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## Quality of Life and multiculturalism of elderly people in the city of Ceuta (Spain)

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### Abstract

The study in the quality of life of old people is seen as having a special interest in order to detect specific needs which otherwise would go unnoticed. This is even more important in multicultural societies, where religious and cultural perspectives are understood as decisive. The main objective of this study was to identify factors which affect the quality of life of the elderly belonging to different religions (Christian, Muslim and Jewish), living together in Ceuta (Spain), on the border of Morocco. Between 2006 and 2009, an ethnographic study was made in the city of Ceuta amongst people aging from 65 to 80 years (n: 372; N: 7078), different religious beliefs (7% Jewish ; 68% Christians; 25% Muslims; 7% Jewish), both genders (55% female; 45% male), with no invalidating/disability pathologies and who had lived in Ceuta for at least 20 years within any of the six different districts in which the city is divided. The indicated population underwent a survey, from which three different dimensions emerge. These dimensions are submitted to reliability and validity criteria: Isolation ( $\alpha=0,73$ ), Multiculturality ( $\alpha=0,65$ ), and Border Security ( $\alpha=69$ ). These results lead us to the elaboration of a model of the reality of the elderly in a multicultural context.

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## 1. Introduction

The quality of life in the elderly population is influenced by social, environmental, political, socio-economic, and health factors amongst other relevant issues which have been compiled in different validated international questionnaires (Badia, Salamero, and Alonso, 2002). Nevertheless, in well established, multicultural societies such as that in Ceuta, the urban distribution of the different cultural groups is influenced to a high degree by habits and religious worships, which suggests the existence of factors difficult to observe in a universal questionnaire model (Vilagut *et al.*, 2005).

From this perspective, our aim was to observe the reality of the elderly population who have been coexisting in the multicultural city of Ceuta, located in the North of Africa, for the last two decades. Under Spanish sovereignty since the early medieval period, the population of the city of Ceuta has belonged to different cultural groups, due to its location near the Magreb, or to factors such as the varying disputes against Morocco during the XIX and XX Century (Gozalbes, 1988).

Nowadays, Ceuta is an Autonomous Spanish City (Organic Law 1/95, March the 13th, BOE March the 14th), commonly known as *Ceuta Four Cultures: A world to discover*. It is a small city, strategically located on the border with Morocco. Ceuta is surrounded by a coastline of 19 kilometers of both the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean and linked by an isthmus to Morocco, with two symbolic, geographical and political borders. The total area of 19.3 km<sup>2</sup> where Christians, Muslims, Jewish, and at a lower rate, Hindus and Pakistani coexist. The area is divided into six districts, which are organized into neighborhoods. The data and map below displays the territorial organization divided into districts with and number of inhabitants, 75.708 citizens in total (38.567 male and 37.141 female):

1. City Centre (12.719)
2. Hacho Mountain (8.280)
3. Puertas del Campo (17.082)
4. The area going from Playa Benítez to Playa del Chorrillo (17.821)
5. Rosales and Juan Carlos I Neighbourhoods (10.089)
6. Príncipe Felipe and Príncipe Alfonso neighbourhoods together with the outside district (10.089)

According to Castells (2004) “*our world is ethnically and culturally diverse and the cities concentrate and express such diversity*”. Most societies have been historically developed from multiple ethnic groups and cultures which have generally resisted bureaucratic pressure towards cultural normalization and ethnic cleansing. Even within societies such as the Japanese or even the Spanish, which are ethnically quite homogeneous, regional differences denote territorial traditions and specific lifestyles, which are reflected in behavioral patterns and sometimes intercultural tensions. Ceuta has undergone a process of cultural adaptation which has resulted in a small city with citizens of both traditional and modern cultures coexisting in every corner., (Borja, and Castells 2004). Due to migratory pressure in the past, it is now becoming difficult to find families who have lived in the city for three generations. As a result, a multicultural society has developed, with a total population of elderly citizens of 3500 of both genders (INE, 2010). Although the nationality of the inhabitants is Spanish, it is difficult to determine their religion, since Spain is considered a non-confessional country. Nevertheless, the largest proportion of the population is Catholic, closely followed by Muslim and finally Jewish and Hindu.

The main *aim* of this study has been to investigate the factors which influence the quality of life of the elderly population of the city belonging to the different Cultural-Religious groups (Christians, Muslims and Jewish) who coexist in Ceuta, a border city with Morocco, of Spanish nationality, and whose have not been included in any conventional questionnaires about quality of life.

## 2. Methodology

With this objective in mind, an ethnographic study has been developed in the city of Ceuta during three years; elderly people in the age group between 65 and 80 (n: 372; N: 7,078) were chosen, in relation to the reference

religious-cultural group and gender (55% females; 45% males), living in the city for at least the last two decades and distributed in the six city districts according to registration documents

The size of the data has been obtained using a calculation algorithm for the analysis of differences for a simple random from a population from which the total numbers of individuals is known (1):

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot N \cdot p \cdot q}{e^2 \cdot (N - 1) + z^2 \cdot p \cdot q} = 365 \text{ people.} \quad (1)$$

Where  $n$  is the size of the sample;  $Z$  is the level of confidence;  $p$  is the positive variability;  $q$  is the negative variability;  $N$  is the size of the population;  $e$  is the accuracy or the mistake;

In order to develop this (what?), it was necessary to closely investigate the social reality of the city and their elderly population, and determine the main factors and best locations to observe and participate. The necessary information to understand the perceptions and the realities required was obtained and compiled using the techniques outlined below (Hammersle and Atkinson, 1994):

- Participant observation.
- Group and individuals semi-structured interviews.
- Structure according to categories and values.
- Design and application of a questionnaire to the specific sample.
- Analysis of the specific dimensions of Ceuta.

Categories compiled from observation in relation to age and qualities of life are specified as follows:

- *Multiculturalism*, as an example of heterogeneity instead of cultural diversity and within their own group instead of the age.
- *Isolation*, as a feeling of geographical distance with respect to the reference mainland (Spain or Morocco).
- *Border-Security* as the fact of living close to a border with a permissive attitude towards illegal migration and its relation to their quality of life.

Elderly people as from stimuli, feelings and emotions express the concepts influenced by gender, age and culture-religion which they belong, resulting categories that reproduce the dimensions – *Isolation, Multiculturalism and Border-security*.

The interviews were organized around the three categories listed in the observation phase, posing questions which linked each category with the criteria of gender, culture and quality of life. As a result of the ethnographic study, the three main dimensions were identified; they emerge from the opinion of the elderly population as the expression of their own perception of the multicultural society with the peculiarities of the geographical context in which the City of Ceuta is located. From these dimensions a questionnaire was developed with the aim to measure their effect on the perception of quality of life, in order to be added to other existing conventional, internationally validated instruments such as the SF-36 (Ware, Show, Kosinski, and Gandek, 1993).

From the dimension *Multiculturalism*, questions were developed aimed at measuring the impact on quality of life, at three levels:

- 1.- Feeling produced by the multiculturalism itself.
- 2.- Acceptance of the others.
- 3.- Attitude towards other cultures.

Finally, from third dimension *Border-Security*, the most relevant aspect was offered by the own perception of this fact, which affected the three cultures at the same level, thus the section of the questionnaire dedicated to this third dimension was focused upon the evaluation of this perception.

A first version of the questionnaire allowed a process of validation to determine the final format, which was provided to all participants in the study.

In order to validate the questionnaire, reliability criteria were followed through the internal cohesion Cronbach's alpha test, and to validate its development, a factorial analysis was applied.

### 3. Results

The questionnaire is based on 14 items in a Likert scale, from which 7 measured isolation, 5 multiculturalism and 2 border-security. Each of the answered questions was evaluated with punctuation from 1 to 5, recoding negative questions so as to obtain a final value in the same sense. Negative and positive questions of the test are offered in the following chart:

Table 1. Dimensions questionnaire from Ceuta and its items.

| Dimensions              | Items                |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Isolation</b>        | Positive 2 8 11 12   |
|                         | Negative 1 4 9       |
| <b>Multiculturalism</b> | Positive 14          |
|                         | Negative 13 15 18 19 |
| <b>Border</b>           | Positive 3           |
|                         | Negative 10          |

The questionnaire underwent Reliability and Validation criteria, with the following profile and categories:

Table 2. Values  $\alpha$ -Cronbach of the dimensions from the specific questionnaire.

| Dimension        | Items | A    |
|------------------|-------|------|
| Isolation        | 7     | 0,73 |
| Multiculturalism | 5     | 0,65 |
| Border           | 2     | 0,69 |
| Total            | 14    | 0,77 |

Table 3. Variability explained by the method with 3 components, in a factorial analysis.

| FACTORIAL ANALYSIS |                     |                   |               |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Components         | Initial Self-Values | Variance          |               |
|                    | Total               | % Of The Variance | % Accumulated |
| 1                  | 3,67                | 26,2              | 26,2          |
| 2                  | 1,77                | 12,6              | 38,9          |
| 3                  | 1,41                | 10,1              | 48,9          |

Table 4. Rotated components matrix (Varimax) with 3 factors which correspond with the dimensions 1= Aisolation; 2= Multiculturality; 3= Border, in the specific questionnaire for Ceuta.

| Rotated Component Matrix |            |        |        |
|--------------------------|------------|--------|--------|
| DIMENSIONS               | COMPONENTS |        |        |
|                          | 1          | 2      | 3      |
| CE08                     | 0,699      | -0,028 | -0,070 |
| CE12                     | 0,655      | 0,332  | -0,054 |
| CE04                     | 0,645      | -0,046 | 0,103  |
| CE09                     | 0,613      | 0,225  | 0,223  |
| CE01                     | 0,555      | -0,037 | -0,071 |
| CE02                     | 0,473      | 0,272  | 0,185  |
| CE14                     | 0,308      | 0,739  | -0,095 |
| CE13                     | 0,077      | 0,669  | 0,161  |
| CE19                     | -0,096     | 0,630  | 0,136  |
| CE15                     | 0,158      | 0,571  | -0,567 |
| CE18                     | 0,048      | 0,495  | 0,132  |
| CE03                     | 0,421      | 0,213  | 0,609  |
| CE10                     | 0,487      | 0,079  | 0,597  |

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. From the ethnographic study

Apart from the traditionally accepted dimensions to evaluate the quality of life in the elderly population (Casas, Repullo, and Pereira, 2001; Sanchez, and García González, 2004), in the city of Ceuta, it is also necessary to consider other constructs derived from social and cultural context (Barth, 1969), which can be specified as: Multiculturality, Isolation and Border-Security.

*Multiculturality* is a construct which emerges from territoriality, that is, from the nature and use of the territory from the perspective of the different cultures (Sabatini, and Cáceres, 2001), and built up from different categories: Conceptual perception, Existence of the other and Relationship among different collectives.

*Isolation* as perception of physical distance and cultural context in relation to a mother tongue, religion, traditions, habits and ways of doing things, is defined by categories: Sensation, Cultural acceptance in the closest context of the neighbourhood and the role represented by the elderly person or the adult in cultural and gender contexts (García Canclini 1997).

*Border-Security* is a dimension defined by the way in which “strangers” are accepted, and the feeling of insecurity that provokes with a common perspective among the different cultures (García Castaño, and Barragán 2001).

### 4.2. From the specific questionnaire in Ceuta

1.- Of the elderly in Ceuta, the Isolation dimension is evaluated at the same rate in both genders, nevertheless in relation to culture, the Christian group has the highest perception of cultural isolation. Urban and population characteristics of the neighborhood also have influence within this dimension.

The Isolation-Perception shows a bipolar behavior in areas where communities which have traditionally been hegemonic and where social changes are taking place, whereas in the areas where there has traditionally existed a natural coexistence between communities and a traditional urban style is maintained, positive values are obtained.

In relation to the Isolation-Culture category, a bipolar behavior is also observed, which has a worse value in the community which finds itself in a minority, according to the given district.

The existence of social mechanisms and the development of participation strategies are behind the better assessment which elderly Christians make of the category Isolation-Age. On the other hand, traditional alternatives in the Muslim community in a society of cultural evolution see themselves deeply transformed, which makes the assessment of this category to be more negative.

2.- The elderly Muslim population shows a more positive perception towards multicultural experience, as opposed to Christians and Jewish groups.

The worst assessment of the category Multicultural-Perception by the Christian and Jewish communities seems to be defined by a preventive attitude towards social changes which take place as a consequence of the of the growing presence of members of the Muslim community.

Coexistence is highlighted as a key factor for a positive perception of the multicultural fact.

Also, the Multicultural-Otherness category compiles the worst assessments amongst Christians. Nevertheless, in the most traditional areas, is valued less by the Muslim community as a consequence of a period of acculturation experienced over time.

The category Multicultural-Relationship clearly shows that, apart from the perception that each community has of multiculturalism, there is a positive attitude towards improving the relationship between communities.

3.- The existence of a border makes the dimension Border-Security a relevant issue which decreases the quality of life in elderly citizens, affecting both men and women in the same way, and is independent from social and cultural aspects derived from belonging to a given culture.

## 5. Conclusions

According to our findings, the perception of quality of life is influenced by urban and demographic features of the district in which each community lives. Consequently, in those districts where a traditional urban structure is conserved and a close neighborhood relationship is maintained, we don't find differences between communities such as in the Sarchal-Hacho Mountain and Hadú areas. On the contrary, those districts which are facing a process of transformation, with cultural differences of the new residents from the established majority or in areas which identify themselves as a majority culture, distinctive features arise among them.

Due to this fact, it raises the need to develop conciliatory, active and specific policies in order to reinforce intercultural relationships, around the analyzed dimensions, and which stimulate the social involvement of the elderly inhabitants of Ceuta regardless their cultural-religious adscription.

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