



Review

Dwelling conditions and life satisfaction of older people through residential satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Dwelling conditions are a good predictor of the psychological well-being of older people who live in urban surroundings. Psychological well-being depends on the internal and external conditions of the home and on the residential satisfaction with the home itself, the building and the community. The study analyzed the relationship between life satisfaction of older people and their perceived satisfaction with their home. The sample consisted of 316 people over 50 years of age. The results indicated that residential satisfaction depends as much on the quality of the physical characteristics of the home itself, as on the resources and quality of the residential context. In addition, the evaluation of the dwelling conditions predicted the degree of home adaptation and the level of residential satisfaction of the older people. Thus, it is necessary to promote home rehabilitation initiatives to adapt them to the older population.

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The study of residential satisfaction is a good predictor of the psychological well-being of older people who live in urban surroundings. Residential satisfaction is understood as the fulfilment of the individual residential conditions (home, district and community) in relation to the needs, expectations and objectives of the

residents (Amérigo & Aragonés, 1997; Olmos, 2008). Different studies show how residential satisfaction influences psychological well-being (Levy-Leboyer & Ratiu, 1993; Philips, Siu, Yeh, & Cheng, 2004, 2005; Siu & Philips, 2002). The studies of Brown (1995, 1997) and Lawton (1983) found that the more favourable the surroundings, the more positive the impact on psychological well-being. Thus, the studies reveal the importance of subjective evaluations of the surroundings, understood as residential satisfaction, in psychological well-being.

The influence of residential satisfaction in the psychological

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well-being of older people is reflected both in the interior conditions of the home (bathroom, kitchen, corridors, etc.) and in the exterior conditions (security, illumination, etc.) (Philips, Siu, Yeh, & Cheng, 2005). The interior and exterior environmental conditions of the home start from the basic needs of the individuals (sleep, cleanliness and personal hygiene, order, etc.) and from the importance of others such as those which promote security, control of acoustic contamination and the provision of adequate illumination of spaces, as proposed by authors such as Amérigo and Aragonés (1997) and Jirovec, Jirovec, and Bosse (1985). In the study of the effects of residential satisfaction on the psychological well-being of older people, it is necessary to study the differentiated effect of the interior and exterior conditions of the home, building or district (Amérigo, 2002; Francescato, 2002).

The study by Philips et al. (2005) supports this influence and reflects that the interior dwelling conditions (interior illumination, temperature, ventilation, lift, stairs, etc.) exert greater influence on life satisfaction than the exterior conditions (illumination of public spaces, rest areas, parks and green zones, pedestrian crossings, etc.). Thus, the interior and exterior dwelling conditions influence the psychological well-being of older people with the mediating effect of residential satisfaction. Perceiving the conditions of the home, district or community as positives and chosen is not the same as perceiving them as situations which cannot be changed.

In terms of assessment of dwelling conditions, it is important to know whether or not the homes of older people are adapted to their needs, to be able to establish the relationship with their psychological well-being. The ecological urban model of Brown (1995, 1997) explains this relationship between variables very well, and maintains that the psychological well-being of an individual is high when the demands of the surroundings do not exceed the personal abilities to overcome them. The results of the study by Landázuri Ortiz and Mercado Doménech (2004) confirm how some aspects of the architectural design of homes satisfy the needs and expectations of their inhabitants. Monsalvo and Vital (1998) indicate that dwelling conditions are an important factor in psychological well-being, which determines psychological well-being at family level, although not giving a global definition by considering all the indicators such as health or free time. Psychological well-being depends, among other factors, on the dwelling conditions, together with the activities of the daily life of older people which indicate the degree of dependency and, therefore, the greater or lesser need for the adaptation of the home.

The review of the European context by Fernández-Carro, Módenes, and Spijker (2015) on dwelling conditions as a predictor of residential satisfaction indicates the need for studies that promote the improvement of housing conditions and environment to encourage residential satisfaction and thus gradually obtain a higher rate of life satisfaction and well-being in old age.

The literature review indicates that although there are previous studies showing the relationship between residential satisfaction and dwelling conditions, there are no studies examining life satisfaction as a measure to determine the quality of life of older people, such as there are on residential satisfaction. Overall, previous research shows the effect of dwelling conditions on quality of life (Braubach & Power, 2011; Burton, Mitchell, & Stride, 2011; Costa-Font, 2013) and on peoples' perceptions of those conditions in the context of meeting their cognitive and emotional needs and aspirations (Oswald et al., 2007; Wahl, Fänge, Oswald, Gitlin, & Iwarsson, 2009). However, how these perceptions are linked to life satisfaction, understood as a measure of quality of life that affects the aging of the population, has been little studied (Nygren et al., 2007; Iwarsson, Wahl, & Nygren, 2004, 2007). That is, it is no longer only necessary or important for a person, in this case elderly, to have good dwelling conditions, context or environment,

but also to analyse how these perceptions affect their level of life satisfaction in order to confer a better quality of life to cope with the aging process.

In most of the studies reviewed, residential satisfaction is limited to a single item of overall satisfaction (Perez, Fernandez, Rivera, & Abuin, 2001; Pinquart & Burmedi, 2003), however, our study includes three items that measure satisfaction with housing, neighbourhood and community.

The present study attempts to find empirical evidence that demonstrates the influence of the conditions of adaptation of the homes on the well-being of the older people who live in them. The aim of the study is to analyse the relationship between life satisfaction of the elderly and their perception of satisfaction with the residence.

The main hypothesis is that the internal and external housing conditions are related to satisfaction with the residence, and thereby with the life satisfaction of the elderly. In addition, the perception of the level of housing adaptation will in turn be related to the dwelling conditions and life satisfaction of the elderly.

1. Method

1.1. Participants

The sample included 316 participants over 50 years of age who attended an Educational Programme aimed at older people. After the Director of the Programme gave permission to interview the attendees, they were all asked if they would like to participate in the present research, and those who answered positively became part of the sample. The participants gave their prior informed consent to participate in the present study. The educational programme was chosen because the participants had different backgrounds and characteristics, but all found those programs to be a way to access social activities and keep active through the learning activities, drawing a sample of the senior population.

The participants lived in different neighbourhoods, identified by the postal code. The data indicated that 80% of them lived in different neighbourhoods in the city, with easier access to social amenities and cultural life, and only 20% of the sample lived outside the city."

As shown in Table 1, 38% of the participants were men and 62% were women. In relation to their educational level, 64% of the participants had a primary level of education, 32.7% had an average (up to baccalaureate) or higher level (similar university studies),

Table 1
Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.

	Number	%
Sex		
Male	115	38
Female	188	62
Education		
Without studies	10	3.4
Primary	190	64
Average or higher	97	32.7
Age		
From 50 to 60	100	31.5
From 61 to 70	182	57.6
71 or more	34	10.9
Coexistence		
Alone	53	17.8
Accompanied	244	82.2
Home		
Rented	15	5.1
Owned	280	94.9
Total = 316		

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