

Exploring the Experience of Loneliness Among Older Adults: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Loneliness is a complex and subjective experience with profound effects on the physical and emotional well-being of older adults. This qualitative study aimed to explore the dimensions of loneliness among older adults in Iran, focusing on cultural and social nuances. Using semi-structured interviews with 16 participants, thematic analysis identified five core themes: diminished social capacity, ineffective interactions, emotional distress, existential abandonment, and temporal loneliness. Participants highlighted the roles of physical limitations, unsatisfactory social connections, and societal attitudes in shaping their experiences of loneliness. Emotional distress, coupled with a sense of invisibility and longing for the past, further compounded their isolation. The findings underscore the importance of addressing loneliness through culturally sensitive interventions that prioritize community inclusion, enhanced communication within families, and mental health support. The study contributes to understanding loneliness in a rapidly modernizing Iranian society, offering insights for developing targeted interventions to improve the well-being of older adults.

Keywords: Loneliness; Older adults; Qualitative study; Cultural context; Psychosocial well-being