



17th Year of Publication, No.2

December 2025

QUALITY OF LIFE IN OLDER AGE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH DIMENSIONS

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Abstract

Quality of life in older age is one of the most important indicators of well-being and psychological functioning in older adults. With the increase in life expectancy and the ageing of the population, attention to the psychological factors that influence the experience of this stage of life has increased significantly. This article analyses the scientific literature on quality of life in older age, with a special focus on the dimensions of mental health and psychological well-being. The literature review examines the role of depression, anxiety, emotional functioning, social support, and coping mechanisms in shaping quality of life. The findings show that perceptions, emotional well-being, and psychological resources have a stronger influence on the quality of life of older adults than their objective physical health. Mental well-being, a sense of meaning, and personal autonomy, together with social support, are consistently associated with higher levels of quality of life in older age. In this context, the article emphasizes the need to integrate psychological interventions within a biopsychosocial approach to the care of older adults.

Keywords: *Quality of life; Older age; Mental health; Psychological well-being*

1. Quality of life in older age

Quality of life is the way a person evaluates his or her life as a whole, including not only health, but also psychological well-being, relationships, independence, security, and life satisfaction. In older age, this concept becomes especially important, because it is linked to biological, psychological, and social changes that influence how this age group experiences daily life. Reaching retirement age, reduced participation in social activities, chronic illnesses, and changes in family status are factors that can strongly affect the quality of life of older adults [1,2].

From a psychological point of view, quality of life does not depend only on objective health status, but also on how individuals interpret and cope with these changes. Studies show that factors such as optimism, a sense of control, and meaning in life are closely related to higher levels of well-being and life satisfaction in older age [3].

2. Mental health and quality of life

Mental health is a central component of quality of life in older age. Depression and anxiety are among the most common disorders in older adults and are often associated with reduced functioning, social isolation, and loss of interest in daily activities [4]. These conditions directly affect how individuals perceive their lives and their ability to maintain social relationships.

In contrast, good mental health is related to a stronger sense of autonomy, self-esteem, and social participation. Older adults who report lower levels of depression and anxiety symptoms tend to evaluate their quality of life more positively, even when they have chronic health problems [5].

3. Psychological well-being and emotional functioning

Psychological well-being includes dimensions such as a sense of meaning in life, purpose, self-acceptance, and the ability to manage emotions. In older age, maintaining these dimensions is essential for a positive experience of ageing. Individuals who can keep a stable sense of identity and purpose report higher levels of life satisfaction and fewer emotional problems [6].

Emotional functioning also affects how older people cope with losses and changes that come with ageing. The ability to accept change, to seek support, and to maintain a positive perspective is closely linked to quality of life [7].

4. The role of social support

Social support is one of the most important protective factors for mental health and quality of life in older age. Relationships with family, friends, and the community provide emotional and practical resources that help individuals deal with the challenges of ageing. Social isolation and loneliness, on the other hand, are linked to a higher risk of depression, anxiety, and poorer overall health [8].

Studies show that older adults with stronger social networks report higher levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being, regardless of their physical health status [9].

5. Discussion

The literature review shows that quality of life in older age is a complex phenomenon influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors. While health problems are unavoidable for many individuals, the way these problems are interpreted and managed plays a key role in the subjective experience of life.

The results suggest that interventions aimed at improving mental health, increasing social support, and strengthening psychological resources can have an important impact on the quality of life of older adults.

6. Conclusions

Quality of life in older age depends not only on physical health, but also on mental well-being, emotional functioning, and social relationships. An approach that integrates psychological interventions and social support within a biopsychosocial model is essential for promoting active and healthy ageing.

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