Abstract

This study focuses on how urbanization causes change to familial activities among Bangkok teenagers and elderly who live in multigenerational households. Unlike prior research that highlighted the negative effects of urbanization on family relationships because it dissolves family quality time, the result of this study illustrates how the aforementioned is not always true. However, family quality time takes places in different forms and carries different meanings.

Bangkok is an excellent setting for this study because it is a highly-urban Asian city filed with migration, Westernization, Easternization (Japanese, Chinese, and Korean influences), and technological impacts. With the limitation on housing space and with a lifestyle that follows an ethic of busyness; people learn to adjust in order to feel connected to their family members. This is crucial to the Thai way of life living in a multigenerational household.

Through in-depth interviews with 22 multigenerational Thai families living in Central Bangkok, the researcher discovered how the Bangkokian defines the meaning of family quality time, types of activities they associated with family quality time, and adaptations caused by urbanization. The results show that ‘family quality time’ can only exist when a person feel a sense of ‘togetherness’ through certain activities that perpetuate feelings of being loved, cared for, worried about, and understood. Examples of activities mentioned were communicating through LINE/calls, massaging, hugging/kissing, shopping in malls, watching television, dining out, cooking together, taking outings, and having certain types of conversation. In conclusion, urbanization has recreated family quality time to be spontaneous, quick-and-easy, and without the necessity of physical togetherness.