

Activity and Needs of Seniors – Research Report in Chorzów

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: The aim of this study is to present seniors' opinions about their activity and ways to meet seniors' needs.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS: The research problem was centered around: participation in senior social life; forms of activity undertaken by seniors; ways to spend free time by seniors and the needs of the elderly. Survey was used as the research method. The studies were diagnostic and exploratory.

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: The progressive demographic change in Polish society makes active and active aging more active and the elderly's needs for care and support become a major stimulus for satisfaction and quality of life. The article reviews the opinions of seniors about their activity and ways of meeting their needs.

RESEARCH RESULTS: This study has shown that participation in social life, forms of activity and the needs of the elderly in various ways are met and implemented. Seniors indicating inactivity (in this study are mainly social welfare beneficiaries) generally declare that they feel socially excluded. These people choose a type of home and solitary activity, and spending their free time is mainly based on watching TV and listening to the radio. On the other hand, active seniors (in this study are mainly participants in senior clubs) are satisfied with their role in society. Free time is spent on meetings with people, e.g. in the club and prefer to take various activities. Research also shows that various forms of senior activism, including senior ones, have an impact on the quality of life of the elderly, significantly improving their activity, while addressing higher needs and counteracting social exclusion.

CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS: There is a need for more intensified action by aid institutions, directed towards seniors who are inactive, excluded – social welfare clients, so that they too can live in the “autumn of life.” Training should also be provided to social workers who equip them

with the necessary knowledge and skills to work effectively with the seniors and to effectively and effectively reintegrate and reintegrate them.

→ **KEYWORDS:** ACTIVE, SENIOR, LEISURE

Activity and satisfaction of needs of persons of senior age are very important in maintaining their physical and mental fitness, as well as in maintaining their independence. Life situation of older adults affects their ageing process and depends on the attitude of the seniors to their own old age, as well as their environment. Social and economic changes are causing the family's responsibility for its oldest members to lose its relevance, resulting in the development of institutional forms of meeting the needs of the elderly, as well as forms of care and stimulation of activity included in the social welfare system.

Taking up activity in senior age affects the overall well-being of older adults, "it is a medicine" for boredom, loneliness and depression, and can fulfil multiple functions: adaptive – helping to adapt seniors to life in new social and family situations; integration – leading to better adaptation in the group; compensation – compensating for deficiencies in other areas; training – promoting development and improvement of personality traits and dispositions; recreational and entertainment – restoring the desire to live, filling the free time, and also eliminating stress; psycho-hygienic – improving the quality of life and allowing to feel satisfaction with life (Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, & Dziegielewska, 2006, p. 164-165).

Therefore, activity and stimulation of activity of seniors is becoming increasingly important and widespread in the area of social care. Satisfying the needs of care and support of the elderly is a key stimulus for life satisfaction and reduces the sense of rejection and social exclusion of seniors.

Author's own research

Society is getting older, the number of people in post-working age is increasing, and the quality of life (Quality of life is a complex concept, difficult to define, which can be considered in the medical, social, mental or spiritual aspects. Quality of life is often equated with satisfaction, fulfilment and happiness, and it depends on the system of values and individual aspirations. With regard to older adults, the most important

factor that determines the quality of life is health, and psycho-physical well-being which allows for a variety of activities that positively influence the image of old age in the elderly. "People-to-people contacts and relationships that arise as a result of staying with others allow for a constructive adaptation of the end-stage of human life. Undoubtedly, health and activity, which with age decreases, are important factors in the level of satisfaction from one's own life" (Pikuła, 2012, p. 324) of the elderly is deteriorating, which has an impact on the activity of this social group and the way to satisfy its needs. This process presents the state and dedicated institutions with specific tasks, so that the participation of older adults in the social life and their needs could be fully satisfied. Thus, the purpose of this study was to acquire seniors' opinions about their activity and based on their opinions prepare ways to meet their needs. This was a diagnostic-exploratory study, thus no hypotheses were formulated (Łobocki, 2006, p. 26). The problems raised in the research concerned:

- participation of seniors in social life;
- forms of activity undertaken by seniors;
- ways of spending free time by seniors;
- and the needs of the elderly.

Obtaining this information became the aim of the survey (see: Babbie, 2013; Giddens, 2008, p. 718) conducted in 2016, in Silesian voivodeship, in the town of Chorzów, among 182 seniors. The basic research tool was a questionnaire with 14 questions + metric. The prepared research tool was authoritative, although it contained elements of cafeteria from common theories already. The tool was subjected to a pilot study among several other seniors who did not participate in a subsequent study. The pilot has verified the prepared research tool (Babbie, 2003, p. 281). Selection of the test sample was deliberate and was subject to availability to the respondents and to guarantee a high degree of reflexivity. The research was not representative and was conducted among the clients of the social welfare center, as well as in several Senior Clubs in the city of Chorzów, which is worth pointing out as one of the Silesian agglomerations, is in the late demographic age. It is worth emphasizing that Senior Clubs are centres of cultural, social and leisure life for older adults. Their goal is to create conditions for active leisure, to satisfy the needs of a higher order (including social, leisure, entertainment and activity needs, as well as cultural and educational needs) to continue or raise interest. The Clubs encourage seniors with a wide range of activities tailored to their needs and capabilities. They attach importance to the frequency of conducted activities, their content, forms and specificities (compare: Leszczyńska-Rejchert, 2005, p. 168-169, and also: Zdebska, 2012, p. 185).

Among respondents, 126 (69.2%) were women, while 56 (30.8%) were male. In terms of age, most respondents were aged 61-70 (47.8%), 33% were aged 71-80, 11.5% were aged 81 or more, and 7% were below 60 years old. Approximately one third of the respondents had vocational (36.3%) or primary (33.5%) education, 1/4 (25.3%) of the respondents had secondary education, and a negligible number (4.9%) had higher education. In the context of civil status, almost half of the respondents (48.3%) were single widows or widowers, the rest were married (19.8%), divorced (16.5%) or single (15.4%).

Following the analysis of the body of research, due to the fact that the surveys were performed among seniors showing different levels of activity (members of Senior Clubs and social welfare clients), two separate groups of respondents were selected. The basis for their selection was active participation in the social life of these people. Thus, two groups were formed: Senior Club members (106 respondents) and the remaining seniors (76 respondents).

Participation of Seniors in Social Life

Each type of participation requires a unit of activity. In the case of social participation, it is the activity that shapes and / or conditions social life. In modern societies there are phenomena, processes and mechanisms conducive to the creation and accumulation of barriers in the sphere of social participation of the elderly (Mandrzejewska-Smól, 2013, p. 155-156). Hence, the first question in the questionnaire concerned the evaluation of participation and activity satisfaction of the respondents. The summary of responses is presented in (Table 1).

Table 1
Evaluation of participation and activity satisfaction in seniors

EVALUATION	Senior Club members		Other seniors – social assistance clients	
	no. of responses	%	no. of responses	%
Satisfactory	68	64.2	15	19.7
Moderately satisfactory	31	29.2	29	38.2
Unsatisfactory	7	6.6	32	42.1
TOTAL	N = 106	100	N = 76	100

Source: author's own research

The responses show that the majority (64.2%) of Senior Club members assess their participation as satisfactory, while the other seniors see their participation as unsatisfactory (42.1%) or moderately satisfactory (38.2%). The above results can be compared with the GUS 2012 survey on *How Older People Live in Poland?* (see in: Schimanek & Wejcman, 2013, p. 11), in which respondents over the age of 65 assessed the overall level of life satisfaction mostly as satisfactory (59.5%). A quarter of respondents (28.5%) were of the opinion that it is neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory. Only a very small percentage evaluated their life satisfaction as unsatisfactory (5.6%), very satisfactory (4.8%) or very unsatisfactory (1.6%).

It is worth noting that the assessment of satisfaction with participation and activity in senior life is different in terms of quality of life, and the quality of life of older people in Poland is differentiated regionally in particular areas: physical, psychological, social and environmental – as confirmed by research “PolSenior” (see: Waszkiewicz, Einchom, Połtyn-Zaradna, Gawęł-Dąbrowska, Grabowska, & Zatońska, 2012, p. 549-560).

In order to explain the problem, I set out two more questions that addressed the respondents’ perception of whether they consider themselves to be active or whether they feel socially excluded. Among the surveyed Senior Club members (82.1%) considered themselves active, while (17.9%) considered themselves inactive. In the second group, only (19.7%) is active and 4/5 (80.3%) considered themselves inactive. Inactive seniors pointed out that the reason for their lack of activity were family responsibilities, illness or incapability to leave the house. This is due to the fact that a large proportion of these respondents are people with a disability or in post-working age who receive age-based social assistance benefits.

In case of the second question, 3/4 of the Senior Club members (76.5%) did not consider themselves socially excluded, and 23.5% did. Among inactive seniors, (80.3%) feel socially excluded and the remaining (19.7%) of the respondents declared that they participate in social life, i.a. are not excluded or marginalized.

Non-stereotyped approach to life is primarily active life. Achieving a post-working age is often called a well-deserved rest, though it is not the same thing as doing nothing. Ending professional activity and being a senior should be the moment of changing one’s activity to another, different from the current one, but contributing to its development. Of course, willingness of the individual to be active and the environmental conditions conducive to that activity have the biggest influence (Hrapkiewicz, 2005, p. 152). The experience of old age also depends on the preparation for

it in previous periods of life, as well on the state’s policy towards old age and the conditions that local authorities and governments create for older people. Therefore, in order to determine whether and how the activity and participation in social life of the respondents has changed since they became seniors, I formulated the following question in the questionnaire. The respondents responses are presented in (Table 2).

Table 2
Change of senior activity and participation in social life

CHANGE OF ACTIVITY IN SENIOR AGE	Senior Club members		Other seniors – social assistance clients	
	no. of responses	%	no. of responses	%
Yes, for the better	74	69.8	13	17.1
Yes, for the worse	10	9.4	28	36.8
No, it is the same as before	20	18.9	33	43.4
No opinion	2	1.9	2	2.7
TOTAL	N = 106	100	N = 76	100

Source: author’s own research

In the case of (69.8%) of the respondents – Senior Club members’ activity changed for the better. Respondents reasoned that they have more free time, which helps them to undertake projects they had no time for before. As for the remaining seniors (43.4%), their activity did not changed and is the same as before, and for (36.8%) of the respondents it changed for the worse.

Participation in social life is also related to the difficulties that arise after retirement / upon receiving age-based benefits in case of social welfare clients. These difficulties can range from health problems to psychological, emotional issues, as well as social causes. Literature points to the existence of many barriers to activity or social participation among older people. Kuchcińska M. (2012) points out the following four groups:

- (1) deficiency of organs and systems of organs (in the case of seniors, these are often the consequences of involution changes of the organism that progress with age) – the “soma” barriers;
- (2) changes (not always involution) in the psychological functioning of a person – the “psyche” barriers – similarly to the first one, they inhibit formal and informal activity;
- (3) different environmental barriers – barriers set by the “polis,” they isolate individuals and groups from each other;
- (4) barriers due to excess or shortage (deficiency / excess) of senior activity – the “agens” barriers (p. 17-18, and also compare: Mandrzejewska-Smól, 2013, p. 157).

These barriers may be the cause of not taking up any significant social activity. In order to verify what are the difficulties (barriers) seniors struggle with after reaching the post-working age, I proposed the following question in the survey. The summary of responses is presented in (Table 3).

Table 3
Difficulties of seniors that arise after retirement / upon receiving age-based benefit

SENIOR DIFFICULTIES	Senior Club members		Other seniors – social assistance clients	
	no. of responses	%	no. of responses	%
Too much unorganized free time	20	18.7	5	6.6
Difficulties due to reorganization of the day schedule	6	5.7	8	10.5
Health problems	38	35.8	29	38.1
Lack of regular, daily contact with people, e.g. at work, provoking the feeling of loneliness	15	14.1	12	15.8
Feeling that they have become unnecessary	5	4.7	31	40.8
I did not have any difficulties	40	37.7	2	2.6
No opinion (I am still professionally active)	17	16	0	–

Source: author's own research. The percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose any number of responses

The summary shows that for (37.7%) of the respondents – Senior Club members, retirement was not associated with any difficulties. Further in this group, seniors find difficulty in health problems (35.8%), large amounts of free time (18.7%) and the absence of regular, daily contact with people, e.g. at work, provoking the feeling of loneliness (14,1%). The remaining seniors recognize as the most difficult the feeling that they have become unnecessary (40.8%) and the health problems (38.1%). Further responses include lack of regular, daily meetings (15.8%) and the difficulties due to reorganization of the day schedule (10.5%).

Forms of Senior Activity

The activity of people in senior age is very important for maintaining their fitness, as well as for maintaining their independence, which is conditioned by socio-environmental factors within the concept of successful

ageing. Successful ageing is understood as a specific “competence for ageing or ability to meet the challenges resulting from the changes in one’s own body, mind and environment.” The criteria of successful ageing include: personal development, sense of purpose, positive interactions with others, autonomy, self-acceptance, and environmental adaptation (Ryff, 2004, p. 157). Kamiński A. (1978), referring to the activity of the elderly, distinguishes its two ranges. The first one concerns the performance of appreciated and useful work. The author includes in this group: work that is a continuation of professional employment in a decreased number of hours or gainful employment outside of one’s profession; activity blending work and leisure, allowing for the pursuit of hobbies and gaining additional income; family activity; and activities related to the specific social roles (e.g. the role of the jury). The second activity range allows to satisfy interests, including: reading books, listening to the radio and watching television; participation in lectures given e.g. in Universities of the Third Age; gymnastics and tourism, as well as club or play activities (p. 259-365, and also: Szatur-Jaworska et al., 2006, p. 162-163). Taking up a variety of activities depends on many factors and brings different benefits to each one of the seniors. In order to verify this statement, I asked the seniors in the questionnaire, what are the benefits of taking up a variety of activities. The respondents’ responses are presented in (Table 4).

Table 4
Benefits of taking up a variety of activities by seniors

DIFFERENT BENEFITS	Senior Club members		Other seniors – social assistance clients	
	no. of responses	%	no. of responses	%
It helps to forget everyday problems (illness, family problems, loneliness)	34	32.1	24	31.6
It gives the opportunity to talk and share one's problems with others	24	22.6	18	23.7
It gives the opportunity to pursue interests that one did not have time for while being professionally active	15	14.2	7	9.2
It gives the opportunity to meet people	37	34.9	8	10.5
It allows to fill free time	13	12.3	26	34.2

Source: author’s own research. The percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose any number of responses.

The survey shows that for one-third of Senior Club members activity gives the opportunity to meet people (34.9%) and disconnect from everyday problems (32.1%). For the remaining seniors, it is mainly a way to fill free time (34.2%) and forget about illnesses, family problems or loneliness (31.6%).

The activity of the elderly becomes especially important with the passing of life, it is a way of communicating with the world around them and with other people. The activity can be divided into three types: formal (involvement in associations, working for the local environment and / or volunteering), informal (contacts with family, friends, neighbours) and solitary (reading books, watching television, listening to the radio, hobbies). The respondents in this survey were also asked which one they prefer. The results are presented in (Table 5).

Table 5
Forms of activity preferred by seniors

FORMS OF SENIOR ACTIVITY	Senior Club members		Other seniors – social assistance clients	
	no. of responses	%	no. of responses	%
Formal	31	29.2	13	17.1
Informal	47	44.4	20	26.3
Solitary	28	26.4	43	56.6
TOTAL	N = 106	100	N = 76	100

Source: author's own research

For nearly half (44.4%) of the surveyed Senior Club members, these are informal activities, consisting primarily of interpersonal contacts e.g. with the family. For the remaining seniors, the preferred form of activity is solitary activity – it is so believed by (56.6%) of the respondents.

Activity also caters for the satisfaction of needs, not only the biological and social ones, but also for the cultural needs. It is also a condition for playing social roles and functioning in the society. For people of senior age, the activity concerns many fields of interest: home and family activity, i.e. performing various tasks related to running a household; cultural activity – related to urban lifestyle (e.g. use of cultural institutions (theatre, opera), watching television, listening to the radio,); educational activity that helps the elderly to continually improve themselves, exercise the mind and memory (e.g. Universities of the Third Age – [U3A] serve for: intellectual development and education of seniors, social and intellectual stimulation, achievement of own dreams and plans, as well as building of

position of seniors in the society. U3A is an opportunity for seniors to gain new skills and training. They function in French and English models [see: Schimanek & Wejcman, 2013, p. 26-28]; religious activity (e.g. participation in church services and parish community meetings, pilgrimages and church activities); recreational activity related to physical activity, leisure and recreational activities (e.g. walks, trips); voluntary service where older people help and work for the benefit of people outside the circle of their friends or family (see: Orzechowska, 1999, p. 28-29; Szatur-Jaworska et al., 2006, p. 162-163; and also: Grudziński, 2012, p. 55). Therefore, in order to deepen and refine the subject matter, I formulated a question about the type of activity undertaken by the respondents. The summary of responses is presented in (Table 6).

Table 6
Types of senior activity

TYPES OF SENIOR ACTIVITY	Senior Club members		Other seniors – social assistance clients	
	no. of responses	%	no. of responses	%
Home and family activity	53	50	38	50
Cultural activity	29	27.3	5	6.6
Educational activity	10	9.4	3	3.9
Religious activity	53	50	26	34.2
Leisure / Physical activity	43	40.5	12	15.8
Voluntary service	8	7.5	6	7.9

Source: author's own research. The percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose any number of responses.

The responses show that half of the surveyed Senior Club members favour home and family activity (50%), and religious activity (50%). The remaining seniors also mostly indicated these types of activity, i.e. home and family (50%) and religious (34.2%) activities. To a lesser extent, the respondents defined their activity through leisure or contact with culture.

It should also be noted that other forms of activity undertaken by and for the seniors are described in literature. These include, among others: self-help organizations as formalized means of action, "Social Time Banks" as informal networks for exchange of services, intergenerational programs, and various local government initiatives e.g. Senior Council (more on this topic: Schimanek & Wejcman, 2013, p. 27-41). Furthermore, an additional form of activity may be offered to senior citizens by public and non-governmental institutions, reminiscence therapy, i.e. work with memories.

Ways of Spending Free Time by Seniors

Another problem considered in the study was the way of spending free time by seniors. Active leisure activities can be influenced by: education – the higher the education level, the higher the level of activity; local environment; family – activity in leisure time depends on contacts with family members, personality and origin; health status and fitness level – the better and healthier the person, the more active the free time is; living conditions that can effectively reduce activity, as well as sex and place of residence (Szatur-Jaworska et al., 2006, p. 162). The following can also be included in the above list: work or its absence, consumption of material goods, time budget, recreational behaviour, participation in socio-political life and attitude towards value (Mandrzejewska-Smól, 2013, p. 160-161). In order to find out which factors influence the way of spending free time by seniors, I asked the following question in the questionnaire. The responses are presented in (Table 7).

Table 7
Factors influencing the ways of spending free time by seniors

FACTORS INFLUENCING SENIOR FREE TIME	Senior Club members		Other seniors – social assistance clients	
	no. of responses	%	no. of responses	%
Education	14	13.2	13	17.1
Local environment	20	18.9	9	11.8
Family	33	31.4	15	19.7
Health status and fitness level	46	43.4	41	53.9
Living and economic conditions	15	14.2	32	42.1

Source: author's own research. The percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose any number of responses.

The summary shows that for Senior Club members it is health and physical fitness (43.4%) and family (31.4%), and for other seniors also health and physical fitness (53.9%), and living and economic conditions (42.1%). This may be due to the often very poor economic and living condition of the social welfare clients, who accounted for the majority of this group of respondents. To a significantly lesser extent, the respondents pointed to education and local environment as factors having an impact on leisure activities.

It is worth noting that studies conducted over the last dozen or so years in Poland concerning the participation of the elderly and their leisure activities show that the most popular activity among seniors is receptive activity, consisting of watching television, listening to the radio or reading newspapers, especially at home, and integrative activity expressed i.a. in social meetings with friends, for example (Mandrzejewska-Smól, 2013, p. 161). In the view of the above data, in order to find out how the respondents spend their free time, I formulated a question about this issue in the questionnaire. The results are presented in (Table 8).

Table 8
Ways of spending free time by seniors

SENIOR LEISURE TIME	Senior Club members		Other seniors – social assistance clients	
	no. of responses	%	no. of responses	%
I dedicate time to my family	34	32.1	41	53.9
I read books / newspapers, etc.	39	36.8	12	15.8
I listen to the radio / watch television	53	50	64	84.2
I exercise / take walks	22	20.8	22	28.9
I travel and sightsee	10	9.4	0	–
I participate in activities available at the Senior Club	106	100	0	–
I dedicate time to gardening	21	19.8	0	–
I meet with friends	30	28.3	5	6.6
Others (I dedicate time to prayer)	5	4.7	0	–

Source: author’s own research. The percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose any number of responses.

The analysis of the above answers allows to recognize that Senior Club members spend their leisure time in club activities, listen to the radio or watch television (50%), and read books / newspapers (36.8%). The other seniors mostly watch television and listen to the radio (84.2%), and also spend time with their family (53.9%). Thus, it can be said that for most respondents the way of spending free time is connected with the activity of a receptive nature.

Although it is worth noting that each person differently, experiencing their own old age (see: Halicki, 2010). This sentence can also refer to the sphere of activity of seniors, because everyone performs it in a different way, although life filled with activity is a good life (see: Szarota,

2004). Human activity is a way of communicating with the environment, and it is becoming more and more important with the passing of time. Increasingly, however, the paradigm of activity is criticized. This is related to the choice of a particular lifestyle for the elderly. Czerniawska O. (see: 1998) distinguishes several types of have a style by seniors, among them:

1. Passive style – associated with a state of health which sometimes completely prevents any activity, or with a personality structure, always withdrawn and passive, and with an even more descending, leading to a state of stagnation.
2. Family style – complete dedication to the family, grandchildren, which may result, for example, from lack of faith in one's own abilities or from the feeling of being dependent.
3. The gardener's style – the landowner – where work on the plot becomes a way of life. Those who choose this style most often have a great need for activity, and work on the plot fills their free time, while giving the opportunity to make new friends.
4. Style based on working in associations – people choose to work as volunteers, or for the local environment, to work in cooperatives. People who choose this style often combine social work with their own need for action for themselves and others.
5. Home style – style on the "border" passive and family. Seniors who are reluctant to leave the house, have flowers on the balcony, solving crosswords or sometimes dealing with grandchildren.
6. Devotional Style – The life of a seniors is centered around the church and related matters. Daily participation in church services, pilgrimages, and processions gives seniors the opportunity to meet their activity.

The author also mentions the institutional style omitted in typology, and is worth paying attention and is a style imposed, very often not of choice. Depending on the type of institution: 24 hour or daily. These institutions determine the rhythm of seniors' life by imposing on them some kind of activity.

The above characteristics of seniors' life styles show how great is the range of possibilities. The lifestyle of senior citizens can be very different and certainly determined by many factors. However, a slow decline in "activity terror" is observed, which can be observed in studies (see: Halicki, 2010).

Needs of Older People

The last issue addressed in this research was the needs of the elderly. A need is the state of lack of something or a feeling resulting from the biological and psychological structure of the body, the individual experience of a person, and his / her place in the social structure. Tibbitts C. (1967) considered the following the most important needs of the elderly:

the need to carry out socially-useful activities; the need of recognition by a part of the society, community and to play a role in it; the need to fill the extended leisure time in a satisfactory manner; the need to maintain normal social relationships; the need of recognition as a human individual; the need of self-expression and sense of accomplishment; the need of appropriate psychic and mental stimulation; the need to protect health and the need of social welfare, a well-established lifestyle and the maintenance of relationships with the family (quoted from: Ziębińska, 2010, p. 93).

It is extremely important to meet the needs of the elderly as well as their expectations associated with the activity offer addressed to this social group. In order to meet these needs, seniors must have a wide range of activities to allow each of them to find something that matches their interests. In order to explore this issue, I asked whether the activities offered by the city of Chorzów meet the needs of seniors. For (67.9%) of the Senior Club members the offer is sufficient, and for (32.1%) of the respondents it does not meet their needs. In contrast, for the remaining seniors, only (34.2%) of respondents is satisfied with the offer, and for the majority (65.8%) it does not meet their needs. This is due to the fact that the majority of the remaining seniors are not actively participating in social life, the respondents feel socially excluded and often do not have the knowledge about the activities offered by the city. In case of the question about the type of activities that are lacking in the offer for seniors, most respondents pointed to a greater number of leisure activities, better access to swimming pools, meetings with interesting people in the field of sport, culture, or outdoor activities.

Often, the capability to meet specific needs by the elderly is hindered by a number of barriers. To find out what barriers prevent the satisfaction of needs of the respondents, I formulated an appropriate question in the questionnaire. The summary of responses is presented in (Table 9).

Table 9
Barriers impeding the satisfaction of needs of seniors

SENIOR BARRIERS	Senior Club members		Other seniors – social assistance clients	
	no. of responses	%	no. of responses	%
Architectonic barriers (e.g. lack of ramps)	15	14.2	6	7.9
Communication barriers (e.g. incapability of self-expression and to interact with the social environment)	18	17	0	–
Mobility barriers (e.g. lack of autonomy and independence)	20	18.9	0	–
Barriers related to the lack of social bonds (e.g. feeling of loneliness)	30	28.3	26	34.2
Educational barriers (e.g. insufficient number of U3A, problems with the satisfaction of ambitions and continuation of hobbies)	10	9.4	11	14.5
Barriers related to the need of being useful (e.g. opportunity to serve other people through voluntary work)	19	17.9	20	18.9
Economic barriers (financial situation)	50	47.2	44	57.9

Source: author's own research. The percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose any number of responses.

For nearly half (47.2%) of the surveyed Senior Club members, these were economic barriers, followed by barriers related to the lack of social bonds (28.3%), mobility barriers (18.9%), as well as barriers related to the need of being useful (17.9%) and communication barriers – incapability of self-expression and to interact with the social environment (17%). For the second group, the largest barrier is the economic barrier (57.9%), as well as barriers related to loneliness or lack of social bonds (34.2%). To a lesser extent, the respondents pointed to the lack of opportunities to serve other people through voluntary work or the barrier related to the need of being useful (18.9%). It is worth emphasizing that in both groups of respondents, a negligible amount indicated architectonic barriers, which are successively being eliminated over the last dozen years.

In conclusion, the presentation of a catalog of guidelines for institutions involved in activating and satisfying the needs of older people, prepared

on the basis of A. Walker, a well-known gerontologist and social politician, was presented at the end of this paper (behind: Szatur-Jaworska et al., 2006, p. 181):

1. In addressing the issue of seniority, we should bear in mind not only professional work, but any manifestation of activity that affects the wellbeing of the elderly, their families, local communities and society as a whole.
2. The activity strategy should provide the opportunity for all seniors to take action, bearing in mind the strong relationship between health and the level of human activity.
3. Preventive measures should be targeted at people of all ages with the aim of preventing illness, disability or lack of qualifications.
4. The issue of active aging should be addressed in all generations, and implementation based on the principle of intergenerational solidarity.
5. The right of people aging to protect social, lifelong learning should be equal to their commitment to the effort required by the activity. Elderly people should be encouraged to engage in activities rather than put pressure on, for example, extending their employment.
6. The principle of participation and respect for human autonomy must apply in all activating activities.
7. Activation programs must take into account cultural and national differences.

Conclusions

Seniors actively participating in social life, that is in the Senior Club activities:

- consider themselves active and do not feel socially excluded, while assessing their participation and activity in social life in a satisfactory way;
- engaging in a variety of activities gives them the opportunity to meet people, although they prefer informal activities, including home and family, and religious activities;
- Senior Club members actively spend their leisure time, participating in club meetings and, in their opinion, their health and fitness levels have a great influence on how they spend their free time;
- for the majority of respondents, the offer of activities addressed to seniors meets their needs, and the barriers that impede the satisfaction of these needs are economic barriers and the lack of social bonds.

In case of the second group of respondents, seniors:

- consider themselves inactive and socially excluded, and for the most part, their evaluation of satisfaction with participation in social life is unsatisfactory;
- engaging in a variety of activities by these seniors mostly fill their leisure time, and the preferred form of activity is solitary activity, and also home and family, and religious activity;
- non-participating seniors primarily spend their free time watching television and listening to the radio, and also spend time with their family; their health and physical condition affect the way they spend their free time;
- for the majority of respondents, the offer of activities addressed to seniors does not meet their needs, and barriers that impede the satisfaction of their needs are primarily economic barriers and barriers related to the feeling of solitude.

However, both in one and the second group of seniors surveyed, economic barriers are emerging as a barrier to meeting the needs. It is noteworthy that, despite the same indication, there is one group of seniors who take part in social activism and participation, which also changes their own way of life, attitude and willingness to engage in activities and expectations as to their needs, which is bound to with many other factors such as personality, and the other group, which due to the fact of his passivity for various reasons, does not take up the activity by specifying as excluded people, who are most often critical to the offered forms of activity. It would be wise to consider whether the personality factor does not bother them more in meeting their needs. So whether the improvement of the economic situation would make all seniors start to identify themselves as the people whose needs are being fulfilled, certainly at that moment, the personality or social barriers, such as lack of social ties, would come to the fore.

On the basis of the research and the results obtained (which may not reflect the full picture of the activity and needs of the senior citizens in Chorzów due to their lack of representativeness), it can be concluded that various forms of stimulating senior activity, including Senior Clubs, have an impact on the quality of life of the elderly, significantly improve their activity, meet the needs of a higher order, above all, prevent social exclusion of the increasingly large group of older people – so that the seniors could live their lives to the fullest.

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