

## **MEASURES NECESSARY TO IMPROVE THE SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE OF THE ELDERLY**

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***Introduction.*** Over the past decades, the proportion of elderly people in the total population has been constantly increasing and this trend is clearly continuing. From the point of view of the psychology of personality development, a person goes through certain stages of the life cycle. Each stage, such as childhood, and maturity and old age is associated with changes in the life and psyche of a person.

Aging is a natural biological process that inevitably develops with age and is characterized by a gradual decrease in the level of human capabilities. Old age is one of the most difficult and controversial stages of life, which is characterized by physical and psychological weakness, which is often incompatible with the desire to maintain a high quality of life and actively implement the accumulated knowledge and experience. Aging is a natural process that occurs during the postnatal life of an organism and is accompanied by regular changes at the cellular, biochemical, tissue, physiological and system levels. From the point of view of gerontology, the following aspects of aging are considered: biological, psychological and social. The socio-psychological types of aging are also different. Psychological aging is the personal changes of an aging person. At the psychological level, there is an awareness of the changes that occur with age and adaptation or non-adaptation to them. Age-related changes are characterized by a decrease in the level of functional activity, which is aggravated with aging.

With active old age, the pensioner continues to participate in public life, continues to create. Old age with good social and psychological adaptation, is when a person's forces are directed to those interesting and important things for him, for which there was no time before. This is tourism, reading books, scientific work, and communication with peers, and much more. There is a type of aging in which older people find themselves in household chores, raising grandchildren, but the adaptability and life satisfaction of these elderly people is lower than in the first two cases. Another type of aging is when a person takes care of himself, taking care of his own health, which is very important for this type.

Gerontologists of the late twentieth century identified the principles inherent in aging. They note that aging, unlike diseases, is a universal process that is peculiar to all people in this age group. Aging is a property of any living organism. This is a conti-

nuous process that is accompanied by degenerative changes (as opposed to changes that occur during the development and growth of the organism). It is practically impossible to identify all manifestations of a person's mental development, given its multidimensionality and capabilities. And, of course, old age and aging do not exhaust all the reserve opportunities and potential for human development. The term "gerontology" was first introduced in 1903 in "Etudes of optimism" by Mechnikov I.I. He emphasized that the study of old age is not only of great theoretical interest, but also of practical importance. Modern gerontology is an interdisciplinary science, which includes the biology of aging, clinical gerontology (geriatrics), social gerontology (gerontohygiene) and gerontopsychology. The task of clinical gerontology (geriatrics), a dynamically developing area of modern medicine, is to study the physiological and pathophysiological characteristics of the old person, the characteristics of the course of pathological processes and diseases and their treatment. The task of social gerontology (gerontohygiene) is to clarify the influence of living conditions and the environment on aging, the duration and quality of human life. The task of gerontopsychology is to study the characteristics of the psyche and behavior of the elderly. An important section of gerontopsychology is behavioral gerontology, which studies age-related changes in the behavior of living beings of different species. Gender studies by both foreign and local scientists have been carried out for about three decades, and issues related to gender problems of the socialization of older people have practically not been studied.

**Methodology.** The article presents research both conducted by the author and conducted with her participation in the development of the methodology. The research was carried out by the method of questioning both with the elderly and with service personnel in social institutions. Meetings and discussions were held with representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, as well as with public organizations providing social services to the elderly who need them. The research base was also made up of statistical data, analysis of international-national (local) legal acts on this issue, and data from conducted studies.

**Literature review.** Recognizing the importance of research within all these sections of gerontology, psychologists pay special attention to the study of gerontopsychology, which is one of the most important sections not only of gerontology, but also a section of developmental psychology dedicated to the problems of aging. In her works Malkina-Pykh I. G. notes the lack of development of the psychological problems of aging, which she connects with differences in theoretical interpretations of the psychological characteristics of older people, the lack of reliable data on the age norm of various aspects of mental activity at a later age. the fact that the vast majority of developed and used methods are designed to study younger people and, of course, do not correspond to the characteristics of older people [Malkina-Pykh, 2021, p.180-200].

On the basis of the main tasks of gerontology - the study of optimizing the aging process of the individual; creating favorable conditions for the life of the elderly; optimization of the system of social services and provision of elderly citizens, Antsiferova L.I. draws attention to the activation of elderly people in all spheres of life [Antsiferova, 2006, p.80-85]. Thus, studies show that older people have a feeling of anxiety, a feeling of fear. This is the fear of old age, when a person is constantly worried about the thought of possible helplessness. This is the fear of illness (especially aggravated during the pandemic). While most older people are in good mental health, many older people are at risk of developing psychiatric disorders, neurological disorders, and other health conditions such as chronic diseases. There is a fear of poverty, loss of income. In old age, people are afraid of the loss of a spouse, a loved one and, of course, death [Avgustova, 2006, p.356-370].

Gerontopsychology as a separate branch of psychological science began to develop actively only at the end of the twentieth century. In the scientific community today there are different terms: "gerontopsychology", "psychogerontology", "psychological gerontology", "age psychology of aging", which, in principle, reflect the same direction of psychology. The task of gerontopsychology is to develop methods of psychological assistance to older people in connection with such changes in their lives as retirement and the excess free time, forced abandonment of their previous lifestyle, changes in relationships with family members, loss of relatives and friends, and much more. The development of issues of social and psychological adaptation of older people is still at an early stage. The task of socialization and socio-psychological adaptation of older people is currently one of the most urgent for society as a whole, and the strategic task of gerontopsychology lies in its solution.

In some works, using a wide range of local and foreign sources, the main problems of gerontopsychology are considered: psychological paradigms and theories of aging, personality traits in the later stages of ontogenesis, age-related changes and mental development disorders in old age. Theoretical approaches to psychological work with the elderly and its practical aspects are described, as well as the requirements for specialists working in this field [Sakharova, 2018, p.292-310]. We must admit that the bearer of new social forms will be the elderly person involved in the system of social relations as an independent, mature personality [Ovsyannikova, 2016, p.3-4], [Sedrakyan, 2023 p.167-200]. Agreeing with the opinions of these scientists, the author of the article believes that it is the development and practical application of the results of gerontopsychology research that should be introduced into state programs of social support, social services, and ensuring active longevity of the elderly. Of course, it is very important here to have or search for funds to create appropriate conditions that ensure the extension of a full-fledged active life of an elderly person.

The issue of creating an appropriate microclimate in the family requires special attention. There are quite a lot of families in Armenia today with three and sometimes even four generations. This has its own peculiarities, own difficulties, its own joys, mutual assistance, love and respect. The fact that for an elderly person the family is more valuable and, above all values, has been shown by many studies.

**Scientific novelty.** The existing system of social services for the elderly cannot cover the full range of socio-psychological, legal, medical, housing needs of the elderly and cannot ensure the inclusion of all older people who really need them. Of course, there is a need to introduce new models of services for the elderly.

Currently, work is underway in Armenia to develop forms and types of services for the elderly. These are daycare centers for social services for the elderly, created by “Mission Armenia” charitable public organization, which operates in Yerevan and the marzes of the republic and today receives state subsidies. These are the daycare centers of the charitable public organization “Armenian Caritas”, this is the daycare center of the “Association for the Care of the Elderly”. In total, more than 2,400 elderly people receive services and spend their leisure time in these centers. These centers provide services to the elderly people with different psychological characteristics, different interests, individual abilities and needs.

The teamwork of specialists, the application of an individual approach, taking into account the psychological characteristics of older people both in these organizations and in others, and in general will ensure the constant development of the social, physical and mental abilities of the elderly. Programs aimed at active longevity should include the issues of training professional personnel: social workers, psychologists, gerontologists.

Assessment of the individual capabilities and needs of elderly people can be assessed using specially developed criteria that includes the psychological characteristics of a person, as well as modern elements and approaches [International Classification of Functioning, 2001].

**Analysis.** With the support of the Armenian Office of the United Nations Population Fund, the Swiss Red Cross and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia in 2016 conducted an assessment of the needs of elderly people in the proposed models of community services. The author of the article took part in the development of the survey methodology.

In 2019, a similar survey was again conducted in nursing homes to find out the needs of elderly people and their willingness to use community services. The results of both surveys showed that the existing system needs to be completely improved, in particular, in the introduction of new models of service for the elderly, new approaches

to solving their problems, taking into account their wishes and involving them in their processes.

In 2021, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, within the framework of measures to implement the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No. 498-L dated April 8, 2021, conducted another large survey for comprehensive and complete assessment of the needs of elderly people and ensuring the implementation of a program to improve services for the care of the elderly, as well as to introduce and develop services in the community.

The study was conducted among elderly people living in nursing homes and elderly people living in their homes and attending daycare centers. Studies have shown, for example, that elderly people prefer an environment that is both protective and stimulating, and that would help them maintain independence.

The results of the research have proved that it is necessary to take an individual approach to each elderly person, based on the social needs, and secondly, an appropriate legal framework must be created. An individual social program must be drawn up for each elderly person, and the elderly person must necessarily participate in the preparation of this program.

As a result of the research, both specialists in the field and elderly people were presented with various service models that exist in different countries (for example, 24-hour home care, active recreation and cultural life clubs for the elderly, support for families with an elderly member, etc.). but the most favored by the elderly were the following types of community services presented by the researchers: daily home care services, day centers for organization of employment, leisure and cultural life of the elderly.

Naturally, among the surveyed pensioners who do not have housing and permanent residence, preference was given to stationary care facilities, while those living in their own home and in need of outside help preferred home care services, while more active pensioners preferred to visit various day centers in accordance with their interests and preferences. The survey showed the importance for elderly people living and serviced in boarding houses for the presence of family, household items as part of their home. Particular attention should be paid to this when referring older people to boarding houses. As a result of the study carried out in general boarding houses, it was also found out from which marzes the persons who are served in boarding houses mainly live, as well as the availability of relevant services in these marzes . These results are the basis for the introduction of community services primarily in these marzes. In particular, five regions of the republic (Gegharkunik, Ararat, Aragatsotn, Tavush, Vayots Dzor) do not have services for the care of the elderly, and the number of people cared for in nursing

homes from these regions is relatively larger. Therefore, it was decided as a matter of priority to establish day care centers first in these areas and then in others.

A serious financial analysis of the cost-effectiveness of existing services and proposed service models has not yet been carried out, but it should be noted that the introduction of community-based services for elderly people is several times more effective in terms of social, moral and psychological, healthy and active aging, improvement of the quality of life of elderly people and the provision of decent living conditions than existing services, and promotes social inclusion, independence, decision-making and participation of elderly people, which is in line with accepted international fundamental principles and approaches to overcome the impacts of aging. However, it is also clear that the new services being introduced are more costly as they emphasize the quality of services and the individual approach to beneficiaries.

The social and psychological state of elderly people is also aggravated by the fact that our country has not developed a system of psychological counseling on both preparation for retirement and professional self-determination after retirement. In the United States, for example, many training programs for retirees have been developed and put into effect. In many European countries, you can meet people of retirement age who receive a second or third higher education. For them, this is not just retraining, but also further intellectual development. The practical introduction of permanent (continuous) education in relation to the elderly can be an important condition. Although in Armenia the state program for lifelong learning is legislatively fixed and operates aimed at rationalization of the lifestyle after retirement for the successful socialization of the elderly, positive changes in this direction has not yet been observed.

Directing its resources to meet the basic needs of elderly people (pensions, benefits, social services and care), Armenia has not yet sufficiently stimulated the social activity of elderly people, no measures are envisaged to increase their social participation in public life, which should be one of the most important issues of social-gerontological policy.

It must be admitted, that measures aimed at the active longevity of elderly people, improving the quality of social services provided to them and introducing new forms and types of services require resources - these are financial resources, the need to train specialists, and the use of the existing potential of the non-state sector, and the activation and increase responsibility of local governments.

**Conclusions.** If until now the Republic of Armenia directed its main resources to meet the social and material needs of the elderly, at present the range of requests of the elderly is considered to be more multi-layered and diverse. Elderly people want to

remain economically active and live with dignity, but for this there is a need to create an enabling environment.

Increasing the social participation of elderly people in public life should be one of the most important issues of social and gerontological policy.

Serious programs and investments are needed to prolong the healthy life of the elderly. Measures are needed to stimulate self-realization, activity and creativity of the older generation. Measures are needed to create and develop the institute of gerontologists and family psychologists. But not the least important is the development of social and psychological services, the development of rehabilitation services, the expansion of the range of medical services, services that activate the life of the elderly.

In creating and maintaining a positive microclimate in the family, state and public structures, the media, targeted television programs and much more should and can be involved.

It is based on psychological characteristics and personality, personal needs that a structure of targeted services for elderly people should be introduced, which will ensure their self-realization, participation in various spheres and at different levels, inclusion in public life, constant development of their social, physical, mental abilities. The system of such services should be reflected in state programs aimed at active longevity it can and should include both existing types of services provided, and the creation and development of community centers for social services, active leisure, training and retraining programs. What is very important, all these programs should be available to elderly people.

Gerontology considers aging as a complex phenomenon that includes personal, social and even economic aspects of human life, since it is very difficult to single out individual human problems.

And this, once again, confirms that the development of multisectoral strategies for active aging, the protection of the rights of the elderly, the improvement of their socio-psychological and medical services, and the improvement of their quality of life should be dealt by psychologists, social workers, health professionals, psychiatrists, gerontologists, economists, lawyers, cultural workers, etc. This requires teamwork, by analogy with an interdisciplinary rehabilitation team, which involves all necessary specialists, the person himself and, of course, his family.

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In this article the measures necessary to improve the socio-psychological state of the elderly are considered. The article focuses on the main issues and problems of aging, such as the reduction of social ties, changes in interpersonal and family relationships, issues of providing life, that is, problems that have their own influence and impact on social activity. Particular attention is paid to improving the targeting of social services for lonely elderly people. Attention is paid to the issues of social and psychological adaptation of elderly people, which is currently relevant for society as a whole, and the strategic task of gerontopsychology lies in its solution. It is the development and practical application of the results of gerontopsychology research that should be introduced into state programs of social support, social services, and ensuring active longevity of the elderly. Based on the versatility of the problems and issues of older people, the article focuses on the importance and necessity of teamwork of gerontologists, psychologists, social and medical workers, psychiatrists and other specialists, the development of the Institute of Gerontology and Family Psychology. The data of studies both conducted by the author and conducted on her initiative are provided. Conclusions are made and recommendations are given on the measures necessary to improve the social and psychological state of the elderly.