

Impact of stress on satisfaction with life of seniors from lubelskie voivodship

Wpływ stresu na zadowolenie z życia seniorów z województwa lubelskiego

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Abstract

Introduction. Stress negatively affects many aspects of human life. Older people are especially prone to stressful situations nowadays. This is primarily due to widespread stereotypes, marginalization, discrimination in the immediate environment and workplace, and family rejection. All these components affect the satisfaction with life, which is an important element in evaluating one's existence. Health condition, family relationships, social activity, education level and life expectancy also determine seniors' life satisfaction. **Aim.** The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the level of stress and anxiety determines the overall satisfaction with one's life in seniors. **Material and methods.** The study was conducted among 120 elderly people living in the Lublin macroregion. Seniors were 60 to 87 years old. A diagnostic survey was conducted using the survey technique as part of the implementation of the study. The Quality Index of Ferrans Life and Powers General Version III was the research tool. **Results.** Respondents were mostly satisfied (49.16%) and very satisfied (29.17%) with their lives. The largest group were the respondents who were somewhat satisfied (30.83%) with their peace of mind. As a result of the research work, a model was developed in which the variable level of stress and anxiety explained 74% of variance in the overall life satisfaction. **Conclusions.** The biggest surveyed group consisted of seniors who were moderately satisfied with their lives. As the stress progresses and worries arise, life quality among seniors worsens. (Gerontol Pol 2018; 26; 86-90)

Key words: stress, satisfaction, life, seniors

Streszczenie

Wstęp. Stres negatywnie oddziałuje na wiele aspektów ludzkiego życia. Szczególnie na sytuacje stresowe narażona jest grupa społeczna osób starszych wiekiem. Spowodowane jest to przede wszystkim stereotypizacją starości, marginalizacją, odtrąceniem, dyskryminacją seniorów w najbliższym środowisku i miejscu pracy. Wszystkie te składowe wpływają na satysfakcję z życia, która jest ważnym elementem oceny własnej egzystencji. Determinantami wpływającymi na zadowolenie z życia u seniorów jest również ich kondycja zdrowotna, kontakty z rodziną, aktywność społeczna, poziom wykształcenia oraz życiowy optymizm. **Cel pracy.** Celem niniejszej pracy było zbadanie czy poziom odczuwanego stresu i zmartwień determinuje ogólne zadowolenie ze swojego życia u seniorów. **Material i metody.** Badania przeprowadzono wśród 120 osób starszych zamieszkujących makroregion lubelski. Seniorzy byli w wieku od 60 do 87 lat. Do realizacji badania posłużono się metodą sondażu diagnostycznego, techniką ankietową. Narzędzie badawcze stanowił Indeks Jakości Życia Ferrans i Powers Wersja III Ogólna. **Wyniki.** Respondenci, w głównej mierze byli zadowoleni ze swojego życia w stopniu umiarkowanym (49,16%) oraz bardzo zadowoleni (29,17%). Największą grupę stanowili badani, którzy byli nieco zadowoleni (30,83%) ze swojego spokoju ducha. W wyniku podjętych prac badawczych opracowano model, w którym zmienna poziom odczuwanego stresu i zmartwień wyjaśnia 74% wariancji zmiennej ogólne zadowolenie z życia. **Wnioski.** Największą grupę badanych stanowiły osoby, które były zadowolone ze swojego życia w stopniu umiarkowanym. Wraz ze wzrostem poziomu odczuwanego stresu oraz zmartwień obniża się ogólne zadowolenie z życia u seniorów. (Gerontol Pol 2018; 26; 86-90)

Słowa kluczowe: stres, zadowolenie, życie, seniorzy

Introduction

Stress in modern times is an inseparable element of human life. Seniors are especially prone to experiencing stressful situations. They are mostly caused by stereotypes regarding old age, marginalization, rejection and discrimination of seniors in their closest circles and in the workplace.

In the subject's literature, there can be found many definitions of stress. Doctor Hans Selye is the pioneer of the first of the very first stress definition: "(...) the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change" [1]. Stress is also understood as "(...) a group of specific and unspecified organism reactions on incentives which disrupt its balance — they either mobilize or cause disorders. Those physical or mental incentives are called stressors" [2]. Aside from the above-mentioned stressors, there are also long-term ones and short-term ones (so called sharp). The source of stressors can be outside (exogenous) and inside (psyche, body) [3]. The most common physical stressors that influence seniors especially are connected to the environment: ever-present noise, excessive or insufficient lighting and climatic factors. Then there are mental causes of stress: physical or mental overload, disruptions (too much pressure put on oneself and close ones), deprivation (social isolation) and various dangers (physical, social standing) [4]. At top of that experiencing stress arises from seniors' health condition. Many ailments appear with age which hamper one's ability to function independently. Change of lifestyle resulting from retirement/pension, caring for close ones, caring for a sick spouse, widowhood, lack of independence and involuntary dependence on various institutions are the further causes of stress among seniors [5].

It is imperative to remember that changes occurring in the society also contribute to the stress that seniors suffer from. It is especially true regarding stereotypes about this group of people which cause them to be socially excluded and marginalized. In light of the subject's literature, seniors are identified with sickness, incompetence, dependence on others and physical disability. They are also identified with pessimism, suspiciousness, malaise and being tight-lipped. The assumption that seniors' intellectual prowess diminishes with age is the most unfair one [6]. As a result, they are rejected by the bigger part of the society and that puts seniors into stressful situations and gives them additional everyday worries. As a consequence, the stress has a negative effect on the life's satisfaction, which is a very important element regarding the assessment of one's own existence. Aside from stress, physical condition, family relationships, public relations, education level and optimism are the

main determinants that influence satisfaction with one's life. Nevertheless, the life balance is very important regarding seniors' life satisfaction where one remembers one's own successes and failures which shaped one's life [7].

Many analyses were conducted so far regarding stress levels and life satisfaction of various social groups. However, only few authors put those two correlations together and conducted analyses focusing on how stress influences life satisfaction. Therefore, the goal of this work is to research if the levels of stress and worries determine seniors' life satisfaction.

Material and methods

120 senior residents of the Lublin Macroregion took part in the study. The choice of the surveyed was deliberate. Respondents had to be at least 60 years old and live in Lublin Voivodeship. The seniors' age varied between 60 and 87 and the average of the respondents' age was 70 years old ($M = 69.74$; $SD = 7.00$). Women constituted more than the half of the surveyed group (54.2%). Almost three quarters of the surveyed resided in the suburbs (72.5%). More than half of the surveyed were married (59.7%) and had either vocational or secondary education (42.5%). The detailed socio-demographic characteristics of the surveyed group were presented in Table I.

Diagnostic poll method, survey technique was used when conducting this research. *Ferrans and Powers Quality of Life Index — Generic Version* was the research tool as to evaluate the quality of life in the quantitative form [7]. The Index focuses on assessment of life quality regarding health condition, family situation, mental and spiritual condition as well as socio-economic state [8]. An attachment was added to the research tool which contained questions regarding socio-demographic factors (age, sex, place of residence, marital status, education).

The characteristics of the surveyed population were based on the analysis of the percentage distribution of the occurrence frequency of qualitative variables and on the calculation of descriptive statistics – average and standard deviation of quantitative data. An univariate analysis of regression with the input method was conducted in hope of verification if the stress level determines overall seniors' life satisfaction. Lack of data was excluded from the analyses. Cut-off error level of the first kind was assumed that is based on the rejection of the true null hypothesis that focuses on lack of differences or correlations that amounts to 0.05. Statistical calculations were conducted with the use of *IBM SPSS 21* software.

Results

When asked about their life quality, most respondents (49.16%) said that they were moderately satisfied with it and that they were very satisfied with their life quality (29.17%). Every sixth senior was a little satisfied and every twentieth senior was slightly satisfied with their life quality.

The biggest group was constituted of the surveyed who were a little satisfied with their peace of mind (30.83%) and a slightly smaller group (24.16%) was constituted of seniors who were moderately satisfied with their peace of mind.

Striving to verify the thesis claiming that stress level determines overall life quality of seniors, a regression analysis was conducted where *the level of stress and worries* was the independent variable and *overall life satisfaction* was the dependent variable.

As a result of the undertaken study, a certain model was developed in which the variable of *the level of stress and worries* explains 74% (R^2 corrected = 0.74) of the variation variable of the *overall life satisfaction*. The model is perfectly adjusted to the data, $F(1.118) = 331.22$, $p < 0.001$, and the resulting data states that the correlation between the predictor and the dependent variable is very strong and inversely proportional, $\beta = -0.89$; $p < 0.001$ which means that seniors' overall life satisfaction worsens when the stress level rises.

Discussion

Satisfaction with life lived by seniors constitutes an overall assessment of life and the accompanying emotional condition. Individual assumption is assumed with a constant and dynamic character [9]. Stress is one of the main factors that determines overall life satisfaction. The studies conducted by J. Czapiński confirm this thesis as they claim that occurrences of stressful situations affect mental health of a person in a negative way [10]. In modern times, seniors are especially prone to stress as it results from various changes occurring in the society. The authorial study suggests that almost half of the surveyed are moderately satisfied with their lives and only less than 30% of the surveyed are very satisfied with their lives. E. Domarecka conducted a study and got rather different results where the listeners of the University of the Third Age assessed their life quality as average and low. It is interesting that a similar number of respondents (27.5%) [11] was highly satisfied with their lives, just like in the authorial study. K. Kurowska and B. Orzol in their work entitled "The feeling of coherence and seniors' life satisfaction" proved that the most seniors' life satisfaction was average at best. What is interesting is that seniors from the 75-89 age group were satisfied with their lives most [12]. C. Borg also conducted a study regarding that subject and the surveyed group constituted of Americans over 65 years of age. The results stated that women were slightly less satisfied with their

Table I. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable		N	%
Gender	Women	65	54.2
	Men	56	45.8
Place of living residence	City	33	27.5
	Village	87	72.5
Marital status	Single	15	12.6
	Married	71	59.7
	Divorced	23	19.3
	Concubinage	8	6.7
	Widower	3	2.5
Education	Basic	6	5.0
	Occupational / Medium	51	42.5
	Higher	22	18.3
	Lack	41	34.1

Table II. Model of conditions of general satisfaction with life of seniors

Model	Measurements of the model's fit			Regression weights for predictors				
	R^2 corrected	F	P	B	SE	Beta	T	P
Satisfaction with life	0.74	331.22	0.001	1.37	0.08	-0.86	18.20	0.001

lives than men [13]. S. Meggiolaro and F. Ongaro came to similar conclusions after studying overall life satisfaction of seniors from Italy [14]. However, most Turkish seniors were very satisfied with their lives as proved by FY. Beyaztas [15].

Life satisfaction is determined by a variety of factors. One of them is stress and everyday worries. As a result of conducting an authorial research, the authors proved that as the stress progresses and worries arise, life satisfaction worsens. Sh. Bano and S. Malik in their research into stress' influence on teachers [16] came to similar conclusions. The same can be said about the research conducted by K. Burger and R. Samuel where stress influence on teenagers' lives was gauged [17]. M. Dziezic conducted a research on that subject as well among the listeners of the University of the Third Age and proved that stress had bigger influence on seniors who assessed their life satisfaction as low and lower influence on the seniors who assessed their life satisfaction as high [18]. In turn, A. Mazur proved that there is no correlation between experiencing satisfaction with one's life and applying the practice of coping with stress based on emotions among adults [19].

Stressful situations also affect Chinese medicine students and negatively affect their life satisfaction. After

having taken into consideration demographic factors they caused 12% of satisfaction variation [20]. A. Schwerdtfeger and co-workers analyzed a group of healthy men and found out that life satisfaction can be positively correlated with beneficial hemodynamic stress reactivity. They present that people with higher level of life satisfaction deal with arising stress in a more adaptive way [21].

Conclusions

The conducted research allowed to present the following conclusions:

1. The biggest surveyed group consisted of seniors who were moderately satisfied with their lives.
2. As the stress progresses and worries arise, life quality among seniors worsens.

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Conflict of interests

None

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