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SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF OLD AGE

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Abstract: The article provides a justification for the need to study the socio-philosophical, socio-psychological and demographic problems of old age. The main problems of the elderly as a socially vulnerable group are considered.

The article focuses on the main issues and problems of ageing, such as loneliness, deterioration of health, loss or reduction of social ties, changes in interpersonal and family relationships, issues of ensuring livelihood, that is, problems that have their influence and impact on the tendencies of changing the meaning of life in this age period.

The data of research both carried out by the authors and carried out on their initiative are presented. The article presents the results of studies concerning the attitude of older people to the world around them, their assessment of the years they have lived and visions about the meaning of life of respondents in the Republic of Armenia, the Russian Federation and the Kyrgyz Republic.

The article focuses on the philosophical problem of the meaning of life - a topic that affects the interests of each person. Usually, this concept refers to the assessment of a person's entire life, and covers the problem of his interaction with the surrounding reality.

Keywords: population aging, elderly people, the meaning of life, problems of elderly people, loneliness, satisfaction with life, demographic changes.

Introduction

The study of philosophical, psychological, social and other problems of ageing is of particular importance in view of the increase in the proportion of elderly people in the total population, or, as

they say now, in view of the ageing of the population.

Demographic ageing of the population in the post-Soviet space is one of the main problems of the demographic situation, the process of which has significantly accelerated in the post-Soviet

years. Population ageing or demographic ageing is the result of long-term demographic changes, population reproduction, fertility, mortality, shifts in their proportions and migration. According to the UN demographic ageing scale, if the proportion of the population aged 65 and over exceeds 7% of the country's population, then that population is considered ageing. This indicator at the beginning of 2021 in Armenia was 12.6%, according to the data of the National Statistical

Committee of the Republic of Armenia (The Demographic Handbook of Armenia, 2021, p. 37).

The research was based on statistical data, analysis of international national (local) legal acts on this issue, and data from conducted research.

Table 1 shows the data of the total population in Armenia, the population over the working age, and the population by age groups (60-74 and 75+).

Table 1.

Data from the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia

Data as of the beginning of the year	Population over working age 63+ m/w		Population at the age of 60-74, m/w		Population at the age of 75-80+, m/w	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2011	146.909	215.513	128.25	172.4	55.37	88.718
2012	146.396	215.602	128.27	172.619	55.443	89.133
2013	147.375	218.209	129.85	174.755	57.752	93.34
2014	149.584	221.687	130.729	176.159	59.532	96.845
2015	152.405	226.321	133.918	179.962	60.688	99.39
2016	155.664	231.995	137.293	185.022	62.024	102.117
2017	157.907	236.501	142.578	193.261	61.888	102.709
2018	162.219	243.071	150.387	205.133	60.282	100.495
2019	167.578	251.596	161.237	221.216	57.363	96.387
2020	173.507	261.122	172.208	237.316	54.381	92.101
2021	172.291	260.057	167.072	229.540	59.325	100.701
2022	175.262	265.129	171.726	236.405	59.481	101.533
2023	178.232	270.201	176.381	243.270	59.636	102.365

Statistics show that in the coming years, an increase in the number of elderly people is expected in the general structure of the population in the world, and according to international criteria, Armenia is already considered a country with an ageing population with all its consequences.

Philosophical ideas about the phenomena of old age and ageing differ. The understanding of old age as a period of life when physical weakness is replenished by prudence and spiritual enrichment has become more widespread. But there is also an opposite view of the ageing process, which characterizes old age as an inevitable period of attenuation of all body functions, including mental abilities.

Social problems of ageing have become the subject of research by T. V. Karsaevskaya (1978)

in her work "Philosophic Aspects of Gerontology" and A. T. Shatalov (1997) in his work "Bi-philosophy". Problems and aspects of socialization of an elderly person are considered in the works of L. S. Vygotsky (2020) and other authors.

However, in philosophy and psychology, the period of old age has been studied much less than childhood, adolescence, and the average age of a person. And as one of the founders of Russian gerontopsychology, L. I. Antsiferova (2006), in her work "Personality development and problems of gerontopsychology", notes that science began to show a growing interest in the problem of ageing of a person and his life in elder and old age only in the last third of the XX century.

General Characteristics of the Problems Under Study

The study of the problems of elderly people through questionnaires, meetings, conversations, and work with experts in this field showed that the problem of loneliness is in the first place among the problems of elderly people (about 35%), and not only people living alone spoke about loneliness. Loneliness is more painful for elderly men than for women. In the second place is the problem of finding the meaning of life (about 15%), and worries about the loss of a loved one (12%) are a big problem. Then there are the problems of social adaptation (9%), problems in the families of adult children, which is especially characteristic of Armenians (20%), and marital problems (about 10%). When comparing the data obtained by various studies in the Russian Federation, we do not notice a big difference. This is explained by the general philosophical and psychological problems of ageing in the post-Soviet space.

One of the main problems for elderly people is loneliness or feelings of loneliness. Older people are characterized by significant changes in their life environment, social contacts, social and family roles, in health, which also leads to loneliness. The established practice, and the norms of our legislation, use lonely living as a criterion for a “lonely pensioner” or “lonely elderly person”, which, of course, is not enough from the point of view of defining the concept of loneliness.

A person in old age is characterized by a tendency to comprehend the results of an individual life path and transfer a rich social experience to subsequent generations. In old age, a person's approaches to assessing events, both past and present, change. A person in old age acquires new qualities that allow him to objectively consider the most significant aspects of his life.

Methodology and Methods of Research

A survey on population ageing conducted by the RA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (the Institute of Labor and Social Research) and the RA National Statistical Service with the support of UNDESA in 2008 was aimed at researching health, lifestyle, well-being, family relationships,

employment, values and attitudes and other issues and concerns of persons aged 50 and over (Report on Ageing Survey in RA, 2009).

To form the sample, a database of addresses of all households in the Republic of Armenia was taken as the basis, created according to the results of the population census by the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, with the technical assistance of the World Bank.

The database of addresses of all households was divided into 4 main groups according to their geographical location. The sample includes 31 cities out of 49 or 63% of the cities of the Republic and 39 villages out of 950 or 4% of all villages in the Republic. As a result, a database was formed on 1264 households. During the field work, the interviewers visited 1250 addresses, and the average republican rate of refusal was 5%.

The survey was conducted both by quantitative and qualitative methods. The authors of the article took part in the development of the survey methodology.

The quantitative method included 2 types of questionnaires.

The first questionnaire of the household was used among 1250 households having at least one family member at the age of 50 and older. The interview was conducted with the head of the household, making basic decisions.

A survey of domestic households included the following sections: list of members of households, housing conditions, property, income and expenditure of households.

The second questionnaire (personal questionnaire) was considered for members of the households at the age of 50+ and their spouses.

This questionnaire consisted of the following sections: socio-demographic characteristics, state of health, restrictions and care, employment and pension, children, participation in the management of the household, social support, financial transfers, activities, values and attitudes. Many questions included cards for answers.

Qualitative methods had the following structure:

Focus groups were held with pensioners residing and not residing in care institutions, with young people, with “expert pensioners”, that is, with those officials who in the past worked in state and non-state structures, made decisions on

issues of elderly people and are currently retired.

In-depth interviews were conducted with experts who make decisions about elderly people, representatives of self-government bodies, non-governmental organizations, family doctors and the media.

Expert interviews were conducted at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia, and the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Armenia.

In 2021, the authors of the article also conducted a study among older people in the 65+ age group. The survey was conducted in Nork boarding house in the city of Yerevan. In total, 100 elderly people of different lifestyles, world-views, and social statuses were interviewed.

More than 30% of the respondents had a higher education, about 40% - had a specialized secondary and 30% - had secondary and primary education.

The results of the survey show that for an elderly person, life satisfaction is mainly measured by health and income. The quality and availability of health care services continue to be critical for elderly people. And elderly people with disabilities make up 22.2% of the total number of elderly people and 42.5% of the total number of persons with disabilities (about 191 thousand), not to mention the need for medical examination and the provision of high-quality, timely medical treatment to all elderly people who need it.

In Armenia, as in other countries of the post-Soviet space, there is instability in the well-being of the elderly population. These are pensions and services that do not meet the needs of elderly people, certain barriers to employment (job placement), and the lack of an organized system that ensures the active ageing of a person.

Thus, the survey showed that 22% of respondents in the age group 50+ feel not demanded in society. Most of the respondents in this age group believe that the state should take care of the elderly. This can be explained by the fact that they lived in Soviet times and the norms of Soviet times are inherent in them. 54% of the respondents agreed with the statement, "There is a considerable number of people in respect of whom I am full of hope and whom I can trust". This can be said to be a positive approach.

Material distress, risks of untimely death, deformation of behaviour norms, and social isola-

tion are the main factors affecting the quality of life and, to some extent, satisfaction with it.

At the same time, satisfaction with life in old age is largely related to the social environment, including interpersonal and family relationships.

Research on ageing is being carried out in many countries. For example, in the Kyrgyz Republic, where the share of elderly people is about 4.5% of the population, such a study was conducted in 2017. It should be noted that there is a high level of external migration in the country, which in the near future will affect the demographic picture of the population in Kyrgyzstan (over 20% of children of elderly people live abroad). Also, there are problems of loneliness of an elderly person, as evidenced by which is the residence of about 45% of children in other localities within the country. A survey on ageing based on the same methodology as the one conducted in Armenia was conducted in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2017. Both of the surveys were conducted with the support of UN DESA (Older people in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2017).

In recent years, quite a lot of research has been carried out in the Russian Federation. It is important to note that older people in these countries have a similar attitude towards life satisfaction and other issues important to the older generation.

The assessment of the socio-psychological characteristics of old age, described by many scientists, makes it possible to identify the predominant orientation of elderly and senile people towards personal, internal experiences, which was confirmed by the survey. This was mostly reflected in the responses of elderly people who are on social care in the Nork boarding house in the city of Yerevan.

The Concept of the Meaning of Life of the Elderly

The life and death of a person and the meaning of life are the eternal themes of philosophy. What are the trends in the meaning of life in this age period? This question remains relevant for philosophical and psychological analysis.

Old age, the phenomenon of old age, is filled with the final deep meaning of the path lived. The statements and conclusions of Francis Bacon are very valuable, with which it is difficult to

disagree, that the age of a person is determined by the nature and quality of the life path, that it is important to combine the merits of all ages “for the merits of each age can correct the demerits of the other”, “that at any age one should enjoy its joys and live with what does not become obsolete” (Bacon, 1978, p. 566).

In her work “The Problem of the Meaning of Life”, N. V. Ovsyannikova (2016) notes that “Old age makes it possible for a person to acquire a new spiritual state – spiritual maturity. In this regard, it acquires the highest value, in contrast to other ages of life, passing through which a person rushes towards it, perhaps not even clearly and vividly realizing this movement itself” (p. 3).

Problems of the social aspect of ageing and psychology are well presented in the works by M. D. Alexandrova (2003), T. N. Bezdenezhnaya (2004), N. G. Kovaleva (2001), L. B. Volynskaya (2006), S. I. Voronkina, N. V. Halina (2012), as well as in scientific works by S. Sedrakyan, A. Ghazarosyan, N. Hakobyan (2016), S. Sedrakyan (2011).

Old age is perceived by each person individually. Life experience can turn into wisdom. Kant (1980) believes that a person can achieve the full application of his mind as wisdom by about 60 years of age. One may not agree with this, but Kant (1980) himself also said that with age, a person approaches wisdom (p. 700).

All ages are subject to the concept of the meaning of life. And after conducting a study of understanding and realizing the meaning of life at a later age, we clearly see that eudaimonism, pragmatism, utilitarianism, hedonism, asceticism and ethics of duty are represented in the answers of elderly people to the question of what they see the meaning of life

The study of the emotional state showed that about 80% of respondents living in a family have a hobby and communicate with friends and persons with similar interests. To the question, if the respondent feels happy, opinions differed, but most responded that things only get worse as they age. The majority assessed their state of health as more or less satisfactory for their age.

Most of the respondents found it difficult to answer questions about life goals, plans, and prospects. This is due to both age, growing pessimism, and not always a clear idea of what else they want to achieve in life. More than 30% of

respondents feel that they are in demand and needed in society.

The problem of the meaning of human life can be considered at the individual, interpersonal and social levels, each of which has a specific context for its actualization.

In addition, the meaning of life is contained in socio-philosophical concepts and is important for their understanding. All this explains the need to build an integral socio-philosophical concept of the meaning of life. If a person at a young or mature age sets concrete life plans for himself/herself, then in old age, the picture changes somewhat.

More than 70% of elderly people living with family see the meaning of life in their usefulness, in possible help and support to their families, their children and grandchildren, in the harmony of family relationships, and in self-respect.

From the study, it is clear that the idea of the meaning of a person’s life comes from his essence; that is, it shows the essence of an elderly person. So, a person who has a social essence, who has devoted his whole life to serving society and creating benefits for other people, both in old and senile age, sees the meaning of life in the well-being of both his children and grandchildren and others, the preservation and strengthening of what has been created, in the development and in ensuring the security of the state. A person who has a creative essence, who created beauty all his life, and at the third age sees the meaning of life in the beautiful, in the transformation of the world. A person who has a biological essence, who lived for himself, at his pleasure and in old age sees the meaning of life in pleasure and happiness.

At the same time, radical changes in society that have taken place during their lives often exacerbate the problem of finding the meaning of life among the elderly, whose youth passed in the Soviet years. These people witnessed the socio-economic and political transformations of society, witnessed wars and their consequences, and witnessed a certain reassessment of values, which naturally influenced their vision of the meaning of life.

The question of the meaning of life has been an important question for philosophers and psychologists for centuries. Ideas about the meaning of life are formed in the process of a person’s activity, in the process of life path and depend on

the worldview, lifestyle, social status, socio-economic and historical situation. That is, the meaning of an elderly person's life as a whole is his or her assessment of life; it is a conscious choice of those values that a person is guided by in his/her life.

Conclusion

Conducted surveys, meetings, and practical experience of the authors show that:

- Satisfaction with life in old age is largely associated with the social environment, including interpersonal and family relationships, life-meaning orientations, the level of optimism and activity, self-esteem, the level and quality of social support, as well as the state of health. Life satisfaction is determined by a system of socio-psychological determinants.
- It is necessary to envisage concrete measures to create sufficient grounds for a longer working and social life for elderly people, participation in decision-making and social integration.
- In order to solve the social and psychological problems of elderly people, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation between regional and inter-sectoral, as well as state and non-state organizations and local governments.

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