

CO-RESIDENTIAL ARRANGEMENTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE IN MEXICAN OLDER ADULTS' SELF- DETERMINATION IN THEIR LEISURE ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore how living arrangements in co-residence may affect older adults' leisure engagement. This study was guided by a collectivism versus individualism approach focusing on gender differences. The methodology chosen was grounded theory and in-depth interviews with a semi-structured protocol were used. A total of eleven Mexican older adults took part in this study, seven women and four males. After the data were analyzed, four core themes emerged: (1) Living arrangements in co-residence influence older adults' self-determination in their leisure engagement, (2) women, in comparison with men, prefer to fulfill their need for relatedness with household members in their leisure engagement, (3) men and women explicitly mentioned that having company from household members is desirable when engaging in some leisure activities outdoors, (4) family members encourage older adults to perform some leisure activities that help to replace negative thoughts, and this improve the emotional health of older adults.

Keywords: Leisure, co-residence, older adults, self-determination, Mexico.

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1. Introduction

Leisure is a basic human right which is closely related to the well-being and quality of life of human beings[1] [2].Several research studies provide evidence of the benefits of leisure activities in our society. For example, some leisure activities that are physically demanding, such as swimming, walking, and running may help to improve or maintain the physiological and psychological health of people[3].Other leisure activities, requiring no-physical exertion, such as reading, listening to music, and attending cultural events, may also contribute substantially to improve people's cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and social aspects[4] [5] [6].

Leisure activities allow individuals to experience self-determination in their free time[7], and self-determination is an essential element for individuals to consider themselves the origin of their own behavior,and have the perception of performing activities that are highly self-regulated [8] [9].Activities that are chosen with autonomy promote intrinsic motivation, and in turn, allow the individual to experience positive emotions such as joy, pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, self-improvement, and capacity building [9].

However, it is recognized that self-determination is not absolute [9], because participation in leisure activities may be affected by several aspects including economic, political, historical, and socio-cultural factors [10].These factors may restrict the freedom of each individual to participate in leisure activities, regardless of how participation is perceived by each individual; thus, people might perceive that their leisure participation is chosen and not imposed by external factors. Then, Stebbins [10] argues that leisure participation should be considered as an unforced behavior, rather than as a behavior chosen freely.

There are several factors that contribute to maintain, increase or decrease the ability of individuals to perceive self-determination at leisure, such as physical health [11],level of education[12], economic status [13],marital status [13], thesocio-cultural contexts [14], andthe place in which people live[15], including their living arrangements (i.e., co-residence or living alone).

There is little evidence regarding co-residence and its effect on leisure behaviors among the older population [16]. Co-residence may be a relevant factor for older adults in Mexico because

studies indicate that one out of every four households in Mexico has at least one older adult (60 years or older) [17]. Moreover, it is expected that in 2040 the older adult population will increase and one out of every five Mexicans will be 60 years or older [18], and co-residence might be the dominant living arrangement for this group of the population. Thus, how is older adults' leisure engagement influenced by their living arrangements? How co-residence may affect older adults' self-determination in the leisure engagement? if any. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore how living arrangements in co-residence may influence older adults' self-determination in their leisure engagement. This study was guided by a collectivism versus individualism approach focusing on gender differences, as further explained.

1.1. A collectivism versus individualism approach

1.2.

A collectivism approach is defined as the one that favors coexistence, a sense of belonging, and it also favors emotional ties with others. This approach is likely to prevail in living arrangements in co-residence. Under this perspective, leisure is particularly appreciated if done in social contexts where activities with others are encouraged [19][20]. While an individualism approach favors autonomy, free decision, and self-regulation; leisure is primarily based on personal goals [19][20]. There is empirical evidence suggesting that Mexican society is more attached to collectivism in their leisure engagement [21]; it seems that Mexicans like social activities, and enjoy being in direct contact with family and friends to share the experiences of daily life [22], and they tend to participate in leisure activities that are mainly aimed at fostering family relationships and emotional ties [21].

In the case of women, it is the collectivism and not the individualism approach, which seems to greatly influence the choice of leisure activities. The support of women in the satisfaction of other family members in their leisure engagement has been widely documented. Empirical studies show that women tend to sacrifice their own leisure preferences for the leisure preferences of other members of their families [23]. In other words, women engage in leisure activities that please their husbands and children, regardless of their personal leisure satisfaction. In addition, women value more some leisure activities that encourage interaction with others than men do [24]. Moreover, studies focusing on Latin American women found that

women had low levels of satisfaction in their leisure engagement, in comparison with men, due to their role as housewives, particularly in regard to their responsibility for raising children [25].

Among older adults, research studies have found a preference for a collectivistic approach in their leisure engagement. Some researchers suggest that older adults intentionally put aside their leisure preferences and accept the leisure preferences of their family members because their need for autonomy or self-determination is lower than their need to interact with their family [26]. Similarly, a study of adult women in Finland indicates that women give up their right to decide or suggest the type of activities to do when sharing leisure time with their family. The evidence suggests that women might think that is best when their children choose what to do during leisure so that those women do not impose or demand their leisure preferences to their children [27]. However, the study of Jolanki [27] does not establish why or what factors lead women to perceive that taking part in family-decision making, regarding their leisure engagement, is an imposition.

Although some literature shows low levels of self-determination of women's leisure engagement, there is also evidence that leisure activities can be highly self-determined, mostly when other aspects of women's lives restrict their freedom. For example, a group of South African women was actively involved in dance classes, because this activity allowed them to get rid of the traditional style of patriarchal life in which they were immersed in their context [28]. While dancing, those South African women experienced a sense of freedom from restrictions imposed on a daily basis by their husbands [28]; thus, leisure becomes a way to fulfill their need for autonomy.

In the case of couples without children living at home, it is known that couples tend to increase or maintain their leisure engagement in activities with their partners. Older adults who live with their partners demonstrate to have a larger leisure repertoire than older adults living alone [13]. Older adults who live alone, tend to choose leisure activities enabling them to have close social contact, instead of leisure activities which do not encourage socialization such as reading, watching television, and listening to music [29]. However, there is evidence that having a partner does not necessarily mean the same interests in leisure preferences, and women

participate more often in leisure activities chosen by their partner than men do. This, in turn, shows more dissatisfaction among women in their leisure engagement in comparison with men [30].

2. Methodology

The qualitative research method chosen in this study was grounded theory; this method helps to develop a theoretical model based on the data to explain the phenomenon of interest. Grounded theory is particularly useful when little is known about the topic to investigate, as in the case of this research effort. The unit of analysis was eleven older adults, seven women, and four men, with residence in the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, Jalisco in Mexico.

Data collection was divided into two stages. The first stage was to recruit potential participants by using non-probability samples in the light of the following three criteria: (1) the age of participants should be 60 years or older, (2) participants should have good physical and mental health to ensure free collaboration, and (3) participants must live in co-residence with family, relatives and/or friends. The second stage was data collection, consisted of interviews, person to person. All interviews were audio-recorded, and without the presence of relatives or other persons. In addition, notes/memos were taken regarding reactions and non-verbal communication of participants. At the beginning of the interview, participants provided some socio-demographic data (see table 1.).

Also, a semi-structured interview protocol was used and the general question was: Can you tell me about your leisure activities? Regarding the people with whom you live, and based on your perception, what is their attitude regarding your leisure engagement? If any. Are there any constraints on your leisure due to your living arrangements? And if so, why?

Table 1. Participants' information

Name *	Age	Household members
Lola	69	Daughter and 2 granddaughters
Carmen	80	Son, daughter-in-law, grandson
Eva	78	Son, daughter-in-law, 3 grandchildren

Alma	76	Sister
Martha	71	Husband and son
Ana	60	Husband, sister, and 2 nieces
Clara	74	Husband
Roberto	70	Daughter and granddaughter
Marcos	67	Wife and mother
Esteban	64	Wife
Lalo	72	Wife, daughter, and grandson

*Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity.

2.1 Analysis of data

Data analysis was based on open, axial, and selective encoding[31].The analysis was carried out through a process of identification, codification, and categorization of substantive data.The analysis went beyond the description of whatthe participants said,an interpretation of data was an important aspect achieved through reflection and analysis of the hidden or implicit meanings of narratives[32].Besides, an emic perspective was used; this perspective respect the way in which each participant defines their leisure activities,this may include a wide range of activities such as cleaning, cooking, making phone calls, and going to church.

3.Findings

3.1. Differences in leisure preferences

As expected, the data obtained showedinter-generational differences in leisure preferences among older adults living in co-residence. The evidence found more differences between older adults and their grandchildren, in comparison with other family members such as children, wife/husband, and other close relatives (e.g., sibling). Although inter-generational differences exist, they engage in similar leisure activities. Older adults engage in a very diverse repertoire of leisure activities; some activities tend to be contemplative activities including watching TV, listening to the radio and reading. Others can be considered as productive activities such as cooking, cleaning the house, feeding and walking pets, gardening, shopping, and going to church, among others.

The evidence suggests that person-to-person interaction is highly valued by participants, men and women alike. The main conflict arises between older adults and their grandchildren because the latter tend to use electronic devices frequently, such as mobile phones and tablets; those devices are used for social interaction with others. Robert, a male participant who lives with her daughter and her granddaughter, explained, "I would love to talk more with my granddaughter, but she is always hypnotized with her phone and her computer." Similarly, Eva, who lives with 3 grandchildren mentioned, "It is not that I do not want them [her grandchildren] to use their mobile phones, but when having meals together, why they should answer the phone, or send a message? It's family time!"

Women showed more willingness than men to adapt to the leisure preferences of all family members, particularly the younger generations. For instance, Eva mentioned, "I really do not like some of the places we go out for dinner, but I do not complain, my family loves those fast food restaurants." Similarly, Carmen, who lives with her son and his family explained that she prefers to sacrifice her inclination for some TV programs in order to share more time with her grandson,

I love watching movies...old movies in black and white, but my grandson hates those movies because they are too old and boring [she laughs]. I could go to my room and watch TV there but, I really enjoy watching TV with him [her grandson] in the living room every afternoon.

Some participants also mentioned the lack of support for performing some leisure activities that some household members consider unfashionable. For instance, Lola enjoys knitting a lot, she used to make knitting clothes for her granddaughters; however, she now feels rejected because of her leisure engagement in knitting, as she mentioned,

They both [her granddaughters] do not like knitting clothes anymore, they prefer to buy clothes... once they said that I should stop knitting, but I truly enjoy it! I do lots of things...now I gift those things to my friends or my cousins.

3.2. Constraints in mobility and the need for company

Although one might expect that living with others would be an advantage for older adults in co-residence, in comparison with older adults living alone, findings demonstrated some constraints for leisure engagement. Those constraints were mostly focusing on two aspects. One related to mobility issues for leisure engagement outdoors; the other was related with performing activities alone. Constraints regarding mobility for leisure engagement outdoors was mentioned by women participants only. The evidence showed three causal conditions limiting women's mobility in Guadalajara city: (1) economic constraints to pay for a taxi; (2) deficiencies in public transportation services; and, (3) functional limitations of participants (i.e., health status). For instance, Carmen is 80 years old and used to visit some of her friends in downtown Guadalajara. She now lives in the suburbs with her son and his family, and regrets that she can no longer go to downtown by herself, "well, I would love to take a bus but my legs do not respond, I can hardly remain stand for long periods and not to mention walking...I now talk by phone with my friends, though is not the same." When I asked whether her son could drive her downtown to visit her friends or pay private transportation she explained, "no, no, he works hard all weekdays, I would not dare to ask him to drive me downtown on weekends or make him pay for a taxi."

The other constraint found was related to performing some leisure activities in solitude. Both, men and women, mentioned that there are some leisure activities outdoors which they are willing to do alone because they feel comfortable, including shopping, walking alone or walking their pets, going to church, visiting family and friend, and doing some errands. However, there are a number of leisure activities outdoors in which they will engage only with a company, such as traveling outside the city/abroad, going out to eat at restaurants or coffee shops, and going to the cinema, theatres, and concerts. For instance, Roberto, a divorced male participant commented,

Now that I live with my daughter and granddaughter I often have lunch or dinner at restaurants, we go together... when I got divorced I simply could not do that, I need to socialize when having meals, and felt uncomfortable alone in a restaurant.

Other participants living in co-residence do not seem to benefit from living with other people. For instance, Martha, who lives with her husband and her son, does not have their support for traveling or going to the cinema with her. In her words,

I love going to the cinema, love movies, but I do not dare to go alone, I would feel uncomfortable. My son goes often to the movies with his girlfriend, but he never invites me [laughs], do you believe? My husband does not like going to the cinema or traveling; I love traveling but he does not! I used to travel with one of my sisters but she passed away 7 years ago.

3.3. *The socio-emotional influence of leisure*

This study showed that some of the leisure time spent by older adults is perceived by other family members in co-residence as good and positive, and this perception may help older adults to maintain or improve their emotional health. The evidence suggests that living in co-residence may motivate older adults to continue their leisure engagement. Two aspects seem to motivate participants. One aspect is focusing on other household members recognizing older adults' skills and/or abilities to perform some leisure activities. These activities might be considered as *productive activities* because they usually generate a tangible product (e.g., painting, cooking, gardening). Besides, productive leisure activities are generally useful and contribute to increasing the self-efficacy of participants, as well as their self-determination to continue their leisure engagement. Almost all participants felt happy, proud, stimulated, and valued when receiving verbal recognition from those with whom they live in co-residence. For instance, Marcos enjoy to spend his free time doing some carpentry work in his garage, and he recently finishes a desk for his daughter, "She loved it! [the desk], she really needed a desk to put all her things...she wants a night table now...I am working on it...I feel happy she likes what I do..." Similarly, Ana mentioned,

...fixing clothes, I love to do that. My husband says that I am really good at sewing, sew a button or sew patches onto clothing... my nieces are always asking me to repair their clothes; I love to do that, I am really good at it, and can spend hours doing that...

The other aspect that seems to motivate participants in their leisure activities is the effect of some leisure activities in changing their mood. This change of older adults' mood due to some leisure engagements, such as listening to music or watching TV is acknowledged by other household members, and consequently, they encourage older adults to perform some leisure activities. In

other words, findings suggest that when some older adults feel sad, melancholic, upset, or stressed, members of their household encourage them to take part in leisure activities that will contribute to improving their emotional state. For instance, Martha explains, “Shopping makes me feel relaxed. My husband says that shopping is my best psychiatrist when I am under stress... He [her husband] encourages my love of going shopping because I stop thinking about my problems.” Similarly, Carmen is encouraged by her daughter-in-law to make phone calls when Carmen is anxious, “She knows me well and always say to me that I should talk to my friends so that they make me laugh; she is right [her daughter-in-law], after my phone call, I feel better and relaxed.” Other leisure activities such as cooking and playing with pets or grandchildren were frequently mentioned by participants because those activities help them to regulate their state of mind; thus household members encourage older adults to perform those activities to avoid or prevent negative emotions and stress.

4. Discussion

After the data were analyzed, four core themes emerged: (1) Living arrangements in co-residence influence older adults’ self-determination in their leisure engagement, (2) women, in comparison with men, prefer to fulfill their need for relatedness with household members in their leisure engagement, (3) men and women explicitly mentioned that having company from household members is desirable when engaging in some leisure activities outdoors, (4) family members encourage older adults to perform some leisure activities that help to replace negative thoughts, and this improve the emotional health of older adults.

4.1. Living arrangements in co-residence influence older adults’ self-determination in their leisure engagement

Findings showed that living arrangements in co-residence do not seem to affect negatively the high participation and self-determination of older adults in most activities carried out alone, such as reading, doing crafts, going to mass, walking dogs, and going for a walk, except for the activities performed outdoors in which they explicitly mentioned the need for company. However, findings showed that inter-generational differences may discourage older adults in their leisure engagement because some activities are judged by household members as old fashion and/or useless, such as participants who enjoy making crafts, knitting, or sewing; the

evidence shows that women are the most affected. These results are consistent with other studies that show that the collective leisure is relevant for women [27], and lacking recognition of their effort may undermine their willingness to engage in leisure activities. However, several participants also recognized the support provided by their family members, when they explicitly recognize the skills and/or abilities of participants, and this makes them feel proud and satisfied. This result is congruent with similar results [33]; thus, the perception of competence among participants in this study is relevant, because they feel capable and valued by those who surround them, and this can result in greater well-being for older adults.

4.2. Women, in comparison with men, prefer to fulfill their need for relatedness with household members in their leisure engagement

The collectivism versus individualism approach used to guide this study helped to uncover those gender roles that are relevant to explain how self-determination varies between men and women. The narratives of male participants showed a high level of self-determination in their leisure engagement indoors; although they recognized differences in leisure preferences between generations, particularly between them and their grandchildren, those differences did not change most of their leisure preferences. On the other hand, women participants were more willing to give up their leisure preferences. Findings suggest that women prefer to fulfill their need for relatedness with household members, particularly the younger generations, than fulfilling their need for autonomy in their leisure engagement. This might be related with how women assimilate the imposition of gender roles in their socio-cultural context, although those gender roles may not be assumed consciously by them. This result is consistent with the collectivistic approach of women found in other studies in which women give up their self-determination for leisure engagement because they prefer to spend their free time sharing with household members [26][27].

4.3. Men and women explicitly mentioned that having company from household members is desirable when engaging in some leisure activities outdoors

Regarding leisure activities outdoors, both men and women explicitly mentioned that for some leisure activities outdoors having company is desirable, otherwise they would rather prefer not to engage in those activities, such as eating in restaurants, traveling, and going to the

cinema/theater. However, findings showed mobility issues for leisure engagement outdoors among women participants only. Women mentioned deficiencies in public transportation along with some health problems, and economic constraints for paying a taxi as the determinants for performing less leisure activities outdoor and far from their home, and this is congruent with other studies [34].

4.4. Family members encourage older adults to perform some leisure activities that help to replace negative thoughts, and this improve the emotional health of older adults

It was found that leisure activities were used as a mechanism for helping older adults to regulate their mood. Household members recognize the positive effect of some leisure activities, including going shopping, going to mass, and visiting friends, when older adults feel sad or stressed. Thus, family members encourage older adults to perform some activities helping to replace negative thoughts, and this improves the emotional and socio-affective state of participants. This result is consistent with other studies that confirm that the immediate social context immediately is a source of positive support and motivation for leisure engagement [35].

5. Conclusion

Co-residence is intertwined with several aspects that help to explain why older adults' leisure engagement is not homogeneous. Findings in this study demonstrated that gender roles, type of leisure activities (e.g., outdoors and indoors), and inter-generational differences are the dominant aspects influencing participants' self-determination, and consequently, their leisure engagement. As the older population grows in developing countries, more research is needed in order to design public policies for improving older adults' health, including their leisure engagement; besides, more research is needed to better understand the dynamics of living arrangements in co-residence or living along, and how they influence older adults' leisure engagement.

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