

Psychological Strength of Elderly People Living Alone in Marginal Communities

– Relationships with communities –

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Keywords: Marginal community, elderly people, psychological strength

This study examined the development of psychological strength in the elderly living in solitary in marginal communities, their relationship to these communities, and the method of support that becomes necessary to make their life in the area sustainable.

The participants consisted of five elderly people living in solitary (one male and four females) in three marginal communities. The average age was 85 years. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the verbatim record was analyzed using the grounded theory approach.

As a result, six core categories were found that related to psychological strength: “adaptability as developed throughout their life,” “the balance between independence and dependence,” “health outlook for the future,” “relationships within the community,” “a hometown that they would like to support and hand down to the next generation,” and “conflicts between their wish to live in their communities until their death and the reality of doing so.”

Psychological strength, as developed in the communities, creates adaptability, the ability to live on, and sustainability, which are necessary to live in marginal communities. Moreover, the participants developed “an affection for the communities” that they lived in.

Psychological strength should be considered when supporting such elderly, and such support should include health care so that the elderly can retain their independence and their relationship to their communities as long as possible. In the future, their psychological strength will help them maintain and support their quality of life.