

Title: Exploring the pathways between depression, anxiety, stress, and quality of life on life satisfaction: a path analysis approach

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Abstract: Life satisfaction, one promising health asset, is associated with reduced risk of several chronic diseases and mortality. Mental health conditions and quality of life (QoL) are important aspects of well-being in late life and are significantly associated with life satisfaction. Despite the complex interrelationships between mental health, QoL and life satisfaction, the current literature has evaluated the simple association between them and failed to consider the complex pathways among these variables, especially among the older population. Hence, this study explores the pathways between mental health conditions (depression, anxiety, and stress), QoL and life satisfaction among older adults in eastern Nepal. This cross-sectional study was conducted in eastern Nepal via face-to-face interviews with 847 older adults selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. The 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale and 13-item Older People's QoL scale assessed life satisfaction and QoL, respectively. The 21-item Depression, Anxiety and Stress scale measured mental health conditions. The relationship between QoL, depression, anxiety, and stress with life satisfaction was first evaluated using linear regression, subsequently by path analysis. The mean ($\pm$ SD) life satisfaction and QoL score were 19.7 ($\pm$ 5.3) and 42.9 ($\pm$ 7.1), respectively. More than one-fifth of the participants had moderate to severe depression (30%), anxiety (34%), and stress (20%). In adjusted regression analysis, QoL was positively associated (β : 0.44; 95% CI: 0.40 to 0.48) with life satisfaction, whereas depression, anxiety, and stress were inversely associated. In the path analysis, the relationship between depression and stress with life satisfaction was mediated by QoL. Depression was indirectly related to life satisfaction (mediated by QoL, β = -0.25), whereas stress was both directly (β = -0.11) and indirectly (mediated by QoL, β = -0.08) related to life satisfaction. Given the high mental health burden among the older Nepali population and its potential impact on life satisfaction and QoL, routine screening for mental health should be encouraged in clinical practice. Additionally, community-based interventions and mental health promotion programs should be launched at regional and local levels.

Keywords: Anxiety; Depression; Life satisfaction; Nepal; Older adults; Quality of life; Stress.

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