

Title: Neighborhood environment and quality of life of older adults in eastern Nepal: findings from a cross-sectional study

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Abstract: Quality of life (QoL) is a subjective measure reflecting individuals' evaluations based on their personal goals and values. While global research shows the role of neighborhood factors like ethnic diversity and socio-cultural dynamics on QoL, these are unexplored in the Nepali context. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between neighborhood environment and QoL among Nepali older adults in eastern Nepal. This cross-sectional study involved 847 non-institutionalized older adults (aged ≥ 60 years) from two districts in eastern Nepal. QoL was evaluated using the 13-item brief Older People's Quality of Life questionnaire, where a mean score of < 3 indicated low/poor QoL. The neighborhood environment, conceptualized across three domains (demographic, socio-cultural, and built environment), included ethnic diversity, connections with family, friends, and neighbors, cultural ties, residential stability, and rurality. Their association with QoL was examined using multivariable logistic regression. Around 20% of older adults reported poor QoL. Higher ethnic diversity (adjusted Odds Ratio [aOR] = 0.12, 95% confidence interval [CI]: 0.04–0.36), moderate contact with family and relatives (aOR = 0.26, CI: 0.11–0.61), and high contact with neighbors (aOR = 0.09, CI: 0.03–0.21) were associated with lower odds of poor QoL. Conversely, high contact with friends (aOR = 2.29, CI: 1.30–4.04) and unstable residence (OR = 6.25, CI: 2.03–19.23) increased the odds of poor QoL. Additionally, among the covariates, chronic disease, tobacco use, unemployment, and lack of education were also significantly associated with poor QoL. Overall, the demographic environment, socio-cultural factors, and the built environment of the neighborhood influence QoL. Therefore, diversifying the neighborhood's ethnic composition, promoting social connections such as frequent contact with family, relatives, and neighbors, and ensuring residential stability can enhance the QoL of older adults.

Keywords: Quality of Life (QoL); Neighborhood environment; Older adults; Ethnic diversity; Socio-cultural dynamics; Built environment; Socio-cultural factors

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