

## STUDY ON ELDERLY PEOPLE AS RESOURCE IN SOCIETY AND FAMILY

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**ABSTRACT.** In this paper, our interest has been that of identifying the possibilities of using elderly people as human resource in family and society, taking into account the present trend of doing away with the dependence state of elderly people, providing solutions to identify some active social roles that keep them active, values promoted by the theory of activity. Looking through the literature in the field, we have observed that it does not offer too many data on the social and cultural needs of retirees, on their spending free time, data which should help us find solutions to increase the quality of life. We have attempted and to a greater extent we have succeeded in promoting activities that can lead to “more active ageing”, so that these people remain active on the community and territorial level as long as possible.

**Key words:** *retirees, family, activity, society*

**REZUMAT.** *Studiu privind persoanele vârstnice ca resursă în societate și în familie.* În această lucrare, interesul nostru a fost de a identifica posibilitățile de utilizare a persoanelor vârstnice ca resursă umană în familie și în societate, luând în considerare tendința actuală de înlăturare a stării de dependență a persoanelor vârstnice, oferind soluții pentru a identifica unele roluri sociale active, care să-i mențină în activitate, valori promovate de teoria activității. Căutând în bibliografia de specialitate, am observat că aceasta nu ne oferă prea multe date despre nevoile sociale și culturale ale pensionarilor, despre petrecerea timpului liber al acestora, date care să ne ajute în a găsi soluții pentru creșterea calității vieții. Am încercat și în mare măsură am reușit să promovăm activități care să ducă la o „îmbătrânire cât mai activă”, astfel încât aceste persoane la nivel comunitar și teritorial să rămână active cât mai mult timp.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *pensionari, familie, activitate, societate*

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## Definition of the research problem

The situation of the elderly people in Romania is described in the literature of the field from rather a demographic and medical point of view. From a social perspective, there are a few regional studies that describe the differences between retirees and people employed or studies regarding the relations between generations (Ionescu, Bunescu, 2007; Tîrhaș, 2007).

The present research targets the identification and definition of aspects referring at the social and cultural life of retirees, to offer operating models of spending their free time, with the objective to keep an active and independent life, which is first of all, qualitative.

We have to mention that the instruments used in research are, generally, determined by a pre-survey (pilot research) which allows the testing of the descriptive scheme, of the instruments and procedures for work, and also the estimation of costs and anticipation of results (Mărginean, 2000). In the qualitative research on the elderly people in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca, we have used the interview as method, the technique used being that of face-to-face semi-structured interview.

The steps of the qualitative research are the following:

- The confirmation of the social self (of the researcher's position in society);
- The adoption of a perspective - in the present research we have used the functionalist paradigm;
- The choice of the study design (the face-to-face semi-structured interview);
- Collection of data – the period between July-October 2021;
- The analysis of data – the period between April-May 2022.

## Introduction of subjects

The qualitative research was carried out on a number of 27 people with residence in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca, 12 men and 15 women, all subjects being above the age of 60. They have a medium level of education, respectively elementary studies/ 8 grades or less (6); 10 grades/vocational school (7), high school (10), post-high school studies (2), higher education (2).

**The reason of retirement** is, mostly, the age limit (19 people), the pre-retirement (4 people) and sickness retirement (4 people).

**The profession** of the subjects taking part in the interviews, before retirement, has the following structure: workers (10 people), personnel with medium level studies (health, education, services) (6 people), retirees (5 people), clerk, technician, supervisor (4 people), personnel with higher education (2 people). All these socio-demographic data are synthetized in the following matrix, for a better view and identification of the people taking part in the interviews (table 1):

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic data in qualitative research

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Civil status</b>	<b>Education level</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Reason of retirement</b>
1	68 years	Male	married	10 grades	lathe operator	Sickness
2	66 years	Male	married	Higher education	teacher	Age limit
3	64 years	Male	married	Supervisor training	technician	Age limit
4	73 years	Male	married	10 grades	machinist	Sickness
5	68 years	Male	married	Highschool	mechanic	Age limit
6	67 years	Male	divorced	Vocational school	warehouse worker	Age limit
7	64 years	Male	divorced	highschool	warehouse worker	Pre-retirement
8	71 years	Male	married	Vocational school	retiree	Age limit
9	67 years	Male	married	Vocational school	rectifier	Age limit
10	70 years	Male	married	8 grades	retiree	Age limit
11	66 years	male	married	Military school	retiree	Age limit
12	68 years	male	married	10 grades	mechanic	Age limit
13	65 years	female	married	8 grades	textile worker	Age limit
14	68 years	female	married	Post-highschool	medical assistant	Age limit
15	58 years	female	divorced	8 grades	tailor	sickness
16	61 years	female	widowed	highschool	accountant	Age limit
17	63 years	female	married	highschool	accountant	Sickness
18	59 years	female	divorced	highschool	kindergarten teacher	Age limit
19	65 years	Female	married	highschool	cook	Age limit
20	72 years	Female	married	8 grades	care-taker	Pre-retirement
21	84 years	Female	widowed	highschool	accountant	Age limit
22	66 years	Female	married	Higher education	horticulturist	Age limit
23	59 years	Female	married	highschool	engineer	Pre-retirement
24	74 years	Female	widowed	highschool	chemical operator	Age limit
25	67 years	Female	married	Vocational school	school teacher	Age limit
26	58 years	Female	widowed	10 grades	tailor	Age limit
27	66 years	Female	married	8 grades	retiree	Pre-retirement
					retiree	Age limit

## The retiree's life style

### 1. The importance of the family

For most of the respondents, family remains the reference point of their lives, most answers highlighting the importance of the family in the activities carried out within it.

**Table 2.** Importance of the family after retirement

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORIES	Number
<b>IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY AFTER RETIREMENT</b>	Involvement in grandchildren's lives	11
	Increased attention to family	6
	Other activities	5
	Accommodation of spouses to each other	2
	Same as before	3

### 2. The retiree's role in the family

Most elderly people see their life within the life of a family, therefore, ignoring the aspects related to family life means ignoring the most important part of the elderly's life. Keeping in touch with the family is very important, regardless of frequency.

**Table 3.** The retiree's role in the family

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORIES	Number
<b>RETIREE'S ROLE IN THE FAMILY</b>	Administrative/household	10
	Educational	5
	Decision making	5
	Advisor	4
	Affective support	3

### 3. Joys/problems of retirement

Wishing to find out the pleasant and less pleasant parts of retirement, this being one of the most important parts of life, besides school, marriage, birth of children, we asked the following questions: "Which is the most unpleasant side when you are retired? Which is the most pleasant part?"

**Table 4.** Unpleasant sides of retirement

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORIES	Females	Males
<b>UNPLEASANT SIDES OF RETIREMENT</b>	Lack of activities/socialization	2	6
	Discrimination	5	
	Financial status	2	3
	Health problems	2	2
	Perspective of death	3	
	No sides	1	1

**Table 5.** Benefits of retirement

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY	females	males
<b>BENEFITS OF RETIREMENT</b>	Family	5	3
	Spare time/freedom	5	3
	Ability to work/health	2	2
	Spare time activities/ socialization		4
	Other benefits	3	

#### ***4. Achievements before and after retirement***

To observe the differences of joys and satisfaction between the period of employment and the period of retirement, we asked the following associated questions: "Can you list the most important achievements (joys) in your life before retirement? What about those after retirement?" The subcategories formed determined us to present life situations separately from the satisfactions before retirement, and joys and satisfactions after retirement, each of them shaping a category with various subcategories.

**Table 6.** Achievements before retirement

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORIES	Number
<b>ACHIEVEMENTS BEFORE RETIREMENT</b>	Family-related achievements	18
	Material achievements	10
	Professional achievements	3
	Social life-related achievements	2
	Hobby-related achievements	2

**Table 7.** Achievements after retirement

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORIES	Number
<b>ACHIEVEMENTS AFTER RETIREMENT</b>	Family-related achievements	12
	Material achievements	7
	No achievement	4
	Does not mention	3
	Social life-related achievements	2

#### ***5. New acquaintances/new friends after retirement***

To identify the socializing level of the elderly in the retirement period, we asked the following associated questions: "Have you met new people after retirement? Have you made new friends?" The resulting subcategories, after answer coding, were Yes or No.

**Table 8.** New friends/acquaintances after retirement

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY	female	male
NEW FRIENDS/ NEW ACQUITANCES	Yes	6	10
	No	9	2
	Total	15	12

### 6. Social/cultural needs of retirees

As one of the study objectives entailed the identification of the social and cultural needs of the elderly, we asked the question: “Can you mention some social and cultural needs you feel that you have as a retiree?”

**Table 9.** Social /cultural needs of the elderly

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORIES	number
SOCIAL/ CULTURAL NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY	Culture	10
	Socialization	9
	Information	8
	Organized activities	5
	Health care	2
	Does not have	2
	Has an organized program	1

### 7. Hobbies of the elderly

One of the premises at the basis of research was the fact that the effects of retirement, as the main period in the life of an individual, can be attenuated by the availability of an extra-professional activity so that, at the moment of retirement, the individual should not feel the lack of professional roles so acutely. Research (Popovici, 2001) shows that people who prepare for the moment of retirement manage to cope with it more successfully and retirement is no longer considered a loss if the intervention of certain motivational factors is possible, such a the extra-professional activities (hobbies).

Also, to identify the motivations behind the category of “spending free time”, we asked the associated questions: “Do you have a hobby? How long have you had it? How often do you practice it?”

**Table 10.** Hobbies of the elderly

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY	number
HOBBIES OF THE ELDERLY	I have no hobbies	8
	Information	4
	Manual activities	4
	Music auditions	3
	Cultural activities	2
	Others	5
	Civic responsibility	1

We mention that the qualitative research is only a stage in the study carried out on the elderly in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca, as the data obtained on qualitative research have only an orientative value, following that through further research we will complete these results with those of quantitative research, to meet the requirements of validity and fidelity specific to sociological research.

## **Conclusions**

Influences on the identity of the elderly are mostly provided by both family and social services. These influences can be both positive and negative, in relation to the approach to the problems that face an elderly person. The family can provide a protective climate of balance by avoiding conflict, psycho-affective traumas, wants and affective frustrations, as well as factors of super and subchallenge, but such a behaviour, which takes over all the tasks of the elderly, can make them feel useless. On the other hand, even though all the social services for the elderly are so organized that they come to their aid, these services can be labelling by their own destination: the elderly, whose subculture may thus be formed.

The main objective of this paper was that of identifying the possibilities of using the elderly as human resource in the family and society, taking into account the present trend of doing away with the state of dependence of the elderly and providing solutions, by identifying active social roles, to keep them within activity - values promoted by the theory of activity.

Analysing the qualitative data of research, we can observe that the elderly can be a valuable resource for both family and community in the society they live in.

They wish to remain active and in touch with the society, taking into account the main needs signaled by them: cultural, socialization and information needs. It is interesting that these needs may be satisfied by the day centres/clubs for the elderly, but which are not accessed by them due to various reasons: they are not interested in the integration into such a collectivity or do not know of such a club. The present paper confirms the fact that the elderly can be a valuable resource to both family and society.

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