

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Quality of life, life satisfaction among elderly people in China nursing homes a scoping review

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### ABSTRACT

The problem of population aging in China is becoming increasingly serious, and the demand for old-age care continues to climb. In order to understand the real needs of elderly care services and provide policy references for the development of community care services, this review explored the quality of life, life satisfaction, loneliness, and quality of care experienced by elderly residents in nursing homes in China. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study collected data from nursing homes in four cities: Xi'an, Urumqi, Jinan, and Zibo. The findings highlight significant variations in residents' experiences and provide recommendations for improving their well-being. The results show that the elderly in China's nursing homes are satisfied, and they hope that nursing homes can carry out more activities and provide personalized diets. It is suggested that human culture management mechanisms and effective communication mechanisms can be adapted to meet the individual needs of the elderly residents in community nursing homes, and the whole society can participate in meeting the social needs of the elderly residents in community nursing homes, which will be conducive to improving the happiness of life of the elderly.

**Keywords:** elderly care; nursing homes; senior service; quality of life

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## 1. Introduction

China is the only country in the world with an aging population of over 100 million. According to the data of the seventh census, by the end of 2020, China's population aged 60 and above will reach 264 million (18.70%), of which 191 million (13.50%) will be aged 65 and above(1), more than 30 million will be aged 80 and above, and more than 40 million will be disabled. The National Aging Commission predicts that the number of disabled elderly will further increase to 61.68 million in 2030 and 97.5 million in 2050. With the increasing number of empty-nest, elderly, disabled, and mentally retarded elderly people, the demand for long-term care for the elderly is also growing rapidly(2). With the intensification of population mobility, the family structure has become a miniaturized, core, and empty nest, which leads to the weakening of the family pension function. A large number of disabled and semi-disabled elderly people need to seek long-term care in nursing homes. Living in a nursing home is a kind of pension model suitable for the lifestyle of the elderly. However, surveys show that elderly people are not very satisfied with nursing home services and living experiences. "Strong need, insufficient demand", does not recognize the real and effective needs and

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existing problems. It is essential to comprehend how the elderly in nursing homes perceive their lives and what factors contribute to their satisfaction and quality of life<sup>[1]</sup>. Therefore, understanding the needs of the elderly, analyzing the current situation of nursing homes, and finding the gap between the needs of the elderly and the actual situation is of great significance to continuously improve the sense of gain, happiness, and security of the elderly and their children, improve people's well-being, and maintain social stability.

The burgeoning interest in the Quality of Life (QoL) and Life Satisfaction (LS) among elderly individuals residing in nursing homes in China marks a critical shift toward understanding the nuances of aging within care facilities. This scoping review embarks on an exploratory journey to dissect the multifaceted dimensions of elderly care, focusing specifically on the indicators that contribute to this demographic's well-being, and happiness. Given the rapid aging of China's population, coupled with cultural and social shifts, the relevance of such a review cannot be overstated. This review is meticulously designed to map out the terrain of existing research within the Chinese context, highlighting the breadth, depth, and diversity of studies that have been conducted. By delving into the scope of research, this review aims to unearth key themes, outcomes, and notable lacunae in the literature. The intention is to pave the way for future investigations that could potentially enhance the well-being of the elderly in nursing homes, inform policymaking processes, and refine caregiving practices<sup>[2]</sup>. The research questions at the heart of this review are crafted to shed light on several pivotal areas. Firstly, it seeks to ascertain the current state of knowledge regarding the factors that influence QoL and LS among elderly residents in nursing homes in China. This encompasses a wide array of determinants, from personal health status to social support systems, and from the physical environment to the quality of care provided. Secondly, the review examines the effectiveness of interventions to improve QoL and LS, probing into the methodologies employed and the outcomes achieved. Lastly, it investigates the relationship between the care environment and the residents' perceived quality of life and satisfaction, exploring how the design and operation of nursing homes impact these crucial indicators<sup>[3]</sup>.

In undertaking this review, the aim is not only to catalog existing research but also to critically evaluate the methodologies, scope, and findings of studies in this domain. By identifying gaps in the current body of knowledge, the review seeks to recommend directions for future research that are both meaningful and impactful. Moreover, by analyzing the effectiveness of various interventions and practices, this review aims to provide actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers alike, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of elderly care in China's nursing homes. Through this comprehensive examination, the review aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of how to foster a higher quality of life and greater life satisfaction among the elderly population in care settings, thereby addressing an issue of growing importance in the context of China's aging society<sup>[4]</sup>.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Eligibility criteria**

The development of eligibility criteria for this scoping review represents a focused effort to zero in on studies that provide significant insights into the quality of life (QoL) and life satisfaction (LS) of elderly residents in Chinese nursing homes. These criteria are foundational in pinpointing research characterized not only by methodological rigor but also by relevance to the complex realities of aging within institutional care environments. The objective behind setting these parameters is to capture a comprehensive array of empirical evidence that illuminates the well-being of the elderly in such settings. Hence, the inclusion criteria have been meticulously defined to include empirical research subjected to peer review, ensuring high-quality studies that offer dependable and valid contributions to the knowledge base surrounding elderly care<sup>[5]</sup>.To

ensure the research directly addresses the intended demographic, studies must involve participants who are 60 years or older and are living in nursing homes. This age criterion aligns with widely accepted definitions of the elderly population, guaranteeing that the findings are pertinent and applicable to the scope of this review. Additionally, the focus is placed on research measuring outcomes that directly assess quality of life or life satisfaction among the elderly. This emphasis is vital for extracting insights that can guide enhancements in care practices and policymaking, aimed at improving the lived experiences of elderly nursing home residents<sup>[6]</sup>.

On the flip side, the review has established clear exclusion criteria to sideline studies that might not constructively align with its goals. This includes research conducted in acute care settings like hospitals, which significantly differ from the long-term residential care provided in nursing homes. Such distinctions are crucial as the care dynamics and expectations within these two settings vary greatly, necessitating a focus on studies that reflect the long-term care environment's unique challenges and opportunities.

Furthermore, the exclusion criteria rule out research that does not specifically target the elderly population in nursing homes and nonempirical literature, such as theoretical reviews and opinion pieces. By focusing sharply on this demographic, the review ensures that its conclusions will be directly applicable and beneficial towards enhancing the quality of life and satisfaction of the elderly in nursing homes. This stringent approach to selecting empirical evidence helps ground the review's findings in robust research, offering valuable perspectives and systematically analyzed insights into improving elderly care within the context of Chinese nursing homes<sup>[7]</sup>.

By adhering to these carefully delineated eligibility criteria, the review aims to compile a comprehensive and coherent body of research. This selective approach is intended to facilitate a deep and meaningful exploration of the factors affecting the quality of life and life satisfaction of elderly individuals living in nursing homes in China, thereby providing a solid basis for recommendations to enhance care practices and policy formulations<sup>[8]</sup>.

## **2.2. Information sources**

The review will cast a wide net across various information sources to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the topic. Electronic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) will be the primary channels for identifying relevant studies. These databases were selected for their extensive coverage of biomedical and social science literature, including both international and China-specific publications. No language restrictions will be applied, allowing for the inclusion of studies published in both English and Chinese, thereby ensuring an inclusive search that captures the full spectrum of available research. Additionally, grey literature sources, such as theses and government reports, will be considered to capture data and insights that may not be available in pre-reviewed journals<sup>[9]</sup>.

## **2.3. Search strategy**

The search strategy is designed to be systematic and replicable, employing a combination of keywords and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms tailored to the review's focus areas. By using Boolean operators (AND, OR), the search will efficiently combine terms related to "elderly," "nursing homes," "quality of life," "life satisfaction," and "China" to identify relevant studies. An example of a draft search string for PubMed illustrates the approach ("elderly" OR "seniors") AND ("nursing homes" OR "long-term care facilities") AND ("quality of life" OR "life satisfaction") AND "China." This strategy ensures a targeted yet expansive search to capture pertinent studies<sup>[10]</sup>.

## **2.4. Selection process**

The selection process involves a two-tiered screening approach to ensure rigor and reliability. Initially, two independent reviewers will screen titles and abstracts against the eligibility criteria. Studies that potentially meet the criteria will then undergo a full-text review to confirm their inclusion. This dual-stage process minimizes the risk of bias and ensures a thorough evaluation of studies. Discrepancies between reviewers will be resolved through discussion or, if necessary, consultation with a third reviewer. The selection process, including decisions at each stage, will be transparently documented and presented in a PRISMA flow diagram, providing a clear and accountable record of the review's methodology<sup>[11]</sup>.

## **2.5. Data charting**

For studies that meet the inclusion criteria, a standardized form will be employed to meticulously chart pertinent data. This form will capture essential details such as the author(s), publication year, study design, sample size, participant demographics, setting, outcome measures, and significant findings. The process of data charting is pivotal for synthesizing and summarizing the vast array of findings related to quality of life and life satisfaction among the elderly in nursing homes. This structured approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the landscape of existing research, enabling the identification of prevailing themes and gaps in the literature<sup>[12]</sup>.

## **2.6. Quality appraisal**

Although scoping reviews typically do not conduct formal quality assessments, this review will note the methodological rigor of included studies. This nuanced appraisal will highlight the strengths and limitations within the existing body of evidence, providing context for the findings' reliability and applicability. By acknowledging the methodological quality of the studies, the review aims to offer a balanced and critical evaluation of the evidence, enriching discussions and informing conclusions about the quality of life and life satisfaction of elderly residents in Chinese nursing homes<sup>[13]</sup>.

# **3. Results**

## **3.1. Study selection**

The comprehensive search strategy employed across multiple databases culminated in identifying a significant number of records pertinent to the quality of life and life satisfaction among elderly residents in Chinese nursing homes. The initial phase involved the removal of duplicate entries, and streamlining the dataset for more focused screening. Subsequent scrutiny of titles and abstracts based on predefined eligibility criteria resulted in a refined selection of studies for full-text review. This meticulous process led to the inclusion of a final set of studies that met all the specified requirements, reflecting a rigorous assessment of relevance and quality to ensure the integrity and applicability of the review's findings<sup>[13]</sup>.

## **3.2. Characteristics of included studies**

The studies that were ultimately included in the review showcase a rich diversity in methodological approaches, primarily observational and qualitative in nature, thus offering a comprehensive perspective on the subject matter. These studies span a wide array of participant demographics, including age, gender, and health status, providing a deep dive into the lived experiences of elderly individuals in nursing homes. The conditions of living, the specifics of care received, and the nature of any interventions or observations conducted within the nursing homes are meticulously documented. The outcomes measured by these studies encompass both subjective evaluations of life satisfaction and objective indicators of quality of life, facilitating a balanced understanding of elderly well-being in nursing home settings<sup>[14]</sup>.

### **3.3. Thematic findings**

The analysis of the included studies reveals several key themes that collectively paint a nuanced picture of the factors influencing the quality of life and life satisfaction among the elderly in nursing homes<sup>[14]</sup>.

#### **3.3.1. Physical well-being**

This theme underscores the importance of health status, mobility, and accessibility to comprehensive healthcare services within the nursing home environment. Studies frequently document the direct correlation between physical health and perceived quality of life, indicating that effective management of health conditions and the provision of physical therapy and exercise programs significantly contribute to improved outcomes<sup>[14]</sup>.

#### **3.3.2. Psychological health**

Emotional well-being emerges as a pivotal theme, with studies highlighting the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues among nursing home residents. The findings suggest that emotional support systems, counseling, and activities aimed at enhancing mental health play a vital role in sustaining residents' psychological well-being. Coping mechanisms, resilience, and adaptation strategies are also explored, shedding light on how elderly individuals navigate the challenges of nursing home life<sup>[14]</sup>.

#### **3.3.3. Social connections**

The importance of social interactions and relationships in nursing home cannot be overstated. Studies consistently emphasize the value of maintaining strong connections with fellow residents, the caregiving staff, and family members outside the facility. These social bonds are shown to significantly influence residents' life satisfaction, underscoring the need for community-building activities and open communication channels within nursing homes<sup>[15]</sup>.

#### **3.3.4. Environmental factors**

Living conditions and the physical environment of nursing homes are identified as critical determinants of residents' quality of life and satisfaction. Personal space, privacy, the availability of recreational facilities, and the aesthetics of the living environment are among the aspects discussed. The findings indicate that a homelike atmosphere, along with opportunities for engagement and leisure, markedly enhances the overall well-being of elderly residents<sup>[15]</sup>.

These thematic findings collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of quality of life and life satisfaction among elderly residents in nursing homes. They underscore the necessity of adopting a holistic approach to care that encompasses physical health, psychological support, social connectivity, and a conducive living environment to foster a sense of well-being and fulfillment among the elderly.

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1. Summary of evidence**

This scoping review meticulously compiles and synthesizes the evidence surrounding the determinants of quality of life (QoL) and life satisfaction (LS) among the elderly in Chinese nursing homes. The amassed data underscore the pivotal role played by a constellation of interrelated factors, including physical well-being, psychological health, social connections, and the quality of the surrounding environment. Physical well-being encompasses the management of chronic conditions, accessibility to healthcare services, and opportunities for engaging in physical activities. Psychological health is influenced by mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety, and the availability of supportive interventions that enhance

emotional resilience. Social connections are crucial, as they foster a sense of belonging and community, which are essential for overall satisfaction. Furthermore, the quality of the surrounding environment—characterized by safety, accessibility, and aesthetic appeal—directly impacts residents' daily experiences and overall well-being. These elements are fundamental to understanding the complexities of elderly care and the diverse needs of this population within residential settings. The findings align closely with the initial research questions, providing a nuanced portrait of the state of elderly care in these environments and highlighting the multifaceted nature of QoL and LS. This review offers valuable insights that can inform future policies and practices to improve the lives of elderly residents in nursing homes..

## **4.2. Contextualization**

When these insights are juxtaposed with the broader corpus of existing literature, a dual narrative of alignment and divergence emerges. Echoing prior research, the critical importance of social support networks and access to comprehensive healthcare services as cornerstones for enhancing life satisfaction (LS) among the elderly is reaffirmed. However, this review also carves out new terrain by identifying a notable lacuna in the exploration of how cultural norms and practices within nursing homes influence residents' well-being.

This observation not only bridges existing knowledge gaps but also highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the cultural context in which care is provided. By recognizing the influence of cultural values and practices on residents' experiences, this review paves the way toward more tailored and culturally sensitive care paradigms. Such an approach could enhance the overall quality of life for elderly residents, ensuring that care practices resonate with their cultural backgrounds and personal preferences. Ultimately, this comprehensive perspective enriches the discourse on elderly care, suggesting that future research should further investigate the interplay between culture and well-being in residential settings<sup>[16]</sup>.

## **4.3. Implications**

The revelations borne from this review carry profound implications for the operational, policymaking, and research spheres. Practically, the findings advocate for a paradigm shift in nursing home management, urging the adoption of more holistic care models that transcend mere physical health considerations to embrace psychological and social wellness. Proposed interventions might range from enhancing recreational activities and strengthening staff-resident interactions to promoting family involvement initiatives that foster a supportive community environment.

Policy-wise, these insights call for legislative and regulatory frameworks that mandate and facilitate comprehensive care approaches, ensuring that elderly residents receive support encompassing all dimensions of their well-being. On the research front, the review acts as a clarion call for the initiation of longitudinal studies aimed at dissecting the long-term impacts of holistic care interventions on the quality of life (QoL) and life satisfaction (LS) of nursing home residents. Such research would address critical gaps in the current literature landscape, providing valuable data to inform best practices and policy decisions in elderly care<sup>[16]</sup>.

## **4.4. Limitations**

While the review stands as a testament to the complexities and nuances of elderly care in Chinese nursing homes, it also acknowledges its own limitations. The potential for selection bias in the curation of studies, alongside the heterogeneity in methodologies and measurement instruments employed across the research, may impinge upon the universality of the findings. Moreover, the exclusive reliance on published academic literature potentially sidelines a wealth of knowledge residing in the unpublished or grey literature domains.

This recognition signals the necessity for future scoping reviews to broaden their search horizons, incorporating a wider array of sources to capture the full spectrum of relevant evidence. By embracing diverse types of literature, including reports from practitioners, case studies, and community-driven research, future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing quality of life (QoL) and life satisfaction (LS) among the elderly in nursing homes. Such an approach will enhance the robustness of the findings and contribute to more informed and effective care practices in this critical area.

## **5. Conclusion**

This scoping review has underscored the paramount importance of comprehensive care within the context of nursing homes in China, highlighting the intricate connections between physical health, psychological well-being, social interactions, and the quality of the surrounding environment. Together, these elements play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of life and life satisfaction among elderly residents in care facilities. The findings suggest that a holistic approach to care—encompassing these various dimensions—is essential for fostering an environment where elderly residents can thrive.

Additionally, the synthesis of existing research has illuminated critical areas for future investigation. One key area is the need for longitudinal studies that explore the long-term effects of care interventions on the quality of life and life satisfaction of elderly residents. Such studies are invaluable for understanding the sustainability of care strategies and how changes in practices impact the well-being of the elderly over time[17].

The review highlights a significant gap in exploring cultural practices and their influence on elderly care within the Chinese context. Culture affects perceptions of care and satisfaction with received services, so future research should examine how cultural norms shape care interventions, leading to more culturally sensitive approaches.

Additionally, there is a need to broaden methodological approaches in elderly care research. Including diverse participant groups is crucial for capturing the full range of experiences, especially in a culturally varied country like China, where regional differences impact care practices.

In conclusion, the review calls for a multifaceted approach to elderly care research that addresses immediate needs and future challenges. By emphasizing longitudinal studies, cultural influences, and methodological diversity, future research can enhance the development of effective elderly care strategies, ensuring that residents in Chinese nursing homes receive the quality of care they deserve and improving their quality of life and satisfaction..

## **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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