

# **Life Outlook and Social Saturation of Pensioners in Slovakia and Russia: Comparative Analysis and Psychological-Pedagogical Directions of Assistance in Digital Epoch**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The current situation of a today's person life presupposes digital technologies integration into all spheres of life activities. And for many representatives of the elder generation, the adaptation to these new for it conditions becomes a significant problem. The study objective is the determination of Slovak and Russian pensioners social intensity (saturation) level and revelation of the main directions of their psychologic-pedagogical assistance in the digital epoch. 153 interrogated respondents from Slovakia (average age of 72±8,3 years old) and 93 respondents from Russia (average age of 71±5,4 years old) took part in the study. “The Pensioner Social Saturation Questionary” (Búgelová, 2010) was used for the collection of data. The results have shown, that the Russian pensioners feel the higher rate of social intensity, than the Slovak ones. Herewith, the gender differences of the social intensity level were revealed only for the Russian pensioners. In Russia male pensioners are more socially saturated, than the female pensioners. Herewith, in both selections, notwithstanding the gender, the low level of social saturation was revealed. The common critical point of emotional sufferings of the pensioners of both nationalities are the risk of social isolation, feeling of loneliness and idleness for other people. Almost 90% of all pensioners worry, that their existence is burdensome for their loved ones. The article deposes attention emphasis from the description of typical gerontological problematics to the everyday life situations, which the pensioners live through, and which bring psychological and social discomfort in their everyday routine. Besides, the publication turns attention to the current directions of psychologic-pedagogical assistance on the basis of studying psychological (emotional) aspects of the problem of pensioner social saturation – the publication gives a list of situations, causing the highest emotional response of the pensioners, and provides the analysis in the context of national selections of the respondents.

**Keywords:** *social saturation, social involvement, Slovak and Russian pensioners, gerontology*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The information on ageing of the population of different countries occasionally emerges in the informational environment, and the longevity seems to be one of criteria of the evaluation of one or another country social and economic level [10]. Herewith, the specialists of the pensioner psychologic-pedagogical assistance area face the objective of its current direction revelation. With the introduction of digital technologies into all spheres of life activities, the adaption of the elder generation representatives to the life in digital epoch becomes one of the most actual directions of assistance. For many representatives of the elder generation the adaptation to

these conditions, new for them, becomes a significant problem. The specific social and social-psychological problems of the pensioner life quality (health, social activity, life objectives, correspondence of social and economic levels) are connected to the senior age period. The gerontologist Litomeritsky (Litomerický) (in: Šimová, 2003) thinks, that the society's degree of development is determined by this society's capability of taking care of unhealthy people and seniors, who got in difficult life situations. In our article we focus attention, first of all, on the social sphere, in which the pensioners live, on their perception of life, and also on the self-perception within the frames of their public and economic spheres.

The comparison of the Russian and Slovak pensioners' life isn't accidental. Although, the territories of these countries aren't equitable, over the past few decades in both of them we can see significant economic and public changes, which found its reflection in changes of the lifestyle and values not only of the people of younger age categories, but also of the people of pensioner age.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1. Execution of the exploration arrangements with the use of specially developed authorial methodologies and technologies (Bugelova, T., 2010).

2.2. Execution of the comparative studies of various respondent selections, divided by gender and nationality criteria.

2.3. Revelation of the current directions of the pensioner psychological-pedagogical assistance.

## 3. STUDY ISSUES

According to different data, today, the age, in which a person finishes his/her effective working activity and becomes a pensioner, moves from the 60<sup>th</sup> to the 65<sup>th</sup> year of life. According to the World's Health Organization (WHO) the pension age is divided in 3 periods:

1. Early senility, from 65 to 74 years old, i.e. the young pension age (young pensioners). This period is followed by the problems, related to the retirement, use of free time and searching for new forms of self-actualization.

2. Senility itself, from 75 to 89 years old, senior pension age (senior pensioners), i.e. there are pensioners, for whom the problems of adaptation, solitude and decrease of the margin of tolerable psychological and physical stress are characteristic.

3. Long livers, from 90 years old and above, i.e. very old pensioners. It is a very problematic period from the point of view of a human's independence and satisfaction of his/her elementary needs and self-service (Poledníková, 2004).

From the qualitative point of view, there are also other classifications in the professional literature:

- "third age" (posteffective period), which lasts approximately up to 89 years old age;

- "fourth age" (dependence period), it lasts approximately from 90 years old age, and it's distinctive by the fact, that with the new years the extent of dependence in the part of main life needs satisfaction increases (Šerák, 2009).

Both national and foreign authors pay much attention to the period of senility and involuntary processes of the physical and mental nature, which go along this period of life. However, the number of the special works, dedicated to reflection of practical sides of the pensioners' life, their social and emotional needs, isn't that large. Among them, we can name the works of Stuart-Hamilton (Stuart-Hamilton, 1999), Chornanichova (Čornaničová 2007), Kholmerova (Holmerová, 2006), which put in the foreground a pensioner's dignity in the context of

attitude of care towards him/her, denying his/her underestimation and lack of attention, paid to him/her. In relation to it, Kulikov, L.V. (2000), who pays attention to "the peace of mind" separate components, shall be mentioned. He writes: "The mental well-being (peace of mind) is the consistency of psychic processes and functions, sense of entirety, internal balance". In his study of needs, which engaged 4 age categories of the respondents, the following most necessary and important needs of the pensioners have been revealed to a significant extent: the necessity for respect from the side of the people around him/her, financial security of life necessities, rational use of the own time and health. The presence of imaginary free time may cause many problems. Also, Opashovsky (Opaschowski, in: Vážanský, 2001) pays attention to it in relation to the conditions, inappropriate for the use of free time, which may reflect in psychical conflicts and social problems, such as retirement, frustration, solitude, illness, etc. Khashkova, Kh. (Hašková, 2010), writes, that a senior shall feel sense of usefulness, and this is why the activities, which he/she carries out, shall provide somebody real benefit, bring the sense of gratitude and specific acknowledgement to a pensioner.

In relation to the abovementioned, the following study issues become interesting.

1. How do Slovak and Russian pensioners get through their lives?

2. What makes them happy and incites to activity, and, alternatively, to which extent are they satisfied with their social and private life?

## 4. STUDY OBJECTIVE

4.1. The main objective of our study is the reproduction of image of the social self-perception and emotional feelings of today's pensioners.

4.2. The determination of satisfaction (dissatisfaction) with the measures, ensuring social saturation, and also revelation of those aspects, which could improve the pensioners' quality of life.

4.3. In our article we don't phrase any principal hypothesis, our main intention is to attract the public's attention to the fact, that with the extension of a person's pension age, the period of senility also extends, and this period of senility shall not be associate with the end of the life journey, but, alternatively, it shall mean the continuation of the following, meaningful and typical period of life.

4.4. The determination of the Slovak and Russian pensioners social intensity (saturation) level.

## 5. STUDY METHODS

In course of the study we have used an authorial questionnaire, provisionally entitled as the Pensioners' Social Saturation Questionary (PSSQ) (author: Búgelová 2000). As of the moment, our studies confirm the absence

of any questionnaire or checklist, which would be entirely focused on studying the extent of social need satisfaction particularly of the pensioners.

The questionnaire consists of 39 direct questions, to which a person gives the answer YES or NO. EXAMPLE: “Do you have two or more friends, with whom you regularly communicate?” Answer YES (1 point) and NO (0 points) (Chronbach’s  $\alpha$  – for the Russian group  $\alpha = 0,67$  and for the Slovak one  $\alpha = 0,84$ ), and of 17 reverse statements (No. 6, 10, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38 и 39), which shall be recoded at the results processing (Chronbach’s  $\alpha$  – for the Russian group  $\alpha = 0,88$  and for the Slovak one  $\alpha = 0,88$ ). EXAMPLE: “the current situation is good enough for me” (1 point) and “the current situation isn’t good enough for me”.

The data was checked for normality of distribution and representativeness. In the result of checking with the help of the methods of descriptive statistics the data representativeness was confirmed, but the normality of distribution wasn’t confirmed, which consequence was the application of Mann-Whitney U nonparametric test. Apart from instrumental and statistical methods, large attention was paid to the description of selection social parameters.

The examinee group consisted of 246 pensioners, 153 of whom are the inhabitants of Slovakia (the average age amounts to  $72.4 \pm 8.3$  years old; min. = 60, max. = 92 years old) and 93 respondents from Russia (the average age of  $71.3 \pm 5.4$  years old, min. = 57, max. 85 years old). The selection gender division is provided in the Table 1.

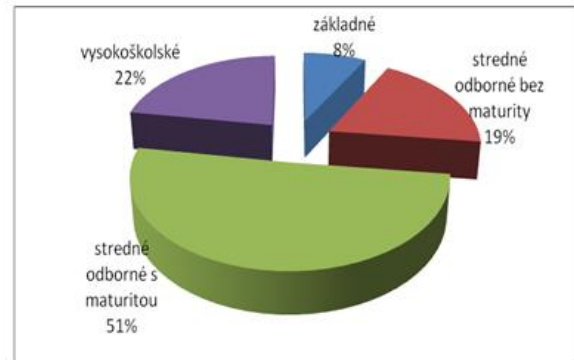
**Table 1** The number of examinee group members by nationality and gender criteria

Country	Female	Male	TOTAL
Slovakia	101	52	153
Russia	74	19	93
TOTAL	175	71	246

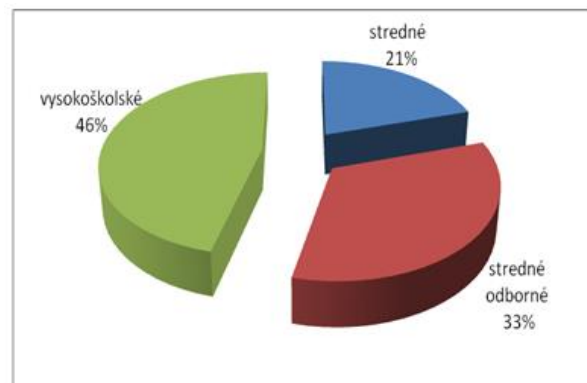
The Russian group of examinees consisted of the inhabitants of Yekaterinburg and Saint Petersburg. The Slovak group consisted of the inhabitants of Eastern Slovakia.

The selection was chosen randomly from the persons, who as of the moment of the study, were not occupied in any work activity and were pensioners officially.

We provide the respondent participant distribution by education criteria in the diagrams No. 1 and 2.



**Diagram 1** The distribution of the respondents from Slovakia by education criteria: 51% - secondary education with the general education certificate; higher education - 22%; general - 8%; vocational secondary education without the general education certificate – 19%



**Diagram 2** The distribution of the respondents from Russia by education criteria: higher education – 46%; secondary education – 21%, vocational secondary education – 33%.

We proved the selection characteristics by the criteria of joint or single habitation of the pensioners.

**Table 2** Description of the selection by co-residence, nationality and gender criteria (N = 244)

country		Habitation		TOTAL
		single	joint	
Slovakia	Female	47	53	100
	Male	19	33	52
TOTAL		66	86	152
Russia	Female	24	49	73
	Male	4	15	19
TOTAL		28	64	92

*Note: Two pensioners didn't put this data in the questionnaire*

## 6. STUDY RESULTS

The results have shown, that the Russian pensioner's level of social intensity (social saturation) is significantly higher ( $M = 14.0 \pm 4.7$ , min. = 5, max. = 29), than the Slovak pensioners' one ( $M = 11.2 \pm 6.2$ , min. = 2, max. = 32) (Table No. 3). The maximum possible number of points, which the examinees could get in the "social saturation" subscale amounts to 39. On the basis of questions of the applied questionnaire, the Russian pensioners achieved 36%, and the Slovak ones – 28% of social saturation.

**Table 3** Comparison of social saturation of the pensioners from Slovakia (n = 6) and Russia (n = 85)

Common variable	Meanrank		U	p
	Slovaks	Russians		
Social saturation	101.1	141.5	4036.5	0.000***

Later on, we have revealed the differences of the study participant social saturation by gender and nationality criteria (Table No. 4). Among the Slovak men ( $M = 11.2 \pm 5.8$ , min. = 3, max. = 31) and women ( $M = 11.2 \pm 6.4$ , min. = 2, max. = 32) no differences have been revealed. The level of social saturation, revealed for the Russian men ( $M = 16.7 \pm 4.8$ , min. = 7, max. = 29) is higher than the one, revealed for the Russian women-pensioners ( $M = 13.3 \pm 4.4$ , min. = 5, max. = 26).

**Table 4** Gender differences at the social saturation of the Slovaks (96 women and 50 men) and Russians (68 women and 17 men)

country	Meanrank		U	p
	Female	Male		
Slovakia	73.0	74.4	2354.5	0.851
Russia	39.6	56.7	344.5	0.010*

There are no revealed differences among the Slovak and Russian pensioners in relation to the satisfaction with their social saturation. In relation to the Slovak pensioners we have received average data ( $M = 7.2 \pm 6.3$ , min. = 0, max. = 32), purely comparable to the data, received from the Russian pensioners ( $M = 7.2 \pm 6.3$ , min. = 0, max. = 32). The Slovak pensioners' extent of the social saturation satisfaction achieves 18.4% and the Russian pensioners' one achieves 19.7%.

**Table 5** Comparison of satisfaction with the social saturation of the pensioners from Slovakia (n = 153) and Russia (n = 76)

Variable	Meanrank		U	p
	Slovaks	Russians		
Social saturation satisfaction	112.7	119.6	5467	0.461

There were no gender differences revealed in relation to the satisfaction with social saturation (Table No. 6). The Slovak women ( $M = 7.6 \pm 6.1$ , min. = 0, max. = 26) and men ( $M = 6.5 \pm 6.7$ , min. = 0, max. = 32) have shown comparatively low results of satisfaction. The Russian women ( $M = 7.4 \pm 6.4$ , min. = 0, max. = 26) and men ( $M = 8.9 \pm 5.9$ , min. = 0, max. = 22) also haven't shown the differences in the relatively low extent of satisfaction with social saturation.

**Table 6** Gender differences at the satisfaction with social saturation of the Slovaks (101 women and 52 men) and Russians (59 women and 17 men)

country	Meanrank		U	p
	Female	Male		
Slovakia	81.5	68.3	2175	0.082
Russia	36.8	44.4	401	0.209

In the course of the results of questionnaire with application of "The Pensioners' Social Saturation Questionnaire" (PSSQ) we got interested, foremost, in two indexes. First of all, in which PSSQ questions the answers of the Russian and Slovak pensioners differ to the largest extent.

Secondly, in which areas are the pensioners' emotional rueful feelings are maximally diminished. In the Table No. 7 we provide the complete PSSQ questionnaire with the percent rate of answers ("yes") in specific sections of the checklist. The data, which serves for specification of statistically important differences of the Slovak and Russian pensioners' answers, has been put in bold, and the asterisk specifies the questions, which caused the maximal emotional rueful feelings of all respondents.

**Table 7** “Yes” answers of the pensioners from Slovakia (n = 146) and Russia (n = 93), provided in percent (%), in separate PSSQ sections

Questions	Country	
	Slovakia	Russia
1. Do you call anybody or does anybody call you at least once a day?	37.9	24.7
2. Do you have a person, with whom you can go for a walk at any time?	24.2	37.6
3. Do you have two or more friends, with whom you communicate regularly?	5.2	14.0
4. Do you observe the daily routine, formed by your own decision? (you wake up and go to bed at approximately the same time, regularly have a meal, execute hygiene procedures at the relatively same time?)	<b>3.3</b>	<b>30.1</b>
5. If you are in a bad mood or you have nothing to do, do you have anybody to refer to?	12.4	24.7
6. Do you feel inner stress, when you have to spend the whole day alone?*	58.2	63.4
7. Do you have a group of friends, with whom you spend weekends?	<b>29.4</b>	<b>47.3</b>
8. Do you have an opportunity to celebrate holidays (New Year, Christmas, Easter, etc.) not alone? Don't you feel yourself out of place at that moment?*	17.0	11.8
9. Do the guests come to you at least once a week?	44.4	47.3
10. Do you worry because of your loneliness?*	77.1	75.3
11. Do you feel financial independence from the relatives?	<b>27.5</b>	<b>43.0</b>
12. Do you go on vacation at least once a year in order to change the environment?	57.5	58.1
13. Do you have any hobby, favourite amusement, which you do at least once a week?	20.9	23.7
14. Do you execute any work for price from time to time?	<b>84.3</b>	<b>64.5</b>
15. Do you usually feel yourself being in a good mood?*	20.3	19.4
16. Do you often feel yourself a burden for your family members?*	88.2	89.2
17. Do you often feel, being used by the family members?	<b>90.2</b>	<b>74.2</b>
18. Do you do any attempts to broaden your circle of contacts?	<b>44.4</b>	<b>61.3</b>
19. Do you manage to broaden your circle of contacts?	<b>22.9</b>	<b>52.7</b>
20. Are you waiting for a case, when somebody will make attempts of communicating with you, even if you could exercise initiative in it by yourself?	<b>55.6</b>	<b>69.9</b>
21. Did you stop doing something (playing volleyball, going to theater, etc.) by virtue of age limitations?	<b>49.0</b>	<b>31.2</b>
22. Do you suffer the feeling of uneasiness, related to doing something, that people can criticize?*	74.5	73.1
23. Do you exercise financial assistance to your family members?	<b>54.2</b>	<b>26.9</b>
24. Do you have to cut down expenses constantly and put yourself on a budget, because you help your family members?	<b>86.3</b>	<b>52.7</b>
25. Do your family members help you financially?	<b>73.2</b>	<b>31.2</b>
26. Do you need any financial support from the side of your family members?	<b>84.3</b>	<b>64.5</b>
27. Do you have any hobbies, which you have been exercising for a long time (5-10 years)?	<b>56.9</b>	<b>21.5</b>
28. Do you continuously need any medical assistance or constant nursing?	50.3	55.9
29. Are you capable to take care of yourself independently: go to a shop, tidy the apartment, take shower, etc?*	11.1	8.6
30. Have you burst into hearty laugh in the last week?*	17.0	22.6
31. Do you regularly do any physical exercises?	48.4	62.4
32. Do you have overweight?	<b>71.2</b>	<b>50.5</b>
33. Do the situations, when someone doesn't listen to your opinion, happen in your life?	<b>65.4</b>	<b>18.3</b>
34. Do you have a feeling of being underestimated by the family members and acquaintants?	<b>80.4</b>	<b>61.3</b>
35. Do you feel your “needlessness” for the family members?*	87.6	87.1
36. Do you have a feeling, that the family members don't notice you?*	87.6	83.9
37. Is there in your life a person, on whom you can rely in any case?*	14.4	12.9
38. Does it happen in your life, that the family members and acquaintants forget to congratulate you on holidays (birthday, New Year, etc.)?*	86.9	90.3
39. Do you often suffer the feeling, that you have been forgotten, and that you are alone?*	<b>75.2</b>	<b>92.5</b>
Note. Bold index numbers indicate the difference of >15% in the answers of the Slovak and Russian pensioners		
* a mark for the critical emotional suffering		

***The most noticeable differences in the social sphere:***

The Russian pensioners meet their friends twice oftener, more freely and come in contact by their own without any impediments and find their friends' support more often. However, it shall be underlined, that these areas' positive

indexes move from 24% to 60% in the Russian respondents, and from 5% to approximately 44% in the Slovak ones. We would like to let ourselves to make a conclusion, that it is relatively low for both groups.

***The most noticeable differences in the sphere of individual activities:***

In both groups of the respondents we have faced relatively high level of the work activity. Even 84% of Slovak pensioners and 64% of Russian pensioners are occupied in the work activity, which is at least the part-time one, sometimes notwithstanding the relevant pension age. The constant hobby was recorded in 20% of the respondents, and at the same moment, even three-quarter of the respondents made the statement in terms of the fact, that in their age the pretensions, related to various kinds of entertainments and games, cannot emerge. Doesn't this refer to the observation of a specific, publicly accepted social role, which a person shall learn and observe in the "definite" age?

***The most significant differences in experience based rueful feelings***

The Russian pensioners suffer the sense of loneliness to a larger extent (notwithstanding the higher level of the social saturation and readiness to searching for new contacts).

The sense of being underestimated by the set of family members appears in the Slovak pensioners to the larger extent, the same as the conviction, that their views and opinions aren't accounted. Even 90% of the Slovak respondents and 64% of the Russian ones feel the sense of being used by the family members. The percent index of such answers, given by the Slovak respondents, are in the range of 75-87%, and the ones, given by the Russian respondents, is in the range of 18-92%.

The answers, related to the organization and observance of the daily routine, are worth noticing. On the basis of descriptive results, notwithstanding the relatively low general percent – 30% as maximum and 3% - as minimum, the Russian pensioners are more disciplined and organized in the terms of daily routine observance.

***The most noticeable differences in the financial sphere***

More than half of the Slovak pensioners and quarter of the Russian pensioners render financial support to someone of their family members. Besides, half of these respondents specify, that they have to put themselves on a budget in order to perform such assistance. The counterintuitive data, received in relation to these statements, is the one, from which results, that three quarter of the Slovak respondents and one quarter of the Russian respondents get financial support from a specific benefactor and also the financial support from

the side of their family members (84% of Slovak respondents and 64% of the Russian ones). This data unintentionally causes the question, related to the kind of money circulation between young and old people, which we get. The highest percent of financial independence has been registered in the Russian respondents – 43% against 27% of the Slovaks' ones. Herewith, the number of the pensioners, who make extra money by working part-time additionally to getting pension benefits was determined at the level of 84% in Slovak pensioners and 64% in the Russian pensioners.

***The most often social situations, causing critical emotional rueful feelings, common for all of the respondents:***

Almost two third of the respondents would suffer anxiety (or have actually already suffered it) because of the necessity of spending complete day without any communication.

In average, only 14% of the pensioners affirm, that they have already got somebody to spend Christmas and other important holidays with, being free of the feeling, that they represent a commitment.

1. Three quarter of the pensioners suffer feelings of loneliness, uncertainty or fear, when they stay at home alone.
2. In average, the psychical comfort prevails only in each fifth pensioner from the group of examinees.
3. Almost 90% of pensioners worry, that they are a burden for their family members.
4. Three quarter of the pensioners think, that due to their age they can't have any pretensions, related to the games and other entertainments.
5. In the last seven days each fifth pensioner has burst into heartily laugh.
6. Almost 85% of the respondents feel themselves underestimated by the people around, even useless, or "out of place", and sometimes even "forgotten".
7. Only 15% of the pensioners are convinced, that in case of any emergency there will be a person, who would be able to take care of them.
8. Although our analysis doesn't incite to any great optimism, and relatively big number of the negative consequences, which the seniority period brings, prevail in our article, we don't have any intention to represent the sad fate of the contemporary pensioners.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

In our opinion, the life situations, provided in our Pensioners' Social Saturation Questionary, refer to the elementary social needs of each person. This opinion comes also from the studied and specified literature. It is natural, that the elder a person is, the lesser he depends on large number of social impacts, and, alternatively, prefers stable, qualitative and time proved incitements and contacts. Besides, with the course of time a person becomes less demanding of the material benefits.

However, the results, which we have received, state on extremely low levels of the social saturation, laced with loneliness and social isolation. Basically, it refers to the Slovak pensioners, to men and women in equal measure. The Russian pensioners show high level of social saturation, which may be a result of the fact, that in comparison to the Slovak pensioners, they don't live separately (they live with the children, or with a partner). In Slovakia, since relatively long ago, the process of

purchasing separate residential property by adult children has been running, and the tendency of multigeneration residence has been coming to naught even in the conditions of a village. The level of satisfaction with such situation is registered in about twenty percent of the respondents. It appears challenging to focus on personal objectives and plans for the future in the situation, when the calmness and internal psychological comfort are absent. We can suppose, that exactly those respondents, who intentionally execute a specific type of activity (about 20% of the respondents), reach the psychological comfort easier, capable to determine and optimistically evaluate their future life outlook.

With the help of the separate questionnaire components descriptive analysis we managed to show those routine life situations, which the pensioners live through, and which, using the terminology of Kulikov, L.V., render psychical and social discomfort to their daily life, more precisely. The study results show, which specific aspects shall become the basis of the pensioner psychological and pedagogical assistance program development.

The data, provided in the article, is a part of the study, being executed at the moment. We are convinced, that its results will be the stimulating resource for the public in relation to the mean, through which this life period, which is a beautiful one, as we hope, quality is endured in the today's digital epoch.

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