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Well-being as a Phenomenon: Research Paradigms of the Fifth Age

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Abstract

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It is established that active longevity is connected with the intense intellectual activity at any age. Nowadays a man uses only a part of his/her intellectual capacities and it leads to reducing the storage capacity of mental memory. Globalization processes, medical and public health achievements have a positive effect on human longevity. Due to this, there is a problem of transforming “survival probability” into the active part of the human life activity known as “The Fifth Age”. As the subject of research is complex and multidimensional, it requires multifaceted study.

In the study different methods such as analysis of information resources reflecting recent data about seniors’ well-being, analysis of websites providing medical and social support to seniors, study of scientific papers about seniors’ well-being are used.

As a result a hypothesis about the conflict between the study of seniors’ wellbeing problem and the lack of study of effective methods creating positive path of active aging based on senior’s personal memories is formed.

Summing up the results it can be concluded that seniors’ well-being greatly depends on their participation in cultural memorial practices.

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Keywords: Seniors’ well-being, memory, subjective well-being.

1. Introduction

The Russian population aged 65 and over is constantly growing and this allows us to relate Russia to the countries with aging population. The pace of population aging in Russia is faster than it is in developed countries. From 1959 to 2002 the total population of Russia increased by 25% and the



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proportion of seniors rose 2.5 times. In the 2000s the proportion of seniors was low as the cohort born during the Great Patriotic War was small. By 2010 the age of post-war generation was 65 and this had increased the share of seniors. The share is expected to reach 20% by 2040 (Gavrilova, & Gavrilov, 2009). In the period between two censuses (2002 and 2010) the share of young population aged under 20 decreased by 4.1 % while the share of elderly population aged over 60 increased by 2.1%. This phenomenon is known as baby boom (Kornienko F., Syryamkina E.V. 2014) or grey revolution (Barysheva, 2014). This is very typical for all post-communist countries. From 2000 to 2050 the share of seniors aged 60 or more is projected to increase from 10% to 22% while in Western Europe it will increase from 20% to 35% (Lutz et al., 2008).

In Russia working pensioners are people who are used to work in a team and convinced of the need to do good. The great Russian philosopher, Alexander Zinoviev, exiled to Munich after being convicted of anti-Soviet activities wrote that he did not worry about the loss of relatives, friends but the loss of team-mates gave him no peace (Zinoviev, 1999). Seniors or citizens of the Fifth Age as they are often called in Europe are job-centered as jobs give them self-esteem and provide communication. The increasing number of young seniors is the subject of thorough study.

2. Methodology

Leading research paradigm in well-being process analysis is the theory of generations. This theory distinguishes six periods of time reflecting values, mental characteristics of different age groups.

Table 1. The theory of generations: temporal and mental characteristics

| Generation | Period | Main characteristics |
|--|-----------|--|
| The Greatest Generation | 1900–1923 | Ambitiousness, responsibility, belief in the bright future, devotion to the ruling ideology, family values |
| Silent Generation | 1923–1943 | Devotion, abidance by the rules, respect for the position and status, honesty, patience, sacrifice, thrift |
| Baby Boom Generation | 1943–1963 | Optimism, teamwork, interest in moral appraisal and financial gain, team spirit, youth and health cult, devotion, respect for the position and status |
| Thaw Generation (the beginning of “the Beautiful Era”) | 1963–1984 | Willingness to change, possibility to choose, technological literacy, individualism, desire for life-long learning, pragmatism, gender equality |
| Perestroika Generation | 1984–2000 | Self-confidence, diversity, immediate reward, civic duty, naïveté, the balance between private and professional lives, ability to work in a team, the use of modern technologies |
| Net Generation of active consumers | 2000–2020 | Aggressiveness, proneness to conflict, prevailing virtual communication, hyperactivity, need for novelty, mosaic thinking, infantilism, exaggerated needs, consumerism |

Baby boom generation and thaw generation focus on dynamic creation and positive perception of reality. To maintain physical and mental stability this strata goes in for sports, likes to find new tourist routes. At the same time, and this cannot be ignored, this aging generation keeps activity habits and the willingness to pay for their leisure time. Young seniors are the most active social citizens and they are also consumers of new products. Stratification of generations can easily identify consumer trends for specific ages but it also requires a serious study. Between 80s of the 20th century and mid-2015 more than 80000 studies devoted to various aspects of seniors' well-being were published. There was a

change in the study of “Active Aging” paradigm: from the study of age-related decline to the study of positive effects of aging and mental health program development.

These studies are carried out in socially oriented societies with a high level of economic development and consequently with a high sociocultural level.

Table 2. Healthy aging: analysis of modern information resources

| № | Title | Subject of study | Content | Resource |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| 1 | The Brain Health and Wellness Center | The Brain Wellness Services™ | The Brain Health and Wellness Center® offers a variety of Brain Wellness Services™ including consultations and coaching for both individuals and organizations on “Healthy Living for a Healthy Brain” featuring the unique Memory Preservation Nutrition® program*. | www.brainwellness.com/services/expert-consulting |
| 2 | Well Personal Health | For an Aging Brain, Looking for Ways to Keep Memory Sharp | The institute is one of several scientific organizations sponsoring rigorous trials of ways to cash in on the brain’s lifelong ability to generate new cells and connections. One such trial, Advanced Cognitive Training for Independent and Vital Elderly, or Active. | http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/05/11/for-aging-effects-more-solutions-than-proof-of-success/?_r=0 |
| 3 | Today health & Wellness | Brain food is real: Study shows how diet affects memory as we age | An international team of researchers found that seniors who consumed the most nutritious food had a nearly 25 percent reduction in the risk of mental decline compared those with the least healthy diets, according to the study published Wednesday in the online issue of Neurology | http://www.today.com/health/brain-food-real-study-shows-how-diet-affects-memory-wet19746 |
| 4 | The Healthy States Initiative | The initiative brings together state legislators, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) officials, state health department officials and public health experts to share information and to identify innovative solutions. | Communicate and promote the message that “it’s never too late.” Older adults can benefit significantly from adopting healthy lifestyles. Legislators can encourage this by: † Conducting communications campaigns targeted at seniors; † Using the media for public service announcements. | http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/ |
| 5 | Preventive Wellness | Making Improvements To An Aging Brain | The ACTIVE study (Advanced Cognitive Training for Independent and Vital Elderly) were divided into three training groups—memory, reasoning and speed-of-processing—and a control group. The training groups participated in 10 60- to 70-minute | http://affects.biz/OHA/?p=145 |

| № | Title | Subject of study | Content | Resource |
|---|---------------------------|--|--|---|
| | | | sessions over five to six weeks, with some randomly selected for later “booster” sessions | |
| 6 | Home watch care give | Guide to senior: Health and Wellness | Programs dedicated to senior wellness are successful when they address: a commitment to healthy aging, a comfortable environment for seniors, peer support, an active role for the senior, family/caregiver involvement and access to professional educational materials. Mental health awareness includes providing opportunities for seniors to seek fellowship with other seniors and community members, either individually or as a group. | https://www.homewatchcaregivers.com/all-locations# |
| 7 | Regent Court: Memory Care | Regent Court is a specialized memory care community that provides quality care to our residents who are facing Alzheimer's Disease or other related dementias. | The Life Series program promotes resident independence, dignity and self-esteem through consistent care, stimulating activities and a specialized residential design. | http://www.regentcourtseniorliving.com/about-us/ |

The data in Tab. 2 suggest that in today's global society there is a clear strategy focused, on the one hand, on the active employment of the aging population, on the other hand, on its sustainable health and sociocultural adaptation. It should be emphasized that these two strategies are cost-effective models. Firstly, this strategy saves and uses the social capital of seniors, secondly, new jobs are created for servicing these seniors, and thirdly, a social model of transmitting axiological world of memory from one generation to another is implemented in practice.

3. Social well-being of seniors as a part of study

Nowadays the social well-being of seniors is examined in the following aspects:

- 1) The system of social security and health insurance;
- 2) The system of social services and public housing;
- 3) Measures of countercyclical policy and state regulation of economic growth;
- 4) Environmental protection measures.

The concept of well-being is examined in current studies and includes fundamental human needs such as physical safety, health, age-appropriate diet, and personal potential, development of social relations that bring satisfaction and the solution of psychosocial and domestic problems. Science-based model of human well-being, particularly seniors, includes the following components: physical, social, emotional and cognitive well-being (Pollad, & Davidson, 2001, Barysheva, 2014).

Over the last 10 years, this has become one of the most popular fields of study in Russia. It can be seen from Tab. 3.

Table 3. The study of seniors' well-being in the Russian Federation

| № | Topic of study | Area where study is carried out | Duration of study | Results |
|---|--|--|-------------------|---|
| 1 | Social well-being of seniors and their social status in the region | Khabarovsk Territory | 1999 – 2011 | Development of purpose-oriented programs of seniors' social support |
| 2 | Subjective well-being of seniors (cross-national study) | Higher School of Economics in St. Petersburg | 2014 | Identification of subjective well-being of seniors |
| 3 | Seniors' well-being | Administrative authorities of the Saratov Region | 2013 | Development of programs for improving seniors' well-being in the region |
| 4 | Technologies for improving seniors' well-being | Tomsk Polytechnic University | 2012-2016 | Developing and testing technologies for improving seniors' well-being |

The fields of study show a steady trend from a problem description, its analysis to developing technologies for improving seniors' well-being. The study carried out with the support of Russian Humanitarian Foundation 11-13-27005a/T and based on the material collected in Khabarovsk Territory has the results of theoretical and empirical sociological study of seniors' social well-being and their social status in the region (Baikov, 2012). The results of comprehensive study of elderly generation show the value of work and leisure for forming positive social well-being of seniors. By the order of administration authorities, the study of seniors' well-being was carried out in Balakovskiy district of Saratov region (Kulikov, 2012). An important contribution to the study of seniors' well-being was done by Yu.A. Zelikova (Zelikova, 2014). She determined the level of subjective well-being of seniors aged 60 or more due to the data presented in the project WorldValueSurvey (the data was collected between 2005 and 2008). Yu.A. Zelikova considers that satisfaction with financial status, positive evaluation of personal health status, decision-making discretion and ability to have friendly relations with people influence greatly on subjective well-being of seniors.

The most complete studying of seniors' well-being problems has been carried out within the framework of scientific activity of the International Scientific-Educational Laboratory for the Improvement of Wellbeing Technologies of Older Adults. The key task of this laboratory (International Scientific Educational Laboratory for the Improvement of Wellbeing Technologies of Older Adults) as a scientific laboratory of Tomsk Polytechnic University is the research aimed to study "evaluation and improvement of social, economic and emotional well-being of older people" (Barysheva, 2014).

This research is new for Russian scientists, as they should describe the processes aimed at forming seniors' positive and conscious attitude to their final period of lives. We believe that the key strategy for forming seniors' positive attitude is the restoration, revival and presentation of individual, subjective and unique memories. The work of public organization "Memorial" and on-line resource "Gefter" is successfully done in this direction. They are aimed at developing methodological strategies of "active experiencing of past memories" that are focused on the implementation of the policy of socio-cultural unity

4. Conclusion

The results show that the problem of active aging can be solved while studying the phenomenon of «Grey Revolution» combined with seniors support on mental and biological level and with implementation of innovative approaches to active aging developed by Russian researchers. The memory of by-gone days and outgoing generations is invaluable. Moreover, history like a careful weaver restores the fabric of individual's unique life story and the closer these people with their simple everyday worries and joys are, the brighter all era diversity appears in our memory.

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