



Factors Affecting the Lifestyle of the Elderly: A Qualitative Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

Background and objective: The present study aimed to investigate the factors affecting the lifestyle of the elderly in Tehran.

Methods: This study was qualitative research based on the grounded theory method. Purposeful sampling was used and continued until theoretical saturation was obtained. Psychiatrists and neurologists of Tehran city in 2018 with more than 5 years of experience were included in this study. Totally 10 participants with high marital satisfaction were interviewed in semi-structured and in-depth method and analyzed using the constant comparative methods. The interview was about the factors affecting the lifestyle of the elderly.

Results: Six specialists were male and 4 were female and had doctoral degrees. The mean age of the male specialists was 47.66 ± 4.31 and 41.75 ± 3.44 in female subjects. Factors influencing the lifestyle of the elderly were divided into seven areas: the lifestyle of the elderly, socioeconomic status, media and the lifestyle of the elderly, beliefs, ethnic diversity, customs, and the state of the elderly, each of which included a total of 23 themes and 19 categories.

Conclusion: The results indicate that the media program has the most impact and rituals and religion have the least impact on the lifestyle of the elderly in Tehran.

Keywords: Influential factors, lifestyle, elderly

Background and objective

Nowadays the aging of the world's population is an unprecedented phenomenon in whole human history. By the year 2050, the population of people over 60 years old will reach two billion, which is 22% of the world's population¹. The development of welfare facilities around the world is a major factor in increasing life expectancy so that by the year 2040, one of every five Americans will be 65 years old; This evidence indicates that extensive planning should be done to promote public health and lifestyle appropriate to this period in this group of society².

Lifestyle is considered as an approach in contemporary modern society concept, lack of unity and integration is status d on the type of social class³. Lifestyle is influenced by culture, race, religion, economic, social status, and beliefs; and it is also the way people choose throughout their life. Lifestyle refers to people's way of life with full reflection of social values, attitudes, and activities; In this regard, in contemporary society, there are different individuals and social groups whose unintended consequences of their behaviors reflect the order of society⁴.

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Individuals and social groups that have been distinguished from each other by researching the process of identification do not have the intention, opportunity, or need to conflict with each other; on the other hand, they do not intend to live in complete isolation. In this regard, individuals and social groups are in the process of intra-social interaction on two processes of differentiation and organized links and have a special agency⁴. Lifestyle means a pattern of life status and on the relationship between a person's life situation and behavioral patterns that is influenced by cultural factors and personal characteristics. These patterns may lead to behaviors that are beneficial or harmful to health, and in a more complete definition can be stated that; "Healthy lifestyle means all behaviors that prevent disease and injury, maintain health and promote it"⁵.

Foundations and organizations such as the municipality, State Welfare Organization, the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation have thought of many plans to improve the lifestyle of the elderly, but have not yet reached the desired goal⁶. Reports from the Statistics Center have confirmed the discussion that in Iran the population over 60 years old was equal to 6.2 million people, which with the current upward trend is projected to reach ten million by the year 2021. In fact, according to the last general census in 2011, this number constitutes 8.1% of the total population and has an increasing trend compared to the results of the 2006 census⁷. In 2011, the population of 0-14 years old was 19.9%, the population of 15-64 years old was 73.9% and the population of 65 years old was 6.2% of the total population of Tehran province. While in 2006, this index was for the three mentioned age groups was 21.2, 73.7, and 5.1 percent, respectively. Comparison of the above numbers indicates that the elderly population of Tehran province has increased, the young population (less than 14 years old) has decreased and the middle population (15-64 years old) has not changed much⁸.

Status and on the above statistics and due to the significant growth of the elderly from ten years ago up to now, it seems that considering the contribution of each factor can be important and measurable. In this way, the

life of the elderly can also be a function of various political factors. In fact, policies are the product of the political environment, values and ideology, power, institutionalized principles, and decision-making processes⁹. In other words; whatever governments choose to do or not to do or the general condition of any policy formulated by the government and government organizations, or at least controlled or approved by the government and government organizations, can affect the lifestyle and quality of life of individuals in society. Economic factors, optimal policies are policies that are subject to technical and information limits and are independent of political limits. Lifestyle is reflecting in the way of spending leisure time, clothing, nutrition, body management (make-up and hair cutting and personal hygiene), architectural style and interior design of people's homes, etc. In fact, we cannot consider the influence and contribution of social and cultural factors in the lifestyle of the elderly but ignore the political and economic factors⁶. To achieve this, it is important to measure the contribution of factors to the lifestyle of the elderly, and the importance of social and cultural factors is emphasized in this study.

Studies in developed countries show that the lifestyle of the elderly affects their mental and physical health and causes a change in communication patterns or their presence in social activities. On the other hand, choosing a lifestyle is very important because of its ability to prevent disease and improve physical and mental health. Scientific evidence shows that people's lifestyle choices and patterns also affect the lifestyle of the elderly¹⁰. Kibmerley and Goldman show that according to differences in healthy lifestyles in urbanized and less urbanized areas of Mexico, elderly people with low emotional support have more days of physical illness, mental illness, depression days, sadness, and anxiety than those with higher emotional support¹¹. Mohli shows in an article entitled "Institutional and Specialized Stresses in Elderly Care" that four characteristics including the elderly right, living at home, good communication, joy, and happiness are important for measuring the lifestyle of the

elderly¹². Del Bono et al. Concluded in a study entitled “Gender, the Elderly and Social Exclusion” that gender differences have no significant relationship with social exclusion¹³. Also, Nemati and Agha Bakhshi in the study of “Tehran, an elderly-friendly city” showed that medium-term planning for Tehran to join the community of Elderly-Friendly Cities has been emphasized by all judges⁹. Mirzaei and Kaveh Firooz in a study entitled “The quality of life of the elderly in Tehran” believe that the quality of life-related to health in men has been better than women except for a few cases⁸.

Seifzadeh concluded in a study entitled “Lifestyle of the elderly in Azarshahr and the factors affecting it” that due to illiteracy and low level of education of the elderly in this city, it is necessary to provide them with the necessary training to improve their lifestyle⁶. According to the subcultural theoretical views, its proponents believe that the elderly can be grouped according to "age", not according to their social class. Therefore, according to the subcultures among the elderly, they have special customs. In fact, every elderly has certain customs and beliefs that he/she behaves accordingly and chooses a certain type of lifestyle. Studies show that the lifestyle of the elderly is not at a desirable level; therefore, studying the various socio-cultural causes of this situation in Tehran is a necessity of the research. In the present study, the main purpose is answering to these questions:

1. What is meant by social factors?
2. What are the cultural factors?
3. Why and how do these factors affect the lifestyle of the elderly?
4. What are the consequences of this impact?

Method

The present study is a qualitative study of the Grounded theory. The purpose of this method is to understand the main structure of human experience through the analysis of verbal explanations of experiences from the perspective of participants. The statistical population of this study consisted of psychiatrists and neurologists of Tehran city in 2018. The sample of this study is included

10 psychiatrists and neurologists of Roozbeh Hospital in Tehran who had more than 5 years of experience. Participants in the study were selected voluntarily through purposive sampling. In this way, after the phone call to announce the readiness for the interview and by appointment in advance and person at the professors' workplace, the interview was conducted and the criteria for their inclusion in the research sample were: 1) doctoral degree and specialist 2) Having at least 5 years of experience working with families and couples, 3) University professor.

This study was approved by the ethical research committee of the Islamic Azad University-Central Tehran Branch with the code of the IR.IAU.CTB.REC.1395.029. Participants signed the informed consent form to voluntarily participate in this study.

Research Tools

Semi-structured interview. Data was collected from couples, psychiatrists, and neurologists using in-depth semi-structured interviews. Because interpretive discourses are so important to all interpretive traditions that it is very difficult to imagine the existence and development of these traditions and currents of thought without a methodology designed to study participants and their discourses. Asking and listening to others tells us what they know and how they feel and believe; this process of asking and listening is the same as the archetype of the interview¹⁴.

Semi-structured interview was designed to answer questions about experiences, meanings and dimensions from the point of view of the participants. This method included interviews with small groups of subjects- that are used to explore ideas, attitudes, and mental concepts of behaviors.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the Lincoln and Guba evaluation method¹⁵ was used, which is equivalent to the validity and reliability in quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba method for ensuring study quality consists of Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability components.

Researcher ensured interview validity at different stages. For this purpose, and to achieve each of the above criteria, the

following measures were taken: **Credibility:** The researcher spent enough time, approved the research process by eight experts, used two coders to code several interview samples to ensure consistency Coders' point of view, the use of objective and measurable questions such as the use of a timer to measure the time variable required to interview. **Transferability:** To ensure the transferability of the research findings, three experts who were not involved in the research were consulted about the research findings. Research details and notes were recorded at all stages of the work to ensure dependability. **Confirmability:** If the research findings are to be verifiable, all details must be carefully recorded at all stages, which was done for the present study, and all documentation is electronically attached to the CD.

Conducting method. Before starting the data collection process, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants and after agreeing and adjusting the interview time, the researcher went to their offices for interviews, and interviews were conducted. At the beginning of the session, the identity and information of the participants were ensured to be confidential, and after stating the general goals of the research and with their permission, their voices were recorded. All the statements of the participants were

expressed word by word in the initial coding (open). In open coding, the data is broken down into the smallest possible parts, and in the second stage, the axial coding of the data is compared and classified according to differences and similarities. Then, similar codes were placed in classes with comprehensible and illustrative names. Interviews were done between 30 to 50 minutes. A semi-structured interview was conducted to discover the factors affecting the lifestyle of the elderly. The semi-structured interview process was such that before conducting the interview status d on research and theoretical literature and also in consultation with supervisors and consultants, questions were asked about the factors affecting the lifestyle of the elderly and after reaching a consensus on this outline, the final form of the interview was prepared and the interview sessions were prepared status d on the questions on the influential factors on the lifestyle. According to the prepared form, semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts.

Results

Six specialists were male with a mean age of 47.66 ± 4.31 years and 4 were female with a mean age of 41.75 ± 3.44 years. All participants had doctoral degrees.

Table 1. Demographics of Specialist

Location and Duration of Interview	Education	Age	Row
University-50 minutes	University professor (Psychiatrist)	47	1
University-45 minutes	University professor (Psychiatrist)	43	2
Office -55 minutes	Neurologist	50	3
Office -65 minutes	University professor	44	4
Office -60 minutes	Psychiatrist	39	5
University-50 minutes	University professor	38	6
Office -60 minutes	Neurologist	44	7
Office -55 minutes	Neurologist	47	8
Office -40 minutes	Neurologist	50	9
University-60 minutes	Professor-Researcher	51	10

- f: female & m: male

Table 2. Factors Affecting Elderly Lifestyle

Themes	Subthemes	Contexts
Elderly Lifestyle	Objective	Purchasing goods- consumption- food-clothe
	Subjective	Attitudes-Tendencies-Desires-Motivations- Thinking
Socio-economic position	Social status	Communication type of the elderly-Education- Leisure- Social communication
	Economic status	Job - House - Income
Media and Lifestyle of the Elderly	The inattention of programmers- Lack of planning- Lack of priority of the elderly- Lack of a specific pattern and method for the elderly in the media	Meaningless programs- Lack of dedicated program for the elderly- Lack of serials for the elderly- The elderly as a general audience of the national media
Beliefs	-A subset of Culture-Religion Elderly Beliefs - Elderly beliefs in the family	Personal beliefs of elderly bring him or her mind peace- Personal beliefs of elderly affect his or her next generation- Personal beliefs of elderly make him or her more patient and calm- he or she can deal with problems easier- he/she .has a better relationship with God
Ethnic diversity	culture- Diversity of values and norms- Ethnic customs- Ethnic diversity- Ethnic similarities	The elderly of any ethnicity is respected by the family. However, some of them have a basic role and their presence is mandatory in all family issues, and some of them have a subsidiary role. In any case, in Iran, the elderly .of any ethnicity is respected
Customs and Traditions	culture- religion, marriage, death, and traditions	As time passes and by the role of new technologies, although the elderly benefit from these technologies, bound by customs and .traditions
Living conditions of the elderly	Quality of Living faccilities - forced isolation	Unfortunately, the elderly doesn't receive sufficient attention in Iran. They do not be considered in macro-planning. The quality of the environment and the weather and the city are such that the elderly prefer to stay at home .rather than in the community

The first theme extracted from the interview was related to lifestyle in the elderly, which was divided into two Subthemes: objective lifestyle and Subjective lifestyle. In the objective lifestyle, the categories of purchasing goods, consumption, food, and clothing, and in the context of the subjective lifestyle, the categories of attitudes, tendencies, desires, motivations, thinking were extracted.

Some quotes about this extracted area theme presented below:

“Obviously, every human being has basic needs, and after these needs are met, the needs of higher levels such as respect, belonging, love, etc. must be addressed. The elderly is no exception. Having proper nutrition, adequate level of health and

treatment, having a comfortable place to live are among the basic and important needs of the elderly.”

The second theme extracted from the interview was related to socioeconomic status, which was divided into two Subthemes: social status and economic status. In the social status, the categories of communication type of the elderly, education, leisure, social communication, and the economic status, job, house, and income were extracted.

Some quotes about this extracted theme are presented below:

“Everyone has their own values, beliefs and culture, and this is a point that should not be forgotten about the elderly. The beliefs and values of the elderly today are formed in a

society completely different from the current society.”

The third extracted theme was related to the media and the lifestyle of the elderly contexts

Inattention of programmers, Lack of planning, lack of priority of the elderly, Lack of a specific pattern and method for the elderly in the media were extracted and Subthemes of Meaningless programs, Lack of dedicated program for the elderly, Lack of .serials for the elderly, were extracted

Some quotes about this extracted theme are presented below:

“Supporting the elderly population is very important. The involvement of the government and voluntary organizations in support and planning for vulnerable groups such as the elderly is essential.”

The fourth theme extracted from interviews with specialists is related to the beliefs of the

elderly. Subthemes of Culture, Religion, Elderly Beliefs, Elderly beliefs in the family were extracted.

The fifth theme extracted was ethnic diversity, which included Ethnicity has subthemes of culture, Diversity of values and norms, Ethnic customs, Ethnic diversity, Ethnic similarities

The sixth theme was related to customs and traditions, which included the contexts of the system of customs and traditions influenced by culture, the obligation of the elderly to customs, including religion, marriage, death, and traditions.

The seventh theme extracted from the interview was related to the living conditions of the elderly, which included subthemes of not appropriate, not suitable for the lives of the elderly, Depression, and forced isolation in the lives of the elderly

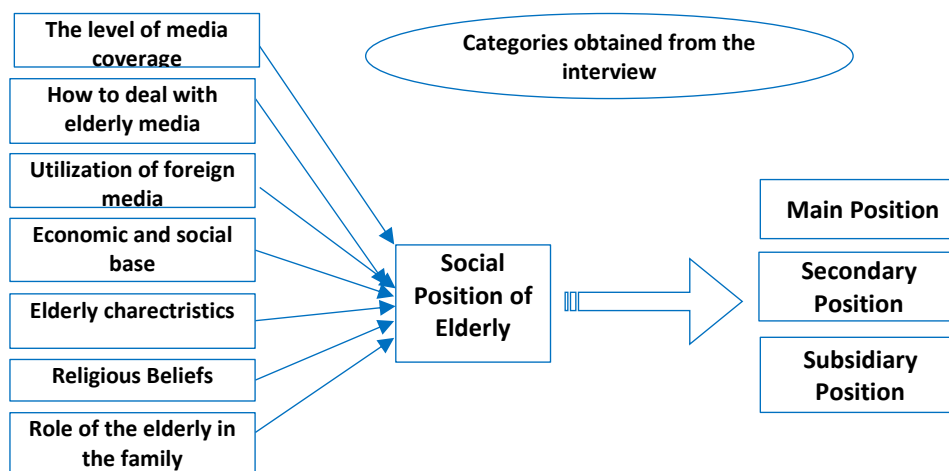


Figure 1. Paradigm model of factors affecting the lifestyle of the elderly

Discussion

The results of the present study showed that influential factors in the elderly lifestyle have been demonstrated in seven areas: elderly lifestyle, socio-economic status, media and lifestyle of the elderly, beliefs, ethnicity diversity, customs and traditions, and living conditions of the elderly. The results of this research are consistent with the results of research conducted by Seifzadeh⁶, Zare et al¹⁶, Isalou et al¹⁷, Mirzaei and Kaveh Firooz⁸, Kimberly and Goldman¹¹, and Molly¹² The

results show that the respondents did not evaluate the socio-economic status as an effective factor in lifestyle. The present hypothesis is consistent with Lawson's theory, three important factors affect levels of activity in the elderly: health; financial facilities; Social support. Reduction or weakness of any of these factors hurts the elderly. In fact, by increasing the socio-economic status of the elderly, it can make aging a favorable period of the elderly life. Therefore, it can be noted that high or low socio-economic position in

elderly cannot have a great impact on their desired lifestyle, although it is important for them to be economically secure and healthy, according to the analysis of their answers, there are more important factors to improve their style that should be considered. Therefore, the results showed that being bound by customs and believing in the values and norms that result from it can affect the style and manner of the elderly. But compared to other components, it did not have a strong effect on the type and lifestyle of the elderly. The elderly, as an important part of society, have always been neglected, while the issues and problems related to the elderly are becoming more and more important as their population grows. As men and women grow older, they are rejected and ignored by their families, workplaces, and social groups. On the other hand, the personal characteristics of the elderly will make them prone to exclusion from society¹⁸. In the present study, the authors tried to identify the variables that affect the lifestyle of the elderly. In general, the results of the present study and analysis of socio-economic sustainability indicators show an unfavorable situation of sustainability; Factors such as instability of quality of life indicators both mentally and objectively, health and social security, job dissatisfaction, low level of performance of the city in the service index, low efficiency and productivity, unemployment and lack of job opportunities have the largest contribution in socio-economic instability. Therefore, in policy-making to stabilize the socio-economic dimension, it is necessary to pay attention to factors that increase the quality of life and improve lifestyle. Following the existing analysis, it can be stated that the explanation of concepts related to socio-economic sustainability has been defined by focusing on maintaining and improving the quality of human life and in harmony with nature. On this basis, preparing the conditions for the emergence of creativity and asking citizens help to meet the socio-economic goals of sustainable development to ensure a better life for all of them, especially poor citizens is important.

In this approach, two vital elements of socio-economic development, participation and

empowerment of citizens to achieve a level of welfare, are considered more important. According to the theoretical foundations of the research, socio-economic sustainability, which is sometimes associated with concepts such as social capital and human welfare, unite categories such as health, improving skills, increasing efficiency and social homogenization with mutual interests, and maintaining values by focusing on the three elements of balance, justice, and freedom. In this concept, the studied socio-economic will cause more interaction to facilitate elderly voluntary presence and emergence, especially the poor people in the social and economic situations, and ultimately, by activating the people, their empowerment will be provided and sense of belonging to the living place will be increased¹⁹. Thus, by emphasizing the socio-economic dimensions of sustainable development, the role and position of citizens in the planning process for the elderly is more considered.

Limitations:

This was a qualitative study that has some limitations. Generalizability is less important in qualitative research findings. At the time of analysis, we were seeking the textual and local meaning instead of the general and universal meaning. The versions that come out of this research can be more responsive to the specific need. Of course, in qualitative research, instead of generalizability, the concept of transferability is discussed, in which the extent of transfer of research findings to other contexts is discussed. Unlike quantitative research, in this research there are no clear criteria for evaluating the quality and strength of the findings, and it was the task of the researcher to clearly mark the path and provide rich evidence of his work. Therefore, in this research, the researcher himself has the role of a tool that must be trained to achieve an accurate, analytical, and at the same time empathetic mind with the context.

Also, our surveyed participants were specialists who had only experience of visiting a particular part of elderly due to specific neurologic or psychologic disorders. Patients with these medical conditions may

have important differences with other elderly patients.

Conclusion

The establishment of social work centers for the elderly and families with an elderly member helps the elderly not to feel rejected and withdrawn and to gain high self-confidence by attending the meetings in such centers, and help their families to consult with social workers and face the problems with the elderly member of their family. These centers can be established both privately and publicly. Besides, the establishment of special cultural centers for the elderly to spend their leisure time will not only play a major role in strengthening the morale of the elderly but will also improve their lifestyle. Such centers can provide study, entertainment, leisure, handicrafts, and other conditions. Researching specific programs related to the lifestyle of the elderly in the media, including radio, television, press, etc., as the most effective component of influencing and changing the lifestyle of the elderly can promote the culture of society and the elderly.

Acknowledgment

It is necessary to express my special thanks of gratitude to all the professors and specialists who have contributed to this research.

Contribution of authors

This article is written from the doctoral dissertation of the first author, which has been approved by the Ministry of Science and Research of Islamic Azad University, Tehran Central Branch. All authors of this article had an equal role in design, conceptualization, methodology, data collection, statistical analysis, drafting, editing, and finalization of writing.

Conflict of interest

According to the authors, this article has no sponsorship or conflict of interest.

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Please cite this article as:

A. Esmaeily, H. Aghjani mersa & Z. Hazrati someaeh .Factors Affecting the Lifestyle of the Elderly: A Qualitative Grounded Theory Study . *Int J Hosp Res*. 2021; 10 (2).