

Life Satisfaction and Senior Citizens' Social and Life Activity

Introduction

The European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations celebrated in 2012 inspired a presentation of reflections concerning senior citizens' life satisfaction against the background of their social and life activity. Activity, in accordance with the Regulative Theory of Temperament, is the trait of temperament regulating the stimulating value of behavior and external stimulation for humans. Activity is a tendency to undertake actions providing strong external stimulation (Strelau, 2001). The activity undertaken becomes then a condition for life satisfaction. The question of satisfaction has been often discussed in relation to its conditions at every stage of development. An analysis of life satisfaction of older people is a major issue not only because of the celebrations of the Year of Active Ageing mentioned above (activity is one of predictors of satisfaction) but also because of the growing number of senior citizens within the society.

Growing old is a complex and multidimensional process concerning all spheres of life: biological, social and psychological ones. An individual, as a result of changes happening in one of the spheres, changes the way she/he functions in other. Thus, it is a continuously transforming and mutually determining system. The process of growing old brings about changes in the biological sphere, though physical changes are the most visible and concern, e.g. appearance, impaired hearing, sight, deteriorating agility of organs and susceptibility to diseases. The biological sphere considerably affects the way senior citizens function within their society (Tobiasz-Adamczyk, 2011; Szewcyczak, Stachowka, Talarska, 2012:96-100). Activity of a person, starting from his/her birth until late adulthood, predetermines the stage of old age. The resources accumulated for years, such as the social and economic status, lifestyle, social roles, the network of social relationships, are decisive for e.g. the length of life, prevalence rate, physical independence, and autonomy (Tobiasz-Adamczyk, Brzyska, 2011). Researchers have pointed out the significance of older people's social networks for their everyday functioning. Social networks go beyond the traditional understanding of social relations as family bonds as J. Barnes (Tobiasz-Adamczyk,

Brzyska, 2011) described them. Life of older people in a numerous and accepting environment facilitates their needs satisfaction. Senior citizens, among their family and friends from different communities, neighborhoods, associations, social organizations, professional life and their past, enjoy better health and cope better with difficult and stressful situations. Functioning within such a network or, precisely speaking, participating in social life, satisfies the need for acceptance and integration and results in improvement of mood (Woźniak, 2007:1-2,7-13). A social network is analyzed with reference to the direct number of bonds between the individual and other people and its social and demographic characteristics (Tobiasz-Adamczyk, 2011:120, Janiszewska-Rain, 2005) and is related with the idea of social support (Głębocka, Szarzyńska, 2006). Consequently, a developed social network contributes to the process of meeting needs and, as a result, to the high life satisfaction. A social network can be thus compared to the idea of external and internal space introduced by E. Dubas (2000). The spaces are constructed in relation to the human "I", the core of human identity. The space comprises situations, subjects taking part in the situation, facts, i.e. objects and subjects the person meets and experiences through the senses. That is the external world the individual comes into contact with, which includes constructing social networks and establishing bonds with particular subjects. On the other hand, the internal space includes thoughts and feelings experienced, lived and understood by the person (Dubas, 2000:121-123). Within the social sphere of growing old, the influence of a negative change of the social and economic status on functioning of older people within the social reality has been stressed.

The psychological sphere of the process of growing old comprises declining cognitive processes (Janiszewska-Rain, 2005: 592-599). The late adulthood has been perceived through numerous stereotypes. Older people are often perceived as cantankerous, depressed, decrepit, and lonely. However, research has shown that senior people do not suffer from depression and their sexual drive does not decrease. As age progresses, declining memory or absentmindedness may be observed, but they result from neurodegenerative diseases. Other symptoms of senile dementia are also myths, as levels of intelligence and verbal skills do not decrease significantly, though older people tend to, e.g. forget words. Another myth concerns the inability to learn new things as senior citizens, despite their age, do acquire new skills (Lilienfeld, Lynn, Ruscio, Beyerstein, 2011:107-109) like e.g. operating mobile phones, computers, cash machines, using credit cards. The late adulthood period enforces gradual change in the way people live (Janiszewska-Rain, 2005:600). It is a time of change of the style of life following not only from retiring from professional life but also from adapting to the progressing disability, decreasing number of friends and acquaintances, but also the time of changing forms of activity satisfying the appearing needs (Brzezińska, 2005:610). The old age commonly referred to as the autumn of life is another interesting and prosperous period in life during which older people choose to embark on tasks allowing them to get a high life satisfaction level.

Life satisfaction of U3A students

Reflections on life satisfaction concentrate on different aspects and thus, also because of its broadness, it is very difficult to find the universally accepted definition of the concept. Life satisfaction is a subjective feeling expressing satisfaction from achievements. High life satisfaction results in a good quality of life. Every research instrument measures life quality basing on the model determining the high life quality as opposed to the low one which is a determinant of numerous attributes. Literature on the subject describes two main approaches to life quality of people at the age of late adulthood. One of them attempts to determine the subjective assessment of general life situation of an individual, while the other examines life quality using external dimensions e.g. evaluating health or disability. As it follows from the very definition of life quality, it is a subjective state and, as a consequence, should be evaluated basing on subjective opinions. Life quality reflects the discrepancy between the current life situation of a person and the best possible situation or the ideal subjective state (Martin, Schneider, Eicher, Moor, 2012:33-40).

Research has provided information about the predictors of life quality of a person at the age of late adulthood. It should be stressed that an older person is stereotyped as a disabled, ill, devoid of plans and ambitions. However, the chronological age is not equivalent to low life satisfaction as has already been discussed above. Life quality results from external and internal conditions and requires that a person has got full awareness of his/her own influence on formation of the subjective life satisfaction (Błachnio, 2002:31). Social acceptance for long-term changes and solutions is the necessary condition constituting a prime requirement for the improvement of life quality of senior citizens to be observed (Szarota, 2009). There has been much research into the question of life satisfaction of different age groups and what has been noted is that late adults are happiest of all respondents. The older people get, the greater life satisfaction they feel (Lilienfeld, Lynn, Ruscio, Beyerstein, 2011:107-109). The satisfaction felt results from e.g. health condition, economic status, and the network of relations or activity. Activity is one of major requirements in feeling high life satisfaction, and the participation in senior clubs, universities and trainings enable older people to attain it.

The University of the Third Age is an educational institution aimed at people in late adulthood. Motives for choosing this form of activity differ widely. Late adults wish to experience a substitute of “real” studies at a college or university, to update their knowledge using state-of-the-art technology, maintain their social authority, establish contacts, fill the loneliness and emptiness left after the death of relations. The constantly developed university curriculum offers an intensive program of studies adapted to its students’ needs. The offer includes lectures, seminars, language courses, physical exercise, sections and interest groups, trips within Poland and abroad, out-of-doors meetings, marches on special occasions. The concept behind the U3A as an educational institution aimed at the oldest generation is the development of the potential of older people (Wnuk, retr. 2013). The University of the Third Age offers its participants opportunities to satisfy their various needs and interests. The major ones include

educational, cultural, creative, recreational, health-oriented, affiliation needs, the needs of belonging, finding own place, self-fulfillment, identification and active learning. A fully-functioning person satisfies both kinds of his/her needs, physical and psychological ones, the family is the place they should be met. However, because of the nuclear family type or the fact that family members work abroad more and more often, people are lonely staying at their homes. At the same time, a senior citizen loses many friends and acquaintances, which results in the diminishing network of relationships. To re-establish the relationships such a person must enter a new community that can somehow "complement" the network of contacts. Death is a natural phenomenon taking away people we value, respect and honor. However, it is hard to function without people, not to mention their virtues and friendship, and so older people must seek new relationships. The University offers opportunities for establishing and maintaining new bonds.

The University of the Third Age fulfils important roles within the academic community. Its functions include: offering attractive leisure opportunities, satisfying the need for social relationships, providing a chance of acquiring new competencies necessary to overcome the stress related to old age and developmental crises. The U3A provides older people with psychological support, releases strength, stimulates, teaches how to preserve health, how to creatively accept diseases, disability, how to engage sensitively in family or community problems. It helps to prevent feelings older people so often experience, such as loneliness, social isolation and lack of attention on the part of the society. Its goals include prolonging the time of cognitive, social and physical activity, creative life, shaping adaptive abilities thus striving for the improvement of life quality of the oldest generation (Wnuk, retr. 2013). Promotion of social involvement of senior citizens by popularizing education constitutes an element of both health promotion and disease prevention in the very age group (Woźniak, 2007:1-2, 7-13). Older people start seeking contacts with other people, occupation and work that can meet their needs. Senior citizens want not only to be needed but wish to carry out tasks entrusted to them and providing them opportunities for self-fulfillment.

Activity and its nature

Free or spare time is a cultural and philosophical category, and thus displays different value for every individual. For older adults it means the time without the characteristics of professional activity performed so far (Olszewski, 2003:92). Literature presents two approaches to spare time spending models. One includes the concept of "excess free time" concerning pensioners and the unemployed, the other one, the so-called "time deficit" concept includes workaholics (Halicka, Halicki, 2002:203).

Literature contains different approaches to activity older adults engage in during their leisure. The activity is often defined as the inclination to intensive action, e.g. undertaking a variety of initiatives or active participation.

Elaborating on this definition A.A. Zych states that activity is a way of experiencing reality, a cognitive quality manifested in physical and intellectual actions conditioned by personality factors (Zych, 2001:19). Activity influences an individual within three spheres: knowledge, skills and attitudes. Thus, activity means actions performed by a human being within various spheres of life resulting in creating a new quality. The environment, interpersonal relations, independence, fitness and health play a vital role in stimulating activity. Authors of the social gerontology foundations write that activity of every man is her/his own way of communicating with other people and the world. It should be noted that the above communication takes place as a result of old people's engagement in various initiatives. Communication is a two-way process where not only the older person acts but is also subject to actions and therefore may be defined as a process of direct and indirect action and cooperation.

A. Kamiński (from Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, Dziegielewska, 2006:162) considers the activity of older adults in terms of two categories. One of them regards performing valued and useful work, while the other one refers to pursuing hobbies and interests. H. Balicka –Kozłowska defines the term of activity in a different way, stressing the fact that it refers to a variety of actions aiming at retardation of the aging process simultaneously forming in the elderly the capability of "being older" (Balicka-Kozłowska, 1986).

Activity is a set of actions performed by an individual owing to which changes in the spheres of his/her knowledge, skills and attitudes occur. Activity is always connected with active participation in tasks resulting in the creation of a new "quality". The effect of activity is the fulfillment of the affiliation need, the need to be needed, the feeling of satisfaction and contentment.

Activity may be divided into 3 types: formal, informal and solitary. The first type, the formal one, is defined as membership in social organizations, voluntary service, work for the local community, participation in politics, etc. Another type, the informal activity, includes contacts with friends, acquaintances, family and neighbors. The latter solitary activity refers to such actions as watching television, reading, following one's hobbies and interests (Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, Dziegielewska, 2006:161). Every activity type results in particular transformations in the life of individuals. The opposite of the activity is "doing nothing", watching television, listening to the radio or reading magazines or books without reflection or choice.

Research performed in Poland - GUS (1990), Szatur-Jaworska (2006), Trafiałek (2003), Halicka, Halicki (2002) etc., shows that the majority of senior citizens spend their spare time in a passive way. The problem of low participation in social life is also stressed by Beata Wojszel (2002). The author refers to the study of 1993 by P. Czekanowski, which states that nothing has changed in this respect (Wojszel, 2002:30). All studies so far have supported each other. B. Wojszel points to p. Czekanowski's results and stresses that during the period of social and political transformations Poland has failed to create the climate conducive to establishing organizations integrating senior adults with the society. Moreover, the old age model popularized does not include activity at all (Wojszel, 2002:30-31).

Writing about older people's activity, it should be remembered that literature specifies three theories of adaptation to the old age, including: the theory of activity, theory of withdrawal and the theory of old age stress. The first one regards an aging person as a social phenomenon amassing tensions connected with the self-image concept that appears when changes in the roles played so far occur. To face the situation, a senior person should be active to the extent her/his health and fitness allow. Thus, the person finds supplementary activities and establishes new relationships (Zych, 2001:218). "The activity theory has been created to explain older adults' behavior in the situation where "I" is in control. The decision on the kind and intensity of their own activity depends on the seniors' own and other people's assessment of their own prestige and behavior in connection with their status (Olszewski 2003:90). In the theory of withdrawal, an ageing person keeps limiting her/his own activity, consequently, her/his social relations become weaker and, as a result, withdrawal from the social life occurs (Zych, 1995:38). The latter stress theory argues that critical events in the life of an older adult act as a stressor. Such critical events may include loss of health, disability, lower social or material prestige.

The fact of taking up activity may be regarded as serving the functions of (Matczak, 2003:48):

- adaptation – helps old people to adjust better to functioning in their new social and family situation,
- integration – contributes to better adjustment to the group the senior citizens belong to,
- compensation – helps to compensate for deficiencies in other respects (e.g. absence of professional work, insufficient knowledge),
- education – helps to develop and perfect personality features and predispositions,
- recreation and entertainment – helps to eliminate stress, restore will of life, fills in the free time,
- psychic hygiene – allows people to feel satisfaction, may advance self-esteem and, consequently, leads to improvement of life quality (Szatur – Jaworska, Błędowski, Dziegielewska, 2006:164).

Positive effects of starting any activity are wide-ranging if functions it fulfils are considered. The importance of older people's activity is still underestimated as only due to it senior citizens do not feel isolated and rejected. Activity taken up by the elderly builds their relationship with the outside world with which they interact and in which they experience all that is worthwhile and valuable.

Types of seniors' activity

Activity is a consequence of a lifestyle. All kinds of activity are determined by: age, sex, health condition, education, social and economic status and lifestyle (Trafiałek, 2003:169). Olga Czerniawska proposes five distinct activity styles: passive, family-centered, social, gardening, house-centered (2000, p. 170-174). M. Halicka and J. Halicki offer 5 other types of activity including: recreation

and hobby, receptive activity, public-oriented activity, integrative activity, other types of activity (2002:207).

Another model distinguishes seven activity types (Szatur – Jaworska, Błędowski, Dzięgielewska, 2006:163). The first one is the home and family-centered activity consisting in various actions connected with running a household and with the life of the closest family. The next type is the cultural activity manifesting itself as mainly urban lifestyle and including, e.g. reading, watching television, listening to the radio, making the most of cultural institution offer and attending seniors' clubs. Professional activity satisfies the need of recognition and of feeling useful. It prevents the seniors' social position from worsening, makes them feel better and improves self-evaluation of their health condition. Social activity is least common among senior citizens and is mainly taken up by people who were already activists before retirement. It seems that during the later years of life the importance of religious activity increases through more frequent participation in religious practices. The last activity type refers to recreation and includes leisure, physical activity and pursuing most favorite pastimes such as gardening

The starting points for the above typologies are different criteria for categorizing activity. Another proposition based on those classifications puts forward three basic activity categories: active, mixed and passive into which particular activity types fall. Analyses have shown that the following activity types should be recognized as active ones: social (voluntary work, participation in political parties, clubs, societies and organizations), educational (University of the Third Age, public lectures), recreation and physical activity (gardening, walking, tourism), religion, professional activity (income generating, i.e. continued professional activity or work not connected with occupation – nursing), cultural activity (opera, philharmonic concerts, theatre, cinema). The mixed, active and passive, category includes actions associated with home and family, while the passive category, house-centered could be understood in two ways: as a reflexive (active and careful content selection) or unreflective, i.e. “doing nothing” – unselective passive television watching, listening to the radio, watching passers-by through the window.

The aim and method

My research so far has concentrated on life satisfaction of older people living in Nursing Homes in Poland, the USA and Germany. Their activity, however, is limited on the one hand to the offer put forward by the institution they stay in, on the other hand, determined by the health condition of residents. The research results pointed out to the high level of life satisfaction and encouraged me to study opinions on life satisfaction expressed by senior citizens living on their own or with their families (Molesztak, 2008:50–65). As has been established earlier, the activity of Nursing Home residents is connected with the offer of the institution, therefore, my next study aimed at determining the activity of retired teachers – members of the Senior Club of the Polish Teachers' Association (ZNP)

against their life satisfaction. Senior clubs are “institutions of social normalization preventing the feeling of loneliness, social isolation and uselessness that at the same time support intellectual and creative capabilities of older people” (Szarota, 2009:87). The results pointed to the need of continuing research into evaluation of life satisfaction of senior citizens – U3A students and older people living in the rural community.

The aim of the research is to determine life satisfaction against the background of social and life activity of older people. Because of the limited space, the article focuses on one chosen research problem following from the research goal, namely: What is the life satisfaction of senior citizens against the background of their social and professional activity?

The results were statistically analyzed for every variable determining the mean value and standard deviation. To verify the significance of differences between groups, the parametric analysis of variance was used. Differences showing values below 0.05 of statistic significance were recognized as statistically significant. The Statistica PL v. 8.0 software was used for the purpose of statistic calculations.

The study uses the diagnostic poll method, a survey based on a questionnaire. The participants were asked to rate on a scale of 7 (very satisfied) to 1 (very dissatisfied) what they considered their happiness level to be, its conditions, satisfaction with standards of living and self-satisfaction. The research participants included U3A students in a province capital and a little town, members of the Senior Club of the Polish Teachers’ Association (ZNP) and residents of rural communities. U3As provide their students a wide and interesting educational offer. The analysis of the programs proposed by the U3A and the ZNP Senior Club has shown that the offer is attractive and facilitates the participation in classes and meetings. The U3A offers cyclic meetings, while the Senior Club members meet cyclically at organized activities.

The study included 219 people, 137 U3A students, 43 ZNP Senior Club meetings participants and 39 residents of rural communities. There were 140 women, 68 men and 11 respondents that did not state their sex in the survey. The youngest participant was 55 years old, while the oldest one was 91. The average respondent was 67.73 years old with the standard deviation of 14.43. The largest group included respondents aged 59-65, which most probably follows from the fact that they have retired not very long ago and are in good health.

The respondents were asked to provide details of their education: 40 senior citizens graduated from colleges or universities, 33 people have secondary education, 15 – vocational, 47 – lower secondary, and 83 – elementary education, 2 people did not answer the question. 123 respondents are married, 21 are single, 16 - divorced, 54 - widows or widowers, and 5 people did not provide the information. An analysis of the social and demographic structure of the group provides the basis for subsequent reflections on activity and life satisfaction.

Standards of living in older people's opinion

Life satisfaction includes also opinions of respondents on different aspects of everyday social life, in my earlier articles referred to as domains of life quality. Table 1 below shows the opinions including four domains of life with reference to mean values and standard deviations. All respondents are most satisfied with their accommodation – that is the highest satisfaction expressed, with similar standard deviation values. Respondents living in rural communities are the least satisfied group. The aspect that generally received worse evaluation by the group is the money they earn, though the opinion seems to be partly positive. The comparison of the groups in the study shows that the ZNP Senior Club members are the least satisfied. They all have university education and, therefore, might believe that they deserve better pay for their work. More dissatisfaction is observed with respect to their feeling of being provided for and life security as they are least satisfied with their savings - the group expressing the lowest satisfaction level is once again the group of ZNP Senior Club members.

Table 1. Chosen life satisfaction domains of Nursing Home residents (M – mean)

satisfaction domains	U3A Big city		U3A little town		ZNP Senior Club		Rural area		Σ	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
accommodation	5.43 1	1.19	5.3	1.44	5.37	1.54	4.02. 2002	1.5	5.16	1.45
earned money	4.23 2	1.29	4.32	1.3	3.41	1.76	4.26 1	1.37	4.1	1.46
savings	3.74 4	1.57	3.56	1.58	2.51	2.03	3.89 4	1.47	3.48	1.71
life security	4.09 3	1.41	3.63	1.7	3.36	1.99	3.92 3	1.46	3.79	1.63

Source: own study. Numbers in the lower line refer to the position with respect to the mean average.

Generally, it may be noticed that respondents living in rural communities show the lowest life satisfaction level in the domain of accommodation, while the remaining groups do not show differences as far as the mean is concerned. In the case of earned money and savings, a similar tendency has been observed, while the least satisfied group included retired teachers.

Though the results of this study provide data concerning the average level of evaluation for the domain, it cannot be concluded that the same mean value will be shown in the case of the whole population. The value is similar to that calculated in the study but, in order to establish how close it is to the tested sample, the so-called confidence intervals for the required value should be determined. On the basis of the sample, it is possible to establish intervals within which the real value of the required measure is included with the assumed probability of 95%. The mean accommodation satisfaction level among older people has been

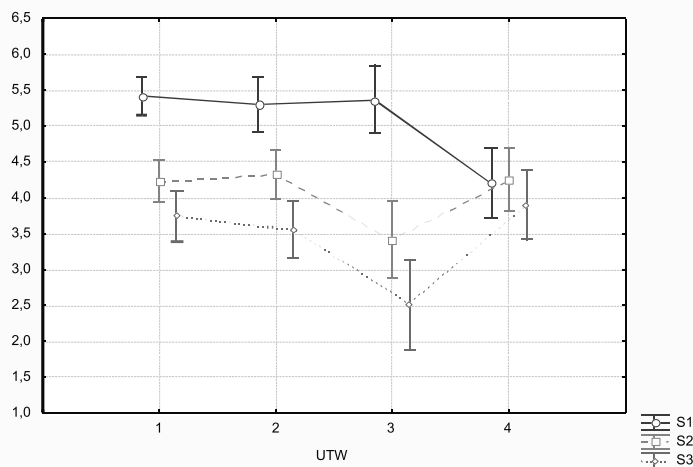
estimated at 5.16. The statistic calculation has shown that there is a 95% probability that the actual accommodation satisfaction level among older people is between 3.8 and 5.65. Older people living in the countryside show the lowest level of satisfaction with accommodation. Another domain concerns satisfaction with money earned. The general mean value is 4.1, while there is a 95% probability that the real mean satisfaction with money earned by older people is between 2.9 and 4.6. Once again, the lowest values have been calculated for the group of retired teachers, which points to the fact that these respondents believe they deserve more than they get. The mean value for satisfaction with savings amounts to 3.4, while the confidence interval for the domain is between 1.9 and 4.4. As in the previous domains, the least satisfied group includes retired teachers from the ZNP Senior Club. The remaining groups are within the same confidence level.

It may be thus concluded that the confidence level for all respondents is similar and, consequently, the differentiation within the comparable group of older people is similar.

A list of mean values and confidence intervals

S1- accommodation, S2 – money earned, S3 – savings

1-U3A Big city; 2- U3A Little town, 3 - ZNP Senior Club , 4 - Rural area



The proposed hypothesis focused on the question of the type of undertaken activity (U3A) differentiates participants of the research. The analysis uses parametric statistics as the number of respondents exceed 100. The results are presented in the table 2 below.

Table 2. Analysis of variance, significant results with $p < 0.05$

Life satisfaction domains	F	P
Accommodation	7,6	0,001
money earned	4,19	0,01
Savings	6,43	0,001
life security	2,17	0,09

No correlation has been found at the significant level of satisfaction with particular domains with respect to the age of respondents.

Self-satisfaction of senior citizens in the research

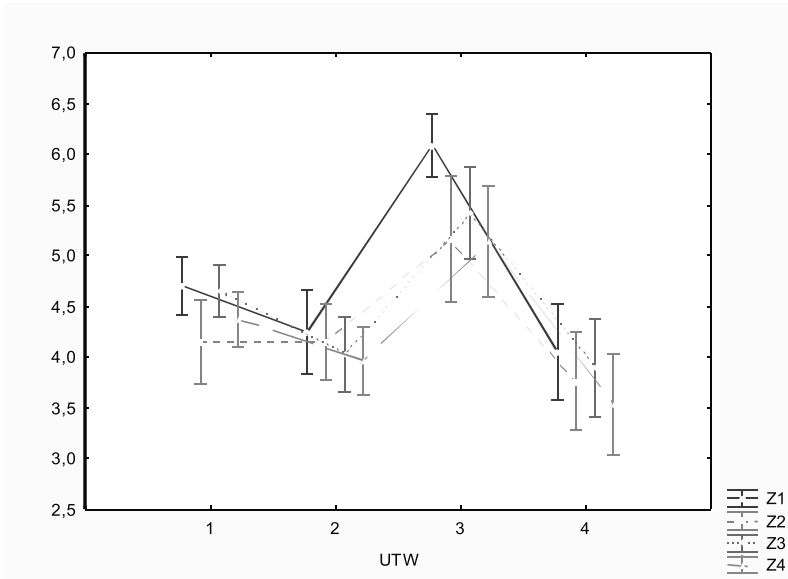
The determination of self-satisfaction involved all nine domains. Generally, the mean value of satisfaction with education for all participants of the study amounts to 4.74. Older people living in rural communities are least satisfied ($M=4.05$), while the mean value for other groups was higher (U3A-dm <big city> $M=4.7$ U3A -mm <little town> $M=4.25$ ZNP - $M=6.09$). Subsequent domains show lower values. Opportunities for personal development are generally estimated at the level of 4.26, and the results for particular groups are: UTW-dm $M=4.15$, UTW -mm $M=4.15$, ZNP - $M=5.17$ and M -w =3.76. The highest value in the domain is shown by the results for the group of retired teachers, which probably follows from their position of educated people aware of lack of knowledge. Spiritual development is another important sphere in the human life. Seeking the meaning of life and answers to the questions “Where am I going?”, “What do I long for?” are crucial for human life. This domain received low evaluation in every group in question. The universal mean satisfaction with spiritual development is $M= 4.49$, while for particular groups the value amounts to: UTW-dm $M=4.65$; UTW -mm $M=4.03$; ZNP - $M=5.43$ and M-w=3.89. Similarly to the former domain retired teachers expressed the highest satisfaction level with spiritual development. Another life satisfaction domain concerns participation in culture, where the most highly valued and at the same time the most satisfied group is the group of the ZNP Senior Club members $M=5.15$. The lowest mean value is shown by the older people living in rural communities ($M=3.54$). The results for retired teachers provide evidence as to their frequent and numerous participation in all types of cultural entertainment. It should be noted that the entertainment is not free; even if respondents buy discount tickets, the prices are not low. Older people most often visit museums, what is the most probably connected with the trips organized for them. Over 50% of respondents go to the opera a few times a year, go to concerts and to the cinema (in descending order). There are people who cyclically, twice a month, participate in some forms of entertainment. Retired teachers from the ZNP Senior Club take part in many different kinds of entertainment, including concerts, performances, exhibitions and films and, perhaps because of that, in comparison with the other groups,

highly value the culture they incessantly enjoy. Other results seem to confirm their desire to pursue their hobbies and interests. In comparison with the other groups, the mean value amounts here to $M=4.47$. The highest level of joy of life is displayed by U3A students: UTW- dm $M=5.26$, ZNP Club $M=5.19$. The group with the greatest satisfaction with life achievements also includes ZNP Senior Club members - $M=5.2$ who show also the highest satisfaction with future perspectives, though the level is slightly lower in comparison with previous results $M=4.4$. Results for work satisfaction are particularly interesting as, despite the low satisfaction with money earned and savings, retired teachers are the most satisfied group in the domain of work $M= 5.71$. Work satisfaction is an important predictor of life quality. U3A students in a big city are less satisfied with their work - $M=3.1$ and thus, it may be stated they are dissatisfied with it. Work has been evaluated at the level of $M= 4.29$ by senior citizens living in rural communities.

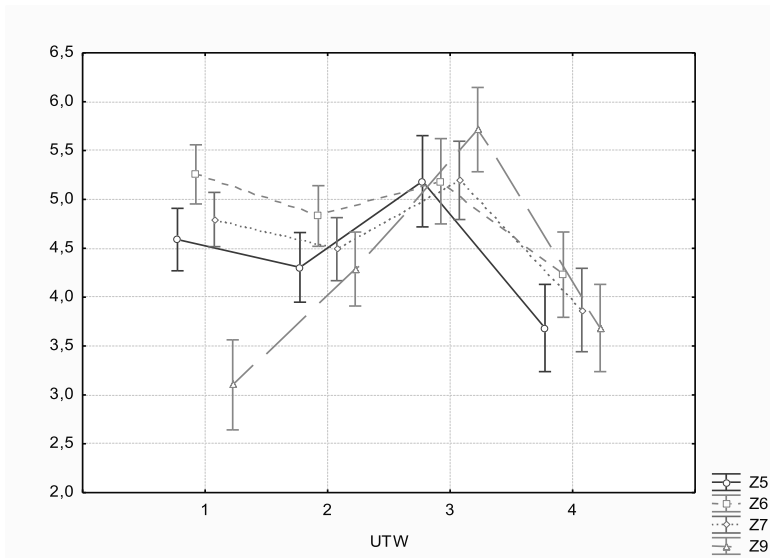
Table 3. Chosen life satisfaction domains of Nursing Home residents (M – mean)

satisfaction domains	U3A Big city		U3A little town		ZNP Senior Club		Rural area		Σ	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
satisfaction with education	4,7	1,29	4,25	1,57	6,09	1,01	4,05	1,45	4,74	1,52
opportunities for personal development,	4,15	1,79	4,15	1,47	5,16	1,84	3,76	1,48	4,26	1,71
spiritual development;	4,65	1,14	4,03	1,43	5,43	1,39	3,89	1,5	4,49	1,43
participation in culture;	4,37	1,21	3,97	1,3	5,15	1,73	3,54	1,54	4,26	1,4
pursuing hobbies and interests,	4,59	1,41	4,3	1,37	5,19	1,52	3,68	1,36	4,47	1,48
joy of life,	5,26	1,34	4,83	1,19	5,19	1,42	4,23	1,37	4,94	1,36
Life achievements,	4,79	1,23	4,49	1,24	5,2	1,27	3,87	1,3	4,63	1,31
Future prospects	3,97	1,29	3,98	1,6	4,4	1,76	4,05	1,41	4,07	1,49
work satisfaction.	3,1	2,04	4,29	1,45	5,71	1,38	3,68	1,36	4,03	1,9

Statistic calculations have shown that there is a 95% probability that the real mean satisfaction level with particular domains concerning self-satisfaction is within the stated limits shown in Figures below.

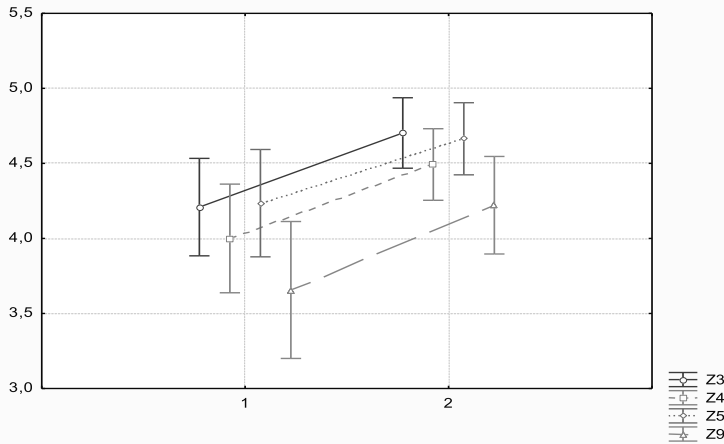


1-U3A Big city; 2- U3A little town, 3 - ZNP Senior Club , 4 - Rural area
 Z1- satisfaction with education; Z2 – opportunities for personal development, Z3- spiritual development; Z4 – participation in culture; Z5 - pursuing hobbies and interests, Z6 – joy of life, Z7 – life achievements, Z9- work satisfaction.

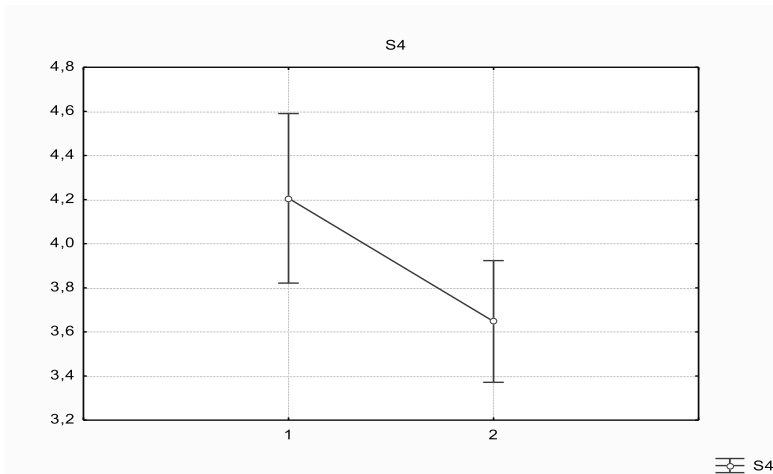


The highest confidence intervals have been established for retired teachers taking advantage of the ZNP Senior Club offer, followed by U3A students in a big city, U3A students in a little town and senior citizens living in rural communities.

Reflections on life satisfaction continue with the analysis of self-satisfaction with respect to sex of respondents. The most significant differences have been observed within four domains: spiritual development, participation in culture, pursuing interests and work satisfaction. In every domain women are more satisfied than men, which results in higher confidence intervals. Work satisfaction is at the lowest level for men. The graph below shows life security to illustrate the comparison between evaluations of satisfaction domains by both sexes.



The figure above graphically presents mean values and confidence intervals for life security for men and women. Men ($M=4.2$) are more satisfied with life security than women ($M=3.64$). There is a visible difference as women wish for a higher level of life security.



Older people's life satisfaction

During the analysis of the responses to the question about life satisfaction it has been observed that all respondents are happy. The happiest are U3A students living in a big city $M=5.05$, followed by ZNP senior Club members $M=4.42$, U3A students in a little town $M=4.38$ and rural areas residents who are the least happy $M=4.2$, thus, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents are happy.

To evaluate life satisfaction Ed Diener measure was used. Respondents answered five questions using the 1-to-7 scale. Results of the study are presented in Table 3 below. The research did not include retired teachers of the ZNP Senior Club, and thus involved 176 respondents. As follows from the data in the study, 52.84 % of respondents are satisfied with their life and 39.2% are dissatisfied. Comparing the records, it has been found out that the majority of U3A students express their satisfaction with life as opposed to 66.66% respondents living in rural communities who are dissatisfied with their lives. Previously described studies point to widespread stereotypes determining the way older people are perceived, such as their vices, disabilities or lack of satisfaction. The groups of respondents confirm the research results. In order to identify the conditions determining the satisfaction level in this group, further research is planned.

Table 4. Older people's life satisfaction

Interpretation	U3A – big city	%	U3A - little town	%	older people in rural communities	%	Σ	%
very satisfied	3	3.85	4	6.78	0	0	7	3.98
Satisfied	25	32.05	7	11.86	1	2.56	33	18.75
moderately satisfied	23	29.49	19	32.2	11	28.22	53	30.11
Neutral	6	7.69	7	11.86	1	2.56	14	7.95
moderately dissatisfied	14	17.95	13	22.03	19	48.72	46	26.14
Dissatisfied	5	6.41	6	10.16	6	15.38	17	9.67
very dissatisfied	2	2.56	3	5.08	1	2.56	6	3.41
Σ	78	100	59	100	39	100	176	100

An analysis of particular statements on general life satisfaction shows the mean value for every question. The question on life quality has received the highest evaluation from respondents, though every group displays the mean value higher than 4. The most satisfied group includes U3A students in a big

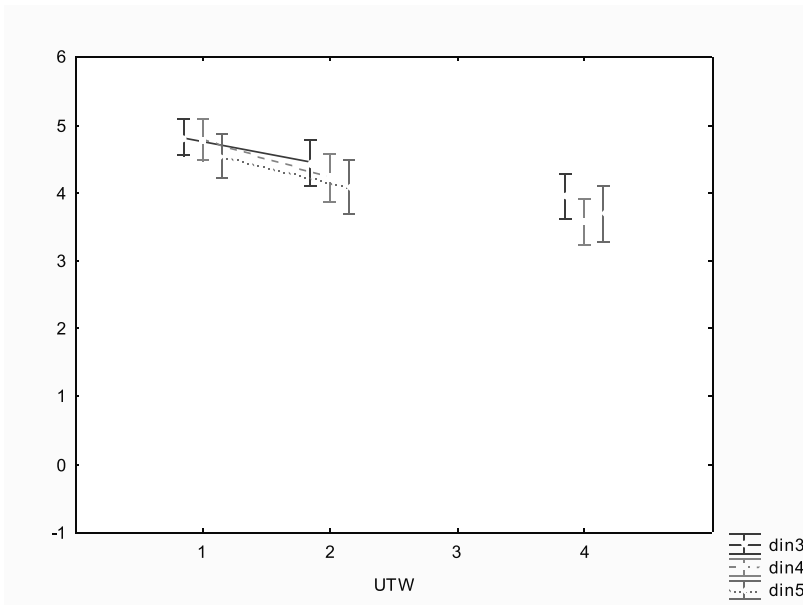
city, while residents of rural areas show the lowest satisfaction level for every statement.

Results of the research provide mean levels for particular domains but do not allow a conclusion that the whole population has the same average value of the feature. To demonstrate how similar it is to the sample the so called confidence intervals may be determined. On the basis of the sample, intervals can be calculated including the real value of the measure in question with a 95% probability. The graph XX shows mean values of particular domains and confidence intervals. The mean life satisfaction (din3) amounts to 4.5. The figure is a graphic representation of the mean values and confidence intervals for every group. With the help of statistic calculations it has been determined that there is a 95% probability the real average life satisfaction level among older people is between 5.1 and 4.5 for U3A students-dm. 4.1 and 4.9 –U3A-mm and 3.6 and 4.25 for rural areas residents.

The statement “I have achieved the most important things I wanted in life” (din4) demonstrates the difference between the groups in the study with respect to mean values and confidence intervals. The lowest results have been recorded for the last statement “If I could live my life once again I would not like to change nearly anything”. As follows from the confidence intervals on the graph the balance of life shows what bad decisions could have been avoided or changed.

Table 5. Life satisfaction domains

satisfaction domains	U3A Big city		U3A little town		Rural area		Σ	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. life close to ideal (din1)	4.15	1.46	4.05	1.21	3.55	1.11	3.99	1.32
2. My life conditions are perfect (din2)	4.12	1.2	3.81	1.26	3.61	1.15	3.9	1.22
3. I am satisfied with my life (din3)	4.82	1.2	4.44	1.28	3.95	1.02	4.5	1.23
4. I have achieved the most important things I wanted in life (din4)	4.78	1.35	4.22	1.33	3.58	1.03	4.33	1.36
5. If I could live my life once again I would not like to change nearly anything (din5)	4.54	1.41	4.08	1.5	3.68	1.23	4.2	1.43



Summary and conclusions

1. The research conducted sanctions a few statements. First, the least satisfied group includes older people living in rural communities, while retired teachers are the group least satisfied with the money earned and savings. With age a change in importance attached to satisfying particular needs is observed. Senior citizens highly value the satisfaction of their life security need, while the significance of needs for prestige and aspirations gradually decrease. As follows from the above study, retirement from work is associated with the deteriorating material status of older people (Wesołowska, 2006, 23-25).
2. The studies conducted provide the basis for the statement that the confidence interval for all respondents is similar. Therefore, the differentiation within the comparable groups is analogous.
3. Participation in U3A does not differentiate the groups in the study. No significant correlation has been noticed between particular domains of life satisfaction and the age of respondents.
4. U3A students most highly value education and opportunities for personal development.
5. Despite the low satisfaction with earned money and savings the ZNP Senior Club members are the group most satisfied with their work.
6. Retired teachers are the group showing highest self-satisfaction that means they show the high level of psychological needs satisfaction. They are also most satisfied with education, work and spiritual development.

Their spirituality may have external (religious services) or internal forms, may stimulate their courage, the will to fight and/or form foundations of the strong belief system (Stelcer, 2006:248). The research has shown that with age the religious activity increases and is high among late adults.

7. No correlation between age and the analyzed domains of satisfaction with standards of living, self-satisfaction and life satisfaction has been found.
8. Senior citizens who are very active in their free time achieve higher life satisfaction, which means that the more active they are, the higher their life satisfaction gets. Moreover, older people with university and secondary education enjoy better life satisfaction.

To conclude I would like to quote Maria Braun-Gałkowska:

(...) In order to turn to it, the interior cannot be empty. In old age we have a bigger than before chance to intensify our internal life but, to be intensified, the life must have existed there before. Old age may be the crown of life but it cannot be its beginning. If we had developed our internal life before, we have now the place to turn to and something to refine. If we fail to do it in time, in old age we have nothing to do but listen attentively to our own body, less and less healthy and less and less beautiful" (1990: 202-203).