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## **Activity Models in Late Adulthood. Educational Context**

<http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/PBE.2020.026>

### **Abstract**

*Activity* contained in the title is considered throughout the article as the context of learning in the course of everyday life.

Purpose: To compare the level in which three different sets of independent variables (three models) predict activity of elderly people in areas concerning: 1. Spirituality/Religion, 2. External world and 3. Themselves. The elements of *Model 1*. are selected demographic variables and ‘Satisfaction with life’, ‘Feelings of loneliness’ and ‘Health problems’. *Model 2*. extends this set by the variable ‘Wisdom’. *Model 3*. adds the variable ‘Subjective definitions of successful ageing’.

Method: Hierarchical regression analysis was used. Participants: 192 older adults from Poland, aged 60–92.

Results: Irrespective of the type of activity, the higher engagement of an elder person is accompanied by the increase of satisfaction with life. In the presented models, only one of the four analysed dimensions of wisdom appear to be essential – affective wisdom. Its level increases along with the engagement in building a harmony with the surrounding world and the development of one’s own spirituality. Formal education is a very important element of activity in the area of learning harmony with oneself: it has a slightly lower, but statistically significant importance, in the models of activity directed to the external world, and it has no significance in models based on spiritual/religious activity.

Conclusions: *Model 1*. best explains activity in the area of learning harmony with ourselves. Additional variables considered in models 2 and 3 do not contribute to the improvement of statistics regarding the adjustment of the regression model. The situation is different in the

case of spiritual/religious activity. *Model 3*. significantly statistically improves the precision of predicting the level of this type of activity. *Model 2*. seems to be most appropriate when it comes to prognosis of activity directed to the external world.

**Key words:** active ageing, successful ageing, learning in late adulthood, older people, ageing.

## The term 'active ageing'

In educational discourses about the old age or discussions about gerontology, 'activity' has been a basic term for many years. In the middle of the last century, for the enthusiasts of *the activity theory* (Havighurst, 1963), the activity of elderly people was a key to a successful life. In a biomedical model of Rowe and Kahn (1998), which is popular also nowadays, the active engagement in life was one of the dimensions of successful ageing. At present, when considering population ageing, there are numerous references to the concept of active ageing in scientific literature. It is understood as "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age" (WHO, 2002, p. 12). In Europe, popularisation of *active ageing* is the political response to the challenges of population ageing (Zaidi & Zolyomi, 2011; Zaidi et al., 2017). Within the frameworks of this approach, organised activities are implemented aimed at encouraging activity of elderly people (in Poland: Rządowy Program na rzecz Aktywności Społecznej Osób Starszych na lata 2014–2020 [*Government Programme for the Social Participation of Senior Citizens (ASOS) 2014–2020*]) underlying the connection between activity and human health (WHO, 2002). In Europe, extensive research has been carried out regarding the connection of an active lifestyle with longevity, satisfaction with life, life quality, the so-called successful ageing or social capital. The example is the project SHARE *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe* (Rebello & Pereira, 2014; Vozikaki et al., 2016; Lee, 2018; Kalbarczyk-Stęclik & Mackiewicz-Lyziak, 2019).

However, in recent years there have been more critical views on the idealization of the *active ageing* and *successful ageing* concepts (Katz, 2000; Dillaway & Byrnes, 2009; Martinson & Berridge, 2015). It is noticed that the intention to popularise active ageing by decision-makers or people who carry out research about the old age can have an affect different than intended. Too much focus on popularisation of this concept is connected with the risk that the society will start to perceive being active as obligatory, and some deficits of ageing may be falsely treated as a consequence of lack of activity of individuals

(identified with being lazy. In a result, the concept may have association with ageism and may lead to the exclusion of people with health problems, the oldest ones, or those with low economic status (Katz, 2000; Boudiny, 2013). Authors who carry out a polemic with the discussed approach notice that the discourse regarding this topic is carried out in a narrow economic and productivity perspective. In this regard, an *active old age* means a *productive old age*, which is useful for society and directed to maintaining health for as long as possible. Such consideration of elderly people activity is too narrow as it omits some important dimensions of an elder person's life.

The term *active ageing* is not unambiguously understood in literature. It is elusive. It is also not clear what types of activity are covered by this term and what is the required level of engagement from an individual so that we may talk about benefits from being active (Foster & Walker, 2015). Quite little attention has been paid so far to considering the activity from the point of view of elderly people whilst types of activities which can be beneficial and bring satisfaction to young people are not necessarily beneficial and satisfactory for seniors. Little attention has been paid to research into the reasons for seniors' involvement in their activities.

### **Activity and learning in late adulthood**

Activity in late adulthood has various meanings in different theories and approach in terms of gerontology. It is considered as a factor which influences regularities or irregularities of development changes, and other times as the development factor (theory of activity, disengagement theory), development goal (humanistic theories), development context (spirituality development), development effect (competence theory, subculture theory) (Niewiedział, 2008). In this article, activity is considered within the context of learning by people. Activity is associated with creating one's own educational environment (creating conditions for one's own learning) in the course of every-day experiences. I mean both the objective environment (material) as well as the subjective one (existing in our consciousness). Being active, we may influence the shape of such environment. It is not only "given" but also is a "challenge" for individuals (Jankowski, 2012). Examples of elderly people learning can be sought in all dimensions of human activity. In Polish andragogics it is underlined that the areas of informal education of an adult are compliant with the areas of its life activity (Kargul, 2005). Biographic research area is of significance, where education of elderly people is located in their everyday life (Czerniawska, 2000; 2007;

Halicki, 2010). Apart from works presenting an approach modelled on the idea of active ageing, there are numerous studies on spiritual development (Dubas, 2000; Semków, 2001; Fabiś, 2015).

The way every day activity of an individual looks like depends on many factors. They include, amongst others, interests, problems related to current life situation, crisis situation, beliefs, needs, dreams. I assume, same as Dubas (2016), that activity can have 1. external character, i.e. it can be directly observed by external viewers. It is then directed to external surrounding of a person, embodying the presence of a person in such surrounding. 2. Internal character, i.e. it is connected with being reflective, with thoughts and emotions of a person, with spiritual development.

Basically, activity of every person reflects his life situation. Every person strives to act in a routine way, repeatedly, in a way that once turned to be successful. A person learns and acts according to developed models. It is possible for as long as a person is able to see the structure of the world as a constant and predictable (Schutz & Luckman, 1974). However, stability and order do not last forever. In difficult and crisis situations, activity of a person is directed to the development of new coping methods (Mezirow, 1991; Jarvis, 2012b). Activity is permanently bound to learning by people. Learning can occur not only in a cognitive area, but in emotional and action as well. It may be rational, intuitive (non-rational), as well as irrational (Jarvis, 2012b). In a result of proactive or reactive learning, people undergo constant transformation. Learning in the course of every-day life is pragmatic: a person acts and learns by acting (Jarvis, 2012b). Being active, one learns competences needed to overcome difficulties of everyday life, they may influence the quality of relations with other people, thus the quality of own life and life satisfaction. The feeling of life satisfaction may also -in turn- influence the level of person activity. According to Jarvis (2011), learning in the period of late adulthood is the source of practical wisdom, which is based on life experience. It seems that the main elements influencing the feeling of harmony of a person with himself/herself and the external world is the possibility to take actions compliant with our own image of a good life.

We can assume that the way a person creates conditions for own activity is connected with age, health condition, the presence of crisis situation in recent years and the support one feels from others. Along with the age, the ability to redefine a successful ageing in the categories of spirituality increases (Tornstam, 2011). In late adulthood an important area of learning is also generativity (Sheldon & Kasser, 2001; Zucker et al., 2002). The level of activity of elderly people in these two areas can therefore be suspected to correlate positively with

wellbeing. Test results show that for example, participation in religious practices is connected with higher level of social integration, social support and lower level of loneliness (Rote et al., 2012). On the other hand, research amongst middle-age subjects has shown that generative activities are connected with life satisfaction (Grossbaum & Bates, 2002).

### **The image of a good life (subjective definitions of successful ageing)**

Definitions of successful ageing formulated by elderly people (common concepts of successful old age) differ from those that dominate in public and political discourses (Strawbridge et al., 2002; Halicki, 2010; Cernin et al., 2011). Research conducted by Jeste et al. (2010) showed that psychological and social criteria are of large significance for others. Based on comparative research carried out within the area of Poland amongst young and older people, it can be stated that together with age, the tendency to define positive ageing in categories compliant with biomedical model of Rowe and Kahn decreases (Kozerska, 2018).

### **Wisdom**

Monika Adrejt differentiates intellectual knowledge from wisdom-related knowledge. The second type is “a practical knowledge of how to live a good life” (Ardelt, 2000b, p. 785). It is the knowledge we do not obtain intentionally. We obtain it by being active in everyday life. Ardelt (2003), based on the work of Clayton and Birren (1980) defines wisdom as a complex set of features which create the *Cognitive, Affective and Reflective* component. All three dimensions are essential for the existence of wisdom. *Cognitive* dimension regards the understanding of phenomena and events. It covers, amongst others, knowledge on positive and negative aspects of a human nature. *Cognitive* dimension directly depends on *Reflective* dimension. Deepened understanding is possible thanks to reflective thinking and analysis of phenomena from different perspectives.

On the other hand, *Affective* dimension assumes the presence of positive emotions and behaviours towards other people. Sympathising and compassion are significant in this regard. All three dimensions are essential for the existence of wisdom. Research carried out in Poland using Polish three-dimensional adaptation of the wisdom scale (Steuden et al., 2016) suggest additional division of *Reflective* dimension to two independent factors – *Self-Awareness* and *Empathic*.

Conceptualization of wisdom presented by Ardel is compatible with Eriksons' theory of psycho-social development. Erikson's theory (1982) states that wisdom is connected with providing a positive solution to the crisis of integrity vs. despair that is experienced by people at old age. Its manifestation is integrity and the associated sense of meaning in one's own life, acceptance of both life and the perspective of one's own death. It is connected with crossing the egoistic perspective for other people. The research shows that wisdom is an important prognostic of good ageing, irrespective of objective life conditions (Ardelt, 2000a). Case studies among elderly people which obtained high results on the wisdom scale (Ardelt, 2008) showed that wisdom coexists together with a commitment to serve others, to work undertaken over development of our own patience and learning humility. Moreover, people of high wisdom were active within the area of learning self-discipline, they used reflection to learn from their own experiences, worked on their own spiritual development, e.g. by practising prayer. The analyses showed that the aforesaid actions lead to lowering the ego and lead to transcendence which can be seen in altruism and common love.

### **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of the research is to compare the level in which three different sets of independent variables (three models) allow us to predict activity of elderly people in areas concerning: 1. Spirituality/Religiosity, 2. External world and 3. Themselves.

### **Sample**

The study covered 192 older adults. The research has been carried out in Poland (the northern areas of the Silesian Voivodeship) in 2019. The age of participants: from 60 to 92 years old. Average age:  $M = 70.1$  years old,  $SD = 7.7$ . Sex: 140 women, 48 men, 4 people did not respond to the question about the sex. 94 individuals live in the city, 92 live in the countryside, 6 did not respond to the question regarding their place of residence.

### **Method**

The method of data collection used in the research regarding activity undertaken by seniors was the categorized interview. In the event of independent variables testing and categorized interview as data collection methods were applied.

## Measures

- Questionnaire for the measurement of activity

The authorship questionnaire is composed of 31 items and is divided to three parts. Each part describes different type of activity of an elder person: Part 1. Activity directed to creating educational environment within the area of religious spirituality. Items examples: *I often pray or take my time to meditate; I am engaged in activities for religious community;* Part 2. Activity directed to pursuing harmony with ourselves. Items examples: *I have a hobby, which requires continuous knowledge deepening; I undertake some physical activity (e.g. gymnastics, riding a bike, walking, swimming, etc.)* Part 3. Activity directed to the external world. Items examples: *I often share my own experiences with younger people; I look after a person who needs being taken care of (e.g. grandchild, person from the family or from outside the family); I take care of my garden.*

Results interpretation: high values on the highlighted scales show that the individuals perceive themselves as highly active in the highlighted areas.

Cronbach's alpha for all 31 items of the questionnaire is 0.87. For the separated sub-scales, it is appropriately: 1) 0.89; 2) 0.79; 3) 0.81.

- De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale

Polish adaptation: Grygiel, Humenny, Rębisz, Świtaj, Sikorska (2013).

The tool is composed of 11 statements. 6 items cover negative statements, which describe the lack of satisfaction from social contacts, and the remaining 5 are positive statements, which measure satisfaction connected with interpersonal relations. The higher the end result, the less lonely the subject is.

- SWLS – Satisfaction with Life Scale

Test authors: E. Diener, R. A. Emmons, R. J. Larson, S. Griffin. Author of Polish adaptation: Zygfryd Juczyński (2011).

The scale is composed on 5 statements. The subject assesses what is the level of reference of each statement to their life. The result of the measurement is the coefficient of satisfaction with life.

- Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale

In the research Polish adaptation of Three-Dimensional Wisdom Scale by Monika Ardel was used (Steuden et al., 2016). The scale is composed of 39 items, which create 4 dimensions: Cognitive, Affective, Self-Awareness and Empathic. The research adopted a four-factor version of Polish authors.

- The questionnaire for the assessment of a subjective definition of a successful ageing

The authorship questionnaire is composed of three parts. Each part describes different image of an elder person. Each part is composed of 6 items. The task of study subjects is imagining a fully happy elder person and defining in what extent such person is described by presented statements. Part 1. The questionnaire covers the statements which describe a person open to a spiritual reality, a religious person who surrounds others with love. Items examples: *He/she feels the love of the Higher Being (God); He/she surrounds others with love.* Part 2. Describes a person who lives in a harmony with external environment, engaged in social relations. Items examples: *He/she is a person valued in a society he/she lives in; He/she has a loving family;* Part 3. Describes a person who lives in a harmony with oneself, living in compliance with his/her own nature, caring about fulfilment his/her own needs, in peace with what he/she has experienced so far. Items examples: *He/she is aware that he/she has fulfilled own life purposes so far. He/she has a feeling of living in compliance with own nature.*

Cronbach's alpha for individual parts of the questionnaire: Part 1.  $\alpha=0.86$ . Part 2.  $\alpha=0.78$ ; Part 3.  $\alpha=0.84$ .

## Results

Analyses are conducted individually for three areas of activity. In each case, relations between variables are verified with a hierarchical regression analysis of taking into consideration the three variants (models). In **Model 1**, the relation between dependent variable and the set of selected socio-demographic variables, satisfaction with life, lack of the feeling of loneliness and experiencing health problems is analysed. These are the variables that were often the object of scientist interest in the context of active or successful ageing (compare e.g. SHARE project). **Model 2**, extends this set by four dimensions of the variable *Wisdom*. **Model 3**, additionally includes three variables which are the dimensions of a *Subjective definition of successful ageing*.

Results presented in the table 1, indicate that activity in the area of spirituality is statistically significantly determined by the set of variables considered in the Model 1. The increase of activity level in the area of spiritual activity is higher along with greater satisfaction with life. Moreover, high activity in this area is favoured by recent health problems and being a woman. The coefficient of multidimensional correlation indicates a moderate linear relationship between dependent variable and this set of independent variables ( $R=0.43$ ). Model 1, explains 15% of volatility of dependant variable. Adding four dimensions of the variable *Wisdom* to the model slightly increased these coefficients ( $R=0.47$ ,



adjusted  $R^2=0.17$ ), but the change is not statistically significant. The increase in the level in the area of spiritual activity is statistically determined by the high level of affective wisdom. Affective wisdom is defined as a person's ability to compassion and empathy, and is associated with the desire to transcend ego-centric tendencies. Adding the variable *Subjective definition of a good old age (SADef)* to the analyses made significant changes in the parameters of the regression model. The coefficient of multiple regression increased ( $R=0.73$ ), and the model which considers new variables, explains 54% of volatility of dependent variable (adjusted  $R^2=0.54$ ). The highest importance for the increase of dependent variable has a belief of an individual that a happy person is a person open to spiritual reality, religious person, who surrounds others with love. This variable enters into the model of regression with a coefficient  $\beta=0.66$ . At the same time, the high level of activity in the spiritual and religious area is favoured by the belief that living in a harmony with external environment, engagement in social relations, in creating external environment have small significance in being a happy person.

Table 1. The model of a hierarchical regression analysis for prediction *Activities in the area of religious spirituality* (N=192)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE B	Beta ( $\beta$ )	B	SE B	Beta ( $\beta$ )	B	SE B	Beta ( $\beta$ )
(Constant)	31.7	9.96		18.85	11.8		23.90	9.94	
Loneliness	0.02	0.058	0.03			0.06	0.027	0.05	0.04
Satisfaction with life	0.36	0.11	<b>0.23**</b>	0.26	0.13	<b>0.16*</b>	0.25	0.11	<b>0.16**</b>
Health problems	-4.3	1.46	<b>-0.2**</b>	-2.20	1.54	-0.11	-2.68	1.21	<b>-0.13**</b>
Age	0.01	0.1	0.03	0.01	0.10	0.01	-0.16	0.08	<b>-0.13*</b>
Place of residency	-2.38	1.51	-0.12	-2.98	1.60	<b>-0.15*</b>	-3.14	1.26	<b>-0.16**</b>
Sex	-4.65	1.67	<b>-0.2**</b>	-3.41	1.76	<b>-0.14*</b>	-0.74	1.40	-0.03
Education	-1.28	1.56	-0.06	-1.10	1.61	-0.06	-0.09	1.27	-0.00
Wisdom (Cognitive Dimension)				-2.06	1.79	-0.13	-1.21	1.41	-0.08
Wisdom (Affective Dimension)				3.84	1.82	<b>0.21**</b>	3.36	1.43	<b>0.18**</b>
Wisdom (Self-Awareness Dimension)				-0.99	1.35	-0.08	-1.05	1.07	-0.09
Wisdom (Empathic Dimension)				1.44	1.01	0.13	0.49	0.79	0.05

Table 1. The model of a hierarchical regression analysis for prediction *Activities in the area of religious spirituality* (N=192)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE B	Beta (β)	B	SE B	Beta (β)	B	SE B	Beta (β)
SADef: Opening to a spiritual reality							0.92	0.10	<b>0.66**</b>
SADef: Harmony with external environment							-0.40	0.14	<b>-0.23**</b>
SADef: Harmony with oneself							-0.19	0.14	-0.11
<b>R</b>	0.43			0.47			0.73		
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.15			0.17			0.54		
<b>F</b>	5.32**			3.80**			11.5**		

Note: Sex: 1=woman, 2=man; place of residency: city=1, countryside=2; education: lower=1 (basic, vocational); higher=2 (medium, higher); Health problems: yes=1, no=2. \*\* p<0,05, \* p<0,1

Source: Author's research.

Table 2. presents results of activity aimed at achieving harmony with the external world. This area covers actions undertaken for others, general behaviour aimed at care for younger generation, care for environment, undertaking actions aimed at being independent person who does not take help from others. Model 1. explains 21% variance in the dependent variable; multi-dimensional correlation coefficient is R=0.49. Most important for taking such activity is life satisfaction. The higher it is, the higher activity of elder person within the area of learning harmony with the external world. The second essential factor is age (the lower it is, the higher activity). Adding the variable *Wisdom* to the model increased (slightly) the percentage of explained variance to 22%, revealing the importance of wisdom in the affective dimension at the same time. *Subjective definitions of good old age* added to the set of independent variables in the Model 3. turn to be of no importance for taking activities by older people aimed at the external world. The strength of belief in the importance of actions directed to the external world for good old age has thus no relation with the strength of engagement in actions one actually undertakes. The group of people engaged in this area of activity include people who believe that such activity favours the feeling of happiness in life, as well as those who do not have such belief. Analysing Model 3, we may state that the higher activity directed to the achievement of harmony with the external world, the younger and the more satisfied

with life is examined person” It is more often a man, rather of high (medium or higher) education, characterized with higher level of affective wisdom. Correlation coefficient for the model is  $R=0.56$ .

Table 2. The model of a hierarchical regression analysis for prediction *Activities in the area of learning harmony with external world* (N=192)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE B	Beta (β)	B	SE B	Beta (β)	B	SE B	Beta (β)
(Constant)	74.1	14.02		53.6	17.07		35.12	18.42	
Loneliness	0.12	0.08	0.1	0.15	0.09	0.13	0.06	0.09	0.05
Satisfaction with life	0.70	0.16	<b>0.31**</b>	0.5	0.19	0.21**	0.38	0.19	0.16*
Health problems	-2.21	2.06	-0.08	-0.63	2.23	-0.02	-0.35	2.22	-0.01
Age	-0.57	0.14	<b>-0.29**</b>	-0.46	0.14	-0.25**	-0.49	0.15	-0.28**
Place of residency	2.84	2.10	0.1	2.08	2.3	0.07	3.06	2.31	0.1
Sex	2.15	2.34	0.06	5.31	2.52	0.16**	6.26	2.53	0.19**
Education	4.13	2.2	0.14	4.73	2.33	0.16**	4.43	2.33	0.15*
Wisdom (Cognitive Dimension)				-4.42	2.59	-0.18*	-4.2	2.6	-0.18
Wisdom (Affective Dimension)				0.04	0.18	<b>0.19**</b>	4.48	2.64	<b>0.16*</b>
Wisdom (Self-Awareness Dimension)				-0.1	1.95	-0.01	0.32	1.96	0.02
Wisdom (Empathic Dimension)				1.42	1.45	0.09	1.25	1.45	0.08
SADef: Opening to a spiritual reality							0.16	0.19	0.07
SADef: Harmony with external environment							0.22	0.26	0.08
SADef: Harmony with oneself							0.34	0.26	0.14
<b>R</b>	0.49			0.53			0.56		
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.21			0.22			0.25		
<b>F</b>	<b>7.15**</b>			<b>4.8**</b>			<b>4.45**</b>		

Note: Sex: 1 = woman, 2 = man; place of residency: city = 1, countryside = 2; education: lower = 1 (basic, vocational); higher = 2 (medium, higher); Health problems: yes = 1, no = 2.

\*\*  $p < 0,05$ , \*  $p < 0,1$

Source: Author's research.

Activity in the area of learning harmony with ourselves regards such issues as having a hobby, deepening knowledge on a healthy lifestyle, caring for health, physical activity, artistic activity and showing interest in art, reading, tourism.

Table 3. The model of a hierarchical regression analysis for prediction *Activities in the area of learning harmony with ourselves* (N=192)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE B	Beta (β)	B	SE B	Beta (β)	B	SE B	Beta (β)
(Constant)	28.05	9.9		22.52	12.3		15.99	13.33	
Loneliness	-0.07	0.06	-0.08	-0.02	0.07	-0.02	-0.05	0.07	-0.05
Satisfaction with life	0.58	0.12	<b>0.34**</b>	0.46	0.14	<b>0.27**</b>	0.39	0.14	<b>0.22**</b>
Health problems	0.39	1.46	0.02	0.81	1.62	0.04	0.85	1.63	0.04
Age	-0.23	0.1	<b>-0.15**</b>	-0.18	0.11	<b>-0.12*</b>	-0.21	0.11	<b>-0.15*</b>
Place of residency	-1.61	1.5	-0.07	-1.03	1.69	-0.04	-0.82	1.72	-0.03
Sex	-2.03	1.65	-0.08	-1.74	1.82	-0.07	-1.36	1.86	-0.05
Education	8.75	1.57	<b>0.38**</b>	9.48	1.71	<b>0.42**</b>	9.39	1.74	<b>0.41**</b>
Wisdom (Cognitive Dimension)				-1.95	1.88	-0.1	-2.22	1.91	-0.12
Wisdom (Affective Dimension)				0.55	1.92	0.03	-0.1	1.95	0.00
Wisdom (Self-Awarness Dimension)				-0.04	1.42	-0.00	0.41	1.44	0.03
Wisdom (Empathic Dimension)				0.63	1.05	0.05	0.56	1.07	0.05
SADef: Opening to a spiritual reality							0.13	0.14	0.08
SADef: Harmony with external environment							0.07	0.19	0.04
SADef: Harmony with oneself							0.18	0.19	0.09
<b>R</b>	0.56			0.55			0.57		
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.29			0.26			0.27		
<b>F</b>	<b>11.1**</b>			<b>5.76**</b>			<b>4.96**</b>		

Note: Sex: 1 = woman, 2 = man; place of residency: city = 1, countryside = 2; education: lower = 1 (basic, vocational); higher = 2 (medium, higher); Health problems: yes = 1, no = 2.

\*\* p < 0,05, \* p < 0,1

Source: Author's research.

Analysing results in table 3., we can see that extending the Model 1. by additional variables has no influence on the model quality. Each of the three models explains only as much as nearly 30% of variance. *Wisdom* and *Subjective definition of good old age* are not significant predictors of a dependent variable. In the event of activity within the area of learning the harmony with ourselves, education is of main importance. Higher education favours better engagement in taken activities in this area. Younger people with higher *Satisfaction with life* are more active.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

Conceptualizing the term of a learning person, Jarvis (2006, 2012a) underlines that learning is of existential nature. It is “the process of being in the world”, a part of the life process, a constant process of “becoming a person”. Increasing the scope of our experiences, learning causes our constant transformation. Human-being is an incomplete project until death, constantly engaged in learning for the whole life. The proof of such engagement (its indicator) is its activity. In the article three selected types of activity considering their conditioning have been analysed.

Activity within the learning area of harmony with oneself can be interpreted in a way that is consistent with the concept of activity promoted in the media. It is directed on learning a healthy lifestyle, constant improvement of ourselves, being amongst elements of high culture, life compliant with our own nature so that we can delay any traces of ageing. Most important of three statistically essential predictors is the level of formal education. This result is not a surprise. Needs realised as a result of taking activities in this area have been imprinted in subjects during formal education. High level of activity is largely a realization of assumptions of biomedical model of *successful ageing*. (Rowe & Kahn, 1998). This type of activity is for example promoted within frameworks of activities of The University of Third Age (Borczyk-Założona, 2014). According to critics of biomedical concept, individuals who have better social and material position, have better chance for the execution of the model assumptions or participation in educational initiatives (Dillaway & Byrnes, 2009; Formosa, 2012; Rubinstein & Medeiros, 2015), which in fact has the connection with formal education. The polemics also notice that this is a proposition for people without health problems (Peterson & Martin, 2015) as the title *success* in this model

means the longest possible life free from diseases and disabilities. The lower the age of an elderly person, the greater the chance to experience this *success*. Two other predictors in the area of learning the harmony with ourselves is the age (the younger the person, the higher level of activity) and satisfaction with life (the higher it is, the higher activity). They are present in all three analysed models of activity directed to ourselves.

Recent experience of health problems emerged as an essential predictor in model regarding spiritual/religious activity. Activity in this area is more probable in the case of women who experience such problems. Thus, active people, who did not achieve *success* in biomedical terms, direct their attention to spiritual areas. The higher affective wisdom they present (the more they can sympathize and feel the empathy, to cross egocentric tendencies), the more probable it is that they will engage in this area.

Being a man favours engagement in the area directed to external world. The higher his affective wisdom is and the higher level of his formal education, the more likely he is to care about selected elements of the external world. Tests regarding informal learning of persons engaged in activity directed to the external world show that the connection between this type of activity and affective wisdom is not one-way only. It is not only the high level of affective wisdom that influences high level of activity, but there is also a reverse dependence – taking up activity influences development (learning) of wisdom. The impact of engagement to the increase of affective wisdom is revealed for example in research regarding volunteering jobs by seniors (Piercy et al., 2011). In the effect of activity directed to the external world, elder people feel benefits from extended social network, they feel they learn to sympathize with others and learn empathy, which is accompanied by rejecting materialism and finding the existential sense in helping others. Research conducted amongst individuals engaged in political organisations, volunteering jobs, Universities of the Third Age (Villar et al., 2019) indicate such effects of informal learning experienced by elder people as: the increase of the ability of understanding and appreciating ourselves, the improvement of managing our emotions, experiencing the feeling of being useful and our personal value, change or enhancement of personal values, and even redefining our life philosophy. It may then influence the assessment of our life situation. This is how we may explain the connection between the engagement directed to the external world and life satisfaction that we obtained from the conducted analysis.

The predictor of religious/spiritual activity in Model 1. and 2. is being a woman. Considering more variables (Model 3), sex turns to be a non-significant variable, whilst the opening to spiritual activity, the belief that spiritual activity is the source of happiness is an important predictor. An essential predictor in models of religious activity is experiencing health problems. This kind of experience can be treated as the example of disjuncture (Jarvis, 2012b). Disjuncture is a kind of dissonance between what we expect in life and what we actually experience. According to Jarvis, the attempts to deal with disjuncture are the main drive of activity being the source of learning by people. Disjuncture may occur both in cognitive dimension as well as in emotional and action dimension. The result of learning is wisdom which cannot be taught. It is obvious for Jarvis that it can be obtained through learning based on our own experiences. In the described model, the affective wisdom is an essential predictor. Negative life experiences may have connection with the development of gerotranscendence which regards spirituality and search for the sense in later years of life, the increase of reflectiveness. Research carried out amongst elderly people suggests the influence of difficult life events on the development of a cosmic dimension of gerotranscendence (Read et al., 2014). It is connected with the change of perception about our place in the world. Cosmic (spiritual) dimension covers redefinition of time, the feeling of connection with previous and future generations, lowering fear of death, a redefinition of the perception of life, and death. Research presented in this article on the increase of spiritual and religious activity of people with health problems can be in some sense the confirmation of regularity Read et al. observed. On the other hand, other research shows a positive correlation between life satisfaction and the increase of gerotranscendence in cosmic dimension (Tornstam, 1994, 2003). These results are compliant with dependences obtained in this research. They also explain why these dependences occur.

In each analysed activity model, which covers various independent variables, life satisfaction is a significant predictor. Life satisfaction increases along with the increase of engagement in activities both within the field of religion, the area directed to the external world, as well as in the area directed to ourselves. However, the direction of this relationship is not clear. Does the activity influence life satisfaction, or maybe people who are satisfied with their lives are more willing to engage in various activities? From the point of view of institutional education, we may therefore ask a question if it is enough to encourage seniors to being active (“activate them”) within the frameworks of a selected area to increase their life satisfaction. Or maybe it is the other way around – a minimum

level of life satisfaction is required, which conditions activities and gives the opportunity for educators to “activate” elderly people. Another important predictor in all analysed areas of activity is age. Activity in all three analysed areas is higher for younger subjects.

## Conclusion

*Active ageing* in the presented research is understood more broadly than in public and political debates or scientific discourses, which assume biomedical concept of good old age as the basis for analyses. This term is presented more broadly broader herein. It covers not only activities of productive value for society, but also these of importance for resilience of elderly person; not only external activity, but also the internal one (including: related to spirituality).

The results prove that irrespective of the type of activity, the higher engagement of an elder person is accompanied by the increase of the feeling of life satisfaction. In the presented models, only one of the four analysed wisdom dimensions appears to be essential – affective wisdom. Its level increases along with the engagement in building a harmony with the surrounding world and the development of one’s own spirituality. Formal education is a very important element of the activity models directed on learning harmony with oneself; it has a slightly lower, but statistically significant importance, in the models of activity directed to the external world. However, it has no significance in models based on spiritual/religious activity.

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