

SELF-ORGANIZATION AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF THE ELDERLY

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Abstract. Self-organization and social activity become important factors determining social well-being in old age. They not only affect physical and mental health, but also contribute to the integration of older people into society, keeping them in demand. For the effective realization of the potential of the older generation, systematic state support measures are needed, including the availability of medical services, the provision of opportunities for the realization of cultural needs, leisure and recreation. Social well-being in old age is closely related to adaptation to changing living conditions, maintaining activity and involvement in social activities. These processes play a key role in maintaining the quality of life of older people, their psychological well-being and social integration.

Keywords: *Social well-being, self-organization, fears, anxieties, losses, uncertainty, life situation, living conditions, elderly Muscovites, Centers of Moscow longevity, senior's leader club.*

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1. Introduction

Among the variety of studies on this topic, self-organization is considered from the point of view of uniting individuals or social groups to form new or maintain/destroy old norms.

Of particular interest is the departure of the state from the usual role of “giver” to the role of “observer”, which is in the shadows, but controls and encourages self-organization (Nederhand *et al.*, 2015). The importance of this approach lies in the fact that people usually value what is created by their own efforts.

This article generally examines how older people (55 years and older, according to the standards of the Moscow Longevity Centers) initiate the work of interest clubs, involving people like themselves in them on the basis of state-owned CML and how such activity correlates with social well-being.

Social well-being is one of the most important components of the population's living situation. In this article, the author uses the interpretation of the concept of “social well-being” as: “a comprehensive indicator of the state of comfort in the environment”... “based on the evaluative judgments of respondents about”... “satisfaction with living conditions”... and ...“protection from unpleasant events” (Mozgovaya & Shlykova, 2014), as well as the presence and specificity of subjective experiencing the uncertainty of a life situation (Kornilova, 2012).

2. Methodology and empirical basis

The study was conducted in January 2024 with the leaders of the clubs of the Centers of Moscow longevity (CML).

Recall that the initiative to create the club comes from the older Muscovites themselves. The CML acts as a platform for implementation: they provide the necessary equipment and premises for classes in every district of Moscow. A total of 203 people participated in the study: 24% of men and 76% of women. Age of the respondents: from 55 to 88 y.o.

Since the study was conducted during the period of reform - the unification of the Moscow Longevity project and the Centers of Moscow Longevity into a single ecosystem, Moscow Longevity, the research opportunities allowed us to cover only 2 administrative districts of the capital: the Central and South-Western.

All respondents filled out a questionnaire online in Yandex Forms.

As indicators of social well-being, the authors chose standard indicators that had already been tested in the research of one of the co-authors (Kornilova, 2012; 2015):

- Satisfaction with individual and social living conditions (family composition, living conditions, financial status and income, state of health, cultural needs, leisure and recreation, social activity (motives for visiting the CML));

- The presence and specificity of subjectively experienced uncertainty of a life situation (confidence in the future, life position and life satisfaction, life losses, fears, anxieties, assessment of public and personal safety, security, confidence in providing vital assistance (from family, the state), self-organization and planning.

Next, the authors examine in detail each group of indicators of social well-being and indicators within the groups.

3. The results of the study

In Moscow, in January 2024, there were more than 5,000 self-organized clubs. An article on the self-organization of the elderly through the study of membership in the active longevity system and club activities was published in 2024. The authors analyzed the respondents' attitude towards active longevity in general and the Centers of Moscow Longevity, in particular, showed the reasons for visits to the CML and the topics of the clubs visited by older people (Kamenskih *et al.*, 2024).

Aspects of self-organization were analyzed in the context of the correlation of respondents as leaders with the Moscow Longevity system, the specifics of making a decision to become a club leader and changes in life after that, membership in the council of the association of club leaders, willingness to help potential leaders, as well as relationships with club members. To analyze leadership at an older age as a social phenomenon, general data was collected on when the subjects first felt like leaders, whether they held leadership positions during their professional careers and whether they enjoyed engaging in organizational activities (Kamenskih *et al.*, 2024).

An essential aspect, which the authors decided to analyze separately, concerns the social well-being of the leaders of self-organized clubs of the elderly. This is important because it allows us to assess the motivation of self-organization based on the life situation of the respondents.

Satisfaction with individual and social living conditions is primarily influenced by the presence and composition of the family. Almost the absolute majority of respondents (96%) noted that they have close relatives (children and/or spouse).

At the same time, 34% of respondents live together with their husband/wife, 33% of respondents live alone, 32% of respondents live with relatives and one respondent lives with a person who takes care of him on a paid basis.

The answers about the degree of satisfaction of respondents with their financial situation were distributed as follows: the income level is “partially satisfied, partially not satisfied” by 31% of respondents; in equal parts, 21% of respondents are “completely satisfied” and “rather satisfied” by income, 20% are rather not satisfied and 7% of participants are absolutely not satisfied with their income level.

42% of the respondents did not experience any changes in their financial situation during the year preceding the survey, while 25% improved their financial situation and 33% worsened it.

When assessing their state of health, the respondents' answers were distributed as follows: 36% of respondents noted a good state of health; 35% noted a good rather than a bad state; they cannot accurately determine and prefer the option “something in between bad and good” - 19%, 6% and 3% noted a deterioration in their health, they are convinced that their state of health is more likely to be bad than good.

35% of respondents feel completely satisfied with the realization of their spiritual and cultural needs, 46% believe that their cultural and spiritual needs are most likely satisfied, 16% of respondents have a borderline (uncertain state) and 3% are undecided, but most likely they are not satisfied with the realization of their spiritual and cultural needs.

The participants were asked about ways to spend their free time and they could choose several answers at once. The most popular pastime options were such as: attending the events of the Moscow Longevity Center - 75%; doing favorite hobby - 54%; socializing with friends - 51%. Slightly less popular ways of spending leisure time were: reading books, newspapers, magazines (44%), traveling and walking (43%), visits from relatives (41%). And the most relatively “unpopular” activity among the proposed ones can be considered watching TV, 25% of respondents chose this option for leisure and recreation.

It can be concluded that most of the respondents prefer to spend their time actively and with benefits for their physical and mental health.

The reasons and motives for visiting the Moscow Longevity Centers are quite different among the respondents: the majority of participants (67%) believe that the Centers' activities make their lives more interesting and fulfilling, 14% see the CML as a place where they can always come and feel confident, for 9% of respondents, the Moscow Longevity Centers are the main source of socialization, development and energy and they can no longer imagine their lives without the Centers of Moscow Longevity, 6% of respondents visit the CML because they have the right to do so and approach their visits formally, since they have reached the status of “pensioner” or “pre-pensioner” and can fully, in accordance with the law, use all the benefits of the project and the smallest share of responses (4%) indicates that respondents visit the Moscow Longevity Centers for lack of a more interesting option for spending time.

In the context of the constant development of society, the rapid pace of digitalization, the acceleration of life processes, the respondents characterized the level of confidence in the foreseeable future in a mostly positive way: 66% expressed

confidence in the future (according to the total share of “completely confident in the stability of their life” and “rather confident”..., 15% of respondents doubt and cannot give a clear answer, the share of those who are uncertain is 19% (according to the total share of “rather not confident” and “absolutely not confident”).

Two thirds of respondents assess their lives positively (the total share of the answers “completely satisfied” and “rather satisfied” was 66% of the total number of respondents). 26% of respondents are partially satisfied with the quality of their life and only 8% of study participants are not satisfied with the quality of their life.

In the question of assessing the state of their personal life, the respondents' answers were distributed as follows: 72% of respondents are completely or rather satisfied with their personal life, 22% are partially satisfied state of personal life, 6% of the surveyed participants are not satisfied with their personal life.

According to the data obtained, 6% of respondents experience tension and irritation, 4% of the participants identify fear and anxiety and only one participant in the study is convinced that he is in a state of depression. Total 11%. Deviations in the mental state are associated with various reasons and events that have occurred, such as: loss of loved ones, illness of a spouse, serious illness, loss of savings, loss of property, which the survey participants had to endure. Despite life tragedies and poor mental health, this category of people visits Centers of Moscow Longevity, tries to share their experience and be needed by society.

The remaining participants emphasized that they are in a normal or good mood - 89%. Accordingly, they can convey a positive state to others, act as a source and example of stability and fullness of life.

The most significant source of anxiety for respondents is the death of loved ones and relatives (50%). Other factors, such as memory loss (23%), loss of self-care ability (18%), loneliness and lack of demand in the profession (14% each, respectively), cause anxiety in a much smaller proportion of respondents. Thoughts about one's own death have a minimal impact on the emotional state of most participants (5%). The data show that respondents are more concerned about the loss of loved ones than about personal changes in health or social life.

When assessing the safety of respondents, they identified social problems that, in their opinion, are the most dangerous for society. The list proposed by the researchers is dominated by: terrorism and lack of spirituality (62% each, respectively), corruption (59%), drug addiction (56%) and immorality (53%).

Respondents were also asked to assess their level of safety on a 10-point scale, where 0 is absolutely unprotected and 10 is absolutely protected. It can be concluded that 14% of respondents assess their level of security as unsatisfactory (0-4 points) and feel unsafe. The feeling of anxiety for one's own safety may be associated with the uncertainty of the future, the general political and economic situation in the country and the world.

However, a greater number of respondents (63%) are satisfied with the level of security to one degree or another (5-8 points) and 23% of participants feel absolutely protected (9-10 points). This is due in part to the Moscow Longevity Centers, which not only support the initiatives of older people in leisure and recreation, but also educate, educate and inform older people about threats and dangers of a social and economic nature. The Centers of Moscow Longevity have information literacy and cybersecurity clubs, which teach skills in safe use of a computer in general and when in the Internet space and focus on protecting personal data when using electronic payment systems.

Respondents were asked to express their attitude to fundamental theses that allow us to determine the mood of respondents and their sense of anxiety in the context of changing social status and their inclusion in society. Those who believe that “Retired people are “not needed by the state”” - 26% (the total share of answers “definitely true” and “mostly true”). At the same time, the majority of respondents - 74% noted the need for pensioners (the total share of answers “mostly true” and “definitely true”). Exactly 80% of respondents consider the statement about the invaluable life experience of older people and the need to listen to their advice to be true. This position, among other things, shows the value of “elders for elders” and the desire to share their knowledge and skills.

The thesis that “Disrespect for the elderly is currently a “social norm” is considered incorrect by 71% of respondents. Attention to the older generation is one of the priorities of the state's socio-demographic policy. The creation of an extensive, large-scale network of Moscow Longevity Centers shows and proves that meeting the needs of the older generation is a priority task of social policy in the capital. The active life position of older Muscovites is also confirmed by disagreement with the statement that “Retirement and the end of a full life are one and the same” (87%). At the same time, I would like to draw attention to the proportion of respondents who negatively perceive the above theses, where the greatest amount of anxiety is observed when assessing the statement “Disrespect for the elderly is currently considered a “social norm”. Almost one third (29%) of the total number of survey participants agreed with this formulation, which can demonstrate anxiety, a feeling of uselessness and insecurity in front of society. It can be assumed that since they attend Centers of Moscow Longevity and are club leaders, the CMLs serve as a platform for them to find the necessary communication that will cover their need for safety and socialization.

The club activities of the CMLs are grouped into three areas: clubs related to a healthy lifestyle, creative clubs and intellectual clubs. The largest number of respondents are leaders of creative clubs - 46%. This may indicate a significant interest in creative activities and self-expression among the participants.

44% of respondents identify themselves as leaders of healthy lifestyle clubs, which means that interest in health issues and an active lifestyle among the participants is also at a high level.

The smallest proportion of respondents (22%) are leaders of intellectual clubs. This may indicate that interest in intellectual activities is less pronounced compared to other categories. Perhaps intellectual clubs require more time and effort to attract participants, which may limit their popularity.

Participants were also asked how long ago they started to engage in club activities. 40% of respondents have been engaged in club activities for more than 1 year, which indicates significant involvement and sustainable interest in clubs, 27% of respondents have been club leaders for more than 3 years. This is the share of experienced leaders who can influence the organization and development of clubs. Every fifth club leader (20%) has essentially just begun their club activities, which may indirectly indicate an influx of new participants into the program. And the remaining 13% of respondents have been engaged in club activities from 6 months to 1 year. This indicates stability of interest at the initial stage.

The survey participants are active members in the Moscow Longevity project, occupy a leadership position and conduct club activities for activists and “newcomers” of the project. This suggests that the respondents still have a high need to interact with

society, create partnerships and strive to master and transfer new skills and knowledge. All these factors have a significant positive impact on social well-being.

4. Conclusion

Most part of respondents (89%) were in a normal or good mood at the time of the survey and were satisfied with their personal lives (72%). The respondents also characterized stability in the foreseeable future mostly in a positive way: 66% expressed confidence in the future.

Elderly Muscovites - survey participants, have relatives (96%). Accordingly, among all the options for sources of anxiety, the most significant was the death of loved ones and relatives (50%).

Survey participants demonstrated moderate stability of assessments both in financial situation and in health.

Although there is a group of respondents with deterioration (9%) and also requires attention, the majority assessed health positively. Perhaps the survey participants are less fixated on illnesses and more focused on the implementation of various needs, including cultural ones.

This is also evidenced by the high rates of satisfaction with spiritual needs. Only 3% of the total number of respondents admitted that they are not satisfied with their leisure and recreation. The presence of the Moscow Longevity Centers, which provide a large number of services and are visited with pleasure by elderly Muscovites, greatly contributes to such a life position.

The main option for spending free time among respondents is precisely visiting the events of the Moscow Longevity Centers (75%). Next in popularity are engaging in a favorite hobby (54%) and communicating with friends (51%) - which can also be done thanks to the club activities of the Moscow Longevity Centers.

A significant portion of respondents prefer to spend their time actively and with benefit for physical and mental health in the Moscow Longevity Centers. The majority of respondents (67%) believe that the activities of the Centers make their lives more interesting and richer, give a sense of confidence and are a place where they can always come.

The active life position of older Muscovites is also confirmed by their disagreement with the statement that "Retirement and the end of a full life are one and the same thing" (87%).

Attention to the older generation is one of the priorities of the state's socio-demographic policy. The creation of a ramified, large-scale network of Moscow Longevity Centers shows and proves that meeting the needs of the older generation is a priority task of social policy in the capital.

The survey participants are active participants in the Moscow Longevity project, occupy a leadership position and conduct club activities for activists and "newcomers" of the project. They still have a high need to interact with society, create partnerships and strive to master and pass on new skills and knowledge.

A significant proportion of respondents (63%) are satisfied with the level of security to varying degrees (5-8 points) and 23% of participants feel absolutely protected (9-10 points). This is also due to the Moscow Longevity Centers, which not only support the initiatives of older people in leisure and recreation, but also educate, educate and inform older people about threats and dangers of a social and economic nature. During the study,

a group of leaders of the Moscow Longevity Clubs was identified that faces financial difficulties: about a third of respondents are dissatisfied with their income and noted a deterioration in their financial situation. However, the solution to this problem is beyond the competence of the Moscow Longevity Centers.

14% of respondents from the total number of respondents assess their safety at a low level. They are worried about anxiety, they do not feel protected, admit a lack of confidence in the future. In this regard, it can be assumed that the Moscow Longevity project is capable of involving not only an audience with a desire to satisfy their own ambitions, but also an emotionally “fragile” group of representatives of the “silver age”. At first glance, the motivation system for such leaders in motivating them to organize club activities will consist in satisfying their own needs for safety or socialization and a deeper analysis requires an expanded list of questions for further research.

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