

The Participation Value of National-level Sports-for-all Programs Perceived by the Living-alone Elderly

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Abstract

This study was for analyzing ethnographically the participation value of national-level sports-for-all programs perceived by the living-alone elderly. For this, specifically, we surveyed 16 living-alone elders aged over 65 among the participants of elderly sports-for-all programs provided by the National Council of Sport for All at 5 districts in Seoul, Gyeonggi, Incheon and made continuous comparison and analysis along the procedure of in-depth interview, data summarization, data arrangement, and conclusion drawing and verification. According to the results of analysis, a total of 38 concepts, 13 sub-categories, and 3 categories were derived, and the extracted three major categories were self-determined value, life satisfaction through participation in sports-for-all, and being a socializing agent. This study is expected to provide information recorded in the vivid language of elderly sports-for-all fields, useful in search for methodologies of research on the living-alone elderly, and valuable in making policies on exercise programs for the living-alone elderly.

Key words: the living-alone elderly, national sports-for-all, participation value

Introduction

Issues related to contemporary people's physical activities are at the center of social interest, and regular exercise is known to delay aging and extend people's health-adjusted life expectancy. In Korea, however, only 9.9-22.6% of the elderly are doing exercise steadily (National Statistical Office, 2012), and the WHO reports that less than 40% of the aged throughout the world have adequate physical activities and the amount of physical activities is decreasing along with the expan-

sion of the aged population. The aging of society is accompanied with various problems to be solved including elders' economic problems, loneliness and sense of alienation, and health

problems. Entering into an aging society already, the Korean society is also experiencing changes in its policies on aging society. Currently as of 2012, the population aged over 65 occupies 11.8%, and the percentage is expected to grow to 14.3% (aging society) in 2018, and to 20.6% (super-aging society) in 2026 (National Statistical Office, 2011). If the current trend continues, the elderly population will approach 40% of the total population in 2050, making the country the most aged in the world, even surpassing Japan. The size of the elderly population aged over 65 was 5,890,000 in 2012 and is expected to increase to

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8,080,000 in 2020 and 12,690,000 in 2030. Particularly from 2020, the baby boom generation born just after the Korean War in 1950 will begin to turn into the aged generation and, as a result, the elderly population aged over 75 will expand rapidly (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012).

The aging of population not only causes national and social problems, but also has a significant impact on the lives of individuals and families. From the position of the young generation engaged in economic activities, they have to take heavy social care giving burdens as well as the burden of preparing their own old lives, and consequently choices and opportunities for individual and family lives will be curtailed. The aged generation is also, though having a longer life expectancy, experiencing a poorer quality of life due to anxieties about income and health condition. Besides, with the acceleration of family differentiation and the increase in the number of elderly couple and single households, families' burden of private caregiving for the aged is likely to be a serious problem (2012, Ministry of Health and Welfare).

In these changes in social structure, bigger concerns are the increasing number of elderly single households and the increasing number of isolated from family and society. According to data from the National Statistical Office in 2012, the number of elders living alone in 2011 was 1,124,000. The term 'living-alone elderly' may imply various meanings, but in general it refers to a social class suffering disadvantage or discrimination in political, economic, social and cultural areas due to their limitations in personal abilities, and consequently excluded socially from opportunities for acquiring life resources (Ko, 2009).

The issue of the living-alone elderly is even more serious considering their poorness in income, health, residence, and social contact. They are exposed to high risk of emotional isolation and lonely death because of their weak social relations characterized by loneliness, economic hardship, etc. Based on Article 27 Clause 2 of the Welfare of the Aged Act, the government has

been executing the program of emergency safety care for the living-alone elderly, beginning with basic elderly care services in 2007. This program provides health and welfare services including one in-person visit a week, two checkup calls a week, and two or more sessions of health education a month. The current health welfare services are fragmentary elderly cares rather than active systems. Therefore if health promotion programs are applied actively to the elderly of alienated classes, such programs will reduce their medical expenses and improve their quality of life and life environment. In this sense, such programs are directly linked to elderly welfare. This is also related to ecosystemic development as a human right issue, and also to the equity of distribution for resolving the polarization of social structure.

From this point of view, understanding how sports-for-all programs provided in the national level are perceived by the living-alone elderly can be an important step to promoting welfare for the living-alone elderly. It is even more important because analyzing the value of national-level sports-for-all programs used by the living-alone elderly can lead to practical health promotion through the practice of exercise, which may, in turn, result in the individual and national reduction of medical expense.

The objective of this study is proposing practical methods for promoting the exercise practice of the living-alone elderly who are disconnected from the society and living a lonely and bored life, by analyzing how the value of national-level sports-for-all programs provided to the living-alone elderly is perceived. The focus of health interventions for the living-alone elderly is not the treatment of diseases but the maintenance of body functions. That is, the purpose of health interventions should be prevention or remission through the maintenance of body functions. Accordingly, moving aside from the primary issue of reinforcing care for the living-alone elderly, this study aimed to systemize the importance of national-level sports-for-all for the living-alone elderly through the participants'

actual voices.

This effort is expected to contribute practically to health promotion and welfare policies for the living-alone elderly and to help search for the methodologies of research on silver sports activation policies and the living-alone elderly.

Methods

Participants

In this study, the subjects were selected through purposeful sampling, one of non-probability sampling methods that artificially sample subjects who may contribute to the development of theories. The main purpose of purposeful sampling is getting a small group of carefully selected subjects and, by doing so, enhancing the reliability of results, and this method is distinguished from random sampling of representative population, which is used mainly in quantitative research and can raise the level of generalization through a large sample size (Lee, 2012). In qualitative research, reality based on raw data on a specific situation is emphasized more than representativeness (Patton, 1985). A total of 16 participants were selected

from living-alone elders aged between 65 and 85 in five places including K District and S District in Seoul Metropolitan City, G City and Y City in Gyeonggi-do, and Y District in Incheon Metropolitan City in 2013. They participated in a sports-for-all program for over 6 months, 2-3 times a week, and over an hour a day in an area participating in the national sports-for-all promotion project. In order to select research subjects, we had living-alone elderly candidates recommended by local public health centers and local councils of sports for all, explained the purpose of research to the candidates, and selected those who showed a favorable and active attitude toward the activities of this study. In addition, for the confidentiality of the subjects, we explained the method and purpose of this study thoroughly and included only those who consented voluntarily. For the privacy of the subjects, we used numbers instead of the subjects' names and their general characteristics were as in <Table 1>.

Data collection and data analysis

The main methods of data collection used in this study were in-depth interview and participant observation, and interview data were collected, first, through collecting the subjects' demographic data, and

Table 1. The participants general characteristics.

Number	Subject	Residence	Age	Occupation
1	participant 1	K District	68	Self-employed
2	participant 2	K District	72	Unemployed
3	participant 3	K District	66	Unemployed
4	participant 4	S District	78	Unemployed
5	participant 5	S District	76	Unemployed
6	participant 6	S District	75	Unemployed
7	participant 7	G City	76	Agriculture
8	participant 8	G City	69	Unemployed
9	participant 9	G City	72	Self-employed
10	participant 10	Y City	73	Agriculture
11	participant 11	Y City	81	Agriculture
12	participant 12	Y City	78	Agriculture
13	participant 13	Y District	77	Unemployed
14	participant 14	Y District	76	Self-employed
15	participant 15	Y District	77	Unemployed
16	participant 16	Y District	75	Unemployed

then using both unstructured and semi-structured interviews. An unstructured interview, which is used for an extensive research area, begins with general questions. It was commonly conducted with an assistant recorder or a memo note according to a list of themes hidden from the interviewee. Through unstructured interviews, the researcher could obtain very rich practical data because the interviewer asked questions freely for deriving certain answers in consideration of the interviewee's interest and idea. The questions used in the interviews were such as "Please tell me what you think about OOO," "What happened at that time?" "How are your experiences in OOO?" as suggested by Shin et al. (2004). For the substantiality and reliability of interview contents, each interview was recorded and the interviewee was informed in advance that the interview would be recorded so that he/she would not be offended. Each interview took about 30 minutes, and during the interview the interviewee's changes in emotion and voice tone, the movements of his hands, and non-verbal expressions such as silence or long sigh were observed. Just after each interview, the researcher recorded information on the environment surrounding the interview, thoughts or directions coming across the researcher's mind, and future questions. Each subject had 1 or 2 interviews, and if there was any unclear description of experience or any part hardly interpretable, supplementary questions were given in a subsequent interview.

Field survey and participant observation

Field survey is a process of producing a viewpoint or knowledge for understanding culture correctly by experiencing cultural relativism in person. This is not being the same as the local people, but living together with them in their culture, experiencing, interpreting and reinterpreting their problems, and finally, reconstructing their life. In such a field survey, data are collected through participant observation (Kim, 2012). A common characteristic of ethnographic studies is

that they use a field survey. Field survey is a research method for understanding culture from the subjects' viewpoint. Accordingly, its purpose is finding the subjects' position and experiencing 'their own' world view, and it ultimately aims at understanding the people's culture living and moving in the context of the people's daily life (Ellen, 1984). Participant observation is suitable for research on the experiential aspect of humans, and is surveying people's behavior and interaction in a social context. In participant observation, it is possible to describe from the subjects' position what is going on, who are involved, when and where it is happening, how it happens, and why it happens as the subjects' do in a specific situation. Participant observation is a desirable data collection method for research on processes, relations between people and events, organization of people and events, the continuity and pattern of a series of events, and things in a social and cultural context created by human beings. In general, there are four types of participant observation: complete participant observation, participant observation as an observer, observation as a participant, and complete observation (Jorgensen, 1989). This study chose the role of an observer as a participant, and observation time was about 40 minutes based on the length of class, and the objects of observation were the cultural meaning and structure of the participation value of a national sports-for-all program perceived by the living-alone elderly.

Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative data analysis is an activity involving three processes: data summarization data arrangement and conclusion drawing and verification. This activity proceeds from designing and planning research, to collecting data, making preliminary data analyses, and reaching the final conclusions (Shin et al., 2004). In the analysis process of this study as well, analyses on in-depth interview data were made systematically along with data collection. In ethnography, data

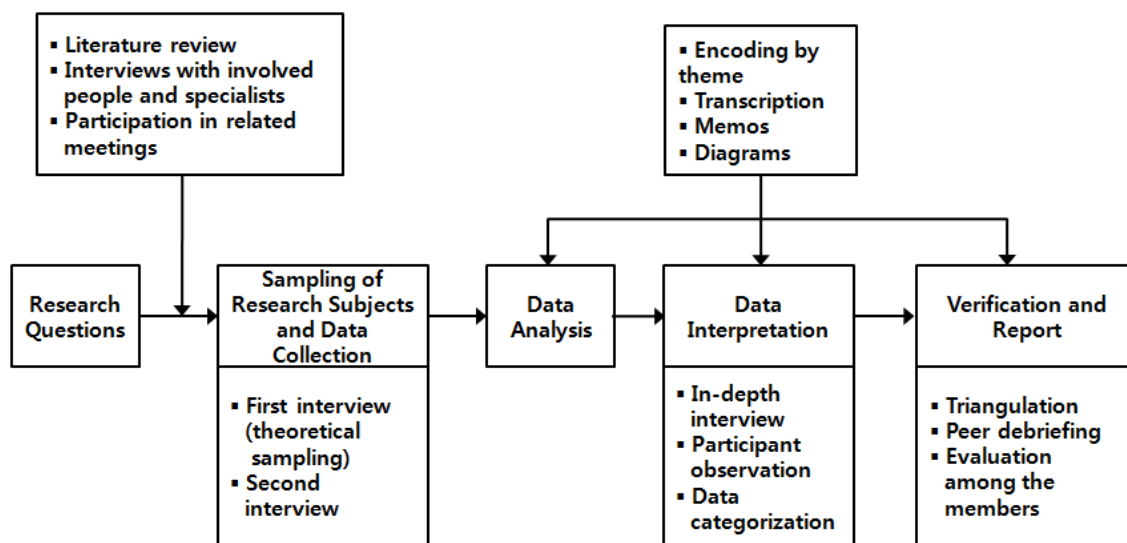


Figure 1. The flow of research on the participation value of national sports-for-all programs perceived by the living-alone elderly

analysis does not begin after data collection but starts together with data collection, and data collection is finished only when analysis is completed. Accordingly, data analysis is made simultaneously with an interview in the field. Then, primarily collected data are reviewed and a decision on an additional interview is made for collecting further information.

In this study, data were analyzed largely through three steps. <Figure 1> diagrammed the data collection and analysis procedure of this study. First, data collected through an in-depth interview are transcribed with a word processor, and the agreement between the transcribed data and the contents of interview was confirmed by the interviewee. Second, transcribed data as raw data were categorized and classified by theme, and for the categorized factors, the categories were structured and common factors were classified according to sub-category. Then, the process of encoding by theme was done, in which transcribed data were read, and if the meaning of a repeated content was found, a theme name was given to the meaning. Third, through the process of encoding by theme, data were reduced in volume and simplified, and through the conceptualization of data, a large volume of data was systemized, rearranged, and reorganized. Through these

processes, the researcher's interest was tuned with the unit and level of analysis, and consequently conclusions were derived through meaningful interpretation and reinterpretation.

Verification of research validity

The reliability and validity of the research methods were enhanced through triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing. First, triangulation is a process of deriving conclusions from various raw data, and this is an analysis method for enhancing the validity and reliability of research data (Denzin, 1989; Goetz & Lecompte, 1984). Thus, as methodological triangulation, the researcher used combined opinions of two or more specialists in order to prevent interpretive defects and errors resulting from relying on a single method. Second, member check is selecting some of research subjects who participated in research and asking them to reassess the validity of research results. Third, peer debriefing is selecting peer researchers who were not involved in the research but in the same background or academic area and asking their opinion, advice, and evaluation on the researcher's qualitative analysis and interpretation. Accordingly, the researcher had regular

meetings with professors specialized in silver sports, and through the meetings, enhanced the validity and reliability of results by preventing the distortions of results that may be caused the researcher's subjective view highly probably with qualitative research methods.

Results

This study questioned how the living-alone elderly

perceived the participation value of national-level sports-for-all programs, and attempted to explain the cultural meaning of the value of public sports-for-all programs. For this purpose, we sampled research subjects, collected data through in-depth interviews and participant observation, reviewed collected data repeatedly, and classified concepts that were considered important. In addition, the concepts were named through the comparative analysis of the similarity of their meanings, and similar concepts were grouped and

Table 2. Categories of data obtained through qualitative data analysis

Factor	Sub-category	Category
Sport item and time Consideration of environment and time	Choice of exercise type	Self-determined value
Enjoying exercise itself Acquisition of motor skills Learning new things	Fun	
Active participation Acquisition of motor skills Resolving sense of alienation Self-awareness	Sense of achievement	
Peers' expectation Family's expectation Social solidarity	Expectation	
Use of leisure time Learning new leisure	Leisure culture	
Feeling healthier Help to stress relief Concentration and dementia prevention Diet effect	Physical satisfaction	Life satisfaction through sports-for-all participation
Fun of exercise Opportunity to try a new thing Opportunity to know myself	New experience	
Pride in elderly exercise Meeting with peer elders Modeling practice of exercise with children Vitality of life	Social satisfaction	
Well-decorated place and facility Good-looking place and facility Program led by government office	Place and facility	
Change in the perception of physical activities Various networks Information on health and leisure	Information acquisition	Being a socializing agent
Reduction of hospital fees Interest in health problems	Reduction of medical expense	
Learning is a fun Continuous health education	Lifelong education	
Confidence in health Can-do spirit Participation in social groups	Confidence	

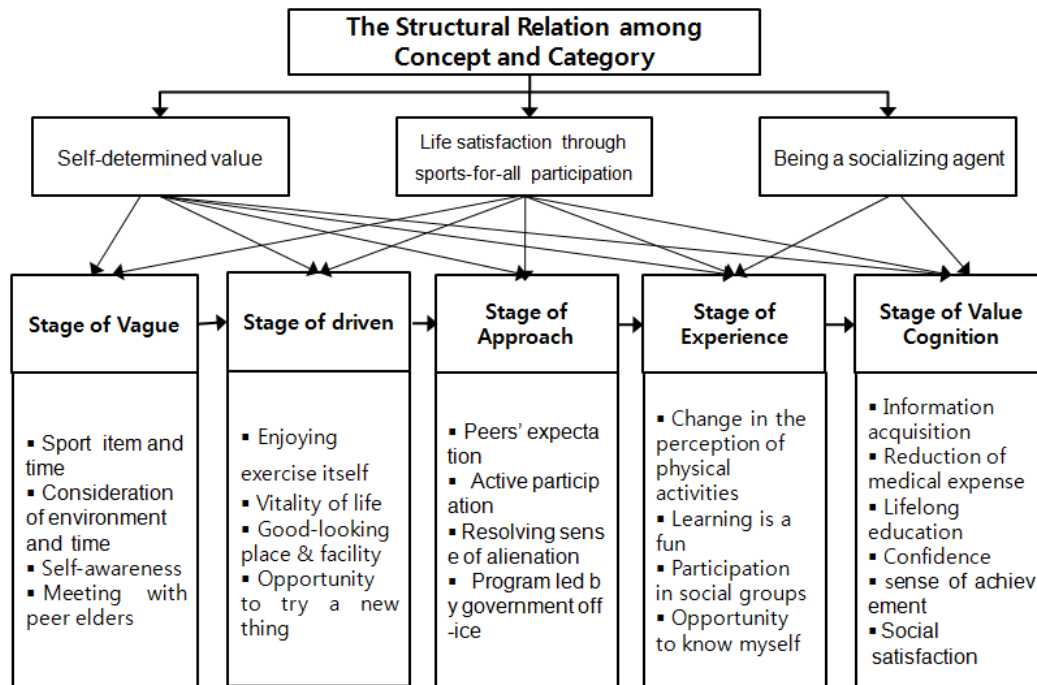


Figure 2. The Structural Relation among Concept and Category on the participation value of national sports-for-all programs perceived by the living-alone elderly

abstracted further. Moreover, the groups were categorized into sub-categories and main categories. The outcome of this process is as in <Table 2>.

In this study, the participation value of national sports-for-all programs perceived by the living-alone elderly was divided into self-determined value category including choice of exercise type, fun, sense of achievement, expectation, health perception, and leisure culture, and concepts such as physical satisfaction, new experience, social satisfaction, and place and facility were grouped under the category of life satisfaction. In addition, values such as information acquisition, reduction of medical expense, lifelong education, and confidence were categorized under the factor of being a socializing agent. These categories and items of participation value of national-level sports-for-all programs perceived by the living-alone elderly are as in <Figure 2>.

The arrows in Figure 2 indicate the stages through which three factors affect along the categorization of data analysis. There were five stages until the stage of

value perception of government-level sports-for-all programs appreciated by the living-alone elderly, and each of the five stages can be distinguished with inclusion of subcategories and concepts. The finally categorized three factors affected from the stage of ambiguity to the stage of value perception.

Discussion

Previous studies on elderly sports-for-all have increased in volume, and many scholars have reported research outcomes on the effects of exercise and the validity of exercise programs. In the national level, moreover, the Ministry of Health and Welfare has announced 'Health Investment Strategies' for solving elderly health programs and securing driving forces for sustainable growth in the future. While responding to these trends, this study was focused more on the living-alone elderly who can easily be overlooked by national-level sports-for-all systems. It began with the

logic that if national-level sports-for-all programs contribute to living-alone elders' health and quality of life, they may bring positive benefits to all of the elderly as well.

From this viewpoint, we went through the procedure of surveying and analyzing the values of national sports-for-all program perceived by the living-alone elderly sampled from 17 metropolitan cities and provinces and 5 places including K District and S District in Seoul Metropolitan City, G City and Y City in Gyeonggi-do, and Y District in Incheon Metropolitan City where sports-for-all programs were executed for the aged by sports-for-all organizations under the National Council of Sport for All. This study was conducted mainly as qualitative research based on ethnography. Accordingly, the living-alone elderly were surveyed through in-depth interviews, and continuous comparison and analysis were conducted through the procedure of data summarization, data arrangement, and conclusion drawing and verification. As a result, a total of 38 concepts, 13 sub-categories, and 3 categories were derived, and they are discussed as follows.

First, the self-determined value factor included sub-categories such as fun, sense of achievement, expectation, health perception, choice of exercise type, and leisure culture. This may represent a feedback phenomenon that the elders set specific personal goals of physical activity and participate by self-determination. Particularly with regard to fun, it is important to impress elders with the image that physical exercise itself is a fun, and because fun gives a psychologically comfortable and joyful feeling the activity itself becomes a pleasure (Izard, 1991). Participation in sports-for-all is ultimately the elders' own decision, and the decision is not just for the maintenance of health but also for playfulness. This means that interest induces their active participation. The living-alone elderly's choice and participation are consistent with Deci's (1989) inner motive theory, which claims reinforcement of their inner motive and therefore supports the results of this study. For the living-alone

elderly, accordingly, sports-for-all should not be regarded as doing payless labor but as having fun from self-determination, which is an important factor for living-alone elders' practice and continuance of physical activities. Furthermore, the living-alone elderly appeared to have some expectations from their participation in physical activities or group activities. An expectation found in the self-determination factor was a sense of achievement. That is, their physical activity can be a process of self-awareness and resultant self-realization in terms of competence, health perception, and the use of leisure time. What is more, if physical activities are regarded as a part of leisure, it will prompt voluntary participation and imbue the elders with vitality of life. These self-determined values are consistent with the opinions of Maslow (1967) and Mitchell (1973), according to whom setting a goal of participation in physical activities increases expectation for the results of given efforts and prompts participation and this may lead to self-realization and a sense of achievement that explain basic physical desires and mental desires.

Second, the factor of life satisfaction through sports-for-all participation included sub-categories such as physical satisfaction, new experience, social satisfaction, and place and facility. According to the theory that elders with high participation in social activities show higher psychological satisfaction or life satisfaction (Cavan, 1962; Lemon et al., 1972), there is a correlation between elders' participation in social activities and their life satisfaction. Participation in sports-for-all by the living-alone elderly leads to their life satisfaction, and going further, to new experiences, social satisfaction, and maintenance of physical activities. Moreover, it may induce their pride in elderly exercise and vitality of life, relieving their loneliness and depression and enhancing their life satisfaction. This is also supported by the theory of Tinsley & Kass (1992) that if one displays his/her abilities successfully in a certain situation through an optimal experience in physical activities, it amplifies his/her joy and satisfaction.

Third, the value of being a socializing agent appeared

in the forms of confidence, information acquisition, reduction of medical expense, lifelong education, etc. The living-alone elderly feel confidence in health and resolve loneliness through participation in physical activities (Wright, 1985; Preston, 1987), and play their role as a socializing agent. Because living-alone elders are keenly interested in health problems due to aging, if they are given objective information on their health status, they are eager to learn the effect of exercise prescription through counseling with an expert in elderly exercise, and this is directly linked to the reduction of medical expense. It is important to let the living-alone elderly to be conscious of their participation in social groups through physical activities. The role of sports socializing agent is significant for participation in sports. It is because a socializing agent plays the role of supporter who may lead and continue participation. For the living-alone elderly, sports-for-all are a productive and constructive cultural means that resolves boredom, and continuous participation in national-level sports-for-all may provide opportunities for them to build various networks by themselves as socializing agents. Although it is difficult for the living-alone elderly to establish relations with people around in new ways such as information acquisition, development of conversation skills, and education, but their participation in sports-for-all may play a catalytic role for preventing the contraction and disconnection of social relations and establishing new relations (Lee, 2012). Participation in national-level sports-for-all by the living-alone elderly is part of public elderly education, and can be a great catalyst for successful aging. Sports-for-all programs promoted in the public level can be applied adequately as social welfare education programs for the living-alone elderly in the blind area of welfare in the coming age of super aging.

Conclusion and suggestion

This study analyzed ethnographically the participation

value of national-level sports-for-all programs perceived by the living-alone elderly. Specifically, the subjects of this study were living-alone elders aged over 65 who were participating in an elderly sports-for-all program in one of five places including K District and S District in Seoul Metropolitan City, G City and Y City in Gyeonggi-do, and Y District in Incheon Metropolitan City. With data obtained through in-depth interviews, continuous comparison and analysis were made through the procedure of summarization, data arrangement, and conclusion drawing and verification. As a result, a total of 38 concepts, 13 sub-categories, and 3 main categories were derived, and the main categories were self-determined value, life satisfaction through participation in sports-for-all, and being a socializing agent. This study is expected to provide information recorded in the vivid language of elderly sports-for-all fields, useful in search for methodologies of research on the living-alone elderly, and valuable in making policies on exercise programs for the living-alone elderly

This study has a number of limitations to be considered in subsequent studies as follows. First, as the subjects of this study had a regional limitation, it is necessary to expand the population for sampling. Second, studies need to conduct quantitative research with a larger number of participants in order to grasp the values of government-level sports-for-all perceived by the living-alone elderly. Third, based on the results of this study, subsequent research needs to develop specific sports-for-all programs for the living-alone elderly and to find differences between living-alone elders and ordinary elders.

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