



SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG COMMUNITY-DWELLING OLDER ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The escalating quantity of older individuals as a susceptible demographic necessitates significant consideration. The emergent challenges encompass not solely physical aspects but also psychological and societal dimensions, subsequently impacting their holistic well-being. An element contributing to the enhancement of the well-being of older individuals involves participating in communal exchanges. Past studies have suggested that seniors who regularly partake in various pursuits and participate in favorable social exchanges in their day-to-day routines may enhance their well-being. This study aimed to examine and analyze the relationship between social interaction and the quality of life among community-dwelling older adults. This study was a correlation with a cross-sectional approach. The sample was selected purposively, resulting in a sample of 228 older adults at the Harapan Raya Inpatient Health Center in Pekanbaru City. The data were collected using two validated questionnaire including social interaction questionnaire with Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.882, and WHOQOL-BREF with the Cronbach's α coefficient for the domains ranged from 0.41 to 0.77. To test the hypothesis regarding the relationship between the social interaction and the older adults quality of life, a chi-square test was employed. The research findings revealed a significant relationship between social interaction and the quality of life among older adults, with a p-value of 0.00 (<0.05) and an OR of 5.6. This implies that older adults with high social interaction have a 5.6 times higher chance of experiencing a good quality of life compared to those with low social interaction. Older adults with high social interaction tend to have a better quality of life compared to those with low social interaction.

Keywords: community; older adults; quality of life; social interaction

First Received 20 March 2024	Revised 28 March 2024	Accepted 17 April 2024
Final Proof Received 19 April 2024	Published 01 June 2024	
How to cite (in APA style) Alfianur, A., Ezalina, E., Saputra, C., & Sapitri, G. R. (2024). Social Interactions and Quality of Life among Community-Dwelling Older Adults. Indonesian Journal of Global Health Research, 6(3), 1077-1086. https://doi.org/10.37287/ijghr.v6i3.3208 .		

INTRODUCTION

The current estimation suggests that there exist 500 million older adults globally, and this figure is projected to rise to 1.2 billion by the year 2025, with an average age of 60 years. The escalating life expectancy on a global scale has resulted in a surge in the older adults demographic, leading to a shift in the population structure towards an older age group. Specifically in Indonesia, the projection indicates that in 2020, the older adults demographic expanded to make up 11.09% of the total population (29,120,000 individuals), with a projected life expectancy range of 70-75 years (BPS, 2021).

The escalating percentage of aging individuals necessitate careful consideration. These matters impact not just the populace but also pose physical, psychological, and societal consequences for the older adults, rendering them susceptible to diverse adversities. The susceptibility of the older adults in negotiating existence results in challenges associated with

aging and their surroundings, including enduring chronic illnesses and cognitive impairments (Destriande, IM., Faridah I., Oktania K., 2021), despite the declining trend in morbidity rate from 14.46% in 2020 to 13.04% in 2021 attributed to enhanced healthcare services, it is noteworthy that among individuals aged 60 and older, a significant proportion of 22.48% experience health issues that interfere with their daily routines (Montero-odasso et al., 2022).

Research findings indicate that various illnesses have an impact not solely on the physical well-being of older individuals but also on their psychological state, resulting in challenges related to mental health. Prevalent health conditions observed in the older adults population encompass joint discomfort, particularly in the knee (49.7%), osteoporosis posing a threat of bone fractures (30%), hypertension (37.8%), diabetes mellitus (22.9%), and rheumatic disorders (11.9%) (Mar'ah Konitatillah et al., 2021). Decreased functionality resulting from the natural aging process and various health conditions impact the capacity of older individuals to engage in activities of daily living (ADL) (Kinasih Angkit, 2021).

Despite reaching an advanced age, the older adults population is encouraged to sustain their level of activity to contribute meaningfully (Ezalina et al., 2019). Studies conducted by (Putu & Suyasa, 2023)) on the issue of functional disability among older adults have revealed that 8% of this demographic face limitations due to health conditions, which subsequently heighten their reliance on family members. The rate of dependency within the older adults cohort has risen from 15% in 2019 to 17% in 2021 (Kemenkes, 2021), thereby exerting a notable impact on their overall well-being (Sembodo, 2021).

The older adults encounter a range of challenges that impact their overall well-being, encompassing physical, functional, emotional, and social dimensions. Quality of life, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of their standing within their sociocultural context, taking into account their aspirations, values, and concerns (Acharya Samadarshi et al., 2022). Generally, the components of quality of life are divided into physical, psychological, and social functions (WHO, 2013).

The concept of quality of life pertains to the degree of contentment experienced by the older population across various domains of their existence, as evaluated through elements like independence, temporal dimensions, interpersonal connections, physical security, leisure pursuits, and financial stability (WHO, 2013). Enhancing the quality of life among older individuals contributes to their self-sufficiency, enabling them to undergo the aging process in a successful manner. Attainment of a heightened quality of life is conducive to overall well-being, while a diminished quality of life is linked to states of discomfort (Gunawan et al., 2020). Social engagement stands out as a significant determinant influencing the quality of life experienced by older adults (Janssen et al., 2023).

Social interaction shapes individuals and groups throughout life, including the older adults. Aging often brings psychological challenges like memory issues, loneliness, and fears about autonomy and mortality. These challenges can lead to reduced social engagement, fostering loneliness and depression. This decline in interaction worsens their quality of life and increases dependence on others. (Fakoya et al., 2018). Positive social interaction greatly enhances the quality of life for the older adults, fostering personal growth and self-discovery. It enables mutual understanding, support, and psychological well-being among older individuals. By engaging socially, they can sustain their quality of life, achieve their goals, and receive the necessary empathy and appreciation to thrive (Datta et al., 2015).

Previous studies (Siette et al., 2022) have indicated a correlation between social engagement and the overall well-being of individuals (Siette et al., 2022). The older adults population, when actively participating in daily routines and engaging in positive social exchanges with their peers, may experience enhancements in their quality of life (Shen et al., 2022). Another study found a significant difference in quality of life scores before and after social interaction among the older adults (Datta et al., 2015). As evidenced by research outcomes, social interaction emerges as a pivotal factor in augmenting the well-being of the older adults demographic. Moreover, social engagement serves as a deterrent against solitude in older adults, consequently bolstering their psychological well-being. Through mutual exchange of emotions and experiences, older individuals can collaboratively enhance their quality of life and derive significance from their existence. Hence, this study aimed to examine and analyze the relationship between social interaction and the quality of life among community-dwelling older adults.

METHOD

Quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design was used in this study. The examination was executed at Harapan Raya Public Health Center in Pekanbaru City, encompassing a population of 315 older adults. Utilizing purposive sampling, a total of 228 participants were selected. The criteria for inclusion in the study stipulated individuals to be aged 60 years and above, devoid of hearing impairments, and possessing effective communication skills. The process of data collection entailed administering questionnaires through face-to-face interviews with the subjects. The exploration focused on 4 key indicators of social interaction: cooperation, competition, conflict, and accommodation. These indicators comprised a set of 20 inquiries, evaluated on a Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 to 4 per question. The questionnaire's validity was scrutinized, affirming the soundness of all inquiries, with coefficients ranging from 0.518 to 0.647. Furthermore, the questionnaire exhibited reliability, as evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.882. In assessing the participants' quality of life, Indonesian version of World Health Organization Quality of Life-BREF (WHOQOL-BREF) tool was employed (Salim et al., 2007). The survey consisted of 26 questions, categorized into physical, psychological, social, and environmental aspects. Participants' answers were assessed using a Likert scale, which rated each question on a scale from 1 to 5. The WHOQOL-BREF theoretically covers four domains: physical, psychological, social relationships, and environment. Factor analysis indicated moderate correlations between each question and its respective domain ($r = 0.5-0.7$). Additionally, the Cronbach's α coefficient for the domains ranged from 0.41 to 0.77.

Ethical clearance for this study was secured from the Research Ethics Committee for Health Research (Komite Etik Penelitian Kesehatan - KEPK) at the School of Health Sciences Payung Negeri, Riau Province, with the reference number 122/IKES PN/KEPK/VIII/2023, affirming adherence to ethical guidelines. The data was analyzed through univariate analysis to establish the frequency distribution of each variable. Subsequently, bivariate analysis employing the chi-square test was utilized to explore the association between two variables, with a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$ and a confidence level of 95%. Rejection of the null hypothesis would signify a substantial correlation between social interaction and the older adults's quality of life.

RESULTS

Respondents' characteristics

Table 1 shows that more than half of the older adults (64.5%) are female. The majority of the older adults fall within the age range of 45-59 years, accounting for 55.3% of the total.

Furthermore, nearly half of the older adults population (46.1%) has an elementary school level of education, and more than half of them (55.3%) are still employed.

Table 1.
Respondent's characteristics (n=228)

Category	f	%
Gender		
Male	81	35.5
Female	147	64.5
Age		
45-59	126	55.3
60-74	90	39.5
75-90	12	5.3
Education		
Illiterate	21	9.2
Elementary	105	46.1
Junior High School	33	14.5
Senior High School	48	21.1
University	21	9.2
Employment		
Working	126	55.3
Not working	102	44.7

Social interaction and quality of life among older adults

Table 2 indicates that more than half (61.8%) of the older adults have high social interaction, totalling 141 people, and a good quality of life (52.6%).

Table 2.
Distribution of social interaction and their quality of life among older adults (n=228)

Variable	f	%
Social interaction		
High	141	61,8
Low	87	38,2
Quality of life		
Good	120	52,6
Bad	108	47,4

Relationship between social interaction and quality of life among older adults

Table 3 shows that there is a relationship between social interaction among the older adults and their quality of life ($p < 0.05$), with an odds ratio (OR) of 5.6. This means that older adults with high social interaction are 5.6 times more likely to have a good quality of life compared to those with low social interaction. Older adults with high social interaction have a good quality of life in 68.1% of cases, whereas those with low social interaction have a good quality of life in only 27.6% of cases.

Table 3.
Relationship between older adults social interaction and their quality of life (n=228)

Social interaction	Quality of life				Total		p	OR (CI)
	Good		Bad					
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
High	96	68,1	45	31,9	141	100	<0.001	5,6 (2,0-15,5)
Low	24	27,6	63	72,4	87	100		

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine and analyze the relationship between social interaction and the quality of life among community-dwelling older adults. Discussion section presented based on the result in the following sub-section.

Social interaction and quality of life among older adults

The findings of this study demonstrated that older adults exhibited a high degree of social interaction which was positively associated with a desirable quality of life. An analysis of the questionnaires indicated that 87% of the participants consistently reported "Always" in response to queries such as "I enjoy engaging in activities with other older adults individuals," while 91% and 88% responded similarly to statements related to competition and socializing with individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, respectively.

Effective social interaction plays a pivotal role in fostering a sense of belonging among older adults, facilitating the exchange of narratives, interests, and concerns, as well as participation in collaborative and imaginative pursuits (Sen et al., 2022). By congregating with peers, older adults are able to provide mutual motivation and support, while also sharing their respective obstacles and difficulties (Bela Aprilia Nuraini et al., 2021). Grover et al., (2018) underscore the significance of visits from family and close friends for older adults, highlighting that restrictions on such visits can diminish social interaction, adversely affecting the well-being of older adults, as well as their families and peers. Additionally, (Widiani et al., 2022). suggest that social interaction among older adults can enhance their mental health. Moreover, research indicates that with advancing age, there is often a decline in social interaction, emotional closeness among peers, and receipt of instrumental support. Social interaction, defined as the bonds individuals maintain with others (Janssen et al., 2023), plays a crucial role in fostering a healthy lifestyle for older adults, potentially reducing depression symptoms and discouraging unhealthy behaviors like smoking and excessive alcohol consumption (Sen et al., 2022).

Based on research findings, 52.6% of older adults reported a favorable quality of life. An analysis of questionnaires found that 85% of older adults often experience minimal physical pain, find life meaningful, have ample energy for activities, and are satisfied with their abilities. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines quality of life as an individual's perception of their life situation within their cultural and value framework, encompassing health, psychological status, independence, social relationships, personal beliefs, and environment.

Active aging is encouraged through physical exercise to prevent age-related physiological deficits and maintain QoL (Souza Madeira et al., 2022). Age-related diseases can impact physical and mental functions, leading to a decline in daily activities and societal roles, emphasizing the importance of accurately assessing and preserving QoL in the elderly (Juanita et al., 2022). Studies have shown that elderly individuals engaging in physical exercise exhibit better QoL compared to non-exercisers, with sensory ability and past activity being significant factors influencing QoL. Additionally, social and health predictors like depression, disability, and social networks play crucial roles in determining the QoL of older adults in the community (Lim et al., 2023).

Relationship between social interaction and quality of life among older adults

This study showed various factors, including health changes and adjusting to new roles, affect quality of life in old age. According to (Stanhope Lancaster, 2016), biological, social, and economic aspects are equally crucial. Physiological decline, social inactivity, unemployment,

and unhealthy behaviors pose risks (Montero-odasso et al., 2022). However, healthy older adults maintain social engagement and preventive measures against anxiety and depression, enhancing quality of life (Shen et al., 2022).

Research has shown that variables like degree of dependence, presence of chronic conditions like diabetes and heart diseases, social relationships, emotional well-being, and physical performance are closely linked to predicting QoL in the elderly (Strandberg, 2021). Additionally, during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic, factors such as age, retirement status, living situation, health insurance, and medical history have been identified as significant influencers of QoL in older adults. Furthermore, studies emphasize the importance of assessing adaptation to old age as it correlates with health-related QoL in older individuals (Sinaga et al., 2022).

Previous research indicates that social interaction significantly enhances the quality of life for older adults. By engaging socially, they can ward off feelings of loneliness and share experiences and emotions with trusted individuals, thereby receiving valuable social support. Effective interaction thrives on mutually beneficial relationships and shared interests (Janssen et al., 2023). With advancing age, physical limitations often lead older adults to withdraw from social interactions. Yet, those who maintain a positive outlook, embrace self-change, and exhibit optimism find it easier to engage with peers, thereby alleviating mental strain and loneliness. Active involvement in the community fosters adaptation and participation, leading to robust social support and long-term benefits for quality of life (Wahyuni & Krisnatuti, 2022).

Active older adults who engage socially tend to be more enthusiastic, independent, and mentally healthy, as they derive satisfaction from their positive outlook and life experiences. Their vitality and contentment translate into enhanced productivity and quality of life. Conversely, those with limited social connections are at greater risk of loneliness, which can negatively impact their health (Panday et al., 2015). The findings underscore the importance of promoting social interaction as a means to enhance the well-being of older adults. Encouraging activities that facilitate social engagement and interaction among older adults can be beneficial in mitigating feelings of loneliness and fostering a sense of belonging within the community. Furthermore, interventions aimed at promoting positive outlooks and adaptive coping strategies among older adults may contribute to increased social participation and improved quality of life.

CONCLUSION

According to the study findings, a correlation exists between social interaction and the quality of life among older adults. Specifically, older individuals who engage in frequent social interactions generally experience a higher quality of life compared to those who have limited social engagement. Embracing the aging process with appreciation and maintaining involvement with their surroundings is important for older adults. Such interactions enable them to share experiences and emotions, diminishing feelings of loneliness and ultimately enhancing their quality of life as they age.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher extends their gratitude to all participants and Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM) for providing funding and facilities that contributed to the success of this research.

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