

Maintaining Independence while Accepting Help – living Alone with Cognitive Impairment In Sweden

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Conclusions

Independence is central for older adults with cognitive impairment living alone, and person-centered support with meaningful social connections is especially important.



Introduction

In Sweden, as in many other countries, the principle of aging in place is a cornerstone of policy for older citizens. This approach emphasises enabling older adults to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, even as their care needs increase. In Sweden almost 50% of people in the time of dementia diagnosis lives alone.

Aim

The aim of this study was to explore experiences of older adults living alone with cognitive impairment in a Swedish community setting.

Method

A qualitative interview study with thirteen participants diagnosed with cognitive impairment (older than 65 years old), with data analysed using content analysis.

Well, loneliness wears on me sometimes. I don't know how to put it... It gets a bit gloomy now and then, so I have to try to pull myself together. (85 year old woman)



Now she [home care staff] probably won't come anymore, I will say no if she comes again... because I didn't like her as she just barged in with her big feet. She leaves her shoes on... when you come to an old person's home and dirty the floor, it's not so nice. (83 year old women)

You still want to keep up with what's going on. We're still human, even if we're old. (90 year old woman)

Sometimes, you can sit and chat with people... not really close [friends], more like strangers, but in a way, we are all lonely people, so to speak... And then you have talked a little, but it's just small talk really. (65 year old woman)

Results

The overarching theme **Balancing interdependence, solitude and connection in everyday life**, captures how older adults living alone with cognitive impairment navigate daily life. While independence remained central to participants' identity, both formal and informal support were highly valued. This interdependence was viewed not as a threat to independence but a means to sustain it and enable safe and meaningful living.



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