

ACTIVITY VERSUS PASSIVITY. SELECTED ASPECTS OF SOCIAL ACTIVITY OF OLDER PEOPLE

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Streszczenie

Zmiany zachodzące w demografii społeczeństwa tworzą nowe problemy badawcze. W ostatnich latach obserwujemy zjawisko starzenia się społeczeństwa, a tym samym rozszerza się obszar badań. Tekst stanowi refleksję nad miejscem osób starszych we współczesnym społeczeństwie. Ukazane zostaną w nim dwie skrajne postawy – aktywność vs. bierność społeczna. W odwołaniu do dotychczasowych badań podjęta zostanie próba odpowiedzi na pytania: na którym biegunie lokują się polscy seniorzy? Jakie działania należy wspierać, aby zwiększyć aktywność społeczną osób starszych.

Summary

Changes in population demographics are creating new problems for research. In recent years we have seen the phenomenon of aging, thereby expanding area of research. The text is a reflection on the place of older people in contemporary society. It will be shown in two extreme attitudes - vs. activity. social passivity. In its appeal to the current research and then attempt to answer the questions: where to locate the poles Polish seniors? What action should be encouraged to increase the social activity of older people.

Słowa kluczowe

Starość. Aktywność społeczna. Bierność społeczna. Wolontariat.

Key words

Old age. Social activity. Passivity social. Volunteering.

Interest in the last phase of life - or old age - is increasingly an area of interest of research scientists, not only medical but also social. It is highly likely that this is a result of the increasing number of people who are beyond retirement age. L. Dyczewski stresses that more often in different countries observe the twin processes of aging (aging doubles). It consists of the growth of the elderly population in the general population¹.

According to the forecast demographic GUS in 2030 in Poland, arrives at almost twice the number of people beyond retirement age. It is assumed that they will constitute almost one-quarter of the population. Increase in the number of older people in society is an inspiration to reflect on ways to spend old age².

A new look at old age

A. Nowicka writes "out of old age is increasingly seen as a period of stagnation and passively waiting for death, but as a phase of life in which man has to fulfill a variety of tasks, to facilitate its adaptation to new conditions of life, enriching his personality and giving the

¹ Zob. L. Dyczewski, *Więzi między pokoleniami w rodzinie*, Lublin, 2002, s. 49-53.

² M. Kowalski, *Aktywność ruchowa jako element zachowań prozdrowotnych w późniejszych dekadach życia człowieka*, [w:] J. Kargul (red.), *Dyskursy młodych andragogów*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, Zielona Góra 2004, s. 91-100.

meaning of his continued existence"³. A study by B. Wciórka that "Poles are increasingly more interested in his old age. The resulting declaration that the current thinking about her more than three quarters of respondents (77%), including one in five (19%) makes it very frequently, every fourth (23%) - quite often, and every third (35%) -- rather rare. Their old age is not interested in one fifth of respondents (20%), and three hundred (3%) maintains that it need not think about it, because it has already experienced"⁴. Research shows that more and more people are interested in their old age. What are some ways to spend it? Way of living due to old age, life plans, as well as the interplay of various factors, which came to operate the unit.

Activity or social passivity?

As the Poles are increasingly interested in their own old age, you can ask a question: if the period of old age trying to be active or passive rather socially? Before you look for answers to this question brings what is social activity and passivity.

The Encyclopedia of Psychology says that social activity is a "man entering the world of other people for a specific purpose"⁵. Social activity is gradated. Due to the criterion, which is the quality of the attitudes we can - on one end - to distinguish those who shun the people and all social life, on the other there are activists or personnel to the cause or the good people. Social passivity is not only a lack of activity. Socially passive person must overcome the resistance to the activity. Social passivity 'expressed lack of initiative to act, to influence change, to become interested in other people and social environment"⁶. Inactivity can lead to loneliness, social isolation, progressive failure, and even premature mortality among the elderly. According B. Dziegielewska⁷ activity can be divided into three types:

- Formal - the activities of various associations in society, politics, work for the local environment, volunteering;
- Informal - consisting of contacts with family, friends, colleagues, neighbors;

³ A. Nowicka, *Wstęp*, [w:] A. Nowicka (red.), *Wybrane problemy osób starszych*, Impuls, Kraków, 2006, s.11.

⁴ B. Wiórka, *Czy zmienia się stosunek Polaków do starości?*, CBOS, Warszawa 2007, s.3. http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2007/K_033_07.PDF

⁵ Cz. Matuszewicz, *Aktywność społeczna*, [w:] W. Szewczuk (red.), *Encyklopedia Psychologii*, Fundacja Innowacja, 1998, s. 13.

⁶ W. Jacher, *Aktywność i bierność społeczna*, [w:] W. Szewczuk (red.), *Encyklopedia Psychologii*, Fundacja Innowacja, 1998, s. 22.

⁷ M. Dziegielewska *Aktywność społeczna i edukacja w fazie starości*. W: Szatur-Jaworska B. (red.). *Podstawy gerontologii społecznej*. Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR., Warszawa 2006; 160–164.

- Solitary - including watching TV, reading, developing their own interests and hobbies.

Social activity or passivity is related to the human lifestyle. According to O. Czerniawska can be divided six ways of life pursued by the seniors. Hers to them, completely passive style, family, resulting from the possession of the garden, the activity of social associations, home-keeping, pious⁸. Referring to the work of M. R Pare author points out that there are - in French literature - can distinguish between these styles of life in old age as follows:

1. La retraite-retraite - that is, to engage in life, breaking all social contacts;
2. 2. La retraite-famille - defined as a family style, consisting of full involvement in family life, abandonment of all other forms of activity and contacts;
3. 3. La retraite-loisir - of filling time activities "wolnoczasowymi, travel, trips;
4. 4. La retraite-revindication - of the struggle for the rights of older people to improve their material situation and living conditions, strengthening of social position;
5. 5. La retraite-participation - this style is based on engaging in social life, housing, neighborhood, city or state. Labor manifests itself in a voluntaristic.⁹

Analysis of studies, as well as the experience of the daily observation of life of older people can say that to a large extent adopted their style of activity is dependent on the preferred system of values, past experiences in life-social environment in which they reside, have access to various forms of activity and financial resources at their disposal, health, physical condition¹⁰.

Factor which arises when we talk about the lifestyles of older people and activity is increased amount of free time.

According to A. Kaminski¹¹ time in older people is not limited in their occupation, family so it can be freely spent.

Alexander Kaminski noted the features that full activity of the elderly. This author noted that it may take place in two areas: useful work, schedule for the delivery of interest. According to the investigator in the first field is a continuing activity, work, work for hire or reward other than in the past the profession, social work (such as a magistrate). In turn, the activity of other distinguished readership, participation in lectures, sports, tourism, as well as a club activity¹².

⁸ O. Czerniawska, *Style życia ludzi starszych*, [w:] O. Czerniawska (red.), *Style życia w starości*, Łódź 1998

⁹ Podaję za O. Czerniawską, tamże.

¹⁰ Zob. B. Szutar-Jaworska, P. Błędowski, M. Dzięgielewska, *Podstawy gerontologii społecznej*, Wyd. Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, Warszawa 2006, s. 162.

¹¹ A. Kamiński, *Wychowanie do starości jako czynnik adaptacji ludzi starszych do nowoczesnego społeczeństwa*, „Zeszyty Problemowe PTG” nr 3 Białystok 1993

¹² Zob. A. Kamiński, *Studia i szkice pedagogiczne*, Warszawa 1978, s. 259-365.

Numerous studies indicate that among the Poles the dominant form of activity are being receptive. It usually manifests itself in watching TV, listening to the radio, reading newspapers. It usually takes place at home. Hence, he says, including E. Tłuczek-Tadla, "referring to the condition of Polish society, can be seen clearly their lack of civic competence".¹³ There is therefore an urgent need to stimulate the activity and the creation of such a lifestyle, which provides a man of personal satisfaction.

Are also disturbing information contained in the intellectual capital of the Poles. The Report states that "the Poles over 50 age to a negligible extent involved in the voluntary sector, are reluctant to integrate the efforts of the local community, in sport or culture. Their social commitment is two to three times lower than in Western countries and is usually confined to immediate family. It also connects to the low level of trust in other people, characteristic for the whole of Polish society, perpetuating the passivity of seniors. Only slightly more than 20% of them believe that they can trust other people ¹⁴.

Opportunity to increase activity (?)

Opportunity to increase the social activity of older people are the actions undertaken by the Universities of the Third Age. Currently in Poland there are nearly 110 Universities of the Third Age, which bring together a total of 25 thousand listeners. In Poland, produces three types of the Third Age:

1. operating within the university, led mostly by proxy Rector;
2. appointed by the associations operating in popular science;
3. other operating at community centers, libraries, homes Day care centers, social assistance.

Actions taken by the Third Age are to disseminate educational initiatives, organizing the intellectual, psychological, social, and physical aging. Facilitate contacts with the institutions. And above all, engage listeners in the activity for their surrounding environment and foster social bonds and maintaining interpersonal communication¹⁵.

Another form - allowing seniors to overcome the social inertia - is voluntary. Unfortunately, it is still very popular form of active aging. Studies suggest B. Wciórka¹⁶, only one in ten

¹³ E. Tłuczek-Tadla, *Wybrane aspekty działalności stowarzyszenia "Parlament Młodzieży" z Przemysłu a praca socjalna w środowisku lokalnym*", [w:] A. Tokarova, T. Matulayova, (red.) *Socjalna pedagogika, sociálna práca a sociálna otázky teórie a praxe*, Acta Fakultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Prešovensis, Prešov 2008, s. 331.

¹⁴ „World Values Survey”, 1999 za: Kapitał Intelektualny Polaków <http://www.innowacyjnosc.gpw.pl/kip/index.php>, z dn. 06.02.2010.

¹⁵ www.utw.pl, z dn. 01.02.2010.

¹⁶ *Spoleczeństwo obywatelskie 1998-2004*. Opinie i Diagnozy nr 1, Warszawa 2004 i *Spoleczeństwo obywatelskie 1998-2008*. Opinie i Diagnozy nr 8, Warszawa 2008.

seniors surveyed stated that there is at least one organization. In recent years, created numerous programs aimed at supporting older people volunteering. While these partnerships are created conditions for the creation of intergenerational initiatives. Supports and promotes the idea of active living among seniors who are involved in social action on behalf of other groups in the local community.

Both the University of the Third Age, as well as volunteering are only certain kinds of activities older people. However, they are an alternative to the popular among the seniors spend time at home. With these forms of activity improves self-reliance seniors, social ties are maintained and interpersonal communication, as well as enhanced integration between the generations.

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