Autonomy and Dependence in Aging. The Role of the Social Networks in Mexico

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Background

• In Mexico, socioeconomic conditions for the elderly are adverse, and family and non-familial support networks are one of the most important elements in surviving the lack of income and care needed for the elderly population (Montes de Oca 2001; Huenchuan, Guzman y Montes de Oca, 2003; De Vos, Solís and Montes de Oca 2004; Garay, Montes de Oca y Guillén, 2014).

• Although we objective is highlight the importance of family support for the elderly, we recognize that elderly people also provide different forms of support, economic as well as non-economic, to other family members.


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Table 1
Support granted in day-to-day situations by relationship and age group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>60 a 64</th>
<th>65 a 69</th>
<th>70 a 74</th>
<th>75 a 79</th>
<th>80 or older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-family members</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: the development and calculation of this table was done by the researchers using data from ENDIFAM 2005.

Table 2
Support received in daily situations by relationship and age group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>60 a 64</th>
<th>65 a 69</th>
<th>70 a 74</th>
<th>75 a 79</th>
<th>80 or older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-family members</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: the development and calculation of this table was done by the researchers using data from ENDIFAM 2005.
Limitations, dependence, disability?  
A general discussion

Table 3.  
Disability of elderly people in Mexico 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (ADL)</th>
<th>Total 65+</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Difficulty bathing</td>
<td>414,765</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Difficulty going to the bathroom</td>
<td>564,789</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Difficulty dressing self</td>
<td>1,016,454</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Difficulty eating or cutting</td>
<td>227,098</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Difficulty taking medications</td>
<td>269,958</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal ADL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,486,246</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTRUMENTAL ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (IADL)</th>
<th>Total 65+</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Difficulty shopping</td>
<td>986,121</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Difficulty preparing hot food</td>
<td>484,542</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal IADL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,104,567</strong></td>
<td><strong>14.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total (difficulties at least in some previous conditions) | 2,249,571 | 25.7 |

Source: Own calculations with MHAS, 2012.
Social Support Networks

Fig. 1
Reception of some kind of support from family, friends or neighbors

Source: INMUJERES, 2015

Fig. 2
Frequency and type of support for elderly

Source: INMUJERES, 2015

POSITIVE EMOTIONS

- gratitude
- compassion
- hope

POSITIVE EMOTIONS

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Reception of some kind of support from family, friends or neighbors

Source: INMUJERES, 2015

Fig. 2
Frequency and type of support for elderly

Source: INMUJERES, 2015

POSITIVE EMOTIONS

- gratitude
- compassion
- hope
Living arrangements and limitations in old age

Fig. 3 Percentage of household with elderly members, Mexico, 1992-2009


Fig. 4 Limitations of elderly and type of household.

Source: Own calculations with National Census 2010.
Fig 5. Probability of support provided by elderly

- **IADL**
  - Limitations
  - No limitations

- **BADL**
  - Limitations
  - No limitations

- **Retirement income**
  - Yes
  - No

- **Age group**
  - 85 or older
  - 80 to 84
  - 75 to 79
  - 70 to 74
  - 65 to 69

- **Sex**
  - Woman
  - Men

* p < 0.05
Fig 6. Probability of received support for elderly

- **IADL**
  - Limitations
  - No limitations

- **BADL**
  - Limitations
  - No limitations

- **Retirement income**
  - Yes
  - No

- **Age group**
  - 85 or older
  - 80 to 84
  - 75 to 79
  - 70 to 74
  - 65 to 69

- **Sex**
  - Woman
  - Men

*p < 0.05
Final Remarks

• In Mexico, the elderly maintain autonomy for themselves and for social supports networks. The family is the principal providing material, financial, and care support in old age. However, the family also assumes these responsibilities as a consequence of the limited availability of social services for the elderly. Other research discusses the inability to provide support among Mexican families as demographic changes (decreased fertility and mortality, but increasing the poverty) occur, and, in particular, in consideration of current and future socioeconomic conditions.

• The types of support provided by elderly are characterized as moral, affectionate, and care-related, thus it is worth highlighting the role of these supports in inserting this group into a social network that may provide benefits in the present and the future.

• There is no doubt that social networks, and the supports provided and received among the Mexican population behave differently depending on the life course, especially for the elderly population in Mexico. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize that the elderly population only functions as a group receiving support. The evidence shows that mechanisms for reciprocity exist, with their autonomy is possible provide supports and the social networks are sustainable, and that these translate into better living conditions for this persons.
References