

Review Paper
Quality of Life in Iranian Elderly



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ABSTRACT

Objectives Considering the increasing population of the elderly in different societies, it is important to pay attention to their basic physical and mental needs and Quality of Life (QOL). This study was conducted to acquire a comprehensive view of the QOL of the Iranian elderly and its associated factors.

Methods & Materials This is a review article with a systematic search. In November 2016, Persian and English language articles were searched in databases including Web of Science, PubMed, Magiran, SID, Iran Scientific Information and Research Institute (IranDoc), Iranpsych, Noormags with the keywords of "elderly", "adults", "aged", "Quality of Life", "life quality", "QOL", "Iran", and "older". The related articles were assessed by the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria and date compilation were taken until June 2016.

Results Through systematic search, 70 articles in various areas of QOL for the elderly were found. These areas included interventions in the QOL of the elderly (11 articles), demographic factors related to the QOL of the elderly (21 articles), the QOL of the elderly patients (7 articles), the status of the QOL of the elderly in Iran (14 articles), the QOL of the elderly (10 articles), and the effect of social protection on the QOL of the elderly (7 articles). About 92% of the articles reported the status of elderly QOL as low and moderate and 7% of the articles reported it as high. The QOL of the elderly is influenced by social support, economic factors, social class, demographic characteristics, physical condition, place of residence, and educational and sports activities.

Conclusion Based on the obtained results, educational, nutritional and sports interventions, marital life, high education, home life, religious orientation, social participation, social support, health status, high socioeconomic status, and appropriate employment could increase the QOL of the elderly.

Key words:

Elderly, Adults, Aged, Quality of Life, Iran, Older

Extended Abstract

1. Objectives

Considering the increasing number of older people in different societies, it is important to pay attention to their basic needs, physical and mental health and

Quality of Life (QOL). Medical and health advances in the second half of the 20th century increased the life expectancy of humans. According to the World Health Organization report, the population of people aged 60 and over was around 600 million in 2000 and it will reach 1.2 billion by 2025 [1]. Age, gender, health status, and cultural values are important factors influencing people's understanding of QOL [2]. By reviewing

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the papers on the QOL of the Iranian elderly, this study aims to explore factors associated with the QOL of this age group.

2. Methods & Materials

This is a descriptive study done by library research and performing a systematic search. The search for scientific papers of Iranian authors in English was conducted in scientific databases of PubMed, Web of Science, MagIran, SID, and IranDoc by using following keywords: "older," "elderly", "adults", "aged", "Quality of Life", "life quality", "QOL", and "Iran". In order to search for the papers in Persian in databases of MagIran, Noormags, Iranpsych, IranDoc, and SID, the Persian equivalent of the mentioned keywords were used.

Search strategy in PubMed was ("quality of life"[tiab] OR "QOL" [tiab] OR "life Quality") AND (older[tiab] OR elder*[tiab] OR aging[tiab] OR aging[tiab] OR "older adults"[tiab] OR senior*[tiab] OR old*[tiab] OR "later life"[tiab]) AND (Iran[ad] OR Iran[pl] OR Iran [tiab])). For Web of Science, it was as follows: ((TITLE: ("quality of life") AND TOPIC: (((((((elder* OR older) OR elder*) OR aging) OR aging) OR "older adults") OR senior*) OR old*)) AND TOPIC: (Iran)).

The included studies for review were those conducted until June 2016 and those evaluated QOL of Iranian elderly people. The search was conducted in October 2016. The studies on non-Iranian elderly people were excluded from the review. In the initial search, 2084 study titles were collected. Based on the inclusion criteria, 301 articles were selected after removing duplicates and non-related studies. The abstracts of selected studies were reviewed by two researchers regarding their relation to QOL of the elderly. Finally, 177 papers were collected. After reviewing the full texts of these papers, 70 papers were selected for the review study. These remaining papers were categorized based on the research questions.

3. Results

Of 70 papers, 11 were related to interventions in the QOL of the elderly, 21 about demographic factors associated with QOL of the elderly, 7 about QOL of the elderly patients, 14 about describing the QOL status of the elderly, 10 about the relationship between exercise and QOL of the elderly, and 7 about the effect of social support on the QOL of the elderly.

Review results showed that 7% of the Iranian elderly people had high QOL, 42% low and 50% moderate QOL (3-5). The elderly living in nursing homes had a lower QOL compared to the elderly living at home. On the other hand, the elderly people living in rural areas had higher QOL. In interventional studies, interventions in the test groups all managed to improve the QOL in the elderly [14-16].

According to these studies, if interventions are educational and are conducted with the presence of peers or volunteers in a group, and based on a specific model such as PRECEDE-PROCEED model or follow-up design, they can have the greatest impact on improving the QOL of the elderly. It seems that educational interventions affecting QOL are very important (12-15). The demographic factors affecting the QOL of the elderly included gender, level of education, religion, place of residence, occupation, and economic situations (16-21). Studies related to the QOL of the elderly patients showed that this group is in a difficult situation due to the financial burden of disease, in addition to its physical burden [22-25].

Exercise can also be effective in improving the QOL in either the healthy or sick elderly people [26, 27]. All of these studies reported exercises as an effective factor in promoting the QOL of the elderly, where aerobic and regular exercises had a greater impact (28-31). In addition to exercise, social support also improves the QOL of the elderly. Social support can be affected by marital status, gender, social ties, parenting practices, and the economic situation of the elderly [3, 32-34].

4. Conclusion

Most of the conducted studies were related to describing the QOL status of the elderly, while fewer studies were related to the QOL of the elderly patients and the social support of the elderly. The factors that can promote QOL in elderly people were educational interventions, nutritional interventions, gender equity, higher educational levels, high economic status, proper occupation, prevention of disease complications, reduced burden of disease, understanding the disease, group and rhythmic exercises in water; emotional, structural, functional, financial, and social support; living at home; connecting with nature; and physical activity. According to the results of this study, health policies can be implemented at different levels to improve the QOL of the elderly. These policies can be aimed at increasing the recreational and sports centers for the elderly, comprehensive health care services for

the elderly, provide financial assistance for seniors, and the increase of retirement pensions and the spiritual and material support of the elderly.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

There is no ethical principle to be considered doing this research.

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Authors' contributions

All authors contributed in designing, running, and writing all parts of the research.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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