RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACTIVE INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE (QOL) OF WOMEN LIVING IN LAO PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

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Abstract. Information exchange is popular among local Laotian women where the infrastructure is insufficient and health interventions often use existing local networks or information exchanges. In this study, we explored the relationship between quality of life (QOL) among Laotian women and their active or passive relationship with their neighborhood. A total of 666 households were randomly selected in four villages in Vientiane Capital. The housewife or equivalent in each household was asked for both face-to-face interview and self-administered questionnaire regarding her health condition and communication over the past four weeks. A Lao translation of the brief version of the World Health Organization QOL questionnaire (WHOQOL-BREF) was used to measure the subjects’ health-related QOL scores. The participants were divided into active and passive communication groups based on their information exchange style. The WHOQOL-BREF scores were compared between the two groups. The active communication group had significantly higher QOL scores compared with the passive communication group (3.44 ± 0.36 vs 3.35 ± 0.36; mean ± standard deviation, \(p=0.003\)). The statistical significance remained unchanged \(p=0.037\) even after adjusting for age, education, occupation, and illness. In a multiple regression analysis, the standardized regression coefficient for communication style was the third largest (0.081), following education (0.189) and occupation (0.086). In conclusion, QOL related to individual health was associated with active communication among women. Besides the effects of education and occupation, QOL can be affected by active communication. Further study regarding the association between social capital and network analysis is needed.

Keywords: health communication, health education, information exchange, neighborhood, social network, social support, WHOQOL-BREF, Lao PDR