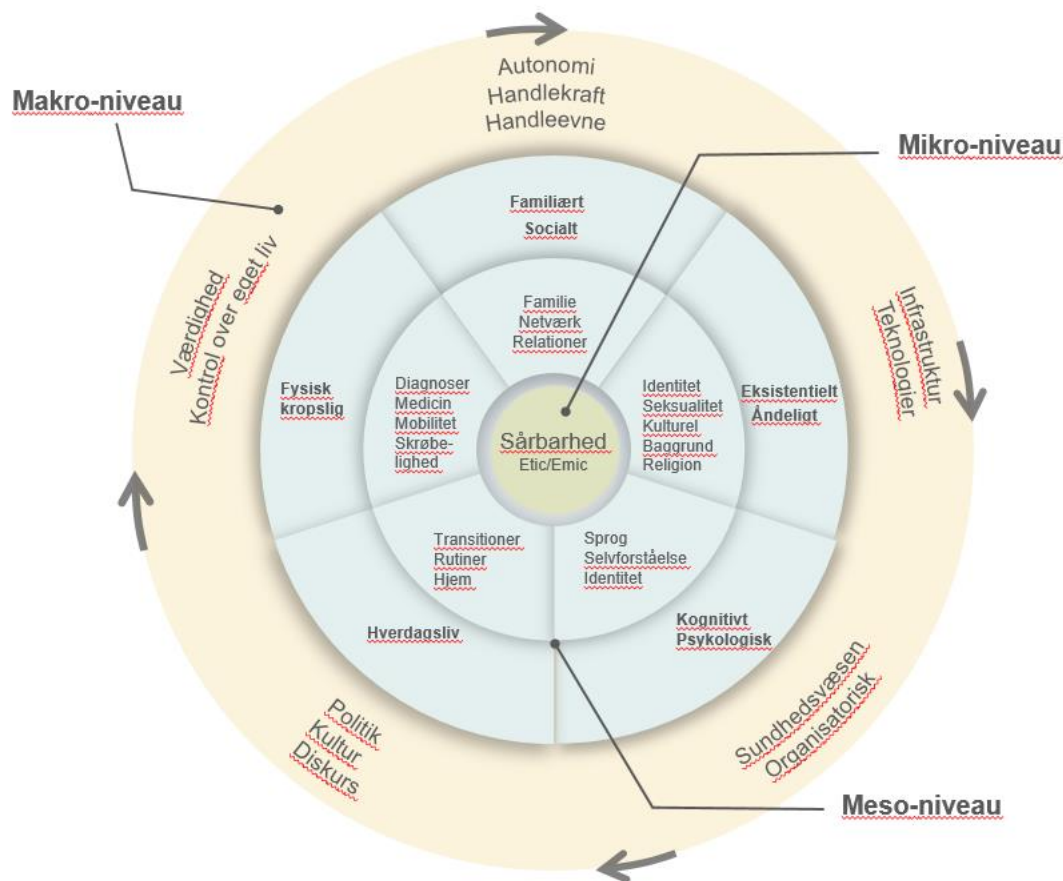


Fig. 1 gives an overview of the perspectives on vulnerability that the center will take as starting point

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE:

As the share of older people continues to grow rapidly, it is crucial to recognize that vulnerable older people and their relatives are subject to various challenges and difficulties, which must be handled by health and social care systems in order to support coherent trajectories of care and treatment (Murray, Hardicre, Birks, O'Hara, & Lawton, 2019). In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of addressing vulnerability in health care (Langmann, 2023). This involves not only identifying and mitigating risk factors but also empowering individuals and communities to take control of their health and well-being.

As our population ages, it is increasingly important to understand how culture affects the lives of older people (Due, Sandholdt, & Waldorff, 2017; Heikkila, Sarvimaki, & Ekman, 2007). Cultural factors such as values, traditions, and beliefs play a significant role in shaping the experiences of older people and are therefore important issues in working on vulnerability and older people. Culture can both exacerbate and mitigate the vulnerability of older people, as cultural norms and values influence the ways in which aging is perceived and experienced in different societies (Heikkinen & Lumme-Sandt, 2013; Nielsen, Minet, Zeraiq, Rasmussen, & Sodemann, 2017) .

By studying and identifying culture and vulnerability in older people in various settings, the COPe research center aims to provide a more detailed understanding of the factors associated with vulnerability affecting the lives of older people. This includes examining the role of social and economic factors, such as poverty, social isolation, and access to health care, as well as individual-level factors, such as social norms, religious beliefs, physical and cognitive health. Through research and collaboration with key stakeholders, the COPe research center can develop effective interventions to mitigate the impact of these vulnerabilities. For example, interventions may focus on providing support and resources to address social isolation or financial instability, or developing programs that promote cognitive and physical health and well-being.

The COPe research center recognizes that addressing the unique needs of older people in vulnerable situations requires collaboration with both academic and community partners. By working closely with these partners, the center can gather data and conduct research that provides a more comprehensive understanding of the issues facing older people. Academic partners can bring specialized expertise and knowledge to the center's research efforts, such as conducting quantitative and qualitative research, data analysis, and developing evidence-based interventions. Community partners can provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of older people, help identify vulnerable populations, and provide input on the design and implementation of interventions. The COPe research center's approach to collaboration ensures that its efforts are grounded in real-world experiences and informed by the latest research findings. By working closely with academic and community partners, the center aims to develop interventions that are tailored to the unique needs of vulnerable older people and have a meaningful impact on their well-being.

In summary, the COPe research center represents a significant step towards addressing the complex and multidimensional issue of vulnerability in older people. By leveraging interdisciplinary research and collaboration, the center is expected to enhance the level of knowledge and understanding of vulnerability and develop innovative solutions that can improve the lives of older people by empowering health care professionals to encompass their needs.

AIM

The aim of the COPE research center is to address the concept of vulnerability in older people and to develop interventions to improve their quality of life and well-being, by adopting a multi-cultural and multidisciplinary approach that recognizes the impact of culture on vulnerability, health, and well-being. The center aims to advance our understanding of vulnerability among older people by exploring various contributing factors and developing new theories and approaches to mitigate these factors. By prioritizing the patient's perspective and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, the center seeks to develop culturally sensitive interventions that enhance the quality of care for vulnerable older people and ultimately improve their health and well-being.

Clarifications of concepts:

- Culture is an important factor to consider in the work of the COPE Research Center, as it plays a significant role in shaping the experiences, perspectives, and needs of older people. By adopting a multi-cultural approach, the center recognizes that cultural factors can impact vulnerability, health, and well-being in complex ways. This approach involves considering cultural diversity and promoting sensitivity to cultural differences in the design, theory, and development of interventions.
- Moreover, the multidisciplinary approach adopted by the center, which integrates insights from health, medicine, psychology, philosophy, literature studies, narrative medicine, communication and social sciences, recognizes that culture is a multifaceted construct that intersects with various dimensions of human experience. This approach allows for a holistic understanding of culture and its impact on vulnerability and well-being among older people.
- The center's focus on the patient's perspective further highlights the importance of culture in its work. By prioritizing the experiences and needs of older people, the center recognizes that cultural factors can influence how individuals perceive and respond to vulnerability and health challenges. This perspective underscores the need for culturally sensitive interventions that address the specific needs of different cultural groups.
- From an etic perspective, vulnerability can be defined as a state or condition in which an individual or a system is susceptible to harm, exploitation, or negative consequences. It is an objective assessment of weaknesses or gaps that can be exploited, whether physical, emotional, or structural, and can arise from external factors such as threats, risks, or power imbalances. It is often measured based on observable factors and standardized criteria.
- From an emic perspective, vulnerability is understood subjectively, taking into account the experiences, perceptions, and meanings attributed by individuals or groups to their own sense of vulnerability. It considers the internal dynamics, lived experiences, and social contexts that shape an individual's or community's understanding of vulnerability, including their culture, values, and power relations. Emic perspectives highlight the unique and diverse manifestations of vulnerability and the factors that contribute to it within specific contexts.

In sum, by advancing our understanding of vulnerability and developing new theories and approaches with a multi-cultural approach, the center aims to improve the quality of care for vulnerable people and ultimately enhance their health and well-being. The center will thereby serve as a hub for interdisciplinary collaboration, for training and education of health care professionals and researchers, and for national as well as international exchange of ideas among researchers and stakeholders.

THE MISSION AND VISION OF THE COPE RESEARCH CENTER

Vision: To create a society where older people are empowered, protected, and valued, and where vulnerability is acknowledged as a natural part of human existence.

Mission: Our research center is dedicated to advancing knowledge and understanding of vulnerability in older people through interdisciplinary research, education, and outreach with a focus on the importance of questions of culture. We seek to identify the factors that contribute to vulnerability and to develop effective interventions and strategies to promote quality of life and well-being in older people. We will achieve our mission by fostering collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and community stakeholders, and by translating our research findings into policy and practice.

THE COPE RESEARCH AGENDA:

The research agenda will be continuously developed in collaboration with the management team, the advisory board, young investigators and students, other community stakeholders, and external partners. The research agenda must prioritize research topics that address the needs and concerns of vulnerable older adults, such as frailty, chronic health conditions, cognitive impairment, and social isolation. The research agenda will furthermore incorporate a range of research methodologies, including qualitative and quantitative methods.

Partnerships and collaborations with other research centers, community stakeholders, and health care providers will help to enhance the impact and reach of the COPE research center. These partnerships are expected to provide access to additional resources, expertise, and opportunities for collaboration.

Overall, the center's focus will be on conducting high-quality research and disseminating knowledge to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable older people. By prioritizing remote collaboration and virtual communication, the center will be able to operate in a cost-effective and sustainable manner while still achieving its research objectives.

COLLABORATION AND MEETINGS

Biannual virtual meetings will be organized by the management team of the COPE research center and will be held in the spring and fall of each year. The meetings will include presentations from researchers and stakeholders on their ongoing research projects and initiatives, as well as breakout sessions for focused discussions on vulnerability and older people and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Beside the virtual meetings, PhD students, senior researchers, the advisory board, and other stakeholders will meet twice a year at seminars held in Svanninge Bjerger, University of Southern Denmark. Here, participants will discuss ongoing research projects and collaborate on new upcoming projects. These seminars will provide an opportunity for researchers and stakeholders to share their expertise and perspectives, and to identify potential areas for collaboration. The meetings will also provide a platform for

networking and building relationships between researchers and stakeholders, which will facilitate knowledge exchange and new projects.

By bringing together PhD students, senior researchers, and other stakeholders, these meetings will help to foster a collaborative and interdisciplinary research environment. This is expected to facilitate the development and implementation of effective interventions to mitigate vulnerability and promote health and well-being among vulnerable older people.

The center will establish a virtual presence through its website at the University of Southern Denmark and social media platforms. The website will serve as a portal for information on ongoing research projects, research publications, and other resources related to vulnerability among older people. The social media platforms will serve as a means to disseminate information and engage with stakeholders, including vulnerable older people, health care professionals, policymakers, and community-based stakeholders.

ORGANISATION

The COPe Research Center will be organized under the umbrella of the Geriatric Research Unit at Odense University Hospital and University of Southern Denmark.

RESEARCH TEAM:

The research team consists of experts from a range of disciplines, including nursing, medicine, public health, management, social work, philosophy, literature, and psychology. The team is responsible for the strategic development and implementation of research, education, and outreach programs that can fulfill the center's vision and mission. Dorthe S. Nielsen will be head of the COPe Center.

- **Dorthe S. Nielsen**, RN, MHS. PhD, Professor in Vulnerability
- **Karen Andersen-Ranberg**, MD. Professor in Geriatric Medicine, Head of Geriatric Research Unit, University of Southern Denmark
- **Peter Simonsen**, Professor, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Language, Culture, History and Communication, University of Southern Denmark
- **Anders Fournaise**, M.Sc. in Public Health, PhD. Head of Department of Health and Older People in Nyborg municipality.
- **Morten Sodemann**, Professor, Migrant Health Clinic, Odense University Hospital, Center of Global Health, University of Southern Denmark
- **Søren Harnov**, Dr. phil. Professor, Philosophy, The Department of Media, Design, Education and Cognition, University of Southern Denmark
- **Mickael Bech**, Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Management, University of Southern Denmark
- **Lisa Duus**, Department of Geriatric Medicine, Odense University Hospital, Consultant in health and ethnic minorities, Master in sports, Master in Health Education and Health Promotion, Master in Health Anthropology
- **Sofie Skipper Meilandt**, Odense Akut team, Social Pedagogue specialized in People with Social needs

International members:

- **Tahir Masud**, MD. Professor, Consultant Physician at Nottingham University Hospitals, Nottingham, UK, visiting professor at University of Southern Denmark

- **Grethe Eilertsen**, Professor in Clinical Nursing, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Department of Nursing and Health Sciences, Campus Drammen
- **Hans Van Delden**, Professor in ethics at University Medical Center at Utrecht University, Holland
- **Frode F. Jacobsen**, Professor, Centre for Care Research, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen Norge

ADVISORY BOARD

The advisory board is constituted of members and stakeholders that assemble different perspectives on vulnerability in older people and are represented by professionals, researchers, and vulnerable older people. The board will provide support and advice to the research plans and activities, assist in developing new projects and programs and identify best-practice standards. Furthermore, the board members will serve as ambassadors and advocate for the work and projects conducted in the framework of the COPE research center, providing a connection to and ongoing exchange of information. Kirsten Kyvik will be chairman of the Advisory Board.

- **Kirsten Kyvik**, Head of Department of Clinical Research, University of Southern Denmark
- **Jørgen T. Lauridsen**, Centre of Health Economics Research; Department of Business and Economics, University of Southern Denmark
- **Kim Brixen**, Director of Odense University Hospital
- **Mette Olsen**, Head of the nursing home, Peder Lykke, Copenhagen
- **Jette Mark Sørensen**, Head of Department of Older people and Health, Odense Municipality.
- **Christine Swane**, MS Cultural Sociology, PhD. Folklore – Cultural Science, Director of EGV Foundation
- **Jette Wensien**, Head of Department of Geriatric Medicine and Chairperson for the nursing association specialized in Geriatric nursing and care.
- **Dorthe S. Nielsen**, Nurse, Professor in Vulnerability

PhD Students and young investigators

All students and young investigators are working with older persons with a focus on culture and vulnerability, and thereby they all provide the COPE research group with new evidence-based knowledge:

- **Sanne Have Beck RN**. *PhD student – Working with older patients' transition from hospital to home*
- **Jette Sørensen** – RN. *PhD student – Working with nursing students and have focus on professional identity*
- **Lisbeth Birkelund** – MA. *PhD student working with language barriers in health care encounters with ethnic minority cancer patients*
- **Anders Valentin Johansen** - *upcoming PhD student working with older persons with LGBT+ background*
- **Camilla Lynnerup** - *PhD student working with medical safety among older patients with cognitive impairment and ethnic minority background*
- **Lisa Kvist Antonsen** – *PhD student working with the importance of social nurses working with marginalized patients*
- **Martin Mau** – *PhD Student working with the meaning and importance of long-distance walking and older people*

- **Camilla Schade Hansen** – *PhD student working with patients who have been hospitalized with sepsis*
- **Jahan Shabnam** – *PhD student working with palliative care utilization among non-western migrants in Denmark*
- **Stine Junker Udesen** – *PhD student working with municipality acute care and older persons living at home and in nursing homes*
- **Henriette Jenssen** – *upcoming PhD student working with older persons who have experienced being insulted or abused*
- **Rikke Frøslev Hansen** – *Master in clinical nursing working with readmission of older patients, with focus on homecare staff's perspectives*
- **Sinthuja Vijayapiraba** – *Master in clinical nursing working with a three generation perspective on being a family with war and PTSD*
- **Cecilie Louise Seeger** – *Cand. Scient San. working with older homeless persons, and their perspectives on the digitalized health care sector*
- **Louise Milling** - *MD, PhD, working with ethics in the acute settings*
- **Kathrine Pii** – *PhD working with rehabilitation and older patients with cancer and ethnic minority background*
- **Mette Valderdorf Jensen** – *RN, PhD working with older people, loneliness and suicide*

INVOLVEMENT OF OLDER PEOPLE

Involvement of older people will be crucial to the research conducted at the COPE research center. By actively involving older people and their relatives in the research projects, the center aims to ensure that the research is conducted in a patient-centered and culturally sensitive manner. This approach will ensure that the research addresses the real needs and concerns of older people, and that the research findings will be relevant and applicable to their lives.

To ensure involvement of vulnerable older people, the center will collaborate with the already established user panels at the Migrant Health Clinic and at the Department of Geriatric Medicine, Odense University Hospital. Additionally, the center will work closely with community-based stakeholder, organizations, and patient advocacy groups to involve vulnerable older people and their relatives in research development and activities. This will help to ensure that the research and work is conducted in a way that is respectful of the vulnerable older people's cultural and social backgrounds.

Overall, the involvement of vulnerable older people will be an essential component of the COPE research center's research program, ensuring that the research is conducted in a way that is relevant, respectful, and responsive to the needs of vulnerable older people.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

1.) *Conducting research projects*

The ongoing projects will continue to develop knowledge and insights related to vulnerability in older people. In the future, the members of the research team will jointly, across the team, initiate new and relevant projects that all address vulnerability in older people.

2.) Education and training program:

The COPe research center will develop an education and training program to build capacity among researchers, health care providers, and community stakeholders and organizations. The education and training program will incorporate a range of learning modalities, including workshops, seminars, and online courses. The center will be in close contact with universities and higher educations.

3.) Theory development

The center will support the development of theories and models that account for the diversity of experiences among older adults from different cultural backgrounds. This will lead to the emergence of new theoretical frameworks that emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity and understanding of vulnerability and aging.

4.) Dissemination

Dissemination of the projects and the activities conducted from the COPe research center will take many forms, such as publishing research papers, delivering layman's presentations, conducting workshops, creating educational materials, arranging national as well as international seminars, and using social media platforms to share information. The goal of the dissemination is to make findings, work, and results more accessible and usable for all stakeholders – ultimately resulting in changed practice in caring and treating vulnerable older people.

FUNDING

The COPe research center will be applying for funding to support its research activities. However, due to the current financial constraints, the center will not have a dedicated physical office space. Instead, the center will rely on virtual communication technologies to facilitate remote collaboration among researchers and stakeholders. This approach will enable the center to minimize its overhead costs and allocate more resources towards research activities and knowledge dissemination.

Secure funding: The vulnerability research center will require funding to support its research, education, and outreach programs. Funding sources can include government agencies, private foundations, and philanthropic organizations.

PERSPECTIVES

- Firstly, the COPe research center will serve as a hub for developing and disseminating knowledge about vulnerability among older people. This can improve the awareness and understanding of health care professionals about the risk factors associated with vulnerability and the interventions that can mitigate vulnerability and promote health and well-being. By providing access to up-to-date and evidence-based information, the center can enable health care professionals to make informed decisions about treatment and care – resulting in improved quality.
- Secondly, the COPe research center will serve as a resource for health care professionals who care for vulnerable older people. The center can provide information on available resources and support services, as well as connect health care professionals to relevant community-based organizations.

This can improve the quality of care and support that health care professionals provide, and help to address the underlying factors that contribute to vulnerability.

- Thirdly, the COPe research center will prioritize interdisciplinary collaboration and science. By bringing together experts from multiple disciplines, the center can leverage diverse perspectives and methodologies to advance the field of vulnerability research. This can improve the development and evaluation of interventions that mitigate vulnerability and promote health and well-being, and ultimately lead to improved health outcomes for vulnerable older people.
- Finally, the COPe research center will contribute to improving the overall quality of care for vulnerable older people. By developing and evaluating interventions that mitigate vulnerability and promote health and well-being, the center can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of health care services. This can ultimately lead to improved health outcomes and a better quality of life for vulnerable older people.

In summary, the COPe research center is important to health care professionals because it can serve as a hub for developing and disseminating knowledge on vulnerability in a multi-cultural setting. Furthermore, it aims to provide resources and support for health care professionals who care for vulnerable older people, prioritize interdisciplinary collaboration and science, and contribute to improving the overall quality of care for vulnerable older people.

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