

Editorial

A new tendency is observed in modern gerontology. The importance of active aging is particularly emphasized. The organization of living space in old age depends on the elderly person. This is done in various ways, although not everyone can manage to do it on their own, independently.

In the collected material we present selected social aspects of aging and old age. Theoretical considerations concerning elderly people and old age form the basis for empirical studies.

Theoretical narratives concerning the process of aging, old age, elderly people, are often carried out taking into account the perspective of time, both in its objective meaning and the subjective perception of time. The category of time interpreted in the philosophical dimension can be an inspiration to undertake research of old age.

The complexity of the issues covered by research in the area of aging and the phenomenon of old age raises a number of important questions. From the perspective of the sociology of old age, taking into account the aspect of research concerning support for the elderly, a number of various dilemmas should be resolved, including issues related to the definition of the caregiver, assessment of the level of their professional skills, preparation of interviewers for research, selection of appropriate methods, or the ethical dimensions of research implementation.

In the area of the discussed issues it is impossible to ignore the matter of lifestyles in old age, which determine the quality of life of seniors. Ma-

ny different factors determine the daily life of elderly people. The impulse to undertake empirical research in this area is the concern for satisfying the life needs of modern seniors. Inspirations for research efforts arise from everyday life practice of elderly people. Along with the growing interest in the “silver generation” potential, the economic and social importance of the way elderly people function are currently emphasized. The economic importance is visible in the consumer and health-oriented lifestyle, while the most important social determinants include the participation of elderly people in culture.

A subjective sense of one’s own attractiveness is also important in this area. In the light of the presented research results, some aspects of the sense of one’s own attractiveness were significantly related to the sense of well-being of the elderly. Interestingly, gender is an important modifier of the relationship between physical, interpersonal and occupational attractiveness and the accompanying emotions. It is also important to seek empirical answers to questions about what the human body is for the elderly and how they perceive the aging body as a result of the process of involution.

One of the breakthrough stages in a person’s life is the moment of preparation to retirement and the retirement itself. The current demographic situation of the country and the difficult situation (of an employee) on the job market make this issue an extremely topical and important social problem. An analysis of the perception of this time, indicating which areas of activity are crucial in the process of preparing for retirement, can be the basis for a successful everyday life in late adulthood.

The sense of quality of life in old age spent in institutions is conditioned in a slightly different way and through other factors. The presented conclusions from the research contradict social beliefs about nursing homes as an environment for vegetative existence. It turns out that the surveyed nursing home residents assessed the quality of life as quite good, while men reported a higher quality of life compared to women in each of the analyzed aspects.

An important element in building a real image of contemporary seniors (which in consequence may translate into their sense of quality of life) are the ideas of the aging process, old age and elderly people presented by younger generations. In the face of dynamic changes, we often face marginalization or even marginalization (exclusion) of the oldest generation. The nature of the declared views on the life and development of the elderly (especially those based on stereotyping) may be the cause of improper treatment of elderly people in society, may cause a decrease in self-esteem and in the sense of control over one’s own life. On the other hand, shaping the right attitudes may condition an increase in the sense of quality of life, in-

crease the chances of seniors for active participation in social life, and thus successful aging.

An equally interesting matter in the context of social aspects of aging and old age, albeit receiving relatively little recognition in the literature, is the problem of alcohol abuse by elderly people. The problem concerns mostly seniors living in a family environment where alcohol abuse can be a risk factor for violence, but it also concerns elderly people living in nursing homes. The conclusions presented in the texts are a challenge for those responsible for the organization of care in the family and in institutions. Proposals of systemic solutions constituting recommendations for education and information activities in this area are also valuable.

The interest in the problem of personal resources of the elderly is a result of prolonged life expectancy and a rapidly accelerating demographic aging of the population. The role and importance of activation of the elderly in society based on resource-based work is currently widely discussed. The involvement of elderly people living in rural areas in non-formal and informal (incidental) education is interesting. Interpretation of the data obtained during the study in the context of environmental and internal resources allows us to state that the respondents felt comfortable in their peer group and based on it and their own resources (personal and internal) configured private spaces of activity, giving new contexts to learning.-

Using the potential of elderly people, on the one hand, is important in sustaining and improving the local environment and, on the other hand, promotes active aging activities by seniors. In this context, the importance of social support workers, especially social workers, should also be emphasized. It should be noted that modern seniors are perceived not only as people receiving assistance but also as supporting others. Moreover, the presented research results suggest that seniors are one of the groups currently sought by organizations that recruit volunteers to work in palliative and hospice care.

We hope that the presented volume on aging, old age, elderly people will be of interest to pedagogues, as well as representatives of other scientific disciplines. We also hope that the materials collected in the volume, connected with the final stage of human life, will enrich Polish pedagogy with aspects of late adulthood, a problem so rarely addressed in the quarterly *Social Pedagogy*.

