



Design of a Semi-Structured Interview on the Perception of Older People Regarding Mental Health As A Consequence Of Covid - 19

Vicente Francisco Balan Contreras, ELTS¹ Daniel Antonio Muñoz González, PhD^{1*}, Lidia Maricela Caamal Campos, MSc¹

¹Escuela de Trabajo Social, Instituto Campechano, Campeche, México

*Corresponding Author Daniel Antonio Muñoz González, PhD

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this work is to design an interview that explores the perception of older people regarding mental health, as well as to identify the psychosocial factors they experience during the Covid-19 pandemic. For this, specialized documentary information was obtained and therefore, a semi-structured interview of 16 questions was designed, which is intended to be applied with a resident population of a Social Institution located in a rural population.

Keywords: mental health, older people, semi-structured interview

I. INTRODUCTION

I must point out that taking into account the increased risks that older adults face during this pandemic, the various policies and interventions must be directed in order to create awareness of the special needs that they require. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the recently discovered coronavirus, both this new virus and the disease it causes were unknown before the outbreak broke out in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Currently, COVID-19, is a pandemic that affects many countries around the world. On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (2019), received several reports of the presence of pneumonia of unknown origin in the City of Wuhan, China. Quickly in early January, authorities in that country identified the cause as a new strain of coronavirus. The disease has been spreading to other continents such as Asia, Europe and America.

Faced with this situation, the Mexican authorities were forced to suspend all types of activity, this in order not to expose people in general and thus be able to control the pandemic, since the impact of this virus throughout the world has caused million deaths. It is also necessary to involve the social worker more, since he plays an

important role in improving the quality of life of older adults as channelers in the face of the various consequences that arise, as well as in the same way it is necessary to achieve a greater understanding of the impact of COVID-19, on these. According to Espin and Cardona (2020), she says that how each older person may be affected by COVID-19, or any other illness, depends on their overall physical and mental health, so care and treatment should always be must take this into consideration.

Similarly, Mayorca (2020) maintains that healthy aging consists of developing and maintaining the functional abilities that allow well-being in old age. However, he affirms that COVID-19 has exposed not only the fragility of older adults, but also that of the systems and environments that surround them. Likewise, we must take into account that currently the majority of older people are in a vulnerable situation, so aspects of health, food and hygiene should not be neglected. We as social workers will investigate the problems that older adults present. Finally, it is necessary to raise awareness of this virus, as well as its main consequences, in the same way that adequate policies must be created in planning and improving the quality of health care for the elderly.

IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE ELDERLY

The World Health Organization (2020), recognizes that there is no official definition of mental health, since the definitions vary according to certain cultural differences, subjective assumptions and professional theories, but recommends the one that refers to "subjective well-being, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependency and recognition of the ability to fulfill oneself intellectually and emotionally". As there is no official definition, it is considered that of the Guipuzcoan Association of Family Members and People with Mental Health Problems (AGIFES), which establishes that mental health is the "state of emotional, cognitive and behavioral balance that



allows the individual to function responsible manner in their family, social and work environment, as well as enjoying well-being and quality of life” (Galvez and Olivares, 2020).

For this reason, I must point out that currently the number of people over 60 years of age is the percentage that is growing the most worldwide, which represents a great challenge for public health and for society. According to the World Report on Aging and Health developed by the World Health Organization (2020), it states that worldwide the number of people over 60 years of age will double by 2050. This rapid increase in the adult population that greater longevity entails depends on a key factor that is health in all its aspects, including mental health.

Likewise, the definition presented above is linked to improving the quality of life and potentiating better health conditions, which can

only be achieved with the reduction of symptoms, attached to the COVID-19 virus. In this sense, according to Urzua (2020), he considers this area "as the level of well-being derived from the evaluation that the person makes of various domains of his life, considering the impact that his state of health has on these". Therefore, according to this context and the possible repercussions on daily life, the main objective of older adults is to identify mental health problems or disorders related to the quality of life of this vulnerable group. Likewise, it is important to note that worldwide approximately 15% of older adults suffer from some type of mental disorder, the most frequent being dementia, depression and acute confessional syndrome.

Each of the three most common mental health disorders of older adults are described below:

Table 1.
Most common disorders that affect the mental health of older people

MAIN MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THE ELDERLY	
MAJOR NEUROCOGNITIVE DISORDERS	It is the new name with which the fifth version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), has replaced the term dementia previously used (Alarcon, 2016)
AFFECTIVE DISORDERS IN THE ELDERLY	Affective disorders in the elderly, in general, cover in the most recent nosological systems, up to two fundamental areas: depressive disorders themselves and bipolar disorders. (Vizcarra, 2016).
SLEEP DISORDERS IN THE ELDERLY	They are considered a public health problem. Rampant prevalence of insomnia, daytime sleepiness and specific disorders such as obstructive sleep apnea (OSAS) demonstrate this (Escobar, 2016).

Own elaboration (2021)

HOW COVID-19 AFFECTS THE HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY

Currently, older people are a high-risk group in the face of contagion by COVID-19. Similarly, the frailty of some older adults conditions their poor immune response and the decrease in functional reserve that leads to a reduction in intrinsic capacity and resilience. I must point out that, since the beginning of the pandemic, it has been pointed out by researchers in different

publications and information media on this subject that the highest mortality occurs in patients over 60 years of age, due to the chronic degenerative problems that the Most of them present. For this reason it is important to provide all possible care to older people who present this type of situation.

Diaz and Toro (2020), raises two main reasons for the greater susceptibility of older adults to COVID-19. The first is that older adults are more likely to have underlying conditions that



impede the body's ability to fight and recover, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In this sense, the second cause has to do with the way in which our immune response changes over the years. His research with coronaviruses has shown, for example, that older mice experience more inflammation early in the course of the disease. This perhaps "paves the way" for lung damage that cannot be overcome later.

Finally, the elderly are a group that is especially vulnerable to this virus, since they have a worse prognosis due to their comorbidity and the fragility associated with aging, all of these factors seriously affect the health of the elderly. For this reason, it is important that when taking into account the impact that COVID-19 causes, the strategies and various policies implemented must be aimed at raising awareness about the special needs of this vulnerable group. Once the information was consulted and contextualized, the semi-structured interview was carried out, which will be applied with a population of elderly residents in a rural social institution.

INTERVIEW "TO KNOW HOW OLDER PEOPLE PERCEIVE THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AS A RESULT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"

OBJECTIVE:

Know and identify the mental health factors in which older adults find themselves, due to the confinement caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Name:

Age:

Sex:

1. When you hear about the Coronavirus, you feel afraid. What do you do to control this situation?
2. Do you know what the symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19) are? Could you tell me which ones you know?
3. You are uncomfortable thinking about the Coronavirus (COVID-19). How do you avoid thinking about this situation?
4. Do you currently have difficulty falling asleep? How do you manage to deal with this situation?
5. You wake up tired in the morning regardless of how many hours you sleep. What are your symptoms? Have you had a medical check-up?
6. Do your hands feel clammy when you think about COVID-19? Have you looked for any solution to control it?
7. In the last few months, have you felt fatigued, tired, have memory problems, or have trouble concentrating on the day? How long have you had

this problem? Have you sought support from your relatives or have you gone to the doctor?

8. Have you recently been afraid of dying from the Coronavirus (COVID-19)? What have you done to control this fear?

9. When you watch news or hear stories about the Coronavirus (COVID-19), do you get nervous or anxious?

10. Do you have problems with your body balance or have you fallen lately? How often?

11. Can you not sleep because of the concern of a possible contagion of COVID-19? What do you do to fall asleep?

12. Are you currently insulating yourself in your place of residence or in another house? What are the reasons?

13. Are you currently spending the time of isolation alone or have you been accompanied by your family during confinement?

14. Do you remember how long you have been in isolation or confinement? How have you been feeling during this lockdown?

15. Have you lately lost interest in doing the activities you usually did? What has been the reason?

16. You feel your heart racing or pounding when you think about getting the Coronavirus. Who do you turn to when this happens?

II. CONCLUSION

For the design of this semi-structured qualitative interview, it was favored that the authors contemplated experiences, empirical and reflection works related to the topic addressed, in this case, the mental health of the elderly has been affected by the Covid pandemic – 19, considerably impacting individual and family quality of life. For this reason, this interview will seek to identify all those factors that allow an adequate approach by social workers and the interdisciplinary team, in favor of a full old age.

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