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Quality of life of institutionalized and non-institutionalized older people in Galle, Sri Lanka: A comparative cross-sectional study

Wickramasighe DA^{1*}, Perera B², Gamage MWK¹

¹Department of Nursing, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka, ²Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka.

Background: Although, Sri Lanka has a rapidly aging population, the Quality of Life (QoL) of institutionalized and non institutionalized older people have not been studied adequately.

Objective: The aim of this study was to describe and compare the QoL of institutionalized and non-institutionalized older people in Galle District.

Method: A comparative cross-sectional study was conducted with a conveniently selected sample of 70 institutionalized and 70 non-institutionalized older people in Galle in the year 2020. Older people who live at home were referred to as non-institutionalized older people. WHOQOL-BREF was used to describe QoL. Questionnaire assessed total QoL and four domains of QoL (physical, psychological, environmental and social relationships). Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Ruhuna.

Results: The mean age of the two groups were 72.1±7.5 and 74.9±8.1 years. Proportion of women among institutionalized older people was higher than non-institutionalized older people (67.1% vs 53.7%, $p<0.05$). Institutionalized older people reported the highest mean score for environmental domain (74.4±14.0) and least mean score for social relationships domain (42.1±18.4) among the four domains assessed. Non-institutionalized older people reported highest mean score for psychological health domain (73.2±18.4) and least mean score for social relationships domain (51.4±21.3). The total score of the QoL scale was higher in non-institutionalized older people compared institutionalized older people (66.4±21.3 vs 59.3±14.4, $p=0.003$). Non-institutionalized older people reported a higher mean score compared to institutionalized older people in the physical domain (68.9±17.8 vs 57.0±21.6, $p=0.001$), psychological domain (73.2±18.4 vs 63.5±20.5, $p=0.004$) and social relationships domain (51.4±21.3 vs 42.1±18.4, $p=0.007$), but no significant difference was found between mean scores of the environmental domain (72.0±15.2 vs 74.4±14.0, $p=0.342$).

Conclusion: Both institutionalized and non-institutionalized older people scored lowest for the social relationships domain. Overall QoL was unsatisfactory among institutionalized older people compared to non-institutionalized older people.