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AKTYWNOŚĆ SENIORÓW A ICH ZADOWOLENIE Z ŻYCIA

SENIOR CITIZENS' ACTIVITY AND THEIR LIFE SATISFACTION

Summary

The present study describes research conducted with participation of 43 retired teachers. The research used the diagnostic poll method, survey technique and survey questionnaire. On basis of the research the author concludes the following: older adults prefer home and family-centred, cultural and leisure activity types. Retired teachers are a comparatively young and very active group, the majority have and pursue broad interests. Their former professional work has contributed to their considerable activity after achieving the senior citizen status. It has been found that the ease in obtaining tickets to concerts and performances facilitates frequent participation of the seniors in the events. An additional advantage is encouraging section managers' contacts with the opera house and philharmonic hall by introducing them to the repertoire for the next month. Friends' engagement encourages new people to take part in culture. At concerts old people sit together, exchange opinions and, last but not least, enjoy themselves. They do not feel isolated or lonely. Organisation of tours by dynamic tourist section members facilitates senior citizens' participation in trips.

Good financial standing of educated people allows them to go abroad more often. Leisure is conducive to keeping fit; most often older adults go for walks and work in the garden. Seniors very active in their free time enjoy greater life satisfaction, what means that the more active older people are the bigger their life satisfaction is. Whether or not seniors take up activity and the activity types depend on many circumstances including: hobbies and interests, aspirations, financial situation, social status, health, disability, place of residence.

Senior citizens' activity and their life satisfaction

Streszczenie

W artykule opisano badania, którymi objęto 43 seniorów-nauczycieli. Badanie przeprowadzono metodą sondażu diagnostycznego, techniką ankiety z wykorzystaniem kwestionariusza ankiety. W oparciu o przeprowadzone badania sformułować można następujące wnioski: seniorzy preferują *domowo-rodzinny, kulturalny i rekreacyjny* typ aktywności. Emerytowani nauczyciele są grupą stosunkowo młodą i bardzo aktywną, większość ma szerokie zainteresowania, które realizują. Wcześniejsza praca zawodowa przyczyniła się do dużej aktywności po osiągnięciu statusu seniora. Okazało się, że umożliwienie szybkiego otrzymania biletu na spotkaniu koła emerytów sprzyja częstotliwości uczestnictwa w koncertach i przedstawieniach. Dodatkowym atutem jest zachęcenie kierowników sekcji od kontaktów z operą i filharmonią z repertuarem na kolejny miesiąc. Zaangażowanie koleżanek sprzyja zachęceniu nowych osób do

podjęcia takiego uczestnictwa w kulturze. Na koncertach seniorzy siedzą obok siebie, wymieniają poglądy i co najważniejsze świetnie się bawią. Nie czują się odizolowani, osamotnieni. Dynamiczna organizacja wyjazdów przez członków sekcji turystycznej sprzyja wyjazdom seniorów na wycieczki. Dobra sytuacja materialna osób wykształconych pozwala na częstsze wyjazdy zagraniczne. Podkreślić należy, że uprawianie aktywności rekreacyjnej sprzyja zachowaniu sprawności fizycznej, najczęściej seniorzy chodzą na spacerzy oraz uprawiają ogródki działkowe; Seniorzy bardzo aktywni w swoim czasie wolnym mają wyższe zadowolenie z życia. Rodzaj i podejmowanie aktywności zależny od wielu uwarunkowań do których zaliczyć można: zainteresowania, aspiracje, sytuację materialną, pozycję społeczną, zdrowie, niepełnosprawność, miejsce zamieszkania.

1. Introduction

To introduce the reader into the topic of the paper a few issues decisive for the development of human activity questions should be focused on. First, it is less and less common for young people to live together with their family of origin. The situation results from the reality of impractical, cramped flats and scarce employment opportunities which forces young people to migrate. Moreover, a low number of marriages and preference of informal relationships and cohabitation have been observed what also contributes to loneliness of the elderly,¹ and thus family bonds become loose. In this way the so called senior adult subculture arises which is a result of separation and exclusion. The subculture is a manifestation of protest against the present culture of separating people from the rest of the society².

As far as demography is concerned the current life expectancy prognoses expect it to lengthen even up to 120 years³. Life expectancy forecast for the period till 2025 has already been estimated. It is a well-known fact that women and men live much longer nowadays and, as it has already been mentioned, the estimated life expectancy increased and already today a 60- or 70 -year-old is expected to live for many long years. A change concerning the retirement age is being observed as well, e.g. in Sweden where men and women alike are in position to acquire full Social Security benefits at the age of 67. In Great Britain the retirement age has also been raised as in 8 years women will be able to

¹ L.Frańkiewicz L. (ed.). (2002). *Polityka społeczna*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katowice, p. 37),

² R.Konieczna-Woźniak (2009), *Udział ludzi starszych e edukacji nieformalnej*, [in:] „Chowanna”. Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice p. 133

³ W.Wnuk (2010), *Kulturowa wartość starości*, „Wrocławski Senior” no. 2. p. 4.

retire at the age of 65, while men will be able to retire at the age of 66 in six years. Such changes have been introduced in Germany as well and Poland similarly faces transformations in this area. Moreover, all people below 70 years of age are allowed to work if they feel the need to do so. The transformations result from the increase in the number of OAPs and the poor natural birth growth rate in highly developed countries.

The third issue of major importance for older people concerns architectural barriers. The elderly often are not able to participate in any forms of activity because of the absence of safe ramped entryways and lifts. However, that is also a problem for the disabled and mothers with little babies and every group has been battling for accessibility facilities as although there are more of them, the number is still inadequate.

The elderly may be partly or completely prevented from engaging in any activity form within a number of human life areas by reasons resulting from their individual preferences or economic or architectural conditions.

It may be noted that the majority literature on the old age starts with quotations pointing to the rapid speed of aging phenomena observed in highly developed countries. The problem should not be ignored though the much research shows that it still does not receive adequate attention and is often being diminished.

The most underestimated area of senior citizens' life is their free time activity and, therefore, the present study attempts to present activity choice trends among retired teachers.

2. Activity and its nature

Throughout life an individual has his/her time organised. When a child s/he spends most of the time at nursery, kindergarten, with a babysitter or a parent; then school and studies take most of their time. Children and adolescents spend their free time attending some extra-curricular courses or doing extra-school activities (dancing classes, chess playing, tennis, social life, etc.) Adults, besides working, fulfil their family obligations to their spouses, children, parents or grandparents and therefore a small amount of spare time is characteristic for this group. The situation changes with the retirement as the OAP has to replace the time otherwise spent on work with other activities but very often the people fail to meet their earlier intentions and plans when retired at last.

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 done so far⁴. 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.⁵

The community of older adults is most often perceived as consisting of people having surplus of free time but observations point to the fact that the amount of spare time depends on many various factors. Gerontological literature draws attention to the fact that the group of senior citizens is not homogeneous and that extensive differences are observed between particular **stages of the old age**. There are some discrepancies as to the definition of the old age stages, however, for example P. Szukalski specifies them as: the young old – to the age of seventy-four, late old age – from age of seventy-five to eighty-nine and the period of longevity - past the age of ninety⁶. As follows from the above division the younger the senior is the more often s/he will spend her/ his free time in an active way, and the older the person is the more amount of unorganised spare time s/he will have. The periods of late old age and longevity are the times when geriatrics syndromes are observed, i.e. the so called multiple morbidity - the health condition preventing or limiting the activity in free time.

Literature contains different approaches to activity older adults engage in in their free time. The activity is defined as the inclination to intensive action, e.g. undertaking a variety of initiatives or active participation⁷. Elaborating on this definition A.A. Zych states that activity is a way of experiencing reality, a cognitive quality manifesting in physical and intellectual actions conditioned by personality factors⁸. Activity influences an individual within three spheres: knowledge, skills

⁴ H.Olszewski (2003), *Starość i witaukt psychologiczny: atrybucja rozwoju*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk p. 92

⁵ Tarkowska, 1997, p.59, following Halicka M, Halicki J. (2002). *Integracja społeczna a aktywność ludzi starszych*, [in:] B. Synak (ed.) *Polska starość*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego. Gdańsk, p. 203

⁶ P. Szukalski, 2006, *Populacja osób bardzo starych w społeczeństwie polskim – stan obecny* [in:], *Ludzie starzy w polskim społeczeństwie w pierwszych dekadach XXI wieku*, Łódź: UŁ p.115)

⁷ *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, 1996, p.25

⁸ A.Zych, (2001), *Słownik Gerontologii Społecznej*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa, p. 19

and attitudes (Konarzewski, 1987). 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 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 mentioned communication takes place as a result of old people's engagement in various initiatives. The communication is a two-way process where not only the older person acts but is also subject to action and therefore may be defined as a process of direct and indirect action and cooperation.

A. Kamiński considers the older adults' activity in terms of two categories. One of them regards doing valued and useful work, while the other one refers to pursuing hobbies and interests⁹. 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”¹⁰.

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 a new “quality” creation. The effect of activity is fulfilment of the affiliation need, the need to be needed, the feeling of satisfaction and content.

Activity may be divided into 3 types: formal, informal and solitary. The first type, the formal one, is defined as membership in social organisations, voluntary service, work for the local community, participation in politics, etc. Another type, the informal activity, includes contacts with friends, acquaintances, family and neighbours. The latter solitary activity refers to such actions as watching television, reading, following one's hobbies and interests¹¹. Every activity type results in particular transformations in the life of individuals. The opposite of activity is “doing nothing”, watching television, listening to the radio or reading magazines or books without reflection or choice.

⁹ B.Szatur-Jaworska, P. Błędowski, M.Dzięgielewska (2006), *Podstawy gerontologii społecznej*, ASPRA-JR. Warszawa, p. 162

¹⁰ H.Balicka-Kozłowska H. (1986), *Aktywność w starszym wieku – hamulce i bodźce* [in:], *Encyklopedia seniora*, eds. I. Borsowa at al. Warszawa, p. 165, following: Nowicka, Majdalska, 2006, p.284

¹¹ Szatur-Jaworska B., Błędowski P., Dzięgielewska M. (2006), op.cit. p. 161)

Research performed in Poland - GUS (1990), Szutar-Jaworska (1994, 2006), Peđich, Halicka (1996), Trafiałek (2003), Halicka, Halicki (2002) 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 from 1993 by P. Czekanowski states that nothing has changed in this respect¹². 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 for establishing organisations integrating senior adults with the society. Moreover, the popularised model of old age does not include activity at all¹³.

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 the old age stress. The first one regards an aging person as a social phenomenon amassing tensions connected with the self image concept which 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 relationships¹⁴. "The activity theory has been created to explain older adults' behaviour 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 behaviour in connection with their status¹⁵. 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 occurs¹⁶. 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 (in: Rembowski, 1984).

A senior adapts to retirements conditions but the attitude to the new situation is most important. The attitude to life, in compliance with the

¹² B. Wojszel (2002), *Zdrowotne i pozazdrowotne uwarunkowania aktywnosci społecznej osob starszych*. Gerontologia E. Woźnicka (ed) Zeszyty Naukowe WSHE, Nr 7, p.30

¹³ Ibidem, p. 30-31)

¹⁴ A.Zych, (2001), op.cit. p. 218

¹⁵ H.Olszewski H. (2003), *Starość i witaukt psychologiczny: atrybucja rozwoju*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk Olszewski, 2003 p. 90

¹⁶ A. Zych (1995), *Człowiek wobec starości*, Interart, Warszawa, p. 38

activity theory, will protect the elderly from apathy, withdrawal and isolation. Furthermore, the people will be fulfilling themselves, developing and satisfying their needs. The primary and fundamental condition for an older person to keep living and functioning is their need satisfaction. Psychologists and gerontologists enumerate the following needs: integration, usefulness and recognition, autonomy, safety, life satisfaction (Leszek, Free paper).

Though it is beyond the scope of this paper one should briefly mention an interesting concept of activity position and role in the mechanism of adaptation to the old age presented by A. Matczak¹⁷.

The fact of taking up activity may be regarded as serving functions of:

- ♦ 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 quality¹⁸.

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 that senior citizens do not feel isolated and rejected. Activity taken up by the elderly builds their relation with the outside world with which they interact and in which they experience all what is worthwhile and valuable.

3. 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

¹⁷ A. Matczak (2003), *Zarys psychologii rozwoju. Podręcznik dla nauczycieli*. Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak. Warszawa p.48

¹⁸ Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, Dziegielewska, 2006, op. cit. p. 164

economic status and lifestyle¹⁹. Olga Czerniawska proposes five distinct activity styles: passive, family-centred, social, gardening, house-centred (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 activity²⁰.

Another model distinguishes seven activity types. The first one is the home and family-centred activity consisting in various actions connected with running a household and with life of the closest family. The next type is the cultural activity manifesting 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 at the later years of life the importance of religious activity increases by more frequent participation in religious practices. The last activity type refers to recreation and includes leisure, physical activity and pursuing most favourite pastimes as gardening²¹.

The starting points for above typologies are different criteria for categorising activity. Another proposition basing 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 recognised as active ones: social (voluntary work, participation in political parties, clubs, societies and organisations), 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-centred could be understood in two ways: as a reflexive (active and careful content

¹⁹ E. Trafiątek (2003), *Polska starość w dobie przemian*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Śląsk”, Katowice, p. 169

²⁰ M. Halicka and J. Halicki (2002). *Integracja społeczna a aktywność ludzi starszych*, [in:] B. Synak (ed.) *Polska starość*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego. Gdańsk., p.207

²¹ Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, Dziegielewska, 2006, op. cit. p.163

selection) or unreflective, i.e. “doing nothing” – unselective passive television watching, listening to the radio, watching passers-by through the window.

4. Older adults' life satisfaction

The variety of theories and opinions on the quality of life demonstrates how broad the scope of the subject is. A generally accepted way of defining the concept is very difficult to agree on because of its generality. “Although life quality seems to be an obvious concept the issue is defined in somewhat different ways to representatives of different scholarly disciplines, depending on unique interests, accepted values or scholarly perspective”.²²

Contemporary definitions mainly focus on social aspects of the quality. Quality of human life represents people's relations with the outside world; in other words, if a person is satisfied with her/his life and receives support from other people, has a happy family and some livelihood, s/he feels safe and it all results in the improved life quality. In scholarly terms, quality of life is defined as follows: “Quality of life is a feeling of satisfaction in individuals or social groups resulting from the consciousness of their own needs having been satisfied and from perceiving opportunities for achieving individual and social development”²³. That very general definition of quality of life is practically all-inclusive but may be subject to expansion or alternation.

Literature varies widely in its description of quality of older people's life. Zofia Szarota remarks that a number of changes important to OAPs occurred when Poland joined the European Union. The major ones include improvement of the quality and status of life for older people in economic, cultural and social respects, great opportunities for UE support, implementation of undertakings aiming at activating stimulating the elderly²⁴. However, it has been reported that the improvement of life quality for older people may occur only and exclusively when “social acceptance for changes and long-term solutions will occur and necessary Social Security reforms will be

²² Sadowska S. (2006). *Jakość życia uczniów z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu lekkim*. Impuls. Kraków: IMPULS, p. 216).

²³ Rottermunda J., A. Klinik (ed.) (2005). *Uwarunkowania rehabilitacji osób niepełnosprawnych*, Kraków: IMPULS, p. 71

²⁴ Z. Szarota (2009), Seniorzy w przestrzeni kulturalno-edukacyjnej społeczeństwa wiedzy [in:] “Chowanna”. Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) *Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice p. 92)

supported. It requires a change in the stereotypical way of perceiving seniors (...) ²⁵. On the other hand, Barbara Szatur-Jawroska points out that “the oldest age group includes relatively many people who do not feel very happy and thus their quality of life should be determined as low” (2006, p. 313 and 315). In the subject opinion of the old, the transformations which occurred did not turn out to be positive for all retired people. Considering those two standpoints, taking into account advantages and actual results one may explain that the changes were occurring very slowly what has contributed to the poor evaluation of life quality.

5. Purpose and methodology of research

The purpose of this study was to relate senior citizens' activity to their life satisfaction. The paper will focus on one chosen research problem following from its rationale, namely the question: what the activity of older problem is with respect to their life satisfaction?

Results of the research have been analysed statistically. Basic calculations for every variable have been done determining the mean value and standard deviation. To specify the importance of differences between groups the nonparametric analysis of variance has been applied. To examine relations correlation matrices were used. Because of heterogeneous variances the nonparametric Kruskal–Wallis one-way analysis of variance test and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient were applied. Deviations not exceeding 0.05 of the significance level were regarded to be statistically significant. For statistical calculations Statistica PL v. 8.0. software was used.

The research was carried out using the diagnostic poll method, a survey technique using questionnaires. Participants were asked to respond to questions about their happiness level, life conditions, satisfaction with living standards and self-satisfaction using a seven-point scale, ranging from 7 (I am very satisfied) to 1 (I am very dissatisfied). At the same time the participants specified the activity type and its frequency.

The research was done at the Seniors' Club of the Polish Teachers' Association. The chosen organisation is a well managed institution. Club members meet once a month throughout the September-June period. The club comprises units connected with spare time organisation, including e.g. the dynamic tourist section arranging cyclic

²⁵ Ibidem

excursions and trips. Another rapidly developing section deals with concert, opera and theatre outings. After the repertoire has been presented club members order tickets to concerts and performances. Holiday celebrations as Christmas carol concerts, poetry meetings and public lectures are cyclically organised by club management board.

In the research 43 people, 41 women and 2 men, participated. The youngest woman was 59 years old and the oldest one - 78. The average age of a woman in the study was 67.5. Most women were in the age group of 59 to 65. The situation probably resulted from the short period of time passed from the retirement moment and good health. People past 71 were the smallest group among club members. Table 1 presents the division of club members according to age groups and sex.

Table 1. Demographic structure of the chosen group

Age	Sex		total
	women	men	
under 65	21	1	22
66-70	9	-	9
71-75	3	1	4
76-89	3	-	3
total	*35	2	38

Source: author's study. * five women did not fill in age.

To present the research group in the most complete way the participants were asked about their education and thus: 35 people have higher education, 5 OAPs graduated from high school and two did not include the details concerning their education. It may be inferred that the remaining two people have at least secondary education. Education of the group is associated with their profession as teachers and educators. Table 2 presents marital status of the research group.

The marital status of the group is much diversified. 14 group members are still married and the majority of married couples are up to

65 years of age. 8 people are single, while 6 are divorced and 10 widowed. The shortest marriage lasted for 10 years and the longest for 51. Another independent variable used in the present study is housing as presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Marital status

marital status	married	single	divorced	widow/widower	total
under 65	7	7	6	2	22
66-70	2	1	-	6	9
71-75	4	-	-	-	4
76-89	1	-	-	2	3
Total	14	8	6	10	38*

Source: author's own study. * five women did not fill in their marital status.

Table 3. Housing type

Housing Age	Living on their own in their own flat	With a husband in their own flat	With children	Other situatio n	Total
under 65	10	6	4	2	22
66-70	4	2	3	0	9
71-75	0	4	0	0	4
76-89	2	1	0	0	3
Total	16	13	7	2	38*

Source: author's own study. * five women did not fill in their marital status.

Older teachers own the apartments where they live (16 people) or live with their spouse (13 people). The number of seniors living independently includes 6 widows, while 7 people live with their children. It seems that if an older person manages to live on her/his own s/he wants to maintain that status quo for the longest possible time. Thirty participants have children, 9 of them have 1 child, 15 -2 children, 6 persons have three or more offspring.

From the social and demographic data cited above it may be concluded that the tested group contains women, in majority under 65 years of age, living on their own or together with a husband in their own flat. The group includes majority of married women and widows.

Social and demographic analysis of the group forms the basis for subsequent considerations connected with activity in relation to the quality of life.

6. Older adults' activity

Activity of old people and their life satisfaction is a problem widely written about in literature. My research so far has concentrated on life satisfaction of residents of Retirement Houses in Poland, the USA and Germany. Activity of residents of old age homes in Poland is limited to activities organised by their own institution on one hand and determined by the state of health of the older people on the other. Results of research demonstrating high life satisfaction became the reason for examining the opinion of senior citizens living on their own or with their family as to that question²⁶. As the formerly received results have shown that activity of retirement house residents is connected with the offer of those institutions, the present study aimed at specifying the activity of senior citizens – teachers members of the Seniors' Club of the Polish Teachers' Association in relation to their feeling of life satisfaction. Seniors' clubs are "institutions of social normalization preventing the feeling of seclusion, social isolation and/or uselessness, at the same time supporting intellectual and creative potential of older people".²⁷

²⁶ A. Molesztak A. (2008), *Jakość życia ludzi starych w aspekcie ich zdrowia*, [in:] J. T. Kowaleski, P. Szukalski (ed.), *Pomyślne starzenie się w perspektywie nauk społecznych i humanistycznych*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego. Łódź (p. 50-65).2008, p. 54

²⁷ Z. Szarota (2009), *Seniorzy w przestrzeni kulturalno-edukacyjnej społeczeństwa wiedzy* [in:] "Chowanna". Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) *Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice p. 87

Seniors were asked to describe their hobbies and interests on the basis of which a list of hobbies of club members was compiled. The hobbies most frequently mentioned include:

- music (theatre, classical music, opera, singing in a choir) – 14 people
- reading books and poetry, writing poetry - 14 people,
- tourism – 11 people,
- cinema, good film – 4 people,
- intellectual games – 3 people,
- gardening - 3 people,
- stamp collecting, painting, natural medicine, needlework or knitting, science – one person per a hobby

Two people stated that they are people of broad interests, however, it may be inferred from the hobbies listed by the club members that they most often go to classical music concerts at the philharmonic hall and to opera, read books and go on trips.

Fourteen people declare their interest in concerts and performances, therefore the survey participants were also asked to assess the frequency of the participation in such activity forms. The results are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Participation in cultural events forms

institution	participation frequency (N= 43)			
	once a month	twice a month	a few times a year	never
Philharmonic Hall	5	5	22	11
Opera	9	2	25	7
Cinema	8	3	19	13
Museum	1	1	29	12

Source: author's own study

The obtained data point to numerous participation in the above forms of entertainment. However, it should be noted that they are not free of charge and even if the older people can buy discount tickets the price is not low (e.g. tickets to philharmonic concerts cost 35 PLN). Older adults most often go to museums, probably on organised trips. Opera performances, concerts and cinema are next on the list, with over 50% of participants. There are people who take advantage of the entertainment forms twice a month. The group is not big as it includes 11 persons. The club members participate in many entertainment forms including concerts, performances, exhibitions and movies.

It turns out that 32 respondents have been on trips over the last two years. In Poland they went to Kraków, Wadowice, Jastarnia, Licheń, Ciechocinek, Łeba, Chełmno, Grudziądz, Wrocław, Górka Klasztorna, Częstochowa, Poznań. They also travelled abroad to Germany (Bavaria), Tunisia, Sicily, Egypt, Thailand, Crimea, France, the Czech Republic, St. Petersburg, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Spain, Lithuania, Belgium, Crete. That implies that senior citizens in the study are in majority interested in trips abroad, some of the respondents indicated that the tours are organised by the tourism section of the club.

Analysis of the activity types seems to confirm the earlier research results as older adults prefer the *home and family-centred* type of activity. 31 seniors spend their free time with their families. Family is one of the most important activity areas for adults. The better is the relation between family members the healthier the senior person feels. The elderly help their children and grandchildren as well as distant relatives but at the same time they also expect support and assistance. The most frequent forms include financial aid and service assistance. J. Wawrzyniak argues that it is the family and home-focused activity style which is most frequent among senior citizens. Older adults take care of their grand and great grandchildren or do household chores; they do the cleaning, water plants, listen to the radio, watch television, read books. But, the author concludes, the tasks do not make their life full as they feel the need to go out and pursue their hobbies and interests outside home. This type of time spending is defined as being half active half passive²⁸.

Professional activity has two forms: continued professional work or work not connected with the seniors' occupation. 5 members of the survey group continue their former professional activity. For people

²⁸J. Wawrzyniak (2009) *Oblicza starości*. Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej, Łódź p.32

fond of their profession it is the most desirable form of activity as, on one hand, it provides income and ensures the feeling of social usefulness, on the other hand, it organises their day and life. Besides the participants mentioned above three respondents do some babysitting. Owing to this their financial standing is better. The study confirms considerations included in literature about the twofold nature of the issue of older adults' professional activity. Work improves the financial situation of the elderly or is preferred by people whose health condition allows voluntary service. The work is connected with the former occupation or hobbies or interests of the people, e.g. retired teachers, accountants, lawyers²⁹.

Table 5. Activity types of the survey participants

Activity types (N=43)		Always	Often	Occasionally	Never
home and family-centred activity		2	29	4	8
professional activity	continued professional activity	1	4	5	33
	babysitting	2	1	3	37
social activity	voluntary work	0	1	5	37
	work in clubs, societies, associations	3	10	6	24
educational activity – participation in the University of the Third Age (U3A),		4	7	0	32
religious activity – every day in the morning or evening I go to church		1	7	12	23
physical activity	I work in the garden	3	16	5	19

²⁹B.Szatur-Jaworska, P. Błędowski, M.Dzięgielewska (2006), *Podstawy gerontologii społecznej*, ASPRA-JR. Warszawa, p. 143)

(leisure)	in the spring and summer,				
	walks	3	19	11	12
cultural activity		5	9	17	12

Sources: author's own study

Participants of the research are a comparatively young and educated group whose religious activity is most often limited to their participation in Sunday services. 8 people go to church every day. The situation may change in the later years of their life what remains in conformance with the research results. Religious activity is continuation of the life style led so far. Churchgoers, participants of holy mass services or religious processions, members of the church escort who have closely cooperated with the church and the parish in their younger years continue doing so in their old age. Membership in the religious community offers them the sense of belonging to a social group sharing similar spiritual needs and views on fundamental human issues³⁰. For some people it is the only way they get in touch with other senior citizens.

Educational activity is related with attending the University of the Third Age (U3A). 25.58% survey group members attend U3A lectures. Jerzy Halicki observes that senior citizen's education in Poland is determined by occasional actions. U3A students are in majority educated people. Educational programmes put forward by the institution focus on general education and only then on assisting older adults in solving their life problems³¹.

Another activity type is the physical or leisure activity playing a major role in the aging process. "The aging process may be defined as gradual deterioration of body organ structure and function (...) conditioned by functions of some genes"³². Since the moment the

³⁰ O.Czerniawska (2000), *Drogi i bezdroża andragogiki i gerontologii*. Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna. Łódź 1998, p. 24

³¹ J.Halicki (2000), *Edukacja seniorów w aspekcie teorii kompetencyjnej*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, Białystok, p. 150-152

³² K. Książek (2007), *Zagadka starzenia się. Współczesne poglądy na temat możliwości opóźnienia się procesu starzenia się* [in:] J. Twardowska-Rajewska, (ed.) *Senior w domu*. Wydawnictwo UAM. Poznań p. 18-19

reproductive process of a human being stops, humans start losing their biological potential and strength what in turn results in incapability of doing some actions. Regular physical activity which prolongs the physical agility period may deter the process. The survey group prefers two physical activity forms. One is gardening regularly (always) done by 3 participants and often by 16 participants. 5 people occasionally work in the garden. In contrast, 19 seniors do not take part in this kind of activity. On the whole, it may be concluded that 44.19% older adults do gardening. This way of spending their spare time shows advantages of "not only active life style but also offers relaxation and leisure in contact with nature, opportunity for inviting family and friends, offering them crops and preserves, for enriching the personal diet and, last but not least, offers satisfaction"³³. Another form of leisure is walking. As the research was carried out in Bydgoszcz where there is the Park of Culture and Entertainment in Myślęcinek the participants were asked to express their opinion on visits to this beautiful place. Consequently, it has been found out that 51.2% older adults always or often visits the place.

Cultural activity includes going to the cinema, theatre, opera, philharmonic hall, to music concerts but also visits to museums or monuments of culture, development of seniors' hobbies and passions.

5 group members always goes to the above institutions, nine – often. 17 people occasionally go to opera or music concerts, 12 – never. An earlier study specified frequency of taking advantage of the mentioned institutions. Cultural activity of the group in the survey is associated with two people who cooperate with the opera house and the philharmonic hall. The consequence of this collaboration is the frequent presence of the respondents at concerts and performances.

Generally, it could be concluded that the spare time category most popular among senior citizens is "social consumption", including television and radio. Reading, mainly newspapers and magazines, less often books, is also among the most important spare time activities."³⁴

Social activity is defined as a situation where an individual or a group consciously embarks on actions for the society³⁵. It is a multidirectional activity for the community the elderly live in or for a specific

³³ J. Wawrzyniak (2009) *Oblicza starości*. Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej, Łódź.p.33

³⁴ A.Chabior (2000), *Rola aktywności kulturalno światowej adaptacji do starości*. Radom-Kielce.p. 59

³⁵ A. Zych, 2001, op.cit. . 20

association. One member of the survey group works in the voluntary service and five of them occasionally join in voluntary work. The results confirm earlier considerations as the elderly engage in social life to a small extent. It should also be observed that people suffering from more serious diseases sympathize with the other ill taking care of them. Examples demonstrating the situation are discussed by B. Wojszel whose studies let her conclude that more active individuals were more seriously ill in doctors' opinion. Accordingly, the elderly suffering from some health problems feel a greater need of group solidarity³⁶. It has been reported that 30.23% of the group members engage in community work for the Club of the Polish Teachers' Association or other societies. Five of the people who belong to a variety of associations are presidents or section managers, six hold positions of organization treasurers. Besides the OAPs' Club at the Polish Teachers' Association the seniors are members of the Film Lovers' Club "Mozaika", the Polish Catholic Association, ZLP, RSTK, the Teachers' Literary Club, the Federation of the Polish Book Club, the Philharmonic Lovers' Club. Little involvement of older adults in this type of spare time spending results from a number of factors, including: health condition, low self-evaluation, attitudes towards own old age³⁷. Seniors' activity for the community brings many undisputed benefits not only to the group of old people but also the society as a whole. Therefore, the best solution is to combine the social activity and senior citizens' own hobbies and interests.

"People with more social activity practice seem to be more prone to show it also in the later years of their life, e.g. retired teachers³⁸. Wojszel stated that as the people get older the percentage of those socially engaged is decreasing (from 12.5% at the age of 60-69 to 6.3% past 80) (2002, p. 34). Moreover, she remarked that a considerable proportion of people active past the age of 50 are the persons who were activists also before the age of 30. (Gone Out Europe initiated in the

³⁶ Wojszel (2002), *Zdrowotne i pozazdrowotne uwarunkownaia aktywnosci spolcznej osob starszych*. Gerontologia E. Woźnicka (ed) Zeszyty Naukowe WSHE, Nr 7, p. 31)

³⁷ J.Wawrzyniak (2009) *Oblicza starości*. Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej, Łódź. p. 33

³⁸ Marczuk M. (ed.) *Lubelski Uniwersytet Trzeciego Wieku. Refleksje z dziesięciolecia działalności 1985-1995.*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin quoted after: Wojszel B. (2002), *Zdrowotne i pozazdrowotne uwarunkownaia aktywnosci spolcznej osob starszych*. Gerontologia E. Woźnicka (ed) Zeszyty Naukowe WSHE, Nr 7, p. 33

European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK) - ³⁹

7. Older people's activity and their life satisfaction

Not to make readers weary of statistics only selected research results, those statistically significant, will be quoted. As a result of analysis of respondents' answers to the question on satisfaction with their lives it has been found that 25 people (58.14%) express positive opinion. 4 survey participants are definitely satisfied with their lives, 2 people are very satisfied. The total of 12 people, i.e. 27.91%, are completely dissatisfied, dissatisfied or did not answer the question. On the basis of the research it can be inferred that the participants are in majority satisfied with their lives. The number of both the satisfied and the completely satisfied amounts to 72.09% of the group in the sample group. The mean value for the expressed satisfaction judgement is 4.58 with a standard deviation of 1.64.

The Kruskal-Wallis test on life satisfaction analysis and particular forms of participation in cultural events turned out to be statistically significant. The survey group members more often going to concerts feel more satisfied with their lives ($H=14.03$, $p=0.0072$). Similarly, other cases, i.e. going to the opera ($H=15.64$, $p=0.0035$), to the cinema ($H=12.84839$, $p=0.0121$) and visiting museums ($H=11.92510$, $p=0.0179$) are conducive to great life satisfaction.

The same analysis was applied to preferred activity types. The home and family-centred activity, the professional, physical and cultural types considerably differentiate life satisfaction but the relationship is not linear, though usually more active people experience better satisfaction. However, the relation of social, religious and educational activity with life satisfaction is statistically significant, what means that people engaging in these activity types enjoy higher life satisfaction.

Analysing data from *The Social Diagnosis 2005* Barbara Szatur-Jaworska observes that senior citizens are more often than not satisfied with their spare time. Free time is a very important constituent of life satisfaction, especially after retiring from ones' profession. Dissatisfaction with spare time is related to the assessment of one's life

³⁹ SRVP, 1994 quoted after: B. Wojszel (2002), Zdrowotne i pozazdrowotne uwarunkownaia aktywnosci spolcznej osob starszych. Gerontologia E. Woźnicka (ed) Zeszyty Naukowe WSHE, Nr 7, p.30)p. 35).

satisfaction. The author sees the reasons for such disappointment in the low participation in culture⁴⁰

Table 6. Activity types and life satisfaction.

Activity types (N=43)		Kruskal-Wallis test H	Significance level p	Spearman's rank correlation R	Significance level p
home and family-centred activity		12.67	0.01	0.11	0.51
professional activity	continued professional work	10.28	0.04	0.22	0.16
	babysitting	11.61	0.02	0.25	0.1
social activity	voluntary service	11.82	0.01	0.35	0.02
	work in clubs, societies	11.79	0.04	0.33	0.03
educational activity – attends the University of the Third Age,		10.54	0.03	0.34	0.03
religious activity – I go to church every morning or evening		16.08	0.002	0.33	0.03

⁴⁰B. Szatur-Jaworska B. (2006). *Jakość życia w fazie starości – próba diagnozy*. [in:] M. Halicka, J. Halicki (ed.) *Zostawić ślad na ziemi*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku. Białystok p. 312

Physical activity (leisure)	I work in the garden in the spring and summer,	11.23	0.02	0.21	0.18
	walks	12.74	0.01	0.19	0.22
cultural activity		10.61	0.03	0.22	0.17

Source: author's own study

8. Reflection

A lot may be written about the old age but in all literature one may hear the tone of grief over unfavourable social and cultural conditions of the last stage in human life, the old age, observed nowadays. Walentyna Wnuk remarks "The world is changing fast. Our roles and the place in the society, once awarded because of age, have been changing. I will postulate the reconstruction of "the role of a wise man" pointing to values older adults bring, and definitely may bring, into our life. (...) The oldest generation offers knowledge of life already "processed", experienced and analysed. It is one more source of knowledge offering life wisdom, the sum of individual experiences enabling solution of difficult existential problems and finding answers we do not discover even in best-written books and guides⁴¹. It should be noted that underestimating the role of older people in inter-family education may result in impoverished experience of the next generation and at the same time its decreased cultural capital⁴². Many gerontologists pointing to the role of senior citizens in the society distinguish "the role of a sage", hence probably referring to the postfigurative culture. M. Mead distinguishes three kinds of cultures: postfigurative, cfigurative and prefigurative⁴³. The postfigurative culture is characterized by reference

⁴¹ W. Wnuk W. (2010), *Kulturowa wartość starości*, „Wrocławski Senior” no. 2. p. 4.

⁴² R. Konieczna-Woźniak (2009), *Udział ludzi starszych e edukacji nieformalnej*, [in:] „Chowanna”. Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) *Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice , , p. 140)

⁴³ M. Mead (1978), *Kultura i tożsamość. Studium dystansu międzypokoleniowego*. Transl. J. Hołówka. Warszawa , p. 25, quoted after: R. Konieczna-Woźniak (2009), *Udział ludzi starszych e edukacji nieformalnej*, [in:] „Chowanna”. Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) *Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice , p. 132

to the irrefutable authority from the past, requires the simultaneous presence of three generations and consists in transmission of the whole heritage to the next generation⁴⁴. Thus, it agrees to some extent with the definition of culture as all products of human activity, material and immaterial, making objective, accepted within the group, transmitted to other societies and next generations. Postfigurative culture stresses the fact that the world of the next generation is to be the same as the one of their parents and grandparents. Another type, the cofigurative one refers to role models preferred by peer groups. The consequences of that culture type include breakup of multigeneration families, the widened generation gap all resulting in family disintegration⁴⁵. The latter type, prefigurative culture, was proposed by M. Mead on basis of future prediction in which grown-ups will be learning from their own children. In that culture type the generation gap will get even wider.⁴⁶

Present day reality remains in compliance with M. Mead's predictions as the society displays prefigurative culture. R. Konieczna-Woźniak also corroborates the position as a wide generation split has occurred as a result of which parents learn from their children. The author stresses that the occurrence of prefigurative culture will depend on a number of circumstances arising in the family itself⁴⁷.

What the old age will be like depends primarily on the seniors themselves. On the basis of the present research the author may conclude that:

- Older adults prefer home and family-centred, cultural and leisure activity type.

⁴⁴ M. Niezabitowski (2007), *Ludzie starsi w perspektywie socjologicznej. Problemy uczestnictwa społecznego*. Katowice, p.21-22 following: R. Konieczna-Woźniak (2009), *Udział ludzi starszych e edukacji nieformalnej*, [in:] „Chowanna”. Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) *Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice, p. 132

⁴⁵ M. Niezabitowski (2007), *Ludzie starsi w perspektywie socjologicznej. Problemy uczestnictwa społecznego*. Katowice, p.21-22, following: R. Konieczna-Woźniak (2009), *Udział ludzi starszych e edukacji nieformalnej*, [in:] „Chowanna”. Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) *Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice, p. 133

⁴⁶ following: R. Konieczna-Woźniak (2009), *Udział ludzi starszych e edukacji nieformalnej*, [in:] „Chowanna”. Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) *Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice p. 133

⁴⁷ R. Konieczna-Woźniak (2009), *Udział ludzi starszych e edukacji nieformalnej*, [in:] „Chowanna”. Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) *Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice p. 139

- Retired teachers are a comparatively young and very active group, the majority pursue broad interests. Some of them run their own economic activity.
- Work with children and teenagers which has required considerable organisational skills contributes to substantial activity after the retired teachers achieve the senior citizen status,
- Free time management is related to older adults' social status. The higher the status is the better organised spare time,
- Ease in obtaining a ticket to concerts and performances is conducive to frequent participation of the seniors in the events. An additional advantage is encouraging section managers' contacts with the opera house and philharmonic hall by introducing them to the repertoire for the next month. Friends' engagement encourages new people to take part in culture. At concerts old people sit together, exchange opinions and, last but not least, enjoy themselves. They do not feel isolated or lonely;
- Organisation of tours by dynamic tourist section members facilitates senior citizens' participation in trips.
- Good financial standing of educated people allows them to go abroad more often,
- Leisure is conducive to keeping fit, older adults most often go for walks and work in the garden;
- The survey group are in majority people with higher education. Old people with higher education are more frequently active and, as research has shown, it especially concerns teachers.
- Seniors very active in their free time enjoy greater life satisfaction what means that the more active older people are the bigger their life satisfaction is. Moreover, the elderly with higher and secondary education enjoy greater life satisfaction.

Whether or not seniors take up activity and the activity types depend on many circumstances including:

- Hobbies and interests pursued in childhood, youth and at middle age (e.g. stamp collecting, arts, etc.),
- Aspirations around which the elderly organise their activity,
- Financial situation – which may limit some activity forms like trips,
- Social status,
- Health , geriatric syndromes (multiple morbidity),
- disabilities,

- the popularised in the media model of the old age lacking any activity,
- in the period of social and political transformation absence of the climate conducive to establishment of organisations aiming integrating the elderly within the society,
- place of residence - countryside, city
- education (the higher education the higher activity level).

Literature points also to other factors influencing activity. They include family environment as activity is associated with personality, family of origin and maintained contacts with children and grandchildren. Sex is another factor: as there are more retired women, it is them who are more prone to take up activity. The last factor of major importance is the presence of active cultural institutions in the place of residence of the elderly.⁴⁸ “Well-managed and used spare time is an ally of lifelong education. In this respect it is a factor facilitating creation and development of autotelic, cognitive values⁴⁹”.

In conclusion the author wishes to quote Maria Braun-Głakowska:

(...) for turning inside to be worthwhile, the interior cannot be empty. In our old age we have a greater than ever before chance to intensify our internal life but, to have anything to intensify, the life there must have existed before. The old age may be the culmination of life but can hardly be its beginning. If we have developed our inner life earlier, now we have something to turn to and something to refine. If we fail to do that in time, at the later years of our life we are left to listen to our body, less and less fit and beautiful”⁵⁰.

Already today start thinking whether to refine something you have already created, or to look for something or somebody lost, something nonexistent – and then you will be left lonely in emptiness... We have to prepare the young generation to spend their free time actively.

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⁴⁹ Z. Szarota (2009), *Seniorzy w przestrzeni kulturalno-edukacyjnej społeczeństwa wiedzy* [in:] “Chowanna”. Vol. 2. A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.) *Edukacja wobec starości – tradycja i współczesność*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego Katowice p. 87

⁵⁰ M. Braun-Galkowska M. (1990), *Psychologia domowa*, Olsztyn p. 202-203

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