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## THE IMAGE OF SIGNIFICANT OTHER AS A FACTOR OF ELDERLY PEOPLE'S LIFE SATISFACTION

Khalina N.V.

**Purpose.** The article looks at the phenomenon of significant Other as an element of self-consciousness and its correlation with life satisfaction of elderly people. The author of the article draws special attention to the interrelation of life satisfaction and the Image of significant Other for elderly people which is of current interest in connection with the importance of developing co-existence relationships with the Others.

**Research Methods:** theoretical study method; techniques of data processing, Fisher's ratio test, Spearman rank correlation analysis.

**Results.** Elderly people's life satisfaction is connected with the Image of significant Other: for satisfied with their life elderly people – with self-respect, for dissatisfied – with self-confidence. Self-respect and self-confidence of the significant Other increases elderly people's life satisfaction. Moreover, the vision of values of the Other (communication values, self-actualization, business) is a crucial parameter linked to elderly people's life satisfaction.

**Results Application.** The study findings can be used to develop courses on psychology of personality, developmental psychology, gerontopsychology, counseling and psychocorrection, the findings can be also useful for social service centers providing aid for the elderly.

**Keywords:** elderly people/the elderly, life satisfaction, overall life satisfaction, satisfaction with living conditions, satisfaction of main vital needs, health self-evaluation, the Image of significant Other, self-respect, self-confidence, activity.

## ОБРАЗ ЗНАЧИМОГО ДРУГОГО КАК ФАКТОР УДОВЛЕТВОРЕННОСТИ ЖИЗНЬЮ ПОЖИЛОГО ЧЕЛОВЕКА

Халина Н.В.

**Цель.** В статье рассматривается феномен значимого Другого как элемент самосознания личности и его связь с удовлетворенностью жизнью пожилого человека. Автор статьи обращает внимание на особенности взаимосвязи удовлетворенности жизнью и Образа значимого Другого пожилых граждан, что является актуальным в связи с важностью выстраивания со-бытийных взаимоотношений с Другими.

**Методы исследования:** метод теоретического анализа; методы обработки данных: критерий  $\phi$  Фишера, корреляционный анализ Спирмена.

**Результаты.** Удовлетворенность жизнью пожилого человека связана с *Образом значимого Другого*: среди удовлетворенных жизнью – с самоуважением, среди неудовлетворенных – уверенностью в себе. Самоуважение, уверенность в себе значимого Другого повышает удовлетворенность жизнью пожилого человека. Кроме того, представления о ценностных ориентациях Другого (ценности общения, самореализации, дела) выступают важным параметром, связанным с удовлетворенностью жизнью пожилого человека.

**Область применения результатов.** Полученные данные могут использоваться при подготовке курсов по психологии личности, психологии развития и возрастной психологии, геронтопсихологии, психологическому консультированию и психокоррекции, а так же центрами социального обслуживания граждан пожилого возраста.

**Ключевые слова:** пожилые люди, удовлетворенность жизнью, удовлетворенность жизнью в целом, удовлетворенность условиями жизни,

удовлетворенность основных жизненных потребностей, самооценка здоровья, Образ значимого Другого, самоуважение, уверенность в себе, активность.

The researchers are interested in life satisfaction in the context of personality self-consciousness where the influence of subjective factor on the feeling of fortunate life is accented (A Campbell, K/C. Reef, I. A. Dzhidaryan, K. V. Kostenko, etc.). Life satisfaction is an integrated psychological unit and it is determined by a number of objective factors (socio-demographic characteristics, satisfaction with health and living conditions, vital necessities, etc.). It also depends on subjective reflection of external conditions - on personality self-consciousness.

L.S. Veegotsky, S.L. Rubinstain, B.G. Ananyev, A.N. Leontyev, V.V. Stolin, I.S. Kon, A.V. Petrovsky, M.G. Jaroshevsky, I.I. Chesnokova, V.S. Mukhina and a number of other Russian psychologists studied the phenomenon of self-consciousness.

According to A.N. Leontyev self-consciousness is a process of understanding yourself – your needs, incentives and personal traits. I.I. Chesnokova reckons that self-consciousness is the attitude of personality to considered aspects of own inner world. It is notable that S.L. Rubenstein was one of the first who proved the cause-and-effect relationship between external and internal self-consciousness of personality, she considers it to be not only attitude to themselves, but also to other people and the world in general [8].

Therefore, positive attitude to others (S. Reef), satisfaction with interpersonal relationships late in life (I. A. Dzhidaryan), consciousness of the importance of one's own life for the others is a resource for life satisfaction (M.V. Ermolaeva).

Personality formation is influenced by other people and specific activity, other people's evaluation are included into personality self-assessment system. The Image of the Other enters the Image of Myself via the assessment of the Other, acquiring certain degree of personal significance. (A.N. Kreelov).

G. Sullivan and V.A Petrovsky define the significant Other as an authority for the subject of communication and activity. A number of other research works are also devoted to relationships with significant Others (K.A. Abulykhanova-Slavskaja, E. Bern, A.A. Kronik, V.A. Labunskaja, Z.I. Rjabikina, D.S. Timofeev and others). The relationships with the family is of greater importance late in life (Bengston, E.D. Smit, Arling, Camille B. Wortman, Elizabeth F. Loftus (the USA), John Izzo, Iris, Madelyn, Ridings, W. John, Conrad, J. Kendon, L. I. Anceferova, O.V. Krasnova, A.G. Lidars, I.V. Gorbulicheva, E.V. Shmeleva and others) and the family is usually a circle of significant people for the elderly [1, 4, 14, 16].

When studying the image of significant Other it is crucial to identify the position of subject-ontological approach. Z.I. Ryabikina points out the necessity of studying “how people dematerialize their intentions, how they create the reality of their own existence, how they change in the course of objectivation facing resistance of other people’s existence” [9, p. 79]. According to the author, the Other is the external world, who we have to synchronize our life with. R.M. Shaminov accentuates the ability to see (to feel and to empathize) with the others; to imagine themselves in other people’s situations is not just a mechanical “displacement”, but comprehension of essence and the meaning of social cognitions.” [11, p. 7]. L.N. Ozhigova, I.A. Sapogova point out that “events can reflect both external an internal world. External reactions are the reactions to external events and situations, and internal reactions are initiated by people as subjects of their own lives.” [6, p. 35]. Additionally, the authors speak about gender aspect of personality existence pointing out that a woman is more a active subject in terms of existence transformation [7]. Co-existence, in their opinion, is a meeting space of two or more people, this meeting is an informal event that is considered to be “significant” landmark (stage, contact) in the life journey. Without a meeting there is no co-existence, and the life is interpreted as shallow... In this case the Other is perceived as a hassle or an obstacle in realization of one’s intention.” [6, c. 36].

In our research studying the Image of significant Other we mean the perception of the significant Other by of the elderly: how much he respects himself (“Evaluation” factor), how self-confident he is (“Power” factor), how active and sociable he is (“Activity” factor) according to the method of personal differential (this method was adapted in Bechtereв Research Institute), his values (according to the opinion of the elderly) system of values method (M. Rockich).

Life satisfaction was evaluated by means of ‘Your Well-being’ questionnaire worked out by O.S. Kopina, E.A. Syslova and E.V. Zaikina

**Research Aim** – to study peculiarities of interrelation between life satisfaction and the Image of significant Other.

**Subject of Research** – personality of the elderly.

**Research Unit** – peculiarities of interrelation between life satisfaction of the elderly and the Image of significant Other.

**The main research hypothesis** is a supposition that the Image of significant Other and life satisfaction are interconnected.

The novelty and importance of the given problem are driven by the study of the phenomenon of life satisfaction by the elderly taken in conjunction with the Image of significant Other as self-consciousness element.

**Sample Group:** a group of elderly people from 60 to 85 years old (average age is 70.7 years old, st. deviation is 8.81 years) consisting of 82 members (26 men and 56 women).

*Management and course of research.*

The first stage of research was the study of life satisfaction as a whole, satisfaction with health, living conditions and needs (‘Your Well-being’ questionnaire drawn up by O.S. Kopina and her co-authors).

All the sample group elderly members assess their health as satisfactory. It was found out that the better the health, the higher is respondents’ life satisfaction ( $r=0.251$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

The respondents on the whole demonstrated average level of life satisfaction (45 points). Satisfaction with living conditions is broadly interconnected with life satisfaction ( $r=0.222$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). There is a common belief that living, household, material aspects are more significant earlier in life, and the elderly are “satiated” with them. But the results of our research disprove this opinion, demonstrating that all these factors are important for the elderly as well.

Satisfaction of main vital needs of the elderly from the sample group is average (40 points). We have discovered that there is relation between satisfaction with main vital needs and overall life satisfaction ( $r=0.473$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Consequently, there is close connection between life satisfaction and objective satisfaction factors like health, living conditions and vital needs, they determine overall satisfaction of the elderly.

At the second stage of our research we studied the significant Others group who are mostly close relatives. We studied the image of significant Other and his influence on life satisfaction of the elderly. The respondents themselves decided who to choose for the assessment. The circle of significant Others was from 1 to 16 people, and the majority of respondents said that they had 5 significant Others.

When we studied the Image of significant Other in accordance with “Evaluation”, “Power” and “Activity” factors (Fisher criterion for the ratios) we discovered that the significant Other for the elderly is *a self-satisfied person who accepts his own personality*, but at the same time, this person *is not self-confident enough and is not active*.

We identified the trend that self-respect of significant Other for respondents with life satisfaction is positively linked to their health esteem ( $r=0.25$ ) and influences the stress level negatively ( $r=-0.26$ ). Deteriorating health, stressful situations can lead to affection decrease and the significant Other becomes less attractive for the respondents in this case.

Elderly people dissatisfied with their life consider the Other attractive but not sociable. If there is a confident person close to them, they get more satisfied with life

( $r=0.368$ ). *Life satisfaction* of the elderly is related to terminal values: 'cognition (broadening of outlook)' ( $r=-0.345$ ,  $p>0,05$ ); 'having good loyal friends' ( $r=0.324$ ,  $p>0.05$ ); and instrumental: 'rationalism' ( $r=-0.292$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), 'responsibility (commitment)' ( $r=0.285$ ,  $p>0.05$ ); 'strong will-power' ( $r=-0.259$ ,  $p>0.1$ ), that is to communication values, self-actualization and their business. Their life satisfaction rises if the significant Other values loyal friends, responsibility, if the significant Other does not insist on his opinion, if he is involved in self-development and is rational.

Therefore, elderly people's life satisfaction is connected with *the Image of significant Other*: for elderly people satisfied with their life – with self-respect, for dissatisfied – with self-confidence. Self-respect and self-confidence of the significant Other increase life satisfaction of the elderly. The idea of core values of the Other (communication values, self-actualization, business) is an important parameter linked to life satisfaction of the elderly.

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#### **DATA ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Khalina Natalya Vladimirovna**, senior teacher, post-graduate student

*Branch Kuban State University in the city of Slavansk-on-Kuban*

*200, Kubanskaya street, Slavansk-on-Kuban, 353560, Russia*

*e-mail: kushnir-pobeda7777@mail.ru*

#### **ДАНИЕ ОБ АВТОРЕ**

**Халина Наталья Владимировна**, старший преподаватель, аспирант

*Филиал КубГУ в г. Славянск-на-Кубани*

*ул. Кубанская, д. 200, г. Славянск-на-Кубани, Краснодарский край, 353560,*

*Россия*

*e-mail: kushnir-pobeda7777@mail.ru*