

**SENIOR CITIZENS' LIFESTYLE AND LIFE WISDOM IN PRE-  
SCHOOL CHILDREN'S PICTURES**  
**STYL ŻYCIA I MĄDROŚĆ ŻYCIA SENIORÓW**  
**W REPERTUARACH OBRAZOWYCH DZIECI PRZEDSZKOLNYCH**

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**Abstrakt**

*Refleksja dotycząca stylu życia wprowadza w problematykę mechanizmów kształtowania się zróżnicowań codziennej aktywności grup ludzkich, zróżnicowań wzorów społecznych w szczególności zaś wyboru wzorów konstytuujących styl życia jednostki. Charakterystyka stylu życia jest zawsze w pierwszym członie proceduralnym kategorią opisu zewnętrznego, opisu zachowania ludzi, np. ich ubioru, zainteresowań, urządzenia domu, sposobów wykorzystania wolnego czasu, itd. Pojęcie stylu życia jest pojęciem, którego zakres znaczeniowy wypełniać można różnymi treściami gdyż odnosi się do wielu płaszczyzn ludzkiego postępowania. (Siciński, 1976). Najogólniej ujmując styl życia to „proces kształcenia potrzeb, uzdolnień, zamiłowań, motywów postępowania, rozwijania wielorakich form działalności, jej intensyfikowania, tworzenie bogactwa życia” (Suchodolski, 1985, s. 182) – bogactwa, które staje się mądrością życiową człowieka, mądrością, która sprzyja jego wspólnotowej egzystencji. Najczęściej rysowane symbole wizualne odnoszące się do seniorów rodu to: spacer z psem, z wnukami; uprawa ogródka; oglądanie telewizji; odpoczynek na kanapie lub w fotelu; czytanie gazety; wykonywanie prac domowych.*

**Słowa kluczowe:** styl życia, mądrość życia, repertuary obrazowe dzieci przedszkolnych

**Key words:** lifestyle, life wisdom, pre-school children's pictures

**Senior citizens' lifestyle and life wisdom**

The reflection concerning lifestyle introduces the issues of the mechanisms which condition the origins of differences in daily activity between various groups of people, divergences in social models and in particular the choice of models which constitute an individual's lifestyle. The characteristic of lifestyle is always in the first procedural mode the category of external description, description of human behaviour, for instance in the selection of clothes to wear, interests, interior design, forms of pastime activity, etc. The concept of lifestyle is a notion whose range of meaning can be filled with diverse content since it refers to many plains of human behaviour. In general, a lifestyle is a process of shaping needs, skills, hobbies, motifs of behaviour, developing and strengthening various forms of activity, creating the wealth of life - the wealth which becomes an individual's life wisdom, the wisdom which enhances his/her existence in the community and society. An adult's lifestyle is not stable, it undergoes the process of change conditioned for instance by experiencing disappointment, emotional conflicts with other individuals or life success. These processes can take place in various periods of human life and at different pace and it is not known to

what extent they are conditioned by biopsychic factors of aging, how much they depend on the changing with age situation and activities or on personal energy of an individual, his/her self-confidence, or breaks downs and resignation. Undoubtedly, a lifestyle is shaped not only by existential conditions, the attitude towards life and world, but also the so-called life wisdom as personal reflection and experience (Gruca-Miąsik, 2008, pp. 526-527). An individual's lifestyle can be expressed in three diverse areas of reality:

1. in the area of outlook on life and world, aims and goals, needs and aspirations,
2. in the area of observed behaviour and activity,
3. in the area of objects an individual chooses, creates or subconsciously takes over treating them as his/her own closest life environment.

Factors determining a lifestyle include:

1. economical, social, cultural and psychological factors,
2. conscious activity directed at not only meeting needs but also realising extra-personality values, i.e. changing oneself and the world according to an imaginary ideal,
3. individual and creative activity which results in the material and personal individualisation of the environment, change of found models and introduction of new values.

The process of aging has an influence on not only a change of a lifestyle or personality but also the attitudes and needs change together with like knowledge connected with experience (Gruca-Miąsik, 2008, pp.524; 2007, pp. 260). It is often heard that the older the person the richer his/her life experience, but does it mean an individual is also wiser? Gerontology has dealt with the issues of personality, among others. It was debated whether an elderly individual's personality has any features specific for age. Ch. Bühler pointed to changes in motivation taking place in human life as well as intentionality of behaviour (Bühler, 1961, pp.126-145), C. C. Jung (1933) focused on introversion and reorganisation of the system of values, Biren (1964) stressed that choices made by people are a variable intermediary between events occurring in human life and his/her behaviour. The phenomenon of social lifestyle would be unacceptable without the unifying factor; the formats of behaviour assume different modes, they can result from certain individual needs, environments or particular patterns taking place. In fact we face a multiplicity of internally interrelated configurations of patterns which criss-cross and coexist. This is a reflection of complex and diverse relations of any individual with different social groups, cultural and aesthetic traditions which have somehow become dependent on one another.

A plethora of definitions of personality, lifestyle, age wisdom, life wisdom makes the picture of age wisdom a complex and internally incoherent structure since there always remains a question of whether age influences an individual's life wisdom. Applying common sense to respond to the query, one would have to answer in the affirmative, if we assume that human life knowledge changes (and evolves) under the influence of experiencing daily life reality, passing time, interaction with the environment, in other words the sum of biological and social events – the response is positive though ambiguous. It seems most humanistic to state that the value/quality of senior age is life wisdom.

Another difficulty is posed by relating the notions of lifestyle with life wisdom since there are a number of research approaches to the issues of stability or changeability of both concepts. While interpreting human behaviour within the aspect of lifestyle there is no differentiation between forms of behaviour and life wisdom including the complexity of notional implication. The picture which is created as a result does not resemble the fragment of a larger whole, but the picture of whole created or seen from one particular angle. The research was aimed at isolating certain forms of behaviour referring to spheres of reality in the category of senior citizens' lifestyles:

1. aims and goals, needs and aspirations,
2. observable behaviour and activities.

The total of 554 respondents took part in this research, including 351 females and 203 males ranging from 60 to 85 years of age. All respondents are retired, live in the Podkarpackie region, 130 live alone, 364 live with families and 60 live in social welfare institutions. All research subjects live in urban areas in Rzeszów, Łańcut and Jarosław. The research was aimed at specifying to what extent such factors as age, sex, intellectual ability, family situation, financial situation and a type of accommodation influence the forms of senior citizens' activity. The accumulated data enable a qualitative description and interpretation of the studied issues.

Table 1. Age and gender of respondents

Total	Gender	Age range					
		60 – 64	65 – 69	70 – 74	75 – 79	80 – 85	Σ
554	Females	136	127	58	25	5	<b>351</b>
	Males	110	75	13	4	1	<b>203</b>

Source: own analysis

Table 2. Age and education of respondents

Total	Education	Females						Males					
		Age range						Age range					
		60 – 64	65 – 69	70 – 74	75 – 79	80 – 85	Σ	60 – 64	65 – 69	70 – 74	75 – 79	80 – 85	Σ
554	Tertiary	67	55	16	3	0	<b>141</b>	23	17	1	0	0	<b>41</b>
	Secondary	46	41	23	12	2	<b>124</b>	28	19	4	1	0	<b>52</b>
	Vocational	16	22	13	6	0	<b>57</b>	47	30	7	2	0	<b>86</b>
	Primary	7	9	6	4	3	<b>29</b>	12	9	1	1	1	<b>24</b>

Source: own analysis

Table 3. Age and place of accommodation of respondents

Total	Place of accommodation	Females						Males					
		Age range						Age range					
		60 – 64	65 – 69	70 – 74	75 – 79	80 – 85	Σ	60 – 64	65 – 69	70 – 74	75 – 79	80 – 85	Σ
554	LA*	32	28	14	6	1	<b>81</b>	25	21	2	1	0	<b>49</b>
	LF**	95	87	37	16	2	<b>237</b>	73	47	4	2	1	<b>127</b>
	SWI***	9	12	7	3	2	<b>33</b>	12	7	7	1	0	<b>27</b>

LA\* living alone

LF\*\* living with a family

SWI\*\*\* living in social welfare institutions

Source: own analysis

The picture of senior citizen's lifestyle created by the respondents forms a certain specific plan of activity. Almost all respondents in the age range 60-70 declared a need for various activities: travelling, developing own interests (do-it-yourself, needlework, gardening, painting, reading), social work, foreign language teaching<sup>1</sup>, operating a computer, internet.

<sup>1</sup> In the specialist literature not much attention is devoted to the foreign language instruction of senior citizens. However, certain teaching methods and techniques described in Hrehovčík and Uberman (2003) or Hrehovčík and Shevel (2009) could be successfully applied. Communicative language teaching (Hrehovčík & Uberman, 2003, pp. 25-28), cooperative learning, whole language approach, participatory education (Hrehovčík & Shevel, 2009, pp. 32-54) as well as the language experience approach (Hrehovčík & Shevel, 2009, pp. 123-130) seem of particular relevance in this case.

Table 4. Aims, aspiration and needs of respondents

Total		Females						Males					
		Age range						Age range					
		60 – 64	65 – 69	70 – 74	75 – 79	80 – 85	Σ	60 – 64	65 – 69	70 – 74	75 – 79	80 – 85	Σ
554	Retaining psychomotor ability	136	127	58	25	5	<b>351</b>	110	75	13	4	1	<b>203</b>
	Developing various forms of activity	123	101	39	16	2	<b>281</b>	88	57	8	2	0	<b>156</b>
	Foreign language learning, operating computers, internet	87	53	21	4	0	<b>165</b>	81	49	4	2	0	<b>136</b>
	Financial security (savings)	127	122	45	19	3	<b>316</b>	105	68	11	4	1	<b>189</b>
	Place of accommodation (independent)	70	51	16	2	0	<b>139</b>	82	54	4	1	0	<b>141</b>
	Close contact with family, children, grandchildren	136	121	58	25	5	<b>351</b>	79	63	11	4	1	<b>158</b>

Source: own analysis

Almost all respondents think that the bases of positive, cheerful old age are formed by financial security (savings), proper living conditions (own flat or house, retaining personal independence), close contacts with the family. This seems particularly important for women, who more often stress the need of socialising with their families, and particularly their grandchildren. The most salient abilities respondents focused on include: motor ability: walking; daily life routines: independent eating, dressing, washing, combing hair, shaving; communication ability: speaking, reading; the ability to run a household: gardening, do-it-yourself, simple repairs, sport: cycling, swimming. The research results show that together with advancing age the respondents become more fearful, they try to ensure own safety and the feeling of security as well as they grow apprehensive of taking risks. The research on diminishing activity with growing age shows that it is related with lowering orientation on reaching aims, limiting interests; the decisive factors are undoubtedly difficult experiences such as for instance losing close relatives, deteriorating health condition, lowering ability of feeling happy, lowering feeling of security caused by gradually impoverished hearing, seeing and psychomotor ability, as a result of which the control over the closest environment becomes far more demanding and difficult. While considering mood, over half of the research group at the age over 65 mentioned changing into worse mood, lower sensitivity, worse adaptation and control over oneself. However, research data also show that the age factor is

not as significant as it is commonly believed. Analysing gender, women, irrespective of their age, exhibit greater need of activity. It depends on the mood rather than education. Depressive mood, negative attitude towards oneself and the surrounding reality cause the growing feeling of dissatisfaction, passing and withdrawal. Positive mood, on the other hand, enhances the internal human need to be active, life plans start to appear and it is easier to function in daily life. The respondents who took part in the study display a strong need to feel needed and useful. Summarising, most respondents live with their children's families, which is the most typical model of family life in Podkarpacie; family issues are the subject of primary care and everyday activity of the research group; low percentage of respondents takes active part in public life resulting from no habit of activity and partaking in social life, deteriorating health condition as well as difficult financial situation.

Basing on the analysis of accumulated data it can be stated that the lifestyle of senior citizens in Podkarpacie appears monotonous:

49% of respondents spend their time in a passive way;

29% of respondents go for a walk once a week;

33% of respondents work in the garden/plot;

9% of respondents have a hobby of some sort (most often mentioned ones are: do-it-yourself, simple repairs, fishing, having pets – birds, growing flowering plants, singing in a choir, needlework);

7% of respondents travel;

5% of respondents ride a bicycle;

3% of respondents go swimming, practise sports: skiing;

1% of respondents go to theatre or philharmonic hall once a year.

The longest lasting habits from earlier periods of senior citizens' lives are gardening, reading, meeting friends. Any individual has a chance to shape his/her own life according to established models considered best for oneself, and then despite the fact that life situations clash with the determination of this auto-creation one can talk of conscious aspiration and application of values and qualities in the form of accumulated life wisdom.

### **Senior citizens' lifestyles in children's pictures.**

Art forms created by children do not bear social consequences, they are the product of spontaneous creativity connected more with a coincidence, invention which is an organised desire, expression of self. In the early childhood children do not try to copy nature, nor do they aspire to reproduce it naturalistically; instead they spontaneously and synthetically

demonstrate the plurality of the perceived world. At the age of 5 to 7, the most often employed graphic symbols representing their grandparents' lifestyles and their life wisdom are pictures/illustrations of grandparents showing: a walk with the dog and grandchildren, gardening, watching television, resting on a sofa or in an armchair, reading a newspaper, performing household duties: cooking, cleaning the house, playing with grandchildren. The behaviour of drawn shapes of senior citizens still represent the cultural stereotypes passed to children by adults. The common belief that grandparents should take care of their grandchildren is evident and visible in children's drawings. The same is true of the clothing of the drawn grandparents, it is closer to the accepted cultural norms: grandmothers' hair is traditionally in a bun, she is wearing an apron, has visible wrinkles on the face, grandfathers have caps on their heads and wear working clothes. The researchers adopted qualitative analysis of drawings. The accumulated research material has enabled the authors to qualitatively describe and interpret the analysed phenomenon. The total of 623 children took part in the study, including 426 girls and 197 boys at the age of 5 to 7 learning in pre-school and '0' class of primary school. All subjects live in Podkarpacie. The topic of the first drawing work was "Draw why grandparents are wise" and the second one, performed two weeks later, was "Draw how (your) grandparents live". The study was aimed at identifying how children perceive grandparents, what they value in them most, how they understand the notion of wisdom and what lifestyle grandparents lead. Among qualitative analysis of produced works most interesting drawings and paintings were selected, those that are beyond commonly held stereotypes.



A child's statement: Grandma and grandpa live in the village. Grandpa feeds pigeons. Grandma is dissatisfied. Then she always shouts at grandpa. Grandma carries water for the cow. Grandma and grandpa are wise because they are old, that's what mum says.



A child's statement: My grandma takes care of me, she fries pancakes for me, in the summer she goes to the garden, sometimes she reads books, goes shopping and rides a bike with me, my mum and my dad.



A child's statement: Grandma and grandpa often go for walks, I go with them; Grandma and grandpa don't work, sometimes they go to their school and then we don't go for walks.

### **Closing remarks**

Life wisdom is a certain phenomenon of human existence – the existence which should be accompanied by activity, independence and full integration with the society. A lifestyle expresses an attitude towards values, and the picture and evaluation of the world are the bases of motivation for activities in conformity with the imaginary, ideal state, often against the commonly accepted rules and models.

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