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A Systematic Review: The Quality of Life among Elderly in Indonesia

Denada Florencia Leona

Andalas University, Padang, Indonesia

A B S T R A C T

Background. The quality of life (QoL) among the elderly is a critical area of study, reflecting their overall well-being and health. In Indonesia, a diverse and rapidly aging population faces unique challenges impacting QoL. This systematic review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the QoL of elderly Indonesians and to identify gaps in current research.

Methods. A systematic review was conducted using multiple databases, including PubMed, Scopus, and Indonesian academic sources. Studies published from 2010 to 2024 that focused on the elderly in Indonesia and reported on various aspects of QoL were included. Data on physical health, psychological well-being, social support, economic stability, and environmental factors were extracted and analyzed. Quality assessment was performed using standardized tools for both quantitative and qualitative studies.

Results. A total of 35 studies were included in the review. Findings indicate that physical health issues, such as chronic diseases and functional limitations, significantly affect QoL. Mental health concerns, including depression and cognitive decline, also play a crucial role. Social support from family and community is vital for reducing loneliness and enhancing emotional well-being. Economic stability, including access to financial resources and pensions, is closely linked to QoL. Environmental factors, such as housing quality and neighborhood conditions, further impact elderly well-being. Regional variations were observed, with disparities between urban and rural areas.

Conclusion. The review highlights the multifaceted nature of QoL among the elderly in Indonesia, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. Policies should focus on improving healthcare access, strengthening social support systems, enhancing economic security, and addressing environmental factors. Future research should address data gaps, explore underrepresented subgroups, and evaluate the effectiveness of existing interventions to inform policy and practice.

Keywords: Quality of Life, Elderly, Indonesia, Physical Health, Mental Health, Social Support, Economic Stability, Environmental Factors

Introduction

Globally, the elderly population is growing at an unprecedented rate, a trend that is particularly evident in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. According to the United Nations, the global population of people aged 60 and over is projected to reach 2.1 billion by 2050, up from 1 billion in 2020. In Indonesia, this demographic shift is significant. The Indonesian Statistics Agency (BPS) reports that the proportion of individuals aged 60 and over has increased from approximately 8% in 2010 to nearly 10% in 2020, and this trend is expected to continue.

Quality of Life (QoL) refers to individuals' general well-being, encompassing physical health, psychological state, social relationships, and environment. For the elderly, QoL is a multidimensional construct that integrates factors like health status, independence, social support, and overall life satisfaction. The focus on QoL among older adults is crucial, as it directly impacts their ability to enjoy their later years, maintain autonomy, and engage in meaningful activities. Indonesia's rapidly aging population is accompanied by various socioeconomic challenges. With a diverse and sprawling geography, Indonesia faces unique challenges in providing consistent and equitable healthcare, social services, and support systems across different regions. Economic disparities, varying access to healthcare services, and differences in educational attainment among older adults can influence QoL outcomes significantly.[1]

Indonesia's healthcare system has made strides in improving access and quality of care. However, significant gaps remain, particularly in rural and remote areas. Chronic diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular conditions, are prevalent among the elderly, and access to adequate healthcare services is often limited. The quality of care received, affordability of treatments, and availability of health resources are critical factors affecting the QoL of older Indonesians. Cultural norms and social structures in Indonesia play a significant role in shaping the QoL of the elderly. The traditional family-centric approach, where extended families often live together, can provide social support and emotional well-being. However, modernization and urbanization are shifting family dynamics, potentially leading to increased isolation of older adults. Social support networks, community engagement, and cultural practices related to aging can influence the overall QoL of elderly individuals.[2,3]

Physical health is a cornerstone of QoL. Chronic illnesses, physical disabilities, and functional impairments can significantly reduce the quality of life. For the elderly, managing these health issues effectively and maintaining physical activity and wellness are crucial. Studies have shown that better management of chronic conditions and access to preventive healthcare can enhance QoL. Mental health is as important as physical health in determining QoL. Depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline can adversely affect elderly individuals' ability to enjoy life. Psychological well-being is influenced by factors such as social support, life satisfaction, and coping mechanisms. Mental health services and interventions tailored to the elderly are essential for improving their QoL. Social support from family, friends, and the community is vital for elderly individuals. Social networks provide emotional support, practical assistance, and opportunities for social interaction. The presence of supportive relationships can mitigate feelings of loneliness and isolation, contributing to a better quality of life. Economic factors, including income level, financial security, and access to resources, impact QoL. Economic stability allows elderly individuals to access necessary services, including healthcare and social activities. Financial stress or insecurity can negatively affect their overall well-being and life satisfaction. The environment in which elderly individuals live, including housing quality, accessibility, and neighborhood safety, also affects their QoL. Safe and accessible living environments contribute to physical health and social engagement, while inadequate housing conditions can lead to a decline in well-being.[4]

This systematic review aims to explore and synthesize the available literature on the quality of life among the elderly in Indonesia. By examining key determinants of QoL, identifying gaps in the current research, and evaluating how these factors interact within the Indonesian context, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for improving the quality of life for Indonesia's aging population. The findings will inform policymakers, healthcare providers, and community organizations in developing targeted interventions and policies to enhance the well-being of elderly Indonesians. This article aimed to present a systematic review about quality of life among elderly in Indonesia.

Method

In conducting this systematic review, a comprehensive and methodical approach was adopted to ensure the inclusion of high-quality studies that provide relevant insights into the quality of life (QoL) among the elderly in Indonesia. The review began with the formulation of specific research questions aimed at understanding the determinants and variations in QoL across different regions and demographic groups within Indonesia. The research questions guided the entire process, from literature search to data extraction and synthesis.

The literature search was conducted across multiple academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, and Indonesian academic repositories such as Garuda and the Indonesian Scientific Journal Database. These databases were selected to ensure a broad coverage of both international and local studies. The search strategy involved the use of a combination of keywords and controlled vocabulary terms related to the elderly, quality of life, Indonesia, physical health, mental health, social support, economic stability, and environmental factors. Boolean operators were used to combine the search terms effectively. To capture the most recent and relevant studies, the search was limited to publications from 2010 to 2024. Additionally, the reference lists of relevant articles were manually searched to identify any additional studies that may have been missed in the database search.[5]

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were carefully defined to ensure the relevance and quality of the studies included in the review. Studies were included if they focused on the elderly population in Indonesia, specifically those aged 60 years and above, and if they provided empirical data on QoL or its determinants. Both quantitative and qualitative studies were considered, as well as mixed-methods studies. However, studies were excluded if they focused on populations outside Indonesia, did not specifically address QoL, or were theoretical or review articles without primary data. Additionally, studies with very small sample sizes (fewer than 50 participants) or those published in non-peer-reviewed sources were excluded to maintain the rigor of the review.

Once the studies were identified, duplicates were removed, and the titles and abstracts were screened by two independent reviewers to assess their relevance based on the predefined criteria. Full texts of potentially relevant studies were then retrieved and assessed in detail. Any discrepancies between the reviewers during the selection process were resolved through discussion, with a third reviewer consulted if necessary. This step was crucial in ensuring that only the most relevant and high-quality studies were included in the final review. Data extraction was carried out using a standardized form designed to capture key information from each study, including the study design, sample size, demographic characteristics of the participants, geographical location, and the specific QoL domains assessed. The extracted data also included information on the various determinants of QoL, such as physical health, mental health, social support, economic status, and environmental factors. For quantitative studies, data on statistical analyses and outcomes were also recorded. For qualitative studies, key themes and findings were extracted. The extracted data were then cross-checked for accuracy by a second reviewer to ensure consistency.

The synthesis of the extracted data was conducted using a narrative approach, given the diversity of study designs and the heterogeneity of the findings. Studies were grouped according to the key themes identified in the research questions, and findings were compared and contrasted across studies. Where possible, quantitative data were summarized using descriptive statistics, and patterns or trends were identified. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to identify common themes and to explore the depth and context of the findings. The synthesis aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing QoL among the elderly in Indonesia and to identify any gaps in the existing research. Throughout the review process, quality assessment of the included studies was conducted using appropriate tools for both quantitative and qualitative research. For quantitative studies, tools such as the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) for cohort and cross-sectional studies were used to assess the risk of bias in selection, comparability, and outcome assessment. For qualitative studies, criteria based on the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) were used to evaluate the rigor and credibility of the findings. Mixed-methods studies were assessed using a combination of these tools, focusing on the integration of quantitative and qualitative data and the overall coherence of the study design. The quality assessment results were considered during the synthesis to ensure that the

conclusions drawn were based on robust and reliable evidence. In conclusion, the methodological rigor applied in this systematic review, from the careful selection of studies to the thorough extraction and synthesis of data, aimed to provide a comprehensive and reliable understanding of the quality of life among the elderly in Indonesia. This approach ensured that the findings are not only reflective of the current state of research but also provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners aiming to improve the well-being of the elderly population in Indonesia.

Result

This systematic review incorporates a total of 35 studies focusing on the quality of life (QoL) among the elderly in Indonesia. The geographical distribution of these studies varies widely, covering both urban and rural areas across several provinces, including Jakarta, Central Java, and East Nusa Tenggara. The included studies employ diverse research designs: a majority are quantitative, comprising cross-sectional and cohort studies, while others utilize qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus groups. Additionally, a few studies adopt mixed-methods approaches, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative data to provide a more nuanced understanding of QoL determinants.[3,4]

The sample sizes of the studies reviewed range from as few as 50 to over 2,000 participants, with an average sample size of approximately 500. The age range of participants typically spans from 60 to over 80 years, reflecting the elderly population. Gender distribution is relatively balanced, although a slight overrepresentation of female participants is noted, consistent with the higher life expectancy of women in Indonesia. Socioeconomic status (SES) of participants varies, with a significant portion of the elderly living on limited income, often relying on informal employment or small-scale businesses. Education levels also vary widely, with many participants having only primary education or less, particularly in rural areas. The review reveals that chronic diseases are prevalent among the elderly in Indonesia, with high rates of hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases reported. These conditions significantly affect daily functioning and are closely linked to lower QoL. Functional limitations are also widespread, with many elderly individuals experiencing difficulties in performing activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), further diminishing their QoL. Access to healthcare services varies, with urban residents generally having better access to medical facilities and affordable care compared to those in rural areas, where healthcare services are often limited and of lower quality.[5]

Mental health issues are a significant concern, with studies indicating a high prevalence of depression and anxiety among the elderly. Cognitive decline, including dementia, is also commonly reported, contributing to lower life satisfaction. The review highlights the importance of psychological well-being as a key determinant of QoL, with emotional well-being and overall life satisfaction being lower among those with poor mental health. Social support, particularly from family members, plays a crucial role in enhancing the QoL of the elderly. Many studies emphasize the importance of caregiving arrangements and intergenerational living in providing emotional and practical support. However, the quality and availability of social networks, including friendships and community involvement, vary. Social isolation and loneliness are significant issues, especially among those living alone or in rural areas with fewer social opportunities. Economic stability is closely linked to QoL, with income levels and financial security emerging as critical factors. Many elderly individuals in Indonesia live on limited incomes, often without sufficient pensions or social welfare support, leading to economic stress. Access to essential resources such as housing, transportation, and social services is often inadequate, particularly for those in lower socioeconomic strata, further impacting their QoL. The quality of living conditions is a significant determinant of QoL. Many elderly individuals live in substandard housing that lacks basic safety features and accessibility. The review also highlights the impact of neighborhood characteristics, with safer and more accessible neighborhoods contributing positively to QoL. The availability of recreational facilities and a supportive living environment are particularly important for maintaining physical and social well-being.[6]

The most frequently reported determinants of QoL among the elderly in Indonesia are health factors, particularly chronic diseases and functional limitations. Social support, especially from family and community, is also consistently identified as a crucial factor in improving QoL. Economic factors, such as financial stability and access to resources, are similarly important, with clear links between economic well-being and overall QoL. Significant differences are observed between urban and rural areas, with urban elderly generally enjoying better QoL due to better access to healthcare, economic resources, and social support. In contrast, rural areas often face challenges such as limited healthcare services, lower incomes, and greater social isolation. These regional disparities highlight the need for targeted interventions to address the specific needs of elderly populations in different areas. Comparing the findings from Indonesian studies with those from other countries reveals both similarities and differences in QoL determinants. While health, social support, and economic stability are universally important, the specific challenges faced by Indonesian elderly, such as access to healthcare and economic security, are more pronounced due to the country's unique social and economic context. The review identifies several effective interventions aimed at improving QoL among the elderly. Health programs focused on managing chronic diseases and providing preventive care have shown positive outcomes. Community-based initiatives that enhance social support and engagement are particularly effective in reducing loneliness and improving mental health. Economic support measures, such as pension schemes and financial aid, have also been successful in alleviating financial stress and improving overall QoL.

Based on the findings, several policy recommendations are suggested. These include improving healthcare access and quality, particularly in rural areas, strengthening social support systems through community programs, and enhancing economic security through better pension schemes and social welfare support. Future research should focus on addressing the identified gaps, particularly in understudied areas and among underrepresented population subgroups. The review identifies several gaps in the existing research. There is a lack of data on certain population subgroups, such as elderly individuals living in remote or isolated regions. Additionally, more research is needed on the specific needs of elderly women, who may face different challenges compared to men. Some limitations in the quality of included studies are noted, including small sample sizes and potential methodological biases. Inconsistencies in data reporting and the use of different measurement tools across studies also present challenges in comparing findings. Future research

should aim to standardize measurement tools and improve study designs to provide more reliable and comprehensive data on the QoL of the elderly in Indonesia.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic review underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of quality of life (QoL) among the elderly in Indonesia, revealing significant insights into the factors that influence their well-being. One of the most consistent themes emerging from the review is the critical role of physical health in determining QoL. Chronic diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular conditions, are highly prevalent among the elderly population and have a profound impact on their daily lives. These health issues not only limit physical functioning but also contribute to a cascade of other challenges, including increased dependency on others for daily activities and a heightened need for healthcare services. The review highlights that functional limitations, which are often a consequence of chronic illnesses, are a significant predictor of reduced QoL, as they directly affect the ability of elderly individuals to maintain independence and engage in social activities.[7,8]

Access to healthcare is another crucial determinant of QoL that emerged from the review. The disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of healthcare access is particularly striking. Elderly individuals living in urban areas generally benefit from better healthcare infrastructure, including more readily available medical facilities, specialized care, and a wider range of healthcare services. In contrast, those in rural areas face significant barriers, including fewer healthcare providers, long travel distances to reach medical facilities, and lower quality of care. This urban-rural divide contributes to the unequal distribution of QoL outcomes across different regions of Indonesia, with rural elderly populations being particularly vulnerable to poor health and associated reductions in QoL. Psychological well-being is another critical aspect of QoL that is closely linked to both physical health and social support. The review indicates a high prevalence of mental health issues, particularly depression and anxiety, among the elderly. These conditions are often exacerbated by social isolation, a lack of meaningful engagement, and the loss of social roles, which are common experiences for elderly individuals. Cognitive decline, including dementia, further complicates the picture, as it not only diminishes the affected individuals' QoL but also places a significant burden on their families and caregivers. The findings suggest that addressing mental health needs and providing adequate psychological support are essential components of improving overall QoL for the elderly.[3,9]

Social support, particularly from family members, plays a pivotal role in enhancing QoL. The review highlights that strong family ties and caregiving arrangements are vital for elderly individuals, providing both emotional support and practical assistance. Intergenerational living arrangements, where elderly parents live with their adult children, are common in Indonesia and are associated with better QoL outcomes. However, the review also points to the challenges faced by elderly individuals who lack such support, particularly those living alone or in less cohesive communities. Social isolation and loneliness are significant issues that negatively impact mental health and overall well-being, underscoring the importance of fostering strong social networks and community engagement among the elderly. Economic stability is another key determinant of QoL that the review identifies as having a significant impact. Many elderly Indonesians live with limited financial resources, often without adequate pensions or social welfare support. Economic insecurity is closely linked to poorer health outcomes, as financial constraints can limit access to necessary healthcare, nutritious food, and safe living conditions. The review also highlights the importance of financial security in enabling elderly individuals to maintain a dignified and independent life, free from the stress of financial instability. This finding underscores the need for policies that enhance economic support for the elderly, including more robust pension systems and targeted financial assistance.[4,7]

Environmental factors, including living conditions and neighborhood characteristics, also play a crucial role in determining QoL. The review finds that many elderly individuals live in substandard housing conditions, which can exacerbate health problems and reduce overall well-being. Poor housing quality, including issues with safety, accessibility, and adequacy, is particularly prevalent among the elderly in rural areas and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, the characteristics of the neighborhood, such as safety, availability of recreational facilities, and social cohesion, are also important determinants of QoL. Safe and supportive environments contribute to better physical and mental health by encouraging active lifestyles and fostering social interactions. In addition to these primary determinants, the review identifies significant regional variations in QoL outcomes, reflecting the diverse social, economic, and environmental contexts across Indonesia. Urban elderly populations tend to have better QoL outcomes due to better access to healthcare, social support, and economic resources. In contrast, rural populations often face greater challenges, including higher levels of poverty, limited access to services, and greater social isolation. These regional disparities highlight the need for tailored interventions that address the specific needs of elderly populations in different areas.[10]

Finally, the review points to the need for more research to fill existing gaps, particularly in understudied areas such as the experiences of elderly women, who may face unique challenges related to gender roles and expectations. Methodological limitations in the existing studies, including small sample sizes and inconsistencies in measurement tools, also suggest the need for more rigorous research designs in future studies. Overall, the findings of this review provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing QoL among the elderly in Indonesia and offer valuable insights for policymakers, healthcare providers, and community organizations working to improve the well-being of this vulnerable population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this systematic review highlights the intricate interplay of factors that shape the quality of life (QoL) among the elderly in Indonesia. Physical health, particularly the presence of chronic diseases and functional limitations, emerges as a critical determinant of QoL, underscoring the importance of accessible and high-quality healthcare. Psychological well-being, heavily influenced by mental health conditions like depression and

anxiety, is closely linked to both social support and economic stability. The review reveals that strong family ties and community engagement are vital for maintaining the well-being of the elderly, while economic security plays a crucial role in enabling a dignified and independent life. The environmental context, including living conditions and neighborhood characteristics, further influences QoL, with significant disparities observed between urban and rural areas. These findings point to the need for comprehensive and region-specific interventions that address the multifaceted needs of the elderly population in Indonesia. Moreover, the review underscores the importance of future research to address gaps in knowledge, particularly regarding underrepresented subgroups and methodological inconsistencies in existing studies. Overall, improving the QoL for the elderly in Indonesia requires a holistic approach that integrates health, social, economic, and environmental factors.

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