

In the face of an ageing population, contemporary society faces many challenges that have a direct impact on demographic structure and social and economic policy. The ageing of society gives rise to many problems, one of the most important being the social exclusion of older people. Social exclusion, understood as the process of marginalisation of individuals or groups, leads to a reduction in their active participation in social life. In the case of senior citizens, this problem manifests itself in particular through social isolation, difficulties in accessing health and social services, and age-related discrimination. In her considerations, the author focused on the perspective of senior citizens on the problem of social exclusion. The subject of the study was therefore the phenomenon of social exclusion among seniors. The aim of the study was to explore the problem of social exclusion in the opinion of seniors. Three research questions were posed:

- To what extent can social exclusion increase stress related to the ageing process, which translates into accelerated development of health pathologies?

Social exclusion and loneliness among seniors increase the stress associated with ageing, leading to health problems, including depression and anxiety. Lack of emotional support makes older people feel overwhelmed by everyday challenges and reluctant to engage in activities that could improve their well-being. Prolonged loneliness has a negative impact on health, lowering immunity and increasing the risk of chronic diseases. Social isolation also leads to a decline in self-esteem, which in the long term can lead to a spiral of loneliness that is difficult to escape. Social support is key to improving the quality of life of seniors.

- To what extent does the social exclusion of older people affect younger generations and the loss of valuable life experiences?

In response to this question, it was emphasised that the lack of intergenerational interaction has serious consequences for individuals and society. Older people are often viewed negatively, leading to isolation and cultural impoverishment. The problem of social exclusion of older people, in the opinion of seniors, is that younger generations do not benefit from their experience, knowledge and traditions. Intergenerational dialogue is key to building empathy and understanding, allowing barriers to be broken down and the values of both sides to be respected.

- To what extent are cultural differences a decisive factor in the context of social exclusion among senior citizens?

The dialogue revealed that society harbours both negative stereotypes about old age and positive attitudes promoting respect for senior citizens. Research shows that many older people perceive positive emotions to dominate in their interactions with younger people. It is crucial to break down harmful stereotypes, recognise the value that senior citizens bring to society, and acknowledge them as partners in dialogue and mentors. Mutual understanding and openness between generations are essential for building healthy relationships and education. Such interaction not only enriches the lives of individuals, but also has a positive impact on society as a whole, promoting integration and cooperation between generations and creating a more sustainable community.

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in the research on social exclusion among seniors. The research was based on a multiple case study method, and the technique chosen in the first phase was a questionnaire survey, followed by informal individual interviews. This method of conducting interviews allowed participants to express themselves and explore their personal spirituality in greater depth. The research was conducted among senior citizens receiving various forms of institutional support. The first phase of the project involved respondents, followed by ten narrators who engaged in a lively and open dialogue. Research and analysis of the phenomenon of social exclusion of senior citizens has revealed how important their opinion is. Senior citizens want to be seen as active participants in social life, not just as people who need care. They express the need to have a say in the forms of

support they receive, emphasising the importance of autonomy and dignity. The problem of social exclusion of older people in the opinion of senior citizens

They demand appropriate conditions for functioning and flexible institutions and programmes that are tailored to their individual needs. Senior citizens want to be equal partners in decisions affecting their lives and to participate in the local community, developing their passions and social relationships.

Perceiving seniors as active contributors to the community counteracts their marginalisation and enriches the lives of society as a whole by drawing on their experience and wisdom. Mutual understanding and respect for the needs of different age groups can contribute to a more integrated and equitable society.