

## Mujeres en pobreza multidimensional en una zona urbana de Yucatán

*Women in multidimensional poverty in an urban area of Yucatan*

*Mulheres em pobreza multidimensional em uma área urbana de Yucatán*

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### Resumen

El objetivo del presente estudio fue analizar la situación de pobreza multidimensional urbana de 374 mujeres que residen en Komchen, Leona Vicario, Cuzco, Cholul, Chablekal y San José Tzal, comisarías de la ciudad de Mérida (Yucatán). Para seleccionar la muestra de esta investigación se tomó en cuenta la propuesta metodológica del Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (Coneval), la cual sugiere que la pobreza multidimensional se halla presente cuando se tiene un ingreso menor a la línea de bienestar o cuando se tiene alguna carencia asociada al bienestar social. En cuanto al apartado metodológico, se trabajó con un enfoque mixto (cuantitativo y cualitativo), pues la información fue recabada mediante cuestionarios estructurados y a través de la observación y la entrevista en profundidad. Los resultados demuestran que la mayoría de las entrevistadas se encuentra en un rango de edad que oscila entre los 40 y 24 años, son casadas y tienen un promedio de 2 o 3 hijos, los cuales se encuentran en edades escolares (principalmente primaria). Esto ocasiona que ellas no solo deban dedicar gran parte de su tiempo a las labores del hogar y al cuidado de los hijos, sino también que no puedan realizar alguna actividad económica y, por tanto, tengan que renunciar a sus proyectos de vida. En síntesis, se puede asegurar que el enfoque multidimensional de la pobreza usado en el presente trabajo ha resultado muy útil para intentar comprender en todas sus aristas dicho fenómeno, pues ha

servido para vislumbrar las diversas circunstancias sociales, así como las creencias culturales que se deben abordar para alcanzar la igualdad de oportunidades.

**Palabras clave:** mujeres, pobreza multidimensional, urbana.

### **Abstract**

The objective of this study was to analyze the situation of multidimensional urban poverty of 374 women living in Komchen, Leona Vicario, Cauce, Cholul, Chablekal and San José Tzal, police stations in the city of Mérida (Yucatán). In order to select the sample of this research, the methodological proposal of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval) was taken into account, which suggests that multidimensional poverty is present when there is a lower income than the welfare line or when there is a lack associated with social welfare. As for the methodological section, we worked with a mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative), since the information was collected through structured questionnaires and through observation and in-depth interviews. The results show that most of the interviewed women are in an age range between 40 and 24 years old, are married and have an average of 2 or 3 children, who are in school age (mainly primary). This means that they not only have to devote a large part of their time to household chores and childcare, but also that they are unable to carry out any economic activity and, therefore, have to give up their life projects. In short, we can say that the multidimensional approach to poverty used in this work has been very useful in trying to understand this phenomenon in all its aspects, since it has served to glimpse the diverse social circumstances, as well as the cultural beliefs that must be addressed in order to achieve equality of opportunity.

**Keywords:** women, multidimensional poverty, urban.

## Resumo

O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar a situação da pobreza urbana multidimensionais 374 mulheres residentes em Komchen, Leona Vicario, Cauce, Cholul, Chablekal e San Jose Tzal, delegacias de polícia na cidade de Mérida (Yucatán). Para selecionar a amostra desta pesquisa a metodologia do Conselho Nacional de Avaliação da Política de Desenvolvimento Social (CONEVAL), o que sugere que a pobreza multidimensional está presente quando você tem menos renda para a linha a ser tidos em conta ou quando há falta de assistência social. Quanto à secção metodologia, trabalhamos com uma abordagem mista (quantitativa e qualitativa), uma vez que a informação foi recolhida através de questionários estruturados e através de observação e entrevista em profundidade. Os resultados mostram que a maioria dos entrevistados estão em uma faixa etária entre 40 e 24 anos, são casados e têm uma média de 2 ou 3 filhos, que estão em idade escolar (principalmente primário). Isto faz com que não só deve dedicar muito do seu tempo ao trabalho doméstico e assistência à infância, mas também não podem exercer uma actividade económica e, portanto, tem que desistir de seus projetos de vida. Em suma, podemos assegurar que a abordagem multidimensional da pobreza utilizada neste trabalho tem sido muito útil para tentar entender em todas as suas bordas do fenómeno, uma vez que tem servido para vislumbrar as diversas implicações sociais e crenças culturais para ser endereço para alcançar a igualdade de oportunidades.

**Palavras-chave:** mulheres, pobreza multidimensional, urbana.

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## Introduction

In Mexico, poverty and extreme poverty have historically had a rural face. However, at present it can be said that this is a problem that has migrated to the cities, because according to figures from the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval) (2014), of the total number of people who are in This economic condition in the country (53.3 million), 68.6% reside in urban areas, which not only has further accentuated exclusion, inequality and unemployment (Sassen, 2000), but has also served as a seed for the emergence of the phenomenon known as multidimensional poverty. This includes aspects related to living conditions that violate the dignity of people, limit their rights and fundamental freedoms, prevent the satisfaction of their basic needs and prevent their full social integration, which is evidenced in a very particular way in women ( García, Oliva and Ortiz, 2012), since this social group is commonly found in stereotyped circles called captivities. In the words of Lagarde (1997), "being a mother is a captivity built around essential, positive definitions of women: their reproductive sexuality, and their relationships of vital dependence on others through motherhood, filiality and conjugality "(page 38).

In agreement with this unequal vision of the genres, Hierro (1998) considers that the central category of the condition of the woman is the one established by Simone de Beauvoir, that is, the one of "being for another". This manifests itself in their condition of oppression as a human being who is not granted the possibility of carrying out a project of transcendence. Therefore, in the words of Huerta (2012), structural poverty is associated with a state of inequality in which some have more than others, not by their own merit, but by the circumstances that present the conditions of life.

On this link between women and poverty, however, authors such as Feijoó (1999) have argued that this economic situation does not only have to do with the feminine, but also corresponds to the stage of the life cycle of families and the possibilities of establish social relationships that help the woman to find new alternatives to get ahead to her family.

Due to this theoretical context of conflicting positions, in this study we have tried to analyze the situation of urban multidimensional poverty in which women live in the city of Mérida,

Yucatán. For this, the approach of Labrecque (1995) has been considered, who explains that an investigation or a development project that only considers women in their reproductive and mother roles would contribute not only to reinforce the current social definition of motherhood, but also to perpetuate its subordination, which in turn would keep it in a situation of structural poverty from which it could not escape. Therefore, the following research questions have been raised:

- What are the socioeconomic characteristics of women living in poverty in the urban area of the city of Mérida, Yucatán?
- What are the characteristics of households in terms of their structure and functioning of women living in poverty in the urban area of the city of Mérida, Yucatán?
- What are the characteristics of multidimensional poverty associated with the gender of women living in the urban area of the city of Mérida, Yucatán?

## Method

The present work was based on a mixed-cut design (Creswell, 1999, Gutiérrez, 1996), since qualitative and quantitative research styles were used simultaneously in order to achieve a better understanding of the phenomenon of multidimensional poverty in women they live in urban areas of the city of Mérida, Yucatán.

Regarding the quantitative aspect, structured questionnaires with open and closed questions were designed. The indicators that made up this instrument were developed deductively from the theoretical review of female poverty, for which special emphasis was placed on aspects related to the multidimensional characteristics of poverty in which the women consulted live, as well as on the characteristics of their homes and the opportunity they have to access services that dignify their lives.

On the other hand, and in relation to the qualitative, the observation technique and the in-depth interview were privileged. The indicators considered were those that allowed characterizing women according to their socioeconomic status and access to services and programs.

Likewise, indicators were taken into account that would allow describing the structure of the household, as well as the dynamics in the distribution of tasks and resources. In addition, and as regards indicators related to gender, we consulted about maternity, marital status, schooling, work status and ethnicity.

### **Population and sample**

The geographic area selected for this study was the municipality of Mérida (Yucatán), which concentrates 42.5% (830,732 people) of the population of the entity. Mérida is characterized for being the space where the majority of employment options and health and education services are located. For this reason, the municipality has become a focus that attracts the population that seeks better sources of employment and a more dignified life.

This municipality is among the lowest percentage of inhabitants in poverty of the entity with 29.4% of the population, that is, a total of 263 837 people. However, of this last number, 29 574 are in extreme poverty, which makes it the municipality with the largest number of inhabitants in that situation.

In the specific case of the state of Yucatan, this phenomenon began to occur between 1970 and 1980, after the fall of the henequen factories, which caused a process of de-ruralization and accelerated urbanization, especially in Mérida (López, 2014). To address this situation, the government began to occupy people from rural areas in activities related to construction, while the private company invested its capital in the production of bottled beverages (beer and soft drinks), textiles, glass, cement , etc. (Lugo, 2006).

However, the accelerated increase in poverty in the state of Yucatán, in general, and in the municipality of Mérida, in particular (National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics [Inegi], 2014), between 2010 and 2012 served to generate greater interest in studying this situation, since it has been considered that the growth of the city and the strategic focus are not offering the expected development results, which is evidenced by the increase in crime rates and insecurity (Coneval, 2012).

To select the participants of this research, a probabilistic design was used, which allowed us to delimit a sample that was representative to know the specific condition of the women of that locality. The sample, therefore, was constituted by a total of 384 women.

Specifically, 374 interviews were conducted distributed in the following manner in the seven locations proposed in the protocol: Candel and Cholul (49 interviews respectively); Chablekal, Komchen and Leona Vicario (50 interviews in each locality); city of Mérida (85 interviews), and San José Tzal (41 interviews).

To identify women living in multidimensional poverty conditions, the methodological proposal of Coneval (2012) was taken into account, which suggests that this phenomenon is present when there is a lower income to the welfare line or when there is lack associated with social welfare.

For purposes of a better understanding of the study, the ages of the interviewees were distributed over four years, as indicated by the Urban Observatory of Mérida in its population pyramid (2012). Specifically, and as established by the Inegi (2010), it began with women who were at the beginning of the active working age, that is, 15 years. This means that in the present study we have tried to give a panoramic approach of adolescents, young, elderly and elderly women from the municipality of Mérida.

## **Results**

### **Age**

For purposes of a better understanding of the study, the ages of the interviewees have been distributed in four-year ranges, as indicated by the urban observatory of Mérida in its population pyramid (2010). It can be seen how the age range most frequently falls on the one indicated as active working age, according to the INEGI (2010), since it has been considered to women over 15 years. Most of the women interviewed are between 40 and 42 years old. The youngest woman interviewed is 16 years old, while the oldest is 86 years old.

It can also be said that this is an inclusive study, because it will be a panoramic approach of adolescents, young women, seniors and the elderly of the municipality of Mérida, but who associate a certain position of adulthood to be responsible for the work of the home and the coordination of the roles that live as women.

### **Civil status**

In the year 2013 in the municipality of Mérida 4,697 and 1,185 divorces were registered, corresponding to 25.3%, a quarter of the marriages in this municipality, divorced (INEGI, 2013).

Of the sample studied 4.5% is single, 70.9% of women are in marriages, while only 3.2% are divorced, 5.6% are separated in the process of divorce or concubinal agreements and 11% of these women they are in a conjugal relationship of free union and widows 4.8.

Likewise, married women who live with their partners and are in the range of 60-64 years of age have the largest number of children (9), while married women, but separated from their partners or widows, have 8 children (these are found in the range of 45-86 years of age). On the other hand, single women or in a free union have only 1 or 2 children. Based on these figures, it can be said that the reproductive cycle of women, not being married or with a fixed partner, is limited to a smaller number of children, so that they can keep them alone.

Regarding the number of people living in the same house with women according to their marital status, it can be noted that married women live with 13 people in their home, single women with 12 people in their homes (these usually have the support of their parents to fulfill their tasks), and those who live in a free union or are divorced with 9 inhabitants in their homes.

### **Speakers of indigenous language**

The women consulted commented that since their families their children instilled the Castilian language, and not the Maya, due to the discrimination to which the indigenous people are subjected in different spaces (schools, work, etc.). In this regard, it is worth noting that the interviewees pointed out that this situation is suffered mainly by men, because they have the greatest responsibility to work outside the home and to educate themselves.

However, when reviewing the relationship between women who speak the Mayan language and the levels of instruction reached by them, we can see that the percentages between these two groups are similar, since 37.2% of the speakers of that language ended high school, while 39.4% of those who do not speak that language did the same.



Likewise, when the ability to speak the Mayan language and the locality is linked, it can be affirmed that the women who reside in more distant areas of the city of Mérida are those who dominate the mentioned language. An example of this is the town of San José Tzal (located 19 kilometers from Mérida) where 95.1% of the interviews speak Mayan. It should be noted that these women only work in the domestic chores of their home.

Similarly, in Leona Vicario (located 7.7 kilometers from Mérida), 50% of the interviewees speak that language, a similar percentage to that of Cholul (located 16 kilometers from the capital), where 57.1% of those surveyed do the same, while in Merida only 38.8% of the women of that locality dominate the language.

### **Scholarship**

In the educational subject, the results obtained were compared with the standards issued by the Coneval (2012) and the National Institute of Educational Evaluation, through the Compulsory Schooling Standard in the Mexican State. In this sense, it can be pointed out that 82% of the interviewees have the basic level of the complete primary, of which 73.9% finished their secondary school programs regularized.

As for women who do not have studies, 64.2% are married, 13.6% are widows, 8.6% are separated and 13.6 are single.

None of the women in the sample have university studies. With a commercial career, 66.7% are married, 22.2% are single and 11.1% are divorced.

However, when the level of education and the number of children are associated, it can be affirmed that women with complete primary education have between 1 and 6 children, while those who completed their high school have between 1 and 3 children.

Also, women who do not have studies had their first child at an age ranging between 12 and 37 years; On the other hand, those who completed primary school did so between the ages of 19 and 26, while those who completed the baccalaureate had their first child between 15 and 33 years of age, and those who completed the commercial career did so between 19 and 26

years old. . From these figures it can be inferred that a greater access to education allows to lower the pregnancy rates in adolescence, so that better family planning can be achieved.

On the other hand, 84% of the married women finished their primary or secondary education in the INEA program, 7.7% of the divorced women completed some INEA program and 7.7% did not finish any INEA program. Likewise, of the women who came to study a commercial career, 60% are married, 30% are single and 10% are divorced. These figures show that married, single and divorced women have reached higher school levels than separated women and those who live in a free union.

### **Work activity**

The results of this study show that 34.5% of the women interviewed do not work in paid activities, 37.1% work on their own, 21.7% are salaried, and the remaining 6.7% work both on their own and in a salaried manner.

It is worth noting that 83.3% of salaried women did not sign a contract to establish their working conditions, rights and obligations or to set the benefits that correspond to them by law. In fact, only 48.5% receive support from their contractors, which implies bonuses for extra work, work permits for family situations, flexibility in the schedule, bonuses, etc. Specifically, 36% is dedicated to housework, which earn an average of \$ 2344 pesos per month, while 24% is dedicated to serving a store, which represents a monthly average of \$ 3009.5 pesos; and 11% work in kitchens, which generates an average of \$ 2456 pesos in the month.

Regarding the relationship between work activity and marital status, the majority of married women work on their own and had their first child, on average, at 20 years of age. On the other hand, there is a smaller group of married women who work in a salaried way, who had their first child, on average, at 18 years of age.

Finally, it can be indicated that 29.2% of salaried women have completed secondary school, 18.9% primary school, 18.9% do not have completed primary school or did not go to school, and 8.17% finished their basic training in INEA programs.

### **Access to health services**

The data collected indicate that 87.6% of respondents indicated that they used the public health service, 8.3% self-medicated or went to village healers, and 3.5% resorted to doctors in their localities or services offered by private pharmacies .

Of the women who receive health service from the public sector, 52.1% processed it themselves, 34.7% were insured by their partners, 6.7% got it as part of the benefits granted by their working conditions, 2% were insured by some of their parents, and 1.8% were insured by their children.

Likewise, of the women who have the public health system, 48.8% receive care through the Popular Health Insurance Program, which, being federal, has generated agreements with the State Health Secretariats to offer their services to the affiliates. Likewise, 46.9% are registered in the health systems of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS), 1.8% belong to the Institute of Security and Social Services of State Workers (ISSSTE), and 1.2% have other types of services doctors

### **Retirement and pension**

About retirement or pension programs, 68.2% of women do not have this right, 23% argue that they could have this benefit at the end of their work, and 4.3% do not know if through their husbands can access this benefit.

Likewise, of the 86 women who do have or will have this right, 64% got it through their husbands, 25.6% through the benefits of their jobs, and 3.5% made the procedures on their own.

### **Housing spaces and services**

Of the salaried women, 60.4% do not have access to housing loans, 28.3% do, and 11.3% do not know how to own them. Of the 30 salaried women who have a housing loan, 50% have it because their husbands secured it (this means that the credit is from the husband, so it is he who can request it, which will make him the owner of the acquired home), 46.7% have it as a work benefit, and 3.3% got it because they were insured by one of their parents.

On the other hand, 66.5% of those who work on their own account do not have access to this type of loans, 20.7% do have this option, and 12.8% do not know about this possibility.

### Access to food

On food, in 43.6% of families all members usually make their three meals at home, while in 11.8% of families some members must buy lunch outside the house. The number of people who can be fed at home varies from one to ten people.

On the other hand, 70.6% of the interviewees consider that they have a varied diet, while 22.7% think otherwise. In either case, these opinions are related to their income levels and also to the possibilities of self-sufficiency. In this sense, 38% is dedicated to the cultivation of different types of food, while 22.5% breeds animals.

### Socialization of gender

In terms of household chores, the results show that these increase when the majority of family members are men. In other words, it is they who mainly perform the daily tasks of the house.

Regarding family interaction, women consider that there is more communication of children with mothers than with parents. The latter, in fact, usually only talk with them about television programs, church activities or sports, while mothers do it on issues related to values, obligations at school and work, and even on the engagement. Likewise, when dealing with sexuality, 69.2% of women believe that their husbands do not address this issue with their children, 25.7% consider that their children and their husbands do talk about it, while 1.8% did not want to answer and 3.3% did not know. In contrast, 56.4% of women talk about this issue with their children, 42% do not, and 1.6% did not want to answer.

In relation to the decisions on educational issues, 45% of the interviewees indicated that they take them alone, 2.86% their husbands and 51.79% in pairs. Likewise, regarding the discipline of the children, 58% of the women considered that they were the ones who complied with this task, 36.7% of the interviewees said that both parents did it, and only 1.8% explained that only the spouses corrected the children when they committed some fault.

Finally, about the administration of money, 55% do so as a couple, 29.7% of women do it alone, 14% do it their husbands, 1.3% of the interviewed women consult their mothers.

## Discussion and conclusion

When reviewing the results of this study in a global way, it can be affirmed that most of the women interviewed are between 40 and 24 years old, married and have an average of 2 or 3 children. which are in school ages (mainly primary). This not only causes them to devote a large part of their time to housework and caring for their children, but also that they can not carry out any economic activity and, therefore, have to give up their life projects, which in turn, it tends to maintain them in conditions where poverty is constant and where access to human rights is diminished.

Therefore, it can be affirmed that the condition of urbanity of the investigated localities has not transformed the traditional practices of the division of tasks within the family, as women continue to assume the main role of home care. In contrast, the husband is the one who usually serves not only as the provider of income, but also as the main responsible for the wife and children to have medical services, housing loans and aspirations to get a pension.

On the other hand, and although most women say they have a harmonious relationship with their partners, these usually do not have a network of friends. In addition, before leaving home they must request permission or inform their husbands of the places to which they must go. In fact, when getting married, most of the women leave their places of residence to stay, generally, in the husband's family house, which forces them to abide by the rules established in that place. These limited conditions for access to a house of their own cause women to have no property or inheritance that they can inherit or use in case of emergencies.

Even so, there is also a significant number of women who carry out formal and informal economic activities in order to generate income for them, their families or their children when the parents do not assume this responsibility. This type of work allows them to perform in an activity in their own locality and adjust their work schedule to the most convenient time. The disadvantage with this type of tasks lies in the unconsciousness of the income and the impossibility to get benefits, although it is worth noting that this last benefit does not usually get it when they are salaried.

These deplorable economic conditions (low incomes, informal or salaried jobs without recognition before the law for the granting of benefits) have caused situations of

vulnerability in women and in their families, which has forced them to generate family and community support networks to be able to meet the needs of their daily lives.

In relation to health services, they usually resort to the public sector or to popular insurance, where they can join voluntarily, although from their perspectives the quality offered is deficient due to waiting times, lack of medicines and successful diagnoses. and timely measures that would prevent the progressive deterioration of certain clinical conditions. In this regard, it should be emphasized that women are the ones who request the most voluntary services and who are in charge of looking after children's diseases. In addition, due to the number of inhabitants of the municipality of Mérida, as well as the characteristics of their health services, the attention capacity of these centers is usually exceeded, which generates precarious care conditions.

Regarding food, women believe that although they have a wide variety of supplies, they recognize that in some cases the costs of certain products (such as meat, vegetables or fruits) exceed their income. In this regard, they also point out that when an unexpected event arises that forces family expenses to be cut back, the first factor that is affected is food, as they reduce purchases or consume lower quality products.

In relation to the construction of the feminine, the women consulted believe that it is their mothers who have prepared them for their adult life, since they are taught how to take care of the home, the children and the husband, that is, they must be calm, quiet, hardworking and support all positive or negative situations depending on the family unit. However, it should be noted that mothers also often prepare their daughters to play the role of providers when they have to assume the responsibilities of raising their children alone. In these cases, women have the support of parents, neighbors or siblings.

As can be seen, the multidimensional approach to poverty used in the present work is very useful to try to understand this phenomenon in all its edges, which also serves to glimpse the various social circumstances, as well as the cultural beliefs that must be addressed to achieve equal opportunities.

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