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The concept of "wellbeing of older people"

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Abstract

The paper is devoted to the well-being of the older generation. The concept of "well-being" is analysed from different points of view. We consider three components of the general notion of "well-being": physical, social and material. The main features of the older generation are studied. We also identify priority of needs by type of well-being for the older generation. Summing up, the concept of well-being of older people is not examined very well. There is no conceptual basis of its study. A lot of researches show different results. In this case, the further study of the issue of senior's well-being would be of interest.

Keywords: Well-being, older people, physical well-being, social well-being, material well-being.

1. Introduction

Every year the number of elderly people as a percentage of the total population of the earth is rising. Thus, the problems of older people are becoming more important. Every person will be old, and s/he will want to live this period of life with a sense of well-being. Creation of necessary conditions for the elderly will help them to live a full life.

The lack of sense of well-being is one of the main problems of the elderly all over the world. Welfare of people is the main social value of any society [6, 7]. Therefore it is necessary to look for ways to achieve a sense of well-being by the elderly. It is necessary to characterize the term “well-being”.

Which category of people refers to the elderly? Today, the final answer to this question can not be given. There is no unique internationally recognized concept of this category of people.

The moment of the old age is rather arbitrary. There are no exact calendar dates for the old age. In 1959, the UN set the lower level of old age and it was 65 years old. It was done for the study of aging. This is a milestone age of retirement in many European countries. Pension is the main criterion for social status. The World Health Organization (WHO) divides older generation into three groups:

1. Early older people: from 60 to 74 years.
2. Letter older people from 75 years and older.
3. Centenarians: 90 years and older.

2. Different approaches

From the scientific point of view, irreversible aging processes are very common in this life period. The functional possibilities of the systems and organs in the body are fading. For instance, deterioration of the central nervous system leads to the decrease of the optimal performance of a human body. This is expressed in the manifestation of resentment, irritability, depression. An elderly person loses the ability to adapt rapidly and becomes less stable in psychological terms.

Elderly people tend to be self-centeredness.

Mental status of the individual in old age is not reduced. It is changed and expanded by certain characteristics, such as moderation, caution, judgment, tranquility. This has been proved on the basis of conducted gerontological research.

While aging the sense of life value is increasing. The priorities of person are changed. For instance, older people pay much attention to their physiological state and inner world.

Many studies that involved older people in different countries around the world were conducted. Some scientists study how older people understand the term "well-being". The results are different. In some polls elderly people characterize their own well-being as having good health, a sense of happiness and contentment, satisfaction with life, love for life, peace of mind, comfort, confidence, and security [2]. In other studies, the welfare of the elderly people is defined as feeling of well-being, ability to communicate with people, sufficient amount of wealth [4].

In an authoritative book "Successful aging" published by John Rowe and Robert Kahn the authors identify the following criteria of successful aging:

- low level of diseases and disabilities;
- a high level of mental and physical abilities;
- active participation in the public life [3].

The elderly people understand the sense of well-being differently. All criteria mentioned by elderly people can be divided into three main groups of indicators. Each group can characterize unique approach to the assessment of well-being or we can be called as a kind of well-being. There are physical, social and material well-being.

Physical well-being is characterized by good health. Health is a dynamic state or a process of conservation and development of biological, physiological and psychological functions, the optimal capacity for work and social activities at the highest life expectancy (VP Treasurers). Good performance of the body is an integral part of the term "health". It depends on the state of the environment and the consumption of high-quality products. Physical activity helps to the biological and physiological body functioning. It improves the functioning of all systems and organs in the body. Health is also characterized by psychological condition of a man. Good psychological well-being depends on the possibility of an elderly person to carry stress easily and on the emotional intensity and the positive attitude towards life.

Older people need to be able to focus on the positive events and to improve their mental state. Certain tools will help to achieve a good psychological state. The older generation must be familiar with these tools. All the above-mentioned factors will help to improve the physical well-being of older people.

Social well-being is determined by human satisfaction with their social environment and contact with it, social status and sense of personal safety. Social well-being of older people depends on social activity, presence of family and friends and relationships with them, level of their own achievements and results and sense of security in the place of residence [5].

Most elderly people feel lonely. This result was shown in some studies [1]. Many of them do not have enough social contacts with relatives and the rest of society. Tactile contact can improve

the state of well-being of older people greatly. This contact helps older people to feel safe. This kind of communication is related to the social aspects of well-being.

Material well-being can be characterized by person's contentment of quality and quantity of material goods. Financial well-being of the elderly people is measured by the presence of movable and real property. If older people are able to buy the necessary goods and services for life, they will be satisfied with their financial situation.

In European countries, material well-being is at the third place after the physical and social components.

The survey carried out in the UK determined the sequence of well-being kinds according to their importance for older people. The first place was taken by physical well-being. The importance of contact with friends and family was placed at the second place. Material well-being is not always included in the definition of well-being for older people in developed countries.

3. Conclusion

The concept of well-being of older people is not examined very well. There is no conceptual basis of its study. A lot of researches show different results. In this case, the further study of the issue of senior's well-being would be of interest.

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