

A STUDY OF EMOTIONAL LONELINESS AMONG ELDERLY
MALAYSIANS IN SOME NURSING HOMES AND THEIR COPING
STRATEGIES

BY

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an in-depth qualitative study using a phenomenological approach to understand loneliness among the elderly individuals in Malaysia. The objectives of the study were to understand how the Malaysian elderly perceive and understand social isolation and loneliness, to know the factors that cause emotional loneliness among the Malaysian elderly in nursing homes and to explore the coping strategies they use in dealing with their loneliness. The method used was semi-structured interviews conducted with ten elderly participants at two nursing homes, made up of both genders and the three major ethnic groups of Malaysia. Results show that several factors caused the elderly to feel lonely including health factors, lack of family ties, lack of communication and cognitive factors such as memory and perception. It was also found that internal (expectations and optimism) and external (work and activities) coping strategies play a role in overcoming loneliness. In conclusion, recommendations were made for the respective parties to include the factors and coping strategies in developing plans to help the elderly overcome loneliness as they have so much to the left offer especially with life experiences and wisdom.