

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY AND LIFE SATISFACTION OF PEOPLE IN SENIOR AGE

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The main objective is to submit a description of the subjective satisfaction of seniors with their lives in connection with education at the Universities of the Third Age . The authors identify areas of motivation for education, barriers that may occur in this education. They also point out the knowledge and experience that seniors gain in education at the universities.

Methods. The analysis of the cited research results indicates subjective feelings and opinions about the satisfaction of seniors with their life and educational activities, the participation of seniors in activities offered by the Senior University (SU).

Results. In the article, the results of a research project aimed at investigating the subjective life satisfaction of senior university students in the context of their education at the university, they point to the life satisfaction of seniors through quantitative research.

Conclusion. Participation in the different types of activities offered by the Senior University is determined by socio-demographic factors such as the length of time seniors attend third-age universities (the Senior University), the length of time they attend classes, education level, age and other factors. Also interesting are the motives of seniors to use the offers of these universities, which are related to the desire to spend time in an interesting way, opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills, to establish new friendships and to get involved in life.

Keywords: educational activity, quality of life, life satisfaction, The Senior University, elderly people

INTRODUCTION

Life satisfaction and quality of life are interdisciplinary categories. In most theoretical and empirical approaches are defined by general well-being, a sense of control over one's life, satisfaction of needs, and undertaking educational, cultural and social activities that enhance a person's mental and physical condition.

Given that education is an important element in shaping the quality of life and the feeling of satisfaction with the life of seniors and supports successful aging, the development of coping skills for life after work, adaptation to new social roles, and the establishment of new relationships that generate life satisfaction (Muszyński, 2011), an empirical investigation of the subjective views of seniors was conducted among seniors who perform such activities and participate in the Senior Universities.

Aging is a complex multifactorial process that conditions the genetic conditions and factors of the external environment. It is highly individualised (Czerniawska, 2007). Hedviga Tkáčová, Patrik Maturkanič, et al. (2023) pointed out that people judge aging according to different criteria, which primarily include physical condition and age, loss of mental sharpness, inability to care for oneself, and difficulty adapting to changes, as well as retirement and similar factors. Generally speaking, "the younger generation tends to see age as the decisive factor, while older people consider health and the ability to care for oneself" to be more important" (Tkáčová, Gadušová et al., 2023, p. 298).

The subject of the discourse in the following article is the analysis of the category of quality of life in the context of the factors determining the sense of life satisfaction of senior citizens-students of the Senior Universities. The analysis presented here indicates that life satisfaction of this group of people is shaped by their participation in activities offered by the universities. The research indicates that educational activity and participation in various types of activities are determined primarily by socio-demographic factors, such as the duration of seniors' attendance at the Senior Universities,

the length of their participation in classes, their level of education, their age, and others (Roubalová, Hlad et al., 2023; Tvrdoň et al., 2022;). Also of interest are the motives of seniors for taking advantage of the Senior Universities offerings, which are related to the desire to spend time in an interesting way, opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills, opportunities to make new friends and opportunities to participate in the life of the local environment. The research also indicates that engaging in educational and social activities by senior citizens strengthens their sense of satisfaction with life.

THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY OF SENIORS AS CATEGORIES OF GERONTOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

In gerontology, quality of life is equated with the good life, psychological well-being, pleasant life, satisfaction with life, high social standing, usefulness of life, sense of happiness, which in turn raises the question of how to define each of these concepts. In assessing quality of life, an elderly person is asked to self-assess satisfaction with his or her current living situation, health status, and expectations for the future; housing, living conditions, income, attitudes toward the environment, and attitudes of the environment toward the elderly person are also assessed. He also writes about the quality of life (Khonamri et al., 2021; Marcotullio et al., 2024).

The multidimensional concept of quality of life includes such aspects of an elderly person's situation as:

- physical conditions - consisting of the natural aging process, chronic diseases, disabilities;
- mental condition - the ability to control one's behaviour, orientation in time and space, depressive states;
- social activity, satisfaction with family life (Jarmoch et al., 2022), continuing to work, house-keeping, contacts with children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, position of the elderly in the wider community, satisfaction with contacts with the community;
- financial status - pension security, income, expenses, the extent to which financial conditions allow the satisfaction of perceived needs;
- structural (final) aspect, indicating the position of the elderly person in society, participation in social life, intergenerational relations, contacts with public authorities, satisfaction with social position.

The quality of life of the elderly is influenced by the impact of at least four essential systems, namely the family system, the circle of close friends and acquaintances, the medical care system and the social security system. These systems are capable of providing such a person with comprehensive support that protects him or her both from stressful events in old age and from adverse physiological changes and undesirable functional limitations (Tobiasz-Adamczyk et al.; Vansač & Kenderešová, 2023). The quality" of life is also about

needs and their satisfaction, about values and their preferences, which naturally change with the development of a person's personality" (Ludvigh Cintulová, Beňo et al., 2023; Sirotkin et al., 2023).

Nowadays, social gerontologists are paying increasing attention to understanding various aspects of life in old age: the ways in which older people cope with everyday life; the opportunities or limitations they face; a holistic understanding of the mechanisms of aging; the multifaceted protection and support of older people, but also the quality of life and various forms of activity, including socio-educational activity (Chu & Chan, 2024; Hašková et al., 2020;).

The discussion also considers the situation and consequences of the recent pandemic, which has particularly highlighted the vulnerability of children (Pavlíková, Tkáčová et al., 2023), school-age youth (Tkáčová, Gadušová et al., 2023).

The impetus for the discourses in this area was the paradigmatic shift in education from teaching to learning, which triggered a debate on the place of educational gerontology in the system of sciences. It turned out that education in the third age, considered a mirror image of non-professional adult education, no longer finds an adequate place in andragogy, which resulted in the search for a new name and a new identity for the phenomenon of education of old people (Quing et al., 2024). Among others, such proposals have emerged as gerontology, educational gerontology, pedagogy of aging and old age, education for old age, as well as andragogy of people in old age, pedagogy of old age, pedagogy of old people, educational, educational or upbringing gerontology or education and upbringing of old people (Murgaš et al., 2023).

Discussions around educational gerontology emerged as early as the 1970s in the United States (Howard McClusky, Clark Tibbits, James Birren, Roger Hiemstra, Bradley Courtenay, James Fisher, Paulette Beaty, Harry Moody, Barry Lumsden, David Peterson and others), which resulted in the dynamic development of the new sub-discipline of educational gerontology in the following decades of the 20th and 21st centuries (Petrikovičová et al., 2021; Petrovič et al., 2023).

In the same period—first in France and then around the world Universities of the Third Age (UTA, the Senior University) were established. They became an important space for the educational activities of the elderly, and education was understood as a remedy for various problems that have arisen and difficult life situations (Dubas, 2020).

Adult (as well as senior) education in the modern era was based on human capital theory and the belief that investment in education has a causal relationship with socioeconomic development. With the development of research and educational practices aimed at senior citizens, the question of what tangible and intangible benefits such activities could bring to the elderly began to emerge. Modernist activity theory shows that educational activity promotes the formation of an individual's ability to cope with the loss of roles and adapt to new social roles in late adulthood, seeing the last stage of life as a time of development and the establishment of new relationships that generate life satisfaction. Thus, the goal of education in old age can be a time, that gives the individual a chance to develop com-

petencies and skills to achieve a high quality of life (successful aging) (Muszyński, 2011). Increasing education and lifelong learning have a positive effect on our entire life time as well as our attitudes towards life.

Educational activity can thus ensure better health and life satisfaction in old age. The modernist theory of activity allowed educational institutions to create such educations as they see fit. Opportunities are offered to maintain mental fitness. Education of the old in this perspective is primarily “intellectual jogging,” in which the mental, social and emotional aspects are trained like muscles; exercise avoids their atrophy (Vansač & Guľašová, 2023).

The primary function of learning in old age and senior education in postmodernism is existential, biographical, autcreative and emancipatory (Kondrla & Pavliková, 2016). What follows is a focus on understanding the phenomenon of life by referring to one’s own biography as well as that of others. These functions resonate with the developmental model of old age, which describes late adulthood as a time of human improvement moving toward wholeness. In the centre is the elderly person, who is fully responsible for the choices he makes, for his knowledge and ignorance (Muszyński, 2011).

The numerous benefits of learning in late adulthood are evidence of the importance of the issue of the aging and old in the context of education (learning). However, the aging and old are still the most marginalised group in education policy in Europe. Along with the emphasis on economic competitiveness and moral panic regarding financial assistance to the aging population (priority), late adulthood is seen mainly as a social problem (Vansač, 2023).

Critical educational gerontology stems from the radical need to overcome the oppression of the elderly, which has led them to ignorance, poverty and social impotence. It is also a reaction to the uncritical, apolitical and unreflective practice of mainstream educational gerontology. The origins of critical geragogy can be traced to the pedagogy of Paul Freire, the Frankfurt School and the work of Paula Allman, who argues that the education of the elderly will only enable a high quality of life through emancipatory education that allows learners to control their own thinking, create their own identity and plan their education. Critical geragogy also draws on feminism. Critical geragogy indicates that education is not morally and ethically indifferent, hence both students and teachers should explore the relationship between power, knowledge and control (Kobylarek et al., 2022).

Research on the Senior Universities, conducted by Marvin Formosa (2011), indicates that most of the educational activities carried out in this institution are derived from the functionalist trend. This is most realised in the adaptive function of the education of old people, as well as the social function, the function of filling leisure time and the felicitous function (Dubas, 2020; Roubalová, Judák et al., 2023). Education that carries out such tasks leads to an increase in self-esteem reinforced by membership in a community of learning old people, which ultimately has an impact on life satisfaction.

From the perspective of critical geragogy, the vision of such education is imbued with the traditional way of imparting school knowledge. This is served by the popular form

of education, which is the lecture. The transfer of knowledge is one-way. The elderly are passive participants in the classroom, with virtually no influence on changing the reality around them. Knowledge is not transformed for the benefit of the learning community. In this respect, the University of the Third Age is another educational institution that has been singled out not because of the specific problems, needs and potential of the old, but because of age.

According to critical geragogues, the University of the Third Age is another forum where teachers primarily present themselves. The vast majority of the institution's educational offerings are dedicated to those with the right background and social capital. The form of the program is overseen by people who are in the power structures of the University. They have a certain education, which is reproduced in the form of a lecture and thematic, subject-related knowledge passed on in the so-called sections. The educational program provided by the university's classes is thus created for a carefully selected social group with a suitable profile. Certainly, the activities of this institution are not a response to the needs of the entire population of old people. A study of UTAs conducted in Poland shows that the vast majority are people with higher and secondary education. The vast majority of UTA listeners are also women (Ludvigh Cintulová, Budayová et al., 2023), which means that these educational institutions do not activate the majority of seniors, but only certain groups of them. The heterogeneity of the elderly population means the diversity of educational offerings in every aspect (values, needs, preferred learning styles, etc.). This is one of the biggest challenges for educational institutions dealing with the education of the old, which continue to classify students by age (University of the Third Age), rather than by goals derived directly from the world of seniors' values (Muszyński, 2011). The growing number of the Senior Universities in Poland, on the one hand, testifies to the great need for learning of people in late adulthood, but on the other hand, especially in the context of critical educational gerontology, poses new research challenges. Two of them seem significant: the first concerns the level of methodological and gerontological preparation of those who conduct classes, courses, lectures, and workshops at the Senior Universities, and the second concerns how to evaluate the educational achievements of students (Malec Rawiński, 2013). Despite critical reflection on the education of the elderly, education in the third age breaks with the traditional vision of old age understood as a time of rest and withdrawal from meaningful social roles, and certainly has an impact on improving the quality of life of senior citizens.

METHODOLOGY AND PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

The results presented in the article are an excerpt from a research project aimed at subjectively determining participation in educational activities, motivation for some selected activities, perception of obstacles to participation in educational projects

of the third age university, and determining satisfaction with educational activities at the Senior university.

The concept of life satisfaction is used as a latent variable, we do not measure this concept and assume that the impact of education at the third-age universities is considered obvious, we have not needed to diagnose this term.

This article focuses on the importance of educational activities in shaping the life satisfaction of third-age university listeners. The study was carried out using a survey research model (Martin et al., 2020; Jarmoch et al., 2022) and was survey-based. The tool for data collection was a survey questionnaire that examines subjective opinion determinants, not objective factors, a standardised questionnaire that can be verified through CFA or factor analysis is not used. The research was conducted at seven the Senior Universities (of the third age) located in the Warmian-Masurian province : Warmia and Mazury University of the Third Age in Olsztyn, University of the Third Age in Kętrzyn, Bartoszyce University of the Third Age, Goldap University of the Third Age, University of the Third Age in Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Pisz University of the Third Age and the “University of the Third Age” Association in Ostróda among a group of 261 seniors—students of the Senior Universities.

In the paper we enjoy the phrases of the University of the Third Age as a Senior university, it is an equal position of the phrase.

Table 1

Distribution of the research sample

Gender	Women	Men		Together
	205	56		261
Age	up to 65 years	65-69 years	70-74 years	75 and over
	4	92	86	79
Education	basic	apprenticeship	high school	Together
	2	38	221	261
Eat UTA	within 2 years	2-3 years	more than 3 years	Together
	18	28	215	261

Source. Own research.

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

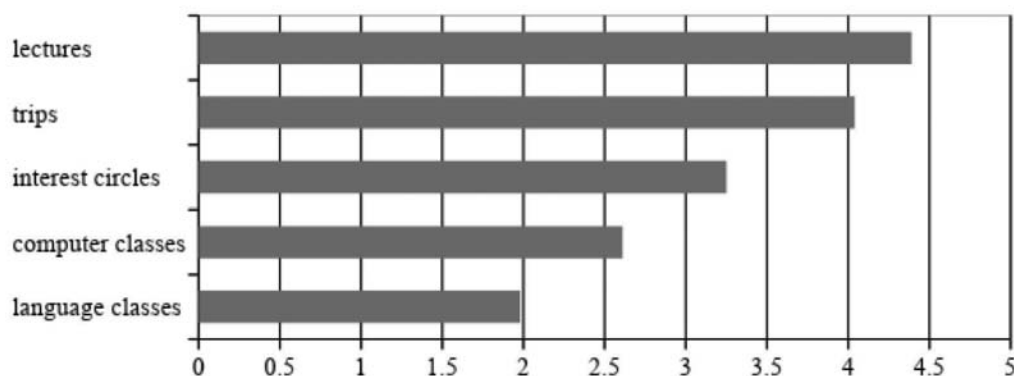
The Seniors Universities are valued for shaping a better reality for seniors, and consequently satisfaction with life. This is due to the fact that these institutions conduct supportive, educational and activating activities. The Seniors Universities can be considered a kind of motivator influencing the personal development of seniors, increasing intellectual and social activity and leading a rational lifestyle. They help build a strong

position for seniors in civil society, indicating their potential and importance in educating younger generations. They improve the daily life of seniors by shaping high self-esteem, self-awareness, self-determination and subjectivity of seniors. In view of the above, I decided to ask seniors whether the UTA actually shapes their life satisfaction.

Realising educational activities in the space of the University of the Third Age, seniors take part in: lectures, foreign language classes, computer classes, interest circles, excursions, social events and volunteering. It is through participation in classes that they can shape their satisfaction with life by acquiring knowledge, developing interests and being active. They can also integrate with the senior community, help each other solve daily difficulties and improve their well-being. The survey shows that seniors most often participate in lectures ($M=4.39$), excursions ($M=4.04$) and interest circles ($M=3.25$). Less frequently, they participate in computer classes ($M=2.61$) and foreign language classes ($M=1.98$).

Figure 1

Frequency of participation in activities offered by the Senior Universities



Source. Own research.

Among the students of the Senior Universities in the Warmian-Masurian voivodeship are lectures and tours. Lectures take one of three forms: auditorium (intended for the entire UTA community), specialised (held in sections composed of people interested in the subject matter) and open (directed also to people who are not members of the UTA community). The topics of lectures vary, depending on the demand of UTA listeners. The most popular among listeners of universities in Warmia and Mazury are lectures in the following fields: traditional medicine, rational nutrition, psychology, culture, art, history and folklore of Warmia and Mazury. In addition to the transmission of knowledge by the presenters, the lectures provide an opportunity for direct contact with the lecturer through discussion and asking questions. A discussion in which insights are exchanged can also be valuable for the lecturers, who can then supplement their knowledge.

Trips are also an important part of the programme of the Senior University. Seniors have the opportunity to participate in them in an active or passive way. In the first form

of participation they are recipients or observers of events, and in the second they are actors. Through them, seniors can also learn about new and interesting places located at home and abroad. In addition to spending their leisure time in a rational way, seniors can establish new relationships and strengthen existing ones.

Interest circles are also very popular among the Senior University students. The following are most common at UTAs in the Warmian-Masurian voivodeship: literary, sightseeing, radiesthesia, astronomy, art (including floristry, embroidery, painting), computer skills and Internet use, choir. Classes that require students to be intellectually active are computer classes and foreign language classes. They take the form of exercise classes conducted in smaller groups. Seniors during the classes are activated by the instructor, who asks them questions. The classes help seniors become accustomed to new technologies and prevent exclusion from the information society. These are specialised courses, which serve to acquire students' skills in using new technologies in everyday life. Seniors learn how to use the Internet, e-mail, use pharmacy and shopping websites. They also learn how to use payment cards, online banking and cell phones. Foreign language classes provide an opportunity to learn a language from scratch or improve language skills. Classes are organised at various levels. During classes, students also learn about the history and culture of the country in which the language is spoken. Seniors can learn English, German, French, Russian, Italian and Esperanto at the level of their choice.

The Senior Universities organise special events, such as New Year's Eve, Andrzejki, Christmas Eve and carnival balls. They take a relaxed, integrative form. These meetings have an educative and educational function, as they popularise culture, provide emotional stimulation and develop interests. During them, seniors can demonstrate their own initiatives, establish close social contacts and satisfy their needs (including self-realisation).

Interesting findings relate to the correlation between the frequency of participation in activities offered by the Senior University and the age, education and duration of attendance at activities offered by the institution. The results of the study in this regard are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Frequency of participation in activities offered by the Senior University vs age, education and duration of attendance at the Senior University

		age of respondents	education	the period of attendance at University of Third Age classes
Lectures	<i>Spearman's rho</i>	0,03	-0,08	-0,18
	relevance	0,619	0,214	0,004
language classes	<i>Spearman's rho</i>	-0,04	0,02	0,08
	relevance	0,578	0,790	0,214

		age of respondents	education	the period of attendance at University of Third Age classes
Computer classes	<i>Spearman's rho</i>	0,04	0,06	0,31
	relevance	0,536	0,342	<0,001
Interest circles	<i>Spearman's rho</i>	-0,07	0,18	0,22
	relevance	0,268	0,003	<0,001
Trips	<i>Spearman's rho</i>	0,03	0,14	0,14
	relevance	0,636	0,025	0,020

Source. Own research.

Analysis of the findings in this area revealed a number of statistically significant relationships. The length of attendance at the University correlated positively and weakly with the frequency of participation in interest groups and excursions, and positively and moderately with participation in computer classes. In other words, the longer a senior's tenure at the University, the more participation in these activities increased.

There was a negative and weak correlation between the length of attendance at UTA classes and participation in lectures. Thus, longer attendance at UTA classes was accompanied by less interest in attending lectures.

In addition, the educational level of the respondents correlated statistically significantly, positively and weakly with the frequency of their participation in interest circles. Thus, it can be assumed that the higher the educational level of seniors, the more frequent their participation in this form of activities.

It is also worth noting the motives for undertaking educational activities in a third-age university. These motives were formulated based on the statutory goals of the activities of the UTA. Data on this subject are included in Table 3.

Table 3

Motivations of undertaking educational activities by seniors

Motivations of undertaking educational activities by seniors	<i>N</i>	%
Opportunity to spend leisure time in an interesting and active way	247	94,6%
Opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and pursue interests	163	62,5%
Integration of seniors into the local community	127	48,7%
Bridging the fear of "sitting out" on retirement	97	37,2%
Getting to know people in similar life situations	61	23,4%
Opportunity to learn about leading a healthy lifestyle	41	15,7%
Gain recognition, respect and satisfaction of needs	22	8,4%
Getting help in difficult and problematic moments	4	1,5%

Note. The results do not add up to 100%, because respondents could select more than 1 answer.

Source. Own research.

The above results show that the most frequently indicated answer was the opportunity to spend leisure time in an interesting and active way, which was given by 94.6% of the elderly. Nearly two-thirds of people also indicated the opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and pursue interests (62.5%) as the reason for enrolling in the university of the third age. Nearly half of the people (48.7%) cited the desire to integrate with the local community as their motivation for participating in the university of the third age activities. The motivations showed aspects of improving life satisfaction that are particularly important to seniors.

Similar research results are found in the author's study by Zofia Szarota (2019), whose subject is the contemporary functions of adult education framed in the context of lifelong learning, their determinants and consequences. The researcher points out that adult education has, among other functions, a hedonistic, emancipatory, competence function, which can be considered to shape the life satisfaction of the elderly. The "sybaritic" hedonistic function refers to taking pleasure in fun, entertainment, experiencing adventures, aesthetic sensations, sublime taste of life, being a customer of the so-called leisure industry. The latter function—emancipatory—is responsible for knowledge and skills that serve to autonomise and free the individual from external controllability and ignorance, from the stress of the difficulty of decisions and actions that enable the elderly to keep up with economic, economic, social, cultural changes. On the other hand, the competence function is concerned with modelling new skills and acquiring knowledge in civic, legal, multicultural, economic, health, information technology education (Szarota, 2019).

Some older people are unable to participate in the activities offered by the the Senior Universities for various reasons. Accordingly, they were asked to identify the main barriers to participation in activities, where they could indicate the three most important to them. Data in this area is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Barriers to seniors' participation in activities offered by the Senior Universities

Barriers to seniors' participation in the Senior Universities classes	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Health problems	200	76,6%
lack of need/laziness	167	64,0%
The need to care for family members	158	60,5%
Large distance to university from place of living	64	24,5%
Lack of friends among the Senior Universities students	54	20,7%
Work for other organisations	43	16,5%
The need to continue working	32	12,3%
Image of the Senior Universities as elite institution	24	9,2%

Note. The results do not add up to 100%, because respondents could select more than 1 answer.

Source. Own research.

The above data show that the main obstacles to participation in higher universities are health problems (76.6%) Lack of need/laziness (64%) and the need to take care of family members of older people (60.5%). The need to continue to work (12.3%), the image of higher universities than the elitist institution (9.2%) and the lack of friends of Ameing university students (20.7%) are obstacles to participation.

Similar research findings on the obstacles to the participation of seniors at higher universities are listed in the report “Zoom at higher universities”, which has been developed by creative initiatives with the financing of the Ministry of Culture and the National Heritage. In addition to the lack of need, lack of time because of the need to take care of family members or to continue which allow self-sufficient development (Agyapong et al., 2024). Seniors can activate their mental activities at The Senior University, develop interests, adapt problems and worries, popularise knowledge of old age and strengthen the image of seniors in society. Detailed data is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5

The qualities of the Senior Universities in shaping the sense of life satisfaction of the elderly

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Stimulating mental and artistic activities	222	85,1%
Developing interests	145	55,6%
Expanding knowledge and skills	145	55,6%
Establishing and maintaining social relationships	109	41,8%
Spreading pro-health attitudes	90	34,5%
Include people struggling with similar problems in the community and build a network of mutual support	32	12,3%
Disseminate knowledge about old age and aging in society and among social policy creators	26	10,0%
Preparing for the challenges of the future, living in a knowledge and information society	10	3,8%

Note. The results do not add up to 100%, because respondents could select more than 1 answer.

Source. Own research.

Summarising the analysis of the research results in this area, it should be pointed out that the most important values of the Senior Universities in shaping a sense of life in the context of educational activities of senior citizens are: stimulating mental and artistic activity (85.1%); developing interests (55.6%); expanding knowledge and skills (55.6%) and establishing and maintaining social relations (41.8%). Less importance in shaping a sense of life satisfaction in the opinion of seniors are the inclusion of seniors in the community of people struggling with similar problems and building a network of mutual support (12.3%), the dissemination of knowledge about old age and aging

in society and among those responsible for social policy (10.0%), and preparation for the challenges of the future, life in a knowledge and information society (3.8%).

A similar account of the roles of education in old age was mentioned by Elżbieta Dubas, pointing to instrumental, social and cultural-civilisational, auxological, emancipatory and felicitological functions (Dubas, 2020). Thus, education in old age is a remedy for the various problems and difficult life situations that have arisen, promotes human development and shapes his lifestyle, allows adaptation to the changes that old age brings, promotes independence and brings the feeling of being satisfied closer (Roubalová & Králik, 2022).

The importance of the educational activities of the elderly in preparing them for their social roles has also been studied by Katarzyna Białożytn. The results of the author's research indicate that education allows a person to be active in society, satisfy higher-order needs, develop comprehensively, and at the same time leads to an increased sense of self-esteem and life satisfaction. According to the author, education in old age promotes adaptation to the changing reality by acquiring new competencies, skills and attitudes. It can also be a motivating and stimulating factor for older people to change their lifestyles (Białożytn, 2019).

FINAL REFLECTION

The presented results of research on factors determining the sense of satisfaction with the life of seniors who are students of third-age universities show that the satisfaction of these seniors with life can be shaped by their participation in educational activities offered by the University of the Third Age.

Sociodemographic factors determine participation in various types of activities of higher universities. Thus, the longer the period of participation of seniors at higher universities, the more often the students participate in interest circles, sports activities, trips, social events and volunteering. On the other hand, the leader of participation in the activities offered by higher universities affects lower participation in lectures and a higher level of education determines more frequent participation of seniors in interest circles, trips and volunteering. Interesting results also concern the motives of seniors in the use of activities offered by higher universities. They are related to the desire to spend time in an interesting way, opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills, opportunities to make new friends and opportunities to participate in the life of the local environment.

Seniors most often participate in lectures (4.39), excursions (4.04) and interest circles (3.25), which form personal development, contribute to increased intellectual and social activity and lead a more rational lifestyle.

Seniors visit classes of higher universities mainly to spend their free time in an interesting and active way (94.6% of the indications), gained new knowledge and skills (62.5% of the answers) and had opportunities to participate in the local environment (48.7%

of the indication). On the other hand, there are obstacles to participation in high university activities mainly internal: health problems (76.6% indications) and lack of need/laziness (64% of answers). On the other hand, the external barrier, which is complained by participating in higher classes of universities, is needed to take care of family members (60.5% of people). Factors that differ in satisfaction with the life of higher universities of students are its assets. The most important assets of the third-age offer has proved to be stimulating physical, mental and artistic activity (85.1% of people), development of interests (55.6% of people), expansion of knowledge and skills (55.6% of people).

Studies have clearly indicated that the institution of higher universities leads to the formation of better reality for seniors and can be a source of personal development, increased intellectual and social activity and more rational lifestyle. It is therefore useful to initiate the establishment of universities of the third age, even in smaller towns and villages to allow the participation of a larger population of seniors and promoting the idea of a successful and creative age. Growth dynamics in the number of higher universities in Warmian-Masurian Vovodeship in the last decade has made it possible to assume that this form of socio-educational activation of older people is gaining popularity and recognising and becoming part of the current policy of senior civil and implementation of many social programs. The example of opening UTA in the small Mazur village of Wydmína is undoubtedly an inspiration for activists and social teachers, local animators, as well as non-governmental organisations and other villages that have no institutions for seniors. It is important from the point of view of the conducted research to include seniors in educational activities aimed at satisfying the need for self-realisation and the need for respect and recognition by including seniors in participation in the life of younger generations organised by universities of the third age and local institutions such as kindergartens, schools, which will contribute to creating a positive image of the elderly in society, sensitise them to their needs, point out their potential and thus contribute to raising their satisfaction with life in the psychosocial aspect. It is also important to apply an individualised approach to the needs of the elderly expressed in emphasising diversity from the point of view of social, health and economic characteristics, which will help such people arouse openness to active forms of spending time, openness to social contacts and benefiting from every moment of their lives. Such an approach will also ensure the subjectivity and autonomy of the elderly.

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