

Social Work Intervention in Identity Reconstruction of Elderly People Who Have Lost Their Only Child at Critical Moments in Their Life Journey

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Abstract

For a long time, due to the special nature of the elderly who have lost their only child, the government has mostly adopted policies of "not supporting" or "not encouraging" them. Therefore, there are not many social service institutions targeting the elderly who have lost their only child, and there are also few achievements. In this context, the author takes the E Association of J City, which specializes in providing services for the elderly who have lost their children, as the research object. By analyzing the identity changes of elderly people at this critical moment after losing their children, the author explores how social work can intervene and reconstruct the lives of elderly people who have lost their only child from the perspective of time extension and life significance, as well as the initiative of elderly people who have lost their only child, in order to improve their quality of life and quality of life. Research has found that elderly people who have lost their only child have undergone identity reconstruction from "raising children to prevent aging" to "having no children under their knees"; From a happy and happy family to a fragmented one; The dual pain of psychology and physiology can have an impact on the speed of time passing; The impact of social environment on the time structure of elderly people who have lost only child. Based on this, social work can intervene in reshaping identity and cognition, regaining the meaning of life, repairing time cracks, and reconstructing time structures.

Keywords

Elderly people who have lost their child; Life course; Social work; Identity reconstruction.

1. Introduction

In the 1980s, the government introduced a policy of population and family planning, advocating that couples only have one child. Many families responded to the national call, so at that time, families of three accounted for a large proportion of the domestic family structure. In the process of a child's growth, some may disappear due to illness, while others may die in disasters. Their parents lose their children and become the elderly who have lost their only child[29]. The elderly who have lost their only child belong to a special group of elderly people. According to a survey, there are over one million families in China who have lost their only child, and more than 70000 new families are added each year[38]. This poses many difficulties for parents who have lost their only child, such as elderly care and medical care. With the acceleration of an aging society, the problem of losing children is a major social issue that must be addressed, rather than a personal or family issue [27].

Although there is a large amount of research on the elderly who have lost their only child in China, it mainly focuses on social policies, mental health, daily care, and social support for the elderly. Peng Yangfan takes social support as the starting point to discuss the necessity of

psychological health assistance for the elderly who have lost their only child, and proposes corresponding countermeasures [27]. Wang Hongbo et al. utilized social work relationships and focused on rebuilding the relationship network of elderly people who lost their only child, and launched a new service model of social work intervention for elderly people who lost their only child [35]; Zhang Bichun and others, from an advantageous perspective, believe that social workers should pay attention to the recovery of the living conditions of elderly people who have lost their only child, rather than making material changes to them[40]. The moment of losing a child becomes an important stage in the life process of elderly people. How to pass through this period is crucial for the quality of life and the quality of life of elderly people who have lost their only child.

2. Explanation of Life Process Theory

The life process theory, as a relatively mature theory, has been widely applied in various fields and a series of disciplines. But all versions of the life process theory acknowledge that it is about examining people's lives over time through different stages and events that give meaning to life. It attempts to explore the factors that affect our lives. It examines what causes and marks changes in life, as well as what influences the direction of life. The theory of life process originated in the 1920s and has been relatively mature abroad after nearly a century of development. In Eddie's book "The Children of the Great Depression," he described the theory of life processes, proposed the concept of life processes, and summarized four life process paradigms[10].

Until the 21st century, few sociologists consciously applied this theory to China. Li Qiang and others introduced the theory and methods of life processes to China. They conducted in-depth research on the historical development, analytical paradigms, and theoretical applications of Western "life processes", and for the first time proposed a new approach to "event history analysis" in the quantitative research of "life processes", and elaborated on the important position of "life processes" in the development of Chinese society [20]. This has given Chinese people a comprehensive understanding of this theory. Subsequently, in 2005, Bao Leiping elaborated on the concept of "life process". She believed that life process does not equate to the life cycle or life history that some scholars believe [4]. These two types of research are of great significance for the formation of life process theory. Scholar Li Junpeng analyzed the traditional, important concepts, and research methods of his knowledge from the perspective of life history. He believes that the main research methods of life process theory include retrospective study of life history and observational analysis of life history. The first is to review the past process, and the second is to conduct long-term exploration of the future process of groups that have not yet occurred. Both have advantages and disadvantages. We can consider combining the two organically[19].

The loss of independence event can cause changes in the life process of elderly people. As Friedman [14] said, once a major event occurs in the course of human life, a dividing line is drawn. It divides life into "before" and "after", and this separation is reflected in the current personal life history. Therefore, research on elderly people who have lost their only child is an indispensable field for studying their life processes. Elderly people learn that losing children is an important moment in their lives, which can trigger a reconstruction of their identity and thus affect their quality of life. The pain of losing a child has changed their perception of time. The painful days seem long, and losing the limitations of children leads to their extraordinary life experiences and identities. In social work research, most studies on the elderly focus on social support, mental health, social policies, etc. However, there is still a lack of research analyzing the identity of elderly people who have lost their only child from a life process perspective. This study rethinks the role of identity in life process research based on the changes in the identity

of elderly people at the critical moment of losing independence. Through social work intervention services, it demonstrates the possibility of reconstructing the identity of elderly people who have lost independence through social work. This article focuses on the core issue of reconstructing the identity of elderly people who have lost their children, emphasizing the changes in their identity after losing them, and how to help them establish new positive identities and improve their quality of life.

3. Research Methods and Case Introduction

Due to the special nature of the group of people who have lost their only child, many relevant departments have long adopted a non encouraging and non supportive attitude, resulting in a limited number of social organizations serving the group of people who have lost their only child. Therefore, the author collected and understood information from E Association, and selected one of the over 200 service recipients to conduct a case analysis using non participatory observation. The service target information is as follows:

Mr. Wang, 68 years old, is a retired worker in good physical condition and has been separated from his wife for a long time. There are no brothers and sisters, only one distant cousin, but few contacts. One day in 2018, after dinner, Mr. Wang's 25-year-old son, Xiao Wang, talked about facing a lot of pressure from performance evaluations recently and wanting to take some money to go home and do business on his own. That night, Mr. Wang had a drink and heard that he wanted a large sum of money. He became furious and scolded Xiao Wang for not being sensible and not doing anything serious. Xiao Wang was so angry that he couldn't resist a few words. Later, the father and son had a quarrel. Upon seeing the situation, Wang's wife rushed over to persuade and let Xiao Wang go out to relax. As Xiao Wang was about to leave the house, Grandpa Wang's anger had not yet dissipated. He shouted at Xiao Wang, "If you go out, don't come back!" "If you don't come back, don't come back!" Xiao Wang angrily left. Afterwards, Grandpa Wang also blamed his wife for not indulging Xiao Wang and letting him go out. At 4am the next day, Grandpa Wang received a call from the police station, saying that Xiao Wang had a car accident and died. In the following years, Grandpa Wang lived a life of self blame. He blamed both him and his wife, often drinking excessively and hitting his wife when drunk. (Before her son passed away, the marital relationship was relatively harmonious.) Blame her for not letting Xiao Wang stay at home, and nothing will happen at home! Mr. Wang's wife often regretted it, but couldn't bear the pain of domestic violence, so she moved back to her mother's house and had no contact for several years. Grandpa Wang gradually became isolated, often talking to himself alone, unwilling to go out during the day, and his health also deteriorated. At first, social workers attempted to establish contact with Mr. Wang, but were refused several times to invite him to the community for activities. Afterwards, social workers were refused to visit him. For a long time, social workers have called and sent text messages to Mr. Wang every holiday or seasonal change. Later, social workers invited him to participate in community activities, but although he verbally agreed, he still did not come. The social worker voluntarily requested to visit him again, but he did not refuse this time. After several conversations, the social worker gradually became acquainted with Mr. Wang. During a conversation, Mr. Wang mentioned that he had always maintained the original appearance of Xiao Wang's room, as if he had never left before, and occasionally held a photo of Xiao Wang hidden under the bed, crying. Seeing other children, they would think of Xiao Wang and couldn't help but cry. He expressed his unwillingness to participate in community activities due to his unwillingness to meet acquaintances, children, and the fear of wanting to shed tears.

4. The Changes in Identity of Elderly People Who Have Lost Their Only Child After Experiencing "Critical Moments"

For a long time, there have been many reasons why elderly people who have lost their only child. According to a survey, the main causes of death for only children are mostly (accidents, such as traffic accidents, earthquakes, etc.), illness, or suicide[21]. Many elderly people who have lost their only child have a deep impression of the scene of receiving the sad news of losing their child for the first time, and can even describe the relevant details at that time. Such as time, location, notifier, and notification method. For elderly people who have lost their only child, the moment they hear their child pass away is a turning point in life, and their understanding of time changes from then on. Losing children is an important event and moment in the lives of elderly people. After experiencing this important moment, the life of elderly people who have lost their only child has undergone a turning point. The accompanying identity also undergoes corresponding changes. The following text will analyze the changes in identity of elderly people who have lost their children from four aspects.

4.1. Time turning point: the transformation of identity from "raising children to prevent aging" to "having no children under one's knees"

Since ancient times, the concept of raising children to prevent aging has always existed in the minds of Chinese people. People expect to have children to support them in their old age. However, some elderly people have lost confidence and hope in their future life due to the loss of their only child. The experience of white haired people sending black haired people has brought tremendous pain to these elderly people, almost destroying their original lives. After losing their children, these elderly people find it difficult to be accepted by society. Their long-term accumulation of negative emotions has formed an irrational perspective and is expressed in an irrational way. This irrational understanding arises in the fact of disasters and absolute loss of children. They believe that without children, there will be no offspring. Life is meaningless. As mentioned earlier, the reason why he didn't go was because he didn't want to see any familiar people or children, because he was afraid that he would lose control of his tears. Mr. Wang always felt that he was different from others and had no confidence when he was with them. Therefore, I do not want to have contact with others. Their lives are upside down day and night, and they don't go out during the day. Only when night falls, there are few people on the streets who go out, and they refuse visits from family and friends. This creates a strong contrast between their expectations for a better life in their later years and the reality of loneliness[35].

Elderly people who have lost their only child feel hopeless and helpless in their future lives. They start counting down their own future and often hear news about losing their independence on television, the internet, and neighbors. The reception of such information affects their self-identity. The initial rich social roles of elderly people who have lost their children gradually decrease, and family members and social status are placed in a secondary position, with the loss of social status occupying the core. Originally, elderly people were prone to feeling useless, and sad events further reinforced their "useless" identity and increased the risk of cognitive impairment. Chinese people believe in causal relationships and the cycles they bring. When they lose their children, some elderly people may believe that their mistakes or mistakes have brought "retribution" to the loss of children. Some elderly people may worry about negative social evaluations due to losing their children. For those elderly people who have lost their children, physical pain and psychological self blame and guilt intertwine, making life painful. They can only wait in pain for death to come and end this unfortunate life.

4.2. Time Misalignment: Identity Transformation from Happy and Happy Families to Fragmented Families

Losing independence means the interruption of the elderly's life journey, deviating from the normal time trajectory. There is a clear difference between experiencing the loss of independence before and after, to the extent that many elderly people use the loss of independence event as the dividing point of their life journey, and their lives are also affected by this event. In this situation, many families who have lost their children have experienced marital problems. The core family is composed of parents and unmarried children, and is currently the most important type of family structure in China, with a relatively stable family structure. In this family structure, children play a very important role. On the one hand, children are the bond between husband and wife, and on the other hand, children may be the pressure reducing valve of family relationships. If an elderly person loses their only child, it means they have lost the most important factor in their entire family. After losing the bond and pressure relief valve of the child relationship, both spouses may experience long-term emotional oppression, leading to resentment, arguments, and even becoming strangers. Some widowed couples who are unwilling to continue their painful life together may choose to divorce, and their families may face a crisis of division[36].

4.3. The transformation of identity in the psychological and physiological dual pain of elderly people who have lost their only child

Human time perception is not measured in hours, minutes, seconds, years, or days. Generally speaking, it is full of confusion and flexibility, which is closely related to specific situations[26]. A painful experience also affects people's perception of time: happy times are always brief, but painful days are incredibly long. The pain of losing a son is one of the main sources of pain for elderly people who have lost their only child. There are usually two explanations for the impact of pain on time. One is the biological orientation pattern. This pattern indicates that an internal clock (biological clock) that is relatively stable relative to the periodic changes in the external environment exists in the brain. The internal clock is also affected by physiological changes such as gender, age, fatigue, and pain[13]. Another type is a cognitive oriented model. This pattern suggests that the external environment may affect an individual's temporal cognition. The perception of individual time comes from external stimuli and is influenced by memory and attention[31].

In fact, a person's perception of time is influenced by psychological and cognitive factors. Pain disrupts the time perception of elderly people who have lost their only child, making them "living in their own time" not necessarily consistent with the time of the objective world[14]. In the painful process, elderly people who have lost their children often underestimate time. Simply put, pain alleviates the subjective feelings of elderly people who have lost their only child, and they may perceive time as walking slowly. In terms of psychology, American medical anthropologist Kevin believes that social problems experienced by a person, if not addressed in a timely manner, will manifest in the body. Using the body as a medium to interpret, express, experience, and respond to personal and social issues is called "somatization". This phenomenon is in line with the emotional theory of traditional Chinese medicine and also conforms to the modern medical model of "physiology psychology society"[28]. Mr. Wang's somatization manifests as insomnia, delusions of victimization, and chest tightness.

4.4. The impact of social environment on the identity of elderly people who have lost their only child

Although life process theory is a typical theory of time, an important element of life process theory is that it is not actually separated from space[10]. Abbott emphasized the importance of time while pointing out that Chicago sociologists have always placed sociological research in

specific time and space[1].Elderly people who have lost their children are often labeled as "lonely," "weak," and "abandoned" by their environment. When faced with these negative labels, they are powerless to resist and do not want to argue. Over time, they gradually reject communication with others and are unwilling to accept help from relevant departments, volunteers, social workers, etc[35].

In the context of Chinese social and cultural context, there are two relative levels of understanding and handling of "lost only" families. Having sympathy and support for families who have lost their only child is the earliest, most direct, most expressive, and correct social cognition. However, there are also theories of "moral condemnation" and "cycle of good and evil" towards elderly people who have lost their only child, and the notion of "childlessness", especially "having no offspring," is stigmatized. For a family that has lost their only child, the current social culture is not very tolerant[7]. From the perspective of short-term time structure, in such a closed environment, elderly people who have lost their only child carry out all closed daily life according to key moments and time reconstruction in their life process. Closed daily life has a prominent position in time management and has become an important unit of time. The elderly who have lost their only child do not have any reserved time for social activities, and the richness of their social identity is squeezed, while their identity is constantly strengthened. Due to space limitations, elderly people who have lost their only child do not want to go out or dare not go out for activities or socializing. Some people may think that elderly people who have lost their only child are an unlucky group and try to reduce the time they spend interacting with them. From the perspective of the medium to long term time structure, elderly people who have lost their only child do not have their own goals, and they feel sad and unfortunate about their future lives. If time has a starting and ending point, then the end point for the elderly who have lost their only child is to quietly wait for death to come and end this unfortunate life.

5. Exploring the Practical Path of Social Workers Intervening in Time Reconstruction for Elderly People Who Have Lost Their Only Child

At an important moment of experiencing the loss of a child, the identity of elderly people who have lost their only child changes, and their significance in life is influenced by the new temporal and spatial environment. But as long as they survive, people will continue to seek the value and meaning of life. A positive life is crucial for everyone[15].Rebuilding a positive identity and changing the life value of elderly people who have lost their only child is an effective way to intervene in elderly people who have lost their only child[39]. Although the state, government, and social personnel have provided assistance to elderly people who have lost their children, these are far from enough for them. It is difficult for elderly people who have lost their children to establish a positive identity through their own efforts. At this stage, the intervention of social workers has the opportunity to gain a positive identity for elderly people who have lost their only child[13]. Of course, the intervention services of social workers are not always effective and may encounter many problems. Some elderly people who have lost their only child are closed to themselves, unwilling to communicate with others, and do not accept the services provided by social workers. Some elderly people who have lost their only child are unable to overcome the pain of losing their child, and are mentally unstable and unable to communicate. Social workers need their active participation and cooperation to help elderly people who have lost their children reconstruct their identities, and fully utilize their initiative.

5.1. Identity and cognitive reshaping of elderly people who have lost their only child

In Mr. Wang's understanding, he believed that losing a son in old age was a sad and unfortunate thing, and that he would be lonely and have no one to take care of him, feeling hopeless about

his future life. Social workers can intervene in Mr. Wang's dilemma from the following three aspects. Firstly, in response to this irrational perspective, social workers can use rational emotional behavioral therapy, which is an important part of cognitive behavioral therapy. The theory of rational emotions holds that certain negative events are beyond our control, and although they are not something we enjoy, there is no reason to say that they should not occur. Therefore, when helping Mr. Wang, we should first help and guide him to accept the fact that his children have left. When this fact cannot be changed, we should learn to accept it and continue living in this state[17]. It is wrong to let Mr. Wang understand his own thoughts, change irrational cognition, and transform his own thoughts. Secondly, due to losing his child, Grandpa Wang does not want to socialize with strangers, but often chooses to communicate with people who have similar experiences with him. Therefore, social workers can use group work to help families in need build support groups in the community, and create a warm, safe, and cathartic space for Mr. Wang[36]. Thirdly, social workers should accurately and timely report Mr. Wang's basic situation to the government's population and family planning departments and civil affairs departments, ensuring that Mr. Wang receives timely national policy economic assistance. At the same time, in response to Mr. Wang's special situation, we will carry out diversified elderly care and solve the problem of Mr. Wang being homeless. For example, implementing elderly care models such as community nursing homes [30].

Due to the fact that most elderly people who have lost their only child are over 50 years old, childless, and helpless, the contemplation of death has begun to emerge in their lives. The elderly who have lost their only child are closely linked to death. In order to help elderly people who have lost their only child regain their confidence in life, social workers can apply the theory of rational emotions, starting from changing their erroneous cognition, correcting irrational cognition, and gradually accepting the fact of losing their independence. Through this approach, social workers can help the elderly who have lost their only child solve their future elderly care problems on this basis, so that they no longer worry about being left with nothing to support. Encourage elderly people who have lost their only child to rethink their lives, enjoy themselves in a timely manner, use their time more actively, reflect on the value of life, and explore a more exciting life.

5.2. Repair time cracks

Marx proposed that "human beings are the sum of all relationships", which is not based on their biological characteristics, but on their sociality. Relationship connection is the result of communication and interaction between relationship subjects, and can also play a role in relationships between individuals, individuals and families, individuals and other important individuals[35]. In Mr. Wang's family, the couple often experience discord and even emotional breakdown due to the loss of one child. After learning about Mr. Wang's situation, social workers first admonished him, telling him that long-term drinking not only cannot save the life of his lost son, but also harms his body and the people closest to him. After a period of intervention, Mr. Wang stopped drinking alcohol. Later, social workers communicated with Mr. Wang's wife, who agreed to go back and chat with him. Through the conversation, Mr. Wang realized his mistake and promised not to drink anymore. He also learned that his wife was very upset about the loss of a child. Through communication, the two of them understood each other's thoughts and opened up a knot in their hearts.

China is a society that places great emphasis on relationships, and for elderly people who have lost their only child, it is important to restore their marital relationships[37]. Research has found that the breakdown of marital relationships among elderly people who have lost their children accelerates, leading to a decline in their quality of life and quality of life. For example, chronic diseases have worsened into acute diseases, and some elderly people who have lost their children are usually taken care of by their wives. Without their wives, elderly people who

have lost their children cannot take care of themselves, and so on. Social workers can encourage emotional communication between couples and share each other's feelings. Enable both spouses to understand each other's thoughts[22]. You can also organize themed photos of family, friends, and travel between the elderly couple who have lost their only child. Expanded the breadth of emotional communication between couples of elderly people who have lost their only child from different dimensions. The elderly who have lost their only child often suffer from the pain of losing their child and forget these dimensions. Through themed photos and emotional communication between the elderly couple, they can bring them closer together[16]. Previously, the experience dominated by the loss of a child was taken as the main thread of their lives by the elderly who had lost their only child, obscuring their originally rich personal life and losing the emotional connection between spouses. When elderly people who have lost their children realize that losing a child is only a part of life, not the whole of life, they will no longer be entangled in it, accept life again, and be positive and optimistic[34].

5.3. To regain the meaning of life and reduce the impact of losing uniqueness on the speed of time passing

The unexpected death of Xiao Wang has had a huge impact on Grandpa Wang, and this shadow will affect his future life. This is due to psychological fear, anger, and helplessness, which have a negative impact on his normal physical and mental health. In addition to his perception of time, he also feels powerless and disappointed in his personal identity and future expectations. In the coming weeks, Mr. Wang may experience normal psychological reactions such as fear, anger, regression, helplessness, and disappointment[9]. And this series of psychological reactions prolonged Mr. Wang's painful time, often feeling powerless and helpless. At this point, social workers can provide grief counseling to Mr. Wang. Through companionship, Mr. Wang can calm down in a relaxed atmosphere and vent his hidden or suppressed emotions. After a crisis event, there is no need for Mr. Wang to deliberately forget the pain of losing his son[11]. Encourage him to discuss or release his painful emotions in appropriate occasions, and find the right way to commemorate his children. Some studies suggest that social workers can organize appropriate rituals and use counseling techniques such as "empty chairs" and "role-playing" to help those who have lost their children express their sadness and helplessness in life[37]. During the process of psychotherapy for Mr. Wang, social workers can also help him restore his normal lifestyle, maintain sufficient sleep and rest. And explore Mr. Wang's life fun or hobbies[32]. When Mr. Wang focuses on doing something, painful memories begin to shift. Therefore, by developing Mr. Wang's interests and hobbies, it can to some extent change his perception of time.

5.4. Time structure reconstruction

Professor Mu Guangzong believes that "only child families are the most risky among all family planning families: if a child passes away early or suffers serious harm in special circumstances, then the risky family becomes a "broken family "and a" difficult family ". Without external support, it is difficult to escape this crisis [25]. Social support refers to the mutual support between individuals in terms of material and spiritual conditions, as well as the exchange of material and spiritual resources between individuals, enabling them to meet social needs. Social support is very important for human society, as well as for human psychological and physiological health. It helps to adjust for the negative effects of stress and reduce the degree of social dysfunction [23]. Due to the significant impact of the throat incident on Mr. Wang, whether he can recover from this incident, successfully return to society, maintain a high level of physical health, and have the ability to meet his quality of life are closely related to social support. Social support can be divided into formal social support and informal social support systems. Formal social support includes the government and its components, neighborhood committees, community health service organizations, charitable organizations, and media.

Informal support includes blood ties, neighbors, colleagues, and other friendships. Support mainly includes material support, emotional support, information support, and social participation support[3].

Due to the influence of the external environment and the lack of goals, Grandpa Wang has been closed off for a long time and is afraid to communicate with the outside world, leading a normal social life. Social workers need to help Mr. Wang improve his self-identity, strengthen social interaction, and participate in community activities in order to better reintegrate into social life. In the process of interpersonal intervention, social workers assist Mr. Wang in forming a certain social relationship network through interaction with others, making up for the rupture of social relationships, enabling them to have certain social resources and capital, and helping them improve their living and working environment and restore normal interpersonal communication[35]. In terms of social interaction, social workers need to help Mr. Wang rebuild a non institutionalized social support system based on blood, geography, industry, and interests. Mr. Wang should be encouraged not to be unwilling to share his experiences and feelings with others due to taboos, and to give others the opportunity to understand his own experiences and feelings. Through interpersonal communication, not only can one rediscover the value of personal life, enrich it, fade sad memories, but they can also express their needs externally and obtain necessary spiritual and material support to increase their social capital[32]. At the level of social policy, build a distinctive culture of the community through various means. Satisfying and increasing Mr. Wang's emotional and social needs, strengthening his integration with the community community, and playing an important role in his community integration and sense of belonging. Through social support, social workers have enabled Mr. Wang to regain his goals, no longer being closed and unwilling to communicate with others, and actively participating in social life. Society has a higher tolerance for Mr. Wang. Mr. Wang's life value has been extended, and he is full of hope for his future life.

6. Summary

The emergence of the life process theory was written by American sociologist Thomas and Polish sociologist Florian Znanetsky in "Polish Farmers in Europe and America", which used methods such as life history, life records, and situational definitions to study the impact of social changes on the trajectory of immigrant life[33]. Since 1999, domestic scholars have summarized the historical development, analytical paradigms, and theoretical applications of life process research, and elaborated on the importance of life process in Chinese sociological research [20]. Afterwards, the life process theory was widely applied and blossomed in the field of social work. But upon closer inspection, it can be found that the theory of life process is less applied in elderly social work. Therefore, this article attempts to apply the life process theory to the group of elderly people who have lost their only child.

The life process is influenced differently by the events and sequence that occur. A man who marries in his prime and an elder who marries at the age of six or seventy have different impacts on life. The loss of a young child and the loss of a middle-aged and elderly child also have different impacts on their life journey. The main focus of this study is on elderly people who have lost their children and are no longer able to conceive, especially those who are middle-aged and childless. They have years of time experience, and the comparison between identity reconstruction and external factor reconstruction after intervention is more obvious.

This study not only demonstrates the changes in the identity of elderly people who have lost their children, but also explores methods for reconstructing identity through social work intervention. After learning about the loss of children, the direction of the identity of the elderly who lost their only child reversed, and the time point shifted from "raising children to prevent aging" to "having no children under their knees" identity reconstruction. In terms of time

allocation, elderly people who have lost their only child are more likely to focus on the current pain[8]. The life experiences after losing a child are completely different from before, and the elderly who have lost their only child tend to gather in the event of losing their child, resulting in a gloomy and negative life. In terms of the speed of time passing, both psychological and physiological pain make elderly people who have lost their only child feel even longer. In addition, the original time structure of elderly people who have lost their only child has been disrupted. In the social environment, the existing time structure makes the social role of elderly people who have lost their only child singular, making their lives monotonous and boring, and feeling hopeless about life. The intervention of social work helps elderly people who have lost their only child to reconstruct their identity, find the meaning of life, actively experience life, and regain the value and identity of life. The rational emotional therapy carried out by social workers helps elderly people who have lost their only child correct their misconceptions and gradually accept the fact of losing their child. Based on this, it helps elderly people who have lost their only child to have no worries about their future retirement life. Organize themed photos of family, friends, and travel between elderly couples who have lost their only child to improve their relationship. Social workers guide elderly people who have lost their only child to develop their interests and hobbies[6]. By changing their lifestyle habits, they improve their perception and identity of pain, which helps alleviate their physical and psychological pain and help them overcome difficult times. Social workers provide social support to help elderly people who have lost their only child regain their goals, no longer being closed and unwilling to communicate with others, and actively participate in social life. Society has a higher tolerance for elderly people who have lost their only child. The life value of elderly people who have lost their only child is extended, and they are full of hope for their future life.

Undoubtedly, elderly people who have lost their only child should become the focus of social attention and respect, rather than being ignored. Although the identity reconstruction of elderly people who have lost their only child cannot be achieved without the help of external forces, identity recognition also cannot be achieved without the individual's own initiative[5]. The performance of elderly people who have lost their only child in the process of receiving social work services is their initiative to rebuild their identity.

Social workers should always pay attention to the subjectivity of the elderly who have lost their only child, constantly reflect on their wishes or the wishes of social workers, and pay attention to the initiative of the elderly who have lost their only child[2]. Guide elderly people who have lost their only child to change their thoughts and regain their confidence in life. In practice, the findings of this study contribute to improving the quality of life of elderly people who have lost their only child and provide theoretical basis for intervening in elderly social work. Social workers can provide targeted services based on the direction, length, speed, and time structure of the elderly who have lost their only child. In elderly social work, the identity of elderly people who have lost their only child is a dimension that is easily overlooked. This study can provide some useful insights.

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