

Abstract

In the presented thesis, the author's focus is on determination and analysis of the sense of the quality of life in seniors in the context of their functioning in the care system in Poland and in Germany. The European societies are characterised by a growing percentage of elderly persons, extended lifespan and simultaneous decrease of the possibility of care offered by family members. The demographic changes that are taking place result in the expansion of the institutional care and social assistance systems, accounting for improvement of the quality of life of this social group.

When considering the research proceedings in the context of theoretical analyses and scientific research pertaining to the quality of life, the author greatly appreciates the intention of the analyses pertaining to this issue and conducted to-date by several Polish and foreign researchers.

The presented thesis comprises eight chapters and has a theoretical and empirical character.

Referring to the theoretical discussions on the quality of life in the first part of thesis, the author presents justifications of various theories and concepts clarifying the process of ageing and an individual's adjustment to the old age and conditions of life in which the individual is in the last stage of life, specific features of caring for elderly persons in Poland and in Germany, including institutional gerontological care in both countries. This part of the paper also presents theoretical bases for improvement of the quality of life of seniors, expressed in multiple aspects in the presented concepts and models of quality of life of many Polish and foreign gerontologists.

In the second part of the paper, the author discusses the methodological assumptions of the studies and analyses the sense of the quality of life among seniors in Poland and in Germany in the institutional aspect. The author has adopted the following dimensions of the quality of life: self-assessment of health condition, satisfaction with life, formulation of plans for the future, perception of own place in the society, social, educational and cultural activities of elderly persons. An important aspect in the discussion was the assessment of own life by the groups of Polish and German seniors participating in the study, combined with factors in the environment of their institutional life.

Determination of the level of the quality of life of the seniors participating in the study in Poland and in Germany called for taking a look at the discussed issue from their perspective and making individual assessments of the selected determinants of the quality of life. In this respect, the author focused on factors in the psycho-social and psycho-physical dimension which – to a greater or lesser extent – affect the sense of the quality of life in the seniors from Poland and Germany participating in the study. They were related to the senior care systems in both countries, taking three factors into account: assessment of the senior care system, the respondents' assessments pertaining to their stay in the care facilities and their expectations with respect to the entities responsible for offering care.

In the studies, the author made use of the diagnostic survey method with an interview technique. The empirical materials were compiled with the use of the following research tools: interview questionnaire with the seniors, questionnaire pertaining to the assessment of the quality of life SF-36.

The studies were carried out over a period of nine months from March 2019 to November 2019. They encompassed seniors residing in care institutions in two European countries: Poland (in six senior care centres) and Germany (in eight senior care centres). The final part of the paper features a discussion on the study results and presents conclusions optimising the forms of care for seniors.

The theoretical discussion and the performed empirical tests encompassing the issue of the quality of life of elderly persons are intended to show the potential of effective institutional impacts for the sake of elderly people, intended to answer their needs, expectations and satisfaction with the quality of own life.

Key words: old age, quality of life, seniors, care centres, senior care system

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