



Factors influencing the exclusion of older adults from the Sergio Toral I Cooperative

Factores que influyen en la exclusión de los adultos mayores de la Cooperativa Sergio Toral

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Abstract

This study aims to generate processes of reflection on the factors that influence the processes of inclusion/exclusion of older adults living in the Sergio Toral 1 cooperative in the city of Guayaquil in order to promote their participation and integration in their territory. This research represents a contribution for the city of Guayaquil, since it will not only benefit older adults, but it will also deconstruct erroneous perceptions that society has about aging, hoping that, through this process, the community will be directed, educated and transformed into an integrating group, leaving aside prejudices and stereotypes that are culturally rooted. The research has a qualitative design with an exploratory scope. Data were collected through the application of surveys to older adults, to the inhabitants of the community (neighborhood actors), interviews with older adults, observation and

social mapping built with neighborhood leaders. Factors such as insecurity, lack of infrastructure, lack of accessible health centers and fractured communication and interaction circuits between the population of the sector and the elderly have an impact on the perception of exclusion of this age group.

Resumen

El presente estudio se propone generar procesos de reflexión sobre los factores que influyen en los procesos de inclusión/exclusión de los adultos mayores que habitan en la cooperativa Sergio Toral 1 en la ciudad de Guayaquil para promover la participación e integración de éstos en su territorio. Esta investigación representa un aporte para la ciudad de Guayaquil, ya que no solo beneficiará a los adultos mayores, sino que, a su vez, de-construirá percepciones erróneas que presenta la sociedad, acerca del envejecimiento esperando que, por medio de este proceso, se encamine, eduque y transforme a la comunidad en un conjunto integrador dejando de lado prejuicios y estereotipos muy arraigados culturalmente. La investigación tiene un diseño cualitativo con un alcance exploratorio. Se recogieron los datos a través de la aplicación de encuestas a los adultos mayores, a los habitantes de la comunidad (actores barriales), de las entrevistas aplicadas a adultos mayores, de la observación y de la cartografía social construida con los líderes barriales. Factores como la inseguridad, la falta de infraestructura, la falta de centros de salud accesibles y los circuitos de comunicación e interacción fracturados entre la población del sector y los adultos mayores inciden en la percepción de exclusión de este grupo etario.

Palabras clave/ Keywords

Social exclusion/inclusion - Older adults – Participation.

Exclusión/inclusión social – Adultos mayores – Participación.

Introduction

Exclusion is a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon, which limits the action of integrating what is socially different. This social phenomenon is a process that hinders, for those who experience it, adaptability and sociability within an environment, the groups most susceptible to face such situations are minorities, such as the disabled,

transsexuals, women, seniors, children, indigenous people, among others Lailive (2008), Hernandez, (2008), the objective is to generate processes of reflection based on the results found in the Sergio Toral I Cooperative, in the city of Guayaquil - Ecuador, on the various factors that influence the exclusion of older adults in order to promote their participation and integration in their territory, since exclusion is a latent problem to which this priority group of the population is no stranger.

Late adulthood is an important phase in the bio-psycho-social development of every human being. This phase is characterized by the adaptation to various changes within a social context that forces this group to adapt not only to the changes of age, but also to reaffirm their belonging to a group. During this stage many are excluded by society and in some cases self-exclude due to feelings of burden.

- 3 The main approaches in research on this population group focus on inclusion, health, quality of life, etc. In the research of Oberto (2013) and Ruíz, et al. (2013).

Rojas (2016), on the state of older adults in abandoned populations, highlights the social responsibility that the State should have to protect this group in a special way, first identifying their most relevant basic needs, both male and female population within a social context where they deserve as much importance as the rest of the population groups.

Regarding the inclusion and participation of this group, social and support networks are one of the main mechanisms to encourage and contribute to their well-being. García, Moya and Quijano (2015) and Gulmes, Nieto (2015) conducted a research entitled "Cognitive performance and quality of life of older adults attending senior groups" p. 399 giving as a result that those who participated in these groups obtained a better performance than others. Regarding the quality of life, no variant was evidenced, preventing the possibility of proving that changes at the cognitive level influence the daily life of these groups, but the importance of social inclusion for the psychological and emotional well-being of older adults is highlighted (García, Moya, & Quijano, 2015, p. 343).

Regarding the protection of this age group by the State, the article "Social protection of the elderly: Inclusion and equity in Argentina during the period 2003-2014", aimed at empirically evidencing the impact of the protection policies implemented on the level of coverage and income distribution. The study showed that social structures are

modified when there is an expansion in income coverage; this means that with a better distribution of resources there will be greater access to basic services. It was also found that social protection policies within the retirement system need to be adapted to a long-term sustainable type strategy (Trujillo, 2018, p. 38).

Álvarez (2009) and Rodríguez (2011) point out that the older adult population is in a stage characterized by the various physical and emotional changes inherent to age. In this phase of the life cycle, this group will require greater attention from those who make up their environment, starting from the family level to state institutions in both the public and private sectors. According to studies by the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, there are 1,049,824 older adults in Ecuador, i.e. people 65 years of age or older, representing 6.5% of the entire population. The Government of Rafael Correa (2007-2017) implemented public policies based on the defense of rights and the valuation of the elderly and this led to an increase in the participation of older adults during those years. Salgado (2007) and Izquierdo (2007). Normatively, we can identify laws established in the country for the benefit of older adults: in Article 36 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, it is established that the elderly should receive priority attention, considering as older adults those persons 65 years of age and older; Article 37 guarantees a series of rights that older adults should have, among them are free and specialized health care, the right to a job, to retirement, to discounts in public services, access to decent housing. Article 38 recognizes that the Ecuadorian State must take measures to guarantee their care in specialized centers where they can be attended to in their health, education, care, protection and nutrition needs, in addition to the fact that the State will provide special protection against labor exploitation and against violence or mistreatment. It will also develop programs that promote their personal autonomy and social integration.

In addition to the aforementioned needs, it is also necessary to promote social inclusion through projects that allow the participation of older adults as active members of society. The Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion is the agency in charge of overseeing and directing the different government programs focused on older adults, ensuring their rights and guaranteeing their welfare. One of its goals is to increase the percentage of participation of this population in the country reaching 74.5% in 2020. This ministry considers the elderly population as an active citizenry, where positive aging is promoted and, therefore, they should be able to enjoy a dignified and healthy life

through participation and empowerment together with the family, the state and society.

Despite all these efforts, there is still exclusion of the elderly in several neighborhoods. The government is committed to providing the corresponding support, however, family members or people who live with them in their environment do not form social bonds that allow the elderly to be an active part of a community. Domínguez (2016). In addition, the State's social plans and programs often do not reach the segregated sectors of the city. This study aims to generate processes of reflection on the factors that influence the processes of inclusion/exclusion of older adults living in the Sergio Toral 1 cooperative in the city of Guayaquil in order to promote their participation and integration in their territory.

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This research represents a contribution for the city of Guayaquil, since it will not only benefit older adults, but will also deconstruct erroneous perceptions that society has about aging, hoping that, through this process, the community will be guided, educated and transformed into an integrating group, leaving aside prejudices and stereotypes that are very culturally rooted.

Materials and Methods

The approach of this research is qualitative and the design is non-experimental, cross-sectional. The level of this research is descriptive. Descriptive research is also called diagnostic research and consists, fundamentally, in characterizing a phenomenon or concrete situation by indicating its most peculiar or differentiating features. "For descriptive research, its primary concern lies in discovering some fundamental characteristics of homogeneous sets of phenomena, using systematic criteria that make it possible to reveal their structure or behavior" (Sabino, 1984, p. 35).

In the research being carried out, our population will be the older adults of the Sergio Toral I. The sample of the population to which the selected instruments were applied is distributed as follows: 12 neighborhood leaders, 30 older adults and 41 neighborhood actors. The research being conducted is non-probabilistic sampling by convenience since accessible cases wishing to be included in the study have been selected, according to the possibilities of the researchers (Otzen & Manterola, 2017).

The techniques used for the collection of information were: a survey applied to 41 neighborhood actors and 22 older adults, interviews applied to 8 older adults, a social cartography or collective mapping that was carried out in a meeting with 12 neighborhood leaders of the community, showing us the situation according to their perspective of the Sergio Toral I cooperative and an observation guide on the infrastructure of the Sergio Toral I cooperative.

Regarding the forms of ordering and analysis of the information, the quantitative data were organized so that they could be tabulated from the Excel program, creating statistical graphs from the information collected. This helps to have specific percentages on a given topic of the information being more concrete to, from this, be able to infer about the issues of exclusion and inclusion of older adults in their territorial community. The qualitative data were coded using a coding matrix where we grouped the perceptions of the interviewees into variables. This was achieved by transcribing the dialogue to, from there, find the significance of each expression used by the older adults. The analysis of the information is presented through the triangulation of information, using quantitative and qualitative data in order to verify and compare the information provided.

The procedure will be as follows: statement of the problem; field work, definition of the sample and application of the instruments; data collection; data analysis; interpretation of results; preparation of the report.

Results

Feelings of insecurity are linked to cognitive elements of the person, where the sensation of danger is wrapped within a situation of uncertainty. Regarding this variable, the first graph shows that 50% of the people surveyed perceive that the level of security in the Sergio Toral 1 Cooperative is medium and 41% of those surveyed perceive that the level of security is low. One of the testimonies that allude to this variable is the following: "My son had 2 plastic chairs that were outside the house and they were taken in the blink of an eye when he went shopping, he told me when he left 'look mommy I'm coming' and Erick called me and when I went out, the chairs were gone" (Interviewee 8, 2019). This discourse reaffirms what a large part of the cooperative's population feels.

Access to quality basic services in any environment contributes to the development of the population, since it ensures access to many of the basic needs of people.

Within the Sergio Toral I cooperative, the older adults have stated the following: 47% of those surveyed have access to drinking water, while only 36% have electricity; there is no access to telecommunication networks, sewage, paving and waste collection. These figures show a problem that directly affects their quality of life.

Among the people interviewed it was common to hear speeches that allude to the access to of these services "The problem of the streets, in my house for example is that I have not been able to fill in down here" (María, 2019); "Well what affects is still the problem of the streets" (María, 2019). "Ah, yes, the streets, we also want the sewerage to come, because that is ugly" (Luisa,2019).

These difficulties become a condition that especially affects the elderly population since, for example, the lack of paving significantly hinders the mobility and movement of the elderly.

According to the UN, for a space to be considered a dwelling, basic elements of a construction must be met. This will be linked to how safe the infrastructure is, how easy it is to access basic services, and recreational and cultural spaces (Velázquez & Lozano, 2018).

Fifty-two percent of the older adults living in the Sergio Toral I Cooperative own a cement house, while 43% reported having a reed house. Cane housing is not a safe or appropriate infrastructure for older adults. In addition, most of these houses are built on an elevated wooden structure and therefore, access to the house is through a ladder. This becomes a serious problem for people with reduced mobility or age-related conditions: bone pain, poor visibility. The conflictive situations that older adults go through according to what the neighborhood actors of the Sergio Toral Cooperatives perceive. Forty-three percent of those surveyed consider that one of the most serious conflicts for older adults is that transportation within their community does not pick them up, 19% consider that young people do not respect them, and 16% say that there is no way to take them to medical attention.

This is an important variable since the Sergio Toral cooperative is located on the outskirts of the city of Guayaquil. The distances to

medical appointments are long and the nearest health center is in Monte Sinai, which is not very accessible to the elderly.

Vélez (2012) and Barrientos (2010) state that participation is a natural need of every human being living in society and that this process improves their relationship with the environment.

The following graph shows the frequency with which older adults in the Sergio Toral 1 cooperative participate in community activities. Forty-one percent do not participate, while 32% of respondents said they always participate; 18% participate sometimes.

We will take into account one of the interviews conducted with some of the older adults of the Sergio Toral cooperative, which highlights the following: "We are meeting on Tuesdays and Wednesdays here at the foundation (...) the day we go, on Tuesday, they give us activities such as drawing cartoons, they give us letter soup; they also give us talks, group tables and guide us" (Olga,2019).

Despite the fact that some of the older adults value participation very positively, the percentage that does not participate at all is high: 41% of the respondents.

Analyzing inclusion as part of the conceptual reference we find that for Ramírez (2017) this is a term that is related to diversity and integrative practices. In addition, the participation of excluded groups, allows their voice to be heard and they can express themselves without fear and thus people who are excluded feel part of something, of a group.

The graph shows the frequency with which neighborhood actors share activities with older adults in the Sergio Toral 1 cooperative: 53% never or almost never share, 26% sometimes share, 12% always or almost always share, and 8% frequently share. Some respondents indicate that there is a lack of interest on the part of the adults, thus placing the responsibility for this problem on them. As can be seen, the inclusion of older adults manifested through activities shared with other neighborhood actors is not the practice that is being generated within this cooperative. Inclusion is linked to integrative practices, but the community, according to the surveys, very rarely shares activities with older adults.

Disability is considered as a condition that a subject goes through, becoming the lack of some physical or cognitive faculty, permanently or temporarily, acquired since the person's birth or through time due

to fortuitous accidents. Physical limitation is a condition acquired by a subject due to the deterioration of certain mental or motor faculties. These conditions affect the development of the human being, generating difficulty in performing certain activities and requiring external support to complement them. In some cases, it can lead to loss of independence and the need for permanent support from health services (Hernández, 2008).

In the Sergio Toral I cooperative in the city of Guayaquil, through surveys of older adults, we found that 59% of the older adult population has some physical limitation or disability. Physical limitations in older adults generate a lot of discomfort: "I can't stand this knee" (Sancan, 2019).

In the surveys conducted among the cooperative's neighborhood stakeholders, 61% mentioned that they do not know people with disabilities in their community and 39% stated that the older adults in the community have some kind of disability or physical limitation. The perception of the neighborhood actors on this issue is not congruent with reality, which could indicate the community's lack of knowledge of the situations that older adults are going through.

Most people with disabilities or physical limitations need the support of an instrument to be able to carry out their activities. The economic conditions of the cooperative's older adults often do not allow them to acquire these instruments, so the limitation is exacerbated.

According to the surveys conducted among the cooperative's older adults, access to health care for this population with disabilities presents a high level of difficulty. Neighborhood stakeholders also indicated that 61% of older adults with disabilities are unable to receive the necessary health care. Likewise, according to the social mapping data, access to health centers is not easy and for this reason many older adults do not receive medical attention or the medicines they need.

The aging stage is considered as a stage of loss. This conception is exacerbated by the physical wear and tear perceived by older adults, the belief that they are no longer able to acquire new knowledge and that they are losing it. One of the consequences of this is that this population becomes isolated and abandons many activities. Active aging contributes in this stage of the human being, according to Ramos, Yordi, & Miranda, (2016) to the physical and mental well-being of the older adult. Recreational spaces contribute to cognitive and social relationships, since in recreational spaces there is

interaction with external agents and the exchange of knowledge, achieving a positive image of themselves.

Fifty percent of the older adults stated that there are recreational areas in the Sergio Toral I cooperative where they can socialize and engage in physical activities; however, the other 50% indicated that there are no recreational areas.

The neighborhood actors affirm that there are places where older adults can meet, but 32% perceive that older adults do not meet; 24% indicate having observed older adults meeting in parks, 20% in other places, 17% in churches near the cooperative, 5% in neighbors' houses and 2% in clubs.

The spaces frequented by older adults are religious centers: "What we do is pray, go to church, especially on Sundays, we have a service" (Olga, 2019). There are also spaces where older adults meet for workshops, but they are not well known by people, and only some older adults attend them, "we are meeting Tuesday and Wednesday here at the foundation, we are going to do a program on the 27th there in the cabin we are going to dress up as guayaquileñas. There are also meetings of elderly people, they give us talks, group tables and they orient one" (Olga,2019). "For us, who are already a little bit, as I explain, stressed and all that, when we go there, we get together, we have more fun, more relaxed" (Francisca,2019).

Conclusions

Based on all the information that has been collected throughout this research project in the Sergio Toral 1 cooperative in Guayaquil through the application of surveys to older adults, to the inhabitants of the community (neighborhood actors), interviews with 8 older adults to deepen their perceptions about inclusion, observation and social mapping built with neighborhood leaders, we can conclude some points on the issue of inclusion of older adults. The lack of infrastructure in the neighborhood, such as the need for sewage and unpaved streets were considered in the interviews with the older adults as one of the greatest needs because it significantly hinders the mobilization and free movement of this age group.

Safety within a neighborhood community is considered by older adults as an important factor that allows their inclusion within the community. Within this sector there are people and groups that commit acts of delinquency and there is the presence of drug users.

This considerably increases insecurity, limiting the possibilities of action and inclusion of older adults. The lack of health care services is a problem in this sector of the city of Guayaquil, and in the event of a health emergency, older adults cannot be attended to quickly and easily. This is considered a very important exclusion factor for this group. The relationship and interaction between the inhabitants and the elderly of the Sergio Toral 1 cooperative is not a strength of the community. The results showed that the neighborhood actors do not have much information about the elderly, are not interested in what happens to them and what they need, and do not share quality time with them. On the other hand, more than half of the older adults do not participate in the activities carried out within the community, reflecting the situation of exclusion that many older adults live in relation to their own community.

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