

A.K. Abdina¹, Sh.A. Ibzharova², M.K. Kakimzhanova^{3*}

¹*Astana IT University, Astana, Kazakhstan;*

²*Almaty management university, Almaty, Kazakhstan;*

³*Saken Seifullin Kazakh Agrotechnical University, Astana, Kazakhstan
(abdinaa@mail.ru, sh.ibzharova@altau.edu.kz, rita_k79@mail.ru)*

The existential needs of the elderly: the problem of quality of Life

Consideration of such an essential and significant part of the problem of population ageing as their existential needs since it is at this age that a person is profoundly confronted with life-meaning experiences. The paper uses comparative research methods and conceptual and hermeneutic analysis of philosophical texts. The existential needs of a person in old age directly affect the quality of his life, awareness of himself as a creative person, freedom in his manifestations, responsible for his actions, and living in harmony with himself and society. The search for roots and identity complements a person's holistic worldview, making him the creator of his own life, and not a shadow of the years he has lived. Unrealized or unsatisfied existential needs destroy the integrity of a person, negatively affecting the quality of his life. The problem of population ageing is closely connected not only with economic, demographic and social problems, but it also expresses, first of all, the existential essence of a person, measured by the quality of his life. The quality of life of older people would be significantly higher if existential needs were consciously satisfied.

Keywords: population ageing, elderly people, quality of life, existential needs, existential experiences, active longevity.

Introduction

The ageing of the population is one of the dominant trends of the XXI century. It has crucial and far-reaching consequences for all aspects of society. According to the UN (United Nations) [1], in 1950 the number of elderly (65+) in the world did not exceed 130 million. By 2015, it had grown 4.6 times – up to 600 million. In 2050, 1.6 billion is expected, and by 2100 – 2.5 billion. There should be 100 times more people over 80: from 10 million in 1950 to 910 million in 2100. The share of the first group today is 10%, and the second is no more than 2%. By 2100, the indicators will increase threefold and fourfold, respectively, so the ageing of the population cannot be ignored in any way but should be considered an urgent problem that requires close attention and comprehensive research.

The ageing of the population has many different complex facets, such as an increase in the number of retired people due to an increase in life expectancy, a decrease in the number of able-bodied members of society caused by the global demographic crisis, and other socio-economic problems generated by this process. In our opinion, the existential needs of older people, which determine the quality of their life, also require careful study, since they affect the physical and mental health of a significant part of the world's population. The relevance of the problem under study is also related to the fact that the coming decade (2021-2030) has been proclaimed by the World Health Organization as the Decade of Healthy Ageing, which emphasizes the inevitability and significance of the problem under study.

* Corresponding author's e-mail: rita_k79@mail.ru

Methodology and research methods

The authors studied the texts of existentialist philosophers, the materials of the World Assemblies on Ageing in 1982 and 2002, the Report on the implementation of the regional strategy for the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2016, the report “Analysis of the population situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, developed in 2019 with technical support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Kazakhstan, the basic report “Decade of Healthy Ageing” for 2020. In addition, the authors of the article used methods of comparative studies, and conceptual and hermeneutic analysis of philosophical texts. There is no specific approach to the definition of the concept of “quality of life” among scientists, therefore, the authors rely on an integral characteristic that includes a complex system of socioeconomic, political, cultural-ideological, and environmental indicators, factors and conditions [2].

Discussion

During the existence of the UN, the problem of population ageing has been discussed twice at World Assemblies. The first World Assembly on Ageing was held in Vienna in 1982, and as a result, the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing was adopted. The Second World Assembly on Population Ageing was held in Madrid in 2002, and the outcome of the assembly was the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

The preamble of the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing states that the countries gathered at the World Assembly on Ageing have consciously approached the issues of increasing the number of the ageing part of their population. Based on this, the countries jointly discussed the issues facing them, taking into account the achievements associated with increasing life expectancy and the resulting challenges and opportunities. As a result of the discussions, the UN members agreed to develop and apply policies at the international, regional and national levels aimed at revitalizing the life of an ageing population. In addition, the UN member states also expressed their intention to study the impact of the ageing part of the population on development, to ensure conditions for the full use of the potential of ageing people, and to mitigate, through appropriate measures, any negative consequences of such influence.

The Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing also notes that the fundamental and inalienable rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights fully and unconditionally apply to ageing members of society [3]. The UN member States recognize that quality of life is no less important than long life expectancy, and that, therefore, the ageing should, as far as possible, be allowed to live a fruitful, healthy, safe and satisfying life in their own families and communities and be considered an organic part of society.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing [4] makes it possible to respond to the opportunities and challenges posed by the ageing of the world's population, based on new international priorities.

Researchers note that the main reason for the international community's concern about ageing issues was the fundamental demographic changes that occurred in the world by the end of the last century and captured to one degree or another almost all regions of the world [5]. It became obvious that the development of society in the new century should take into account the growing processes of demographic ageing, find solutions to emerging problems and take advantage of the opportunities. The understanding has been established in the world that the ageing of mankind has become universal and irreversible, equal in importance to the process of globalization.

A review of articles on the state of the problem of population ageing in the world shows that scientists pay more attention to the social economic and medical aspects of the problem [6-16], whereas, in our opinion, the existential components of the problem are no less important for research. As Erich Fromm notes: “In an attempt to define the human essence, we do not rely on such abstractions as speculative metaphysics operates in the person of, for example, Heidegger and Sartre. We turn to the real conditions of existence of a real living person so that the concept of the essence of each individual coincides with the concept of the existence of the genus” [17].

In 2016, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan prepared a Report on the implementation of the regional strategy for the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the Republic of Kazakhstan [18]. This document provides data on the socio-economic changes that occurred in the Republic of Kazakhstan during the reporting period from 2012 to 2016, as well as on progress in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing during this period.

Although the ageing of the population is a relatively new phenomenon for Kazakhstan, statistics show that the country is on the verge of ageing. The number of people aged 65 years and older in the total population was 7.5% at the end of 2018. It is believed that the 7% threshold is typical for an ageing nation, and in general, this threshold has already been overcome in Kazakhstan, although the situation in the regions of the country is different. So, in the north-east of the country and part of central Kazakhstan, the situation is similar to the countries of Europe, that is, the population is ageing due to the rapid increase in the number of elderly people compared to young people (due to insignificant natural population growth and a negative migration balance). And in the southern and western regions of the republic, as well as in the capital of the country, there is an increase in the birth rate, as a result of which the indicators of population ageing decrease [18].

Researchers of social economic factors of the problem of population ageing note [1] that the key question from the point of view of the welfare of society is how an increase in the share of the elderly in the total population will affect per capita consumption – will it decrease, increase or remain neutral? The ageing of the population is the result of the interaction of a declining birth rate with an increasing life expectancy. The economic consequences of increasing life expectancy are a simpler case. Reducing the ratio between the number of employed and the number of the entire population leads to the fact that each employee is forced to support the same number of children as before but at the same time a larger number of elderly. Hence, there is the reduction in per capita consumption at any possible level of capital labour.

According to forecasts [19], in Kazakhstan for the period from now to 2050, the coefficient of potential support will decrease by 2 times, that is, only about 3.5 people of working age will account for 1 pensioner aged 65+, which will increase the burden on the latter. At the end of 2018, there were 6.8 able-bodied people per 1 retired person and 7.5 in 2014. The low forecast values of this coefficient emphasize the potential impact of the ageing of the population in Kazakhstan on the labour market, and economic indicators, as well as on the increase in the burden on the state budget in terms of social and pension provision, which Kazakhstan may face in the coming decades.

Within the framework of the G20 symposium held in January 2019 in Japan, automatic adjustment of the retirement age with an increase in life expectancy was discussed as a possible measure in response to the ageing of the population (this mechanism has been implemented in Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal and Finland) [20].

The increase of the retirement age in Kazakhstan to 63 years, which was initiated by the legislative authorities in 2015 with the introduction of amendments to the Law on Pension Provision in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2013, caused an unambiguously negative reaction in society. Although the increase in the age limit is associated with an increase in life expectancy and the ageing process of society, the population of the country perceived these changes as an antisocial and unpopular measure adopted by the state in response to the problem of ageing. In our opinion, the issue requires a comprehensive solution. It is not enough to raise the retirement age based on the global trend of population ageing and count on the long-term positive effect of this measure. An increase in the retirement age should be accompanied by an improvement in the quality of life of older people, an increase in the quality of medical services provided to them, a variety of leisure activities for older people and their opportunities for full rest, and other activities aimed at public awareness of the value of old age.

It is important to understand that the ageing of the population is not only a demographic process with economic consequences but also a social phenomenon that considers the possibilities of a person in various spheres of economic, social and political activity. With a competent state policy, an increase in life expectancy means that longer economic activity of people can become an additional incentive for economic growth.

Earlier we wrote that the philosophy of independent life orients a person with a disability to the fact that he sets himself the same tasks as any other member of society [21]. This position is also applicable to elderly people. It is necessary to create conditions for continuing work activity after retirement age, so that pensioners have the opportunity to study or retrain, or, with highly qualified elderly people, have the opportunity to consult in their professional field. In other words, it is necessary to encourage pensioners to continue working.

However, solving the problem of population ageing involves not only the possibility of continuing to work. Much more important and relevant, as we have already noted above, is the issue of the quality of life of older people, both around the world and in our country. According to the report “Analysis of the population situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan” for 2019 [22], the ageing process of the population has a serious impact on all aspects of human life and society: economic growth, investment, savings, labour market,

consumption and leisure, pensions and taxation, and much more. The ageing process of the population affects the health and lifestyle of the elderly, as well as the growth of their dependence on the economically and socially active population. In other words, the ageing process directly affects the existential needs of older people.

From Fromm's point of view, unique existential needs are inherent in human nature. Firstly, it is the need to establish emotional connections. Fromm writes that realizing his isolation from nature, a person must find new connections that would replace his biological connection with his mother. "Without strong emotional ties with the world, he will suffer unbearably from his loneliness and loss. But it is in his power to establish various forms of communication with other people", writes Fromm [17].

People always need to take care of someone and take part in the lives of the people for whom they are responsible. And if most young people can establish emotional connections with their surroundings without any problems, then the situation becomes more complicated with age. Children grow up and no longer need guardianship, work no longer takes up most of their lives, or, due to retirement, it simply does not exist, and an elderly person is particularly acutely aware of his isolation. This condition is not experienced only by those who continue to lead an active social or creative life, but, unfortunately, most people with retirement begin to feel huge problems with establishing emotional connections, which naturally leads to a feeling of loss, uselessness and meaninglessness of existence.

Secondly, Fromm draws attention to the problem of people overcoming their natural origin, which generates an existential need to overcome themselves. Pashchenko O.V. in the article "Existential needs as the basis of the integrity of personality" writes that in everyday life "there is a distortion of the existential situation. A person, satisfying daily needs, feels unhappy because there is no satisfaction of existential, essential human needs. Unsatisfied existential needs are behind the majority of personal psychological problems" [23].

The most promising solution to the need to overcome everyday life is seen as an activity based on creativity. If a person can combine his main activity with creativity during his life, or devote his life entirely to art in its various manifestations, then elderly people who have retired and realized that they have free time can master creative practices in a new way. For example, promoting ideas based on life experience, creating spiritual and material values in the field of art, and helping young people with mentoring and pedagogical activities. These practices allow older people to realize their importance and achieve a sense of a certain freedom from boring old age, unpromising everyday life, and, in a sense, even from a destructive future. It can be argued that the development of new skills, especially creative ones, improves the quality of life of older people.

The third existential need is the search for roots, or, the desire of people to feel an integral part of the world. According to Fromm, this need arises from the very birth, when biological ties with the mother are severed [17]. By the end of childhood, every person refuses the security that parental care provides. Throughout life, people experience this need in different ways. Existential experiences of middle age are associated to a greater extent with the needs of everyday life, including feelings of stability and security, which are similar to parental protection in childhood. But at a more mature age, every person is faced with the reality of separation from life itself, when death is approaching.

In modern society, the problem of separation from the roots is particularly acute, since community culture, which provides an existential need for roots, is gradually giving way to urban culture, blurring the line between the past and the present. Therefore, elderly people living in cities feel this need most acutely. At first glance, it seems that liberation from the norms and values of the community can give a person the opportunity to gain personal integrity and freedom, but this is not quite true. This kind of experience is necessary at a younger age, when a young person, freeing himself from the custody of his parents, builds his personality. The existential need for roots experienced by older people can be compared to returning home after a long journey, with accumulated life experience and the desire to apply it to a new understanding of community life. Often, it is in old age that people begin to be drawn to the roots, to gain integrity with the community to which they belonged, belong or could belong. The researchers write: "Fromm's main thesis is that human evolution is based on the loss of his original home – Nature – and the inability to return to it again. However, having lost this prehistoric unity, they developed the ability to think, foresee, and imagine" [24]. Perhaps it is this ability that helps people in satisfying the existential need to search for roots.

The fourth existential need that Fromm draws attention to is the need for identity. Fromm talks about the identity that helps a person to realize himself, his essence. In our opinion, this is the highest existential need, since the meaning of human existence lies in the awareness of one's essence, and the loss of this kind

of identity can lead to the consequences of complete denial of oneself as a person, to dissolution in society. And if, in search of roots, a person is looking for integrity with the community to which he belongs or would like to belong, then in the awareness of his essence, a person is trying to find personal integrity, unity of the existential being principle with spiritual foundations.

The search for oneself is inherent in a person always, throughout life. Considering existential needs through the prism of old age, it can be noted that at this stage of the life path, a person can accept his identity in different ways. Someone feels satisfaction from their achievements and is fully aware of their integrity. Someone continues a restless or thoughtful search for new facets of himself. It seems to someone that life has passed by, and he has only touched it with the edge, not realizing his exclusivity to the full. In any case, awareness of one's own identity is a deep existential need of an elderly person, which, positively, helps him to accept life as it is, or, negatively, due to various circumstances, plunges into denial of life values. The state of senile depression is one of the most severe forms of this disease. Anxiety, irritation, apathy, and general negative mood, all this is often associated with both a decrease in physical activity and an unwillingness to accept oneself in a feeble old age. All this contributes to the deterioration of the quality of life of the elderly and a decrease in its duration.

Another existential need, from Fromm's point of view, is the need for a value system that helps a person to perceive the surrounding reality in all its manifestations: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. "People need stable and constant support to explain the complexity of the world", (где открываются кавычки?) Fromm believes [17]. A person needs to constantly explain and clarify all the events taking place in the world and correlate them with his system of values. Moreover, it does not matter at all what is the basis of this system – scientific facts, religious beliefs, moral attitudes, the main thing is that this system does not fail, and does not leave a person alone with disordered chaos, depriving solid ground under his feet.

If we proceed from existential values, then a person is always in a situation of choice. In his book *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre expounds his understanding of freedom as a person's ability to create himself [25]. Accordingly, freedom of choice is human destiny. Man is doomed to freedom. Sartre's researchers write that in later works the French existentialist began to recognize the social conditionality of human freedom. So he turned to the problem of necessity. Sartre argues that necessity is the opposite of freedom. It interferes with a person's free activity, shackles his initiative and does not allow him to show his spiritual and physical potencies [26]. In this regard, I would like to note that an elderly person, being freed from the burden of necessary everyday social actions, begins to gain genuine freedom. He overcomes the necessity and, provided he is open to the world, realizes this world as an integral person, free in his choice. It should be taken into account that there are a lot of options for the development of events, and a person can be broken by the realities of society or overwhelmed by necessity, which he begins to realize as his own choice. Or, he builds some illusory system of values, since he is unable to resist existing narratives. But a person's openness to the world presupposes his full perception of himself as an integral person, and in this case, a person overcomes his dependence on necessity and forms his system of values, free from external interference.

Thus, the existential needs of a person in old age directly affect the quality of his life, the awareness of himself as a creative person, free in his manifestations, responsible for his actions, and living in harmony with himself and society. The search for roots and identity complements a person's holistic worldview, making him the creator of his own life, and not a shadow of the years he has lived. Unrealized or unsatisfied existential needs destroy the integrity of a person, negatively affecting the quality of his life.

Most people gain their integrity by relying on common sense. Tolstoy in "War and Peace" characterized common sense as mediocrity, in our opinion, because common sense suggests the simplest way, more based on practical experience, not burdened with intellectual efforts. The quality of life of the elderly would be significantly higher with the conscious satisfaction of existential needs.

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А.Қ. Абдина, Ш.А. Ыжарова, М.Қ. Кәкімжанова

Егде жастағы адамдардың экзистенциалды қажеттіліктері: өмір сапасы мәселесі

Халықтың қартаюу проблемасының маңызды және маңызды бөлігін егде жастағы адамдардың экзистенциалды қажеттіліктері ретінде қарастыру, өйткені дәл осы жаста адам үшін мағыналы өмір тәжірибесі өте өткір болады. Мақалада философиялық мәтіндерді салыстырмалы зерттеу, тұжырымдамалық және герменевтикалық талдау әдістері қолданылған. Егде жастағы адамның экзистенциалды қажетті-

ліктері оның өмір сүру сапасына, өзін-өзі және қоғаммен үйлесімді өмір сүретін, өз іс-әрекеттеріне жауапты, өз көріністерінде еркін, шығармашылық тұлға ретінде сезінуіне тікелей әсер етеді. Түп негіз бен сәйкестікті іздеу адамның тұтас дүниетанымын толықтырып, оны өткен жылдардың көлеңкесі емес, өз өмірінің жасаушысы етеді. Іске асырылмаған немесе қанағаттандырылмаған экзистенциалды қажеттіліктер адамның тұтастығын бұзады, оның өмір сүру сапасына теріс әсер етеді. Халықтың қартаюу проблемасы тек экономикалық, демографиялық және әлеуметтік мәселелермен тығыз байланысты емес, ол, ең алдымен, адамның өмір сүру сапасымен өлшенетін экзистенциалды мәнін білдіреді. Егде жастағы адамдардың өмір сүру сапасы олардың экзистенциалды қажеттіліктерін саналы түрде қанағаттандырса, әлдеқайда жоғары болар еді.

Кілт сөздер: халықтың қартаюуы, егде жастағы адамдар, өмір сапасы, экзистенциалды қажеттіліктер, экзистенциалды тәжірибе, белсенді ұзақ өмір сүру.

А.К. Абдина, Ш.А. Ибжарова, М.К. Какимжанова

Экзистенциальные потребности пожилых людей: проблема качества жизни

Рассмотрена такая существенная и значительная часть проблемы старения населения, как экзистенциальные потребности пожилых людей, поскольку именно в этом возрасте перед человеком наиболее остро стоят смысловые переживания. В работе использованы методы сравнительных исследований, концептуального и герменевтического анализа философских текстов. Экзистенциальные потребности человека в пожилом возрасте напрямую влияют на качество его жизни, осознание себя творческой личностью, свободной в своих проявлениях, ответственной за свои поступки, живущей в гармонии с самим собой и обществом. Поиск корней и идентичности дополняет целостное мировоззрение человека, делая его творцом своей собственной жизни, а не тенью прожитых лет. Нереализованные или неудовлетворенные экзистенциальные потребности разрушают целостность человека, негативно влияя на качество его жизни. Проблема старения населения тесно связана не только с экономическими, демографическими и социальными проблемами, она выражает, прежде всего, экзистенциальную сущность человека, измеряемую качеством его жизни. Качество жизни пожилых людей было бы значительно выше при сознательном удовлетворении экзистенциальных потребностей.

Ключевые слова: старение населения, пожилые люди, качество жизни, экзистенциальные потребности, экзистенциальные переживания, активное долголетие.

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