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## Research Paper

# Quality of Life (QoL) of Slum Women: A Case Study of Dehradun City

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

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Violence, Transportation,  
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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to find the quality of Slum dwellers especially women. Methodology involves collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. The literature was instrumental in identifying factors such as the lack of safe housing, lack of transportation, lack of safe neighbourhood, violence, discrimination, lack of good education, lack of good job opportunities, lack of decent income, lack of food security, and lack of access to clean water reduce the QoL of slum dwellers

## 1. Introduction

The quality of life (QoL) of slum dwellers, particularly slum women, has been a concern for many researchers across multiple disciplines, including the field of sociology, the field of urban geography, and the field of population (Singh & Sinha, 2019). Slums can be seen as streamlined settlements that are developed with the help of poorly constructed tenements and are packed with unhygienic conditions and insufficient drinking water. The growth of slums in cities is a result of rapid urbanization. Moreover, given the lack of basic infrastructure facilities, lack of cleanliness, lack of potable water, and lack of other services, the living condition of slum women remains poor (Ghosh et al., 2014). The condition of life of slum women is also adversely affected by poor residential conditions, congestion, and unsatisfactory housing quality. There are several studies in the existing literature which support that the QoL of women in slums remains extremely poor and hazardous because slums are mostly located along high-risk locations such as near canals, low river embankments, sewage drains, railway lines, and roads (Basu&Basu, 2000).

The literature also suggests that the QoL gets affected by various factors, including improper healthcare delivery systems, lack of proper healthcare facilities, inadequate services and infrastructure, substandard housing and insecure residence (B.T, 2018). Moreover, according to the United States (US) Department of Health and Human Services, QoL gets significantly affected by factors such as safe housing, transportation, neighbourhood, violence, discrimination, education, job opportunities, income, food security, and access to clean water (Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). Consequently, given how slums are typically associated with these factors, it remains to be seen how living in slums affects the QoL of women. This paper will present a case study of women living in slums across Dehradun city, which is a city in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. The research question of the topic is as follows:

## 2. Literature Review

This section will utilise the existing peer-reviewed and grey literature, including government publications and white papers, to explore how QoL is affected by the different factors described above. One of the defining characteristics of India's urbanization has been the emergence of slums across cities. In a study conducted by Simonelli et al. (2013), the authors researched how an improvement in housing quality can affect the QoL, majorly sleep quality, among slum dwellers. They concluded that even a minimal improvement in basic housing quality can have a major impact on the improvement in QoL

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of slum dwellers Simonelli et al. (2013). They also suggested that low-cost interventions can lead to improvements in reducing existing sleep disparity and improving sleep quality. Further, regarding the impact of transportation on QoL, in a study conducted by Sahasranaman & Bettencourt, (2021), it was found that access to services across non-slum neighbourhoods was better than slum neighbourhoods because the former enjoyed good access to transportation. The public delivery system, which is a significant part of the social security system for poor people in India, gets adversely affected because of a lack of transportation services (Sahasranaman & Bettencourt, 2021).

With respect to the impact of neighbourhood and violence on QoL, one significant study was conducted by Subasinghe (2015). The authors noted that most people living in slums are poor and are either unemployed or under-employed (Subasinghe, 2015). Therefore, such people resort to alcoholism, child deviancy, theft, prostitution, violence, and other kinds of criminal acts. As a result of these factors, the neighbourhood in slum areas becomes violent and people living in these slums are more likely to witness deaths, suicide, illness, abortions etc (Subasinghe, 2015). Consequently, both factors, neighbourhood and violence negatively impact the QoL of people living in slums (Subasinghe, 2015).

With respect to the impact of discrimination, one study was conducted by Vikas Sehra of the Jawaharlal Nehru University. The author conducted a survey in the slums of the Sanjay Colony in Delhi (Sehra, 2018). The study found that people living in these slums have higher discontent when it came to social discrimination, among other factors (Sehra, 2018). The author also shows that social discrimination was one of the strongest predictors of mental health, indicating that discrimination has an adverse impact on the QoL among people living in slums (Sehra, 2018). Moreover, with respect to the impact of education and job opportunities on the quality of life, one relevant study was conducted by Chugh (2014) in the slums of Ludhiana. She noted that a large section of people living in slums across Ludhiana was majorly dependent on construction and manufacturing activities (Chugh, 2014). Therefore, most of them typically lived in poverty and were, therefore, unable to provide formal education to their children (Chugh, 2014). The author also concluded that because of poverty, parents had little motivation to get their children enrolled in the formal education system.

In a book published by Vaidyanathan & R., (2001) in slums across Orissa. The author suggested that because of a lack of education, children were not able to acquire life skills and vocational training, which significantly reduced their ability to materialize upon job opportunities (Vaidyanathan & R., 2001). Overall, these two studies suggest that a lack of education leads to a lack of job opportunities, and together, they negatively affect the QoL of people living in slums (Vaidyanathan & R., 2001). With respect to the influence of income on the QoL of slum dwellers, one relevant study was conducted by (Renzaho et al., 2020). The author acknowledged that people living in slums, particularly young ones, do non-rewarding and dangerous jobs that do not offer decent income (Renzaho et al., 2020). As a result, these people lack basic management skills and financial knowledge to comprehend their financial circumstances (Taylor et al., 2011). They also tend to lose control of their money, irrespective of their income levels (Melhuish et al., 2008). This has a negative influence on the QoL of these people. Renzaho et al. (2020) were also able to conclude that a slight improvement in the income level of these people can have a positive impact on the quality of the neighbourhood, self-esteem, and psychological well-being of these people.

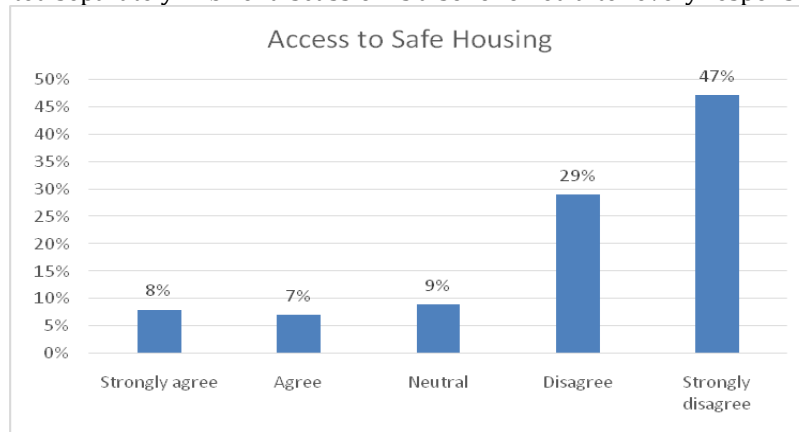
With respect to the impact of food security on the QoL, one relevant study was conducted in African slums by (Wanyama et al., 2019). The authors used the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) to measure the food security level of the participants (Wanyama et al., 2019). They concluded that a large section of the slum population was struggling with low dietary quality and was facing food insecurity, which significantly affected their QoL (Wanyama et al., 2019). The authors also attributed poor dietary access to low-income levels (Wanyama et al., 2019). Similar results were observed when there was a lack of clean water. For instance, in a study conducted on the water quality in Mumbai slums, Subbaraman et al. (2013) noted that slums often lack access to municipal water supplies, which adversely affects water quality. The authors pointed out in their study that water was contaminated by bacteria when people living in slums stored the water in their households (Subbaraman et al., 2013). This restricts these people from attaining universally accepted minimum health and social equity standards of health and negatively influences the QoL of these people (Subbaraman et al., 2013). As an intervention, the authors also suggested that these people should be provided with the provision of narrow-mouthed safe storage containers and chlorination.

### 3. Methodology

This section will discuss the methodology that has been employed to conduct this study. The author has used a mixed methodology (qualitative as well as quantitative methodology) to conduct the research. The existing literature on the subject has been used to collect qualitative data for the study whereas a questionnaire has been used to collect quantitative data for the study. The survey was conducted in slums across Dehradun city and a total of 20 participants (all women) were taken for the study. A mixed methodology has been used because it reduces the likelihood of bias in the study. The outcome of any study that is solely based on qualitative research is likely to be influenced by the researcher's bias, and therefore, the adoption of a survey to collect quantitative data was done to ensure that the bias remains minimum. This is because it is difficult to manipulate quantitative data. The questionnaire has been attached in the appendix.

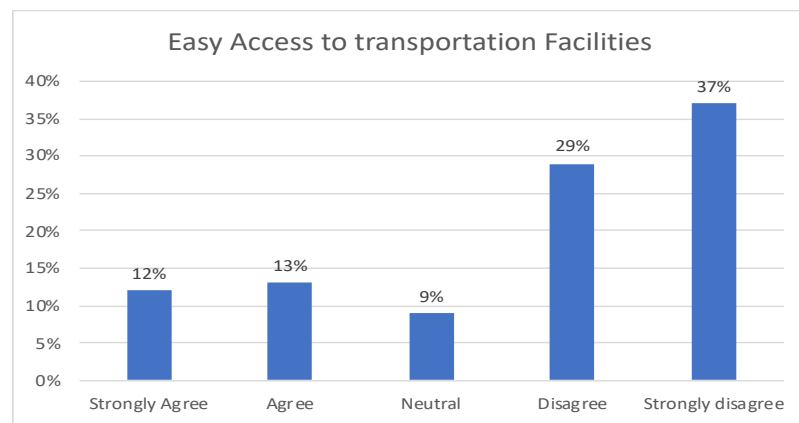
**4. Results and Discussion**

This section will present a graphical representation of the responses collected through the questionnaire. The response to each question has been presented separately. A brief discussion is also followed after every response.



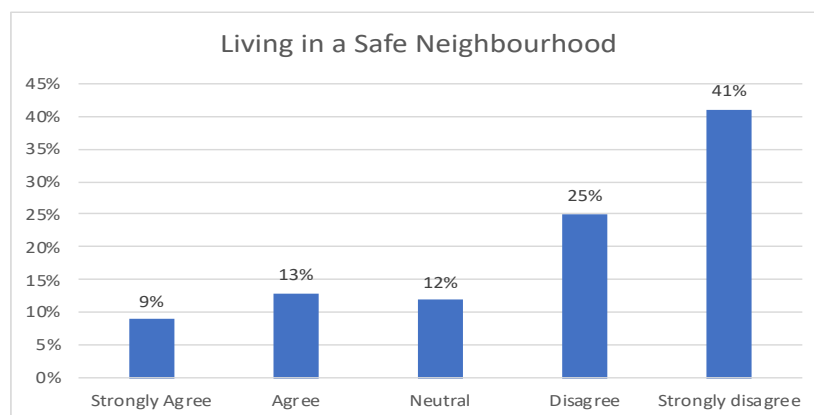
**Fig 1:** Response of participants towards access to safe housing (Created by Author based on survey response)

When participants were asked about access to safe housing, only 8% strongly agreed and 7% agreed that they had access to safe housing. 9% remained neutral in their response. Another 29% said that they disagree with the statement and a whopping 47% said that they do not have access to safe housing. This represents how a majority of the women living in the slums of Dehradun did not have access to safe housing. In line with the established literature above, it can be said that since a large section of women does not have access to safe housing, they tend to experience deterioration in their QoL too.



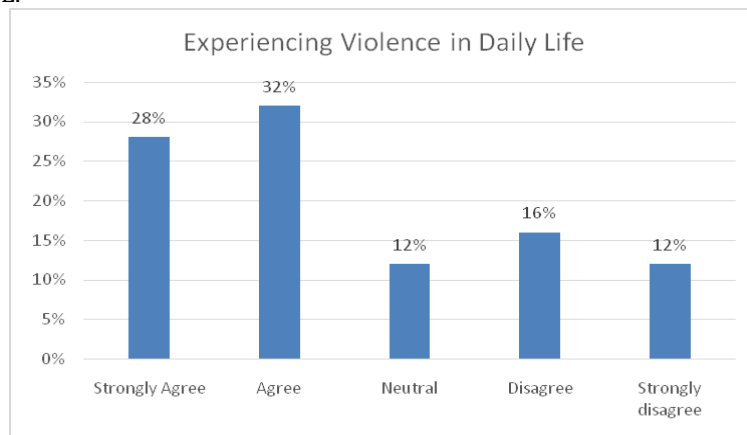
**Fig 2:** Response of participants towards access to transportation facilities(Created by Author based on survey response)

When participants were asked about easy access to transportation facilities, only 12% strongly agreed and 13% agreed that they had easy access to transportation facilities. 9% remained neutral in their response. Another 29% said that they disagree with the statement and another 37% said that they do not have easy access to transportation facilities. This represents how a majority of the women living in the slums of Dehradun did not have easy access to transportation facilities. The literature has suggested how the lack of transportation facilities reduces the QoL of slum dwellers. Similarly, these women living in the slums of Dehradun will likely experience a reduction in their QoL too.



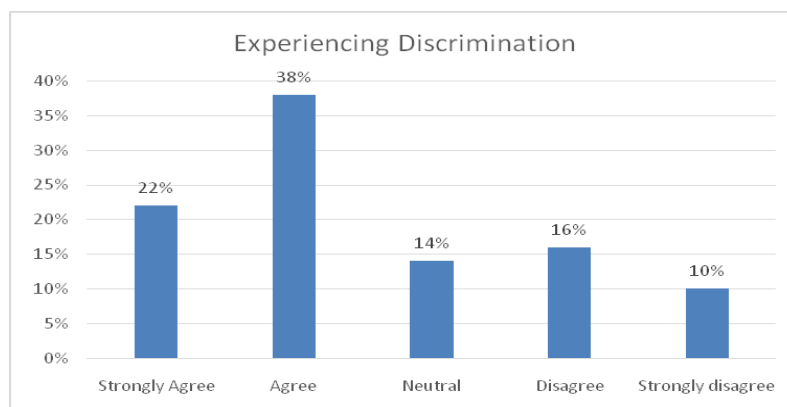
**Fig 3:** Response of participants towards living in a safe neighbourhood (Created by Author based on survey response)

When participants were asked about their neighbourhood, only 9% strongly agreed and 13% agreed that they were living in a safe neighbourhood. 12% remained neutral in their response. Another 25% said that they disagree with the statement and a large section of the women (41%) said that they do not live in a safe neighbourhood. This represents how a majority of the women living in the slums of Dehradun are living in unsafe neighbourhoods. The literature clearly suggests that unsafe slum neighbourhood is a major determinant of poor QoL, women living in Dehradun will also be experiencing similar deterioration in their QoL.



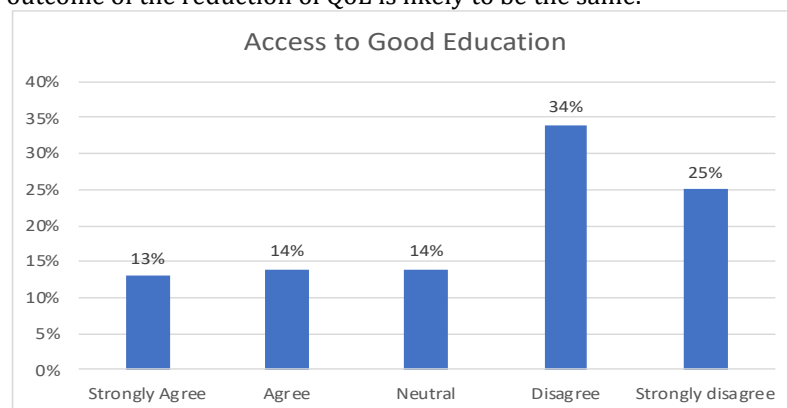
**Fig 4:** Response of participants towards experiencing violence in daily life(Created by Author based on survey response)

When participants were asked about their experiences of violence in their daily life, a large number of them (28%) strongly agreed and another (32%) agreed that they experienced violence in their daily life. 12% remained neutral in their response. Another 16% said that they disagree with the statement and the rest (12%) said that they do not experience violence in their daily life. This shows how a large section of women living in the slums of Dehradun experience violence in their daily life. In line with the established literature, it can be said that since a large section of women experiences violence in their everyday life, they tend to experience deterioration in their QoL too.



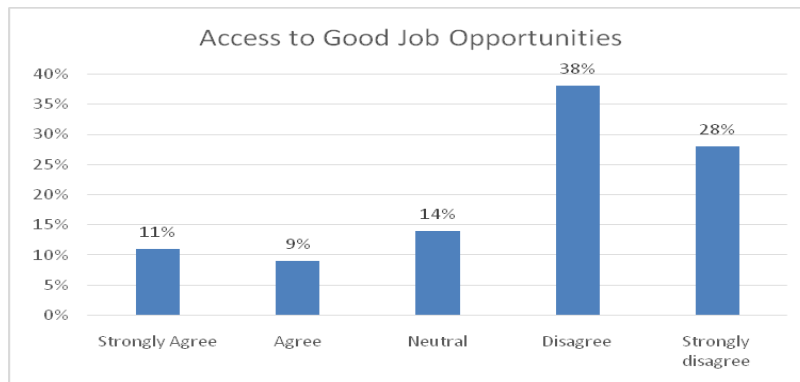
**Fig 5:** Response of participants towards experiencing discrimination(Created by Author based on survey response)

When participants were asked about whether they face discrimination, a whopping 22% strongly agreed and 38% agreed that they faced discrimination. 14% remained neutral in their response. Another 16% said that they disagree with the statement and only 10% said that they do not experience discrimination. This goes on to show that a majority of the women living in the slums of Dehradun experience discrimination frequently in their lives. Evidence has been provided in the above literature that when slum dwellers experience discrimination, they see their QoL deteriorate. For women living in slums across Dehradun, the outcome of the reduction of QoL is likely to be the same.



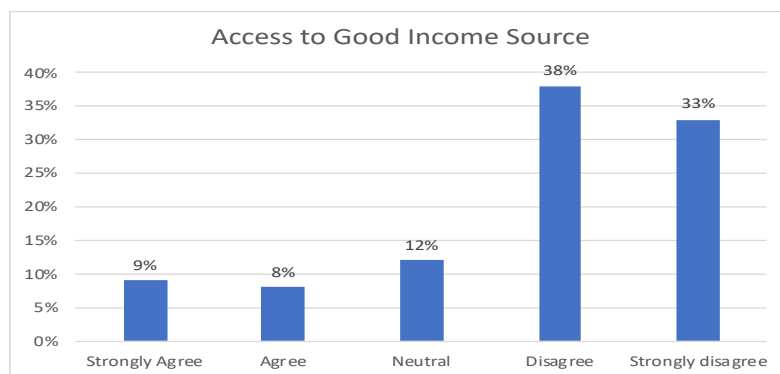
**Fig 6:** Response of participants towards access to good education (Created by Author based on survey response)

When participants were asked about access to good education, only 13% strongly agreed and 14% agreed that they had access to good education. 14% remained neutral in their response. Another 34% said that they disagree with the statement and the rest (25%) said that they do not have access to good education. This suggests how a majority of the women living in the slums of Dehradun are bereft of access to good education. The literature has maintained that lack of good education among slum people is a major determinant of poor QoL. Consequently, women living in Dehradun will also be experiencing similar deterioration in their QoL too.



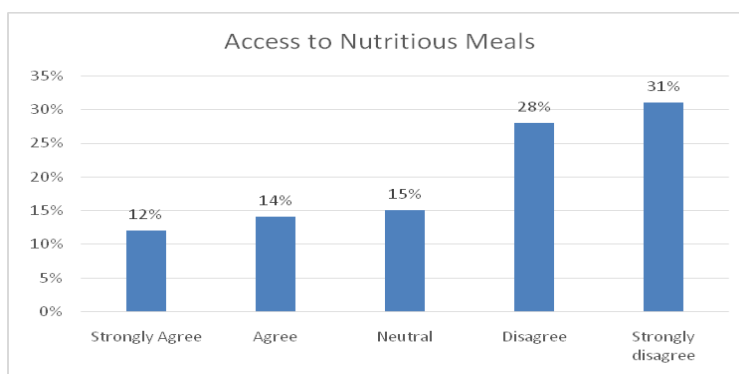
**Fig 7:** Response of participants towards access to good job opportunities(Created by Author based on survey response)

When participants were asked about access to good job opportunities, only 11% strongly agreed and 9% agreed that they had access to safe housing. 14% remained neutral in their response. A majority of them (38%) said that they disagree with the statement and the rest (28%) said that they do not have access to good job opportunities. This shows how a majority of the women living in the slums of Dehradun are devoid of good job opportunities. The literature has suggested how the lack of job opportunities among slum dwellers reduces their QoL. Accordingly, these women living in the slums of Dehradun will likely experience a reduction in their QoL too.



**Fig 8:** Response of participants towards access to good income (Created by Author based on survey response)

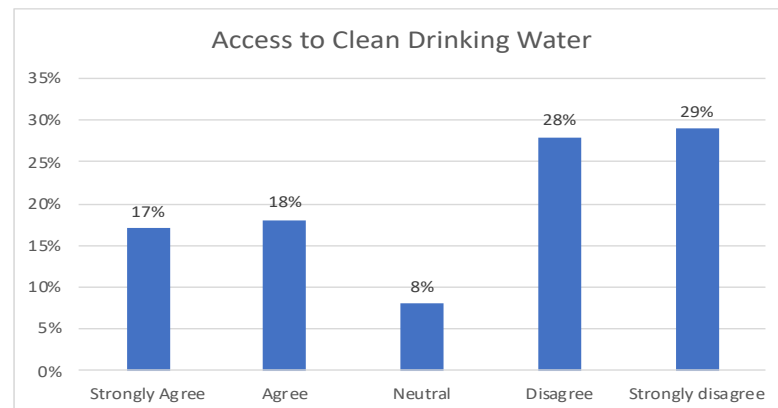
When participants were asked about their access to a good income source, only 9% strongly agreed and 8% agreed that they had access to a good income source. 12% remained neutral in their response. A whopping 38% said that they disagree with the statement and the rest (33%) said that they strongly disagreed with the statement. This represents how a majority of the women living in the slums of Dehradun did not have access to a good income source. In the existing literature, the lack of good and regular income sources among people living in slums has been associated with a reduction in QoL. In line with these findings, the women living in the slums of Dehradun will also be experiencing similar reductions in their QoL.



**Fig 9:** Response of participants towards access to nutritious meals (Created by Author based on survey response)

When participants were asked about access to nutritious meals, merely 12% strongly agreed and 14% agreed that they had access to nutritious meals. 15% remained neutral in their response, suggesting that on some days, they get to consume

nutritious meals and on others, they are devoid of the same. Another 28% said that they disagree with the statement and a whopping 31% said that they do not have access to nutritious meals. This represents how a majority of the women living in the slums of Dehradun cannot eat nutritious meals. Evidence has been provided in the above literature that when slum dwellers do not have regular access to nutritious meals, they see their QoL being adversely impacted. Therefore, similarly, for women living in slums across Dehradun, the outcome in the reduction of QoL is likely to be the same.



**Fig 10:** Response of participants towards access to clean drinking water (Created by Author based on survey response)

When participants were asked about access to clean drinking water, 17% strongly agreed and 18% agreed that they had access to clean drinking water. 8% remained neutral in their response. Another 28% said that they disagree with the statement and a large number of them (29%) said that they do not have access to clean drinking water. This represents how a majority of the women living in the slums of Dehradun did not have access to clean drinking water. The literature also suggests how lack of clean drinking water is directly associated with reductions in QoL and since a large number of women in the slums of Dehradun lack access to clean drinking water, their QoL is also likely to reduce significantly.

## 5. Conclusion

After having collected both qualitative and quantitative data, this section will connect both and offer a conclusion. The literature was instrumental in identifying factors such as the lack of safe housing, lack of transportation, lack of safe neighbourhood, violence, discrimination, lack of good education, lack of good job opportunities, lack of decent income, lack of food security, and lack of access to clean water reduce the QoL of slum dwellers. When data related to these factors was collected from women living in slums across Dehradun city, it was observed that a large section of women had a lack of safe housing and good job opportunities. Most of them were also facing violence and discrimination in their daily lives. A large section of the women had observed that they did not have access to regular income and they lack food security. These women were also struggling to have access to clean water. All these factors suggest that the QoL of women living in slums across Dehradun city had poor QoL and that is unlikely to change in the absence of targeted interventions. The strength of this study was its mixed methodology, which ensured that the researcher's bias remain at the minimum levels. However, one limitation is associated with the generalizability of the results. Given the lack of time and monetary resources, the sample size was restricted to 20, which warrants that the results be cautiously applied to the general population. With respect to future studies on the QoL of women living in slums, future researchers are advised to increase their sample size so that the results become more representative of the larger slum population.

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