

## Study of the Level of Youth Readiness for Old Age Changes

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### ABSTRACT

The society is aging and as a result of it, the psychological well-being of the elderly, as well as well-being of a society as a whole becomes even more important. In some ways, there is a sense of fear towards later stages of life and an unwillingness to understand and accept positive aspects of aging. Scientists suggest solving this problem through the development of intergenerational interaction between generations; in the process representatives of different generation cohorts start forming tolerant attitudes towards each other through the exchange of experience. Readiness for this kind of interactions is an integral characteristic that determines the individual's awareness of the fact of own aging and more tolerant attitude towards it. The absence of fear of the inevitable physiological, social, personal-psychological and professional changes happening with aging can improve psychological well-being at any age. The current paper presents the results of an empirical study in which we assessed the readiness of 100 young people towards senior age changes (Azerbaijan, Baku; 50 males, 50 females; the age range from 18 to 25; Mage=20.73 years, SD age=1.91). The materials for analysis were the data of a questionnaire survey conducted at the ASPU (Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University). Results showed that the overall readiness level is in the range of an average degree of readiness to the development of age-related changes, which indicates an unruffled, tolerant attitude towards ongoing and future age changes without any acute experiences and negative emotional reactions.

**Keywords:** *Age-Related Changes, Methodology, Readiness, Old Age, Statistical Analysis, Youth.*

Each cycle of human development, called age, is accompanied by certain changes, physiological, mental, and intellectual. In addition, with the transition to a new cycle of development, the person's lifestyle is changing. Some of us take these changes as normal and do not oppose the process. For others, this is a disaster, as youth goes away: the time of serenity, even some sort of irresponsibility ends and the period of aging begins. All these events are actualized in the connection with the fact that in recent decades a so-called youth

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cult has formed, which influences the worldview of modern human, which manifests itself in the desire to preserve youthfulness as long as possible, otherwise a person may be unclaimed by the society.

Some studies (Buchman, Boyle, Wilson, Fleischman, Leurgans, & Bennett, 2009; Grundy & Sloggett, 2003; Andreas, Daniela, Michel, Delphine, & Matthias, 2016) on the problems of an old age showed that most people's expectations from an old age are weakness, decrepitude, loneliness, social uselessness etc. Many are afraid of their own helplessness.

Moreover, with retirement, people have to break down life-long habits and stereotypes that have existed for years; they have to rebuild and reform the entire way of living, which is not easy at all. All of this is may be accompanied by negative, sometimes very painful emotional experiences.

Some authors (Bodner, Palgi, & Kaveh, 2013; Wu et al., 2015; Lulia & Laus, 2017) tried to comprehend the phenomenon of attitude to age changes, in order to identify adjusting components by addressing their own aging, but there is no single concept in considering this phenomenon.

Comparative analysis of typologies presented by Ansiferova (2006), Bromley (1995), Yermolayeva (2002), Qalina and Kon (2000), Ilyin (2012), etc. showed that the general determinant of a person's choice of a specific aging strategy is his attitude to the process, which is formed not only in the late periods of ontogenesis, when old age is a fait accompli but also during earlier stages of life.

So Ansiferova (2006) identified 2 personal types of an old age:

- 1) Calmly accepting an old age. People in this category go through the need for retirement without emotional problems, preparing in advance for this event, searching for new ways of inclusion in public life, plan their future free time, experience thirst for the upbringing of a new generation and mentoring;
- 2) Negatively perceiving an old age. These people have a passive attitude towards the life, by avoiding social encirclement, alienation, narrowing of the circle of interests, loss of self-respect, developing the feeling of uselessness.

Yermolayeva (2002) built the following typology of the attitude of a person to old age:

- 1) An old man-negativist is denying of any signs of aging;
- 2) An old man-extravert is recognizing aging through external impacts and observing the changes (growing up of young people, death of relatives, novelties of social life, etc.);
- 3) An old man-introvert is the one who is experiencing aging severely: a person does not have an interest in the novelties, plunges into memories, inactive, and seeks for peace.

Attempts to analyze the ideas of an old age are reflected in the typology by Qalina and Kon (2000):

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- Active-creative old age: after retirement, people continue to participate in public life, educate young people, without feeling inferiority in social status;
- The joy of having more spare time. These old people continue self-education, focusing on active leisure time and travel. They are adapting well both socially and psychologically, but their efforts are mostly self-directed;
- Realization of being a significant part of the family (seen predominantly women). House chores and caring for grandchildren becomes an important part of socialization at old age, and this realization helps to adapt to a new social status;
- Taking care of oneself becomes the meaning of life. Older people start developing various diseases of the cardiovascular, urinary, respiratory and musculoskeletal systems, and taking care of oneself is part of a normal behavior if there is no tendency to excessive care (seen more often in men) and exaggeration of one's own actual and/or imaginary diseases;
- Aggressive old grumblers. Older people in this subgroup, according to Kon (1967), are dissatisfied with their condition; they tend to criticize everyone except themselves, make endless and often unjustified demands. According to authors, this is a subgroup of older people that most often cause public irritation and anger. It is noteworthy, that the general public's view of aging is similar to what happens to this group of people;
- Disappointed in themselves and in their own lives. This subgroup of older people includes lonely, unfortunate and unhappy people; especially those who were unable to create families by the late adulthood.

Gana, Bailly, Saada, Joulain, & Alaphilippe (2013), Gerstorf, Ram, Estabrook, Schupp, Wagner, & Lindenberger (2008) distinguish various types of attitudes towards an old age, depending on existential problems of elderly. The authors have distinguished various ways of experiencing aging:

- Psychologically none prosperous aging, which is a rejection of real life (through despair, depression, withdrawal from the reality into the past, holding society responsible for own misfortunes, domination of resentment towards others etc.).
- Dependent aging is when the main determinants in a life of an elderly person are living conditions, the well-being of close ones, and as a result of it, the person loses the feeling of assuredness, and, ultimately, responsibility for self-being.
- Successful aging includes acceptance of the finiteness of life, own life path, acceptance of responsibility for one self and happenings around, the ability to continue to live in the present with current life goals.

Slobodchikov and Isayev (2000) attempted to explain the process of choosing strategies helping to adapt to aging. They associated personal choices with stereotypes formed by public and individual opinions. Slobodchikov and Isayev (2000) emphasized that in modern society the image of the elderly is a useless person who is a burden. Many elderly people are treated according to these stereotypes and sometimes unconsciously begin to match expectations: examples are the social and professional passivity of people on retirement,

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mental processes involutes more rapidly and more negative personality changes start developing.

Ansiferova (2006), Qlukhanyuk and Qershkovich (2003), Lulia and Laus (2017) shed light on a problem of the relationship between attitudes toward old age and the personal choice of an aging. Most researchers were convinced that social attitudes toward old age have an impact on the formation of acceptance of a given age by a person. The situation gets more complicated because formed negative attitudes do not always have a real basis; they are caused by non-acquaintance of complex mechanisms and strategies of adaptation in later periods of human life, provoking fear of age-related changes.

Above mentioned problem is complex: on the one hand, people from old age group project negative social attitudes toward themselves, on the other hand, representatives of other age groups, cultivate fear of aging denying the possibility of their own well-being at old age. Researchers propose to regard the situation through the development of intergenerational interaction in between generations, through which representatives of different age cohorts work toward forming a tolerant relationship to each other.

Qlukhanyuk and Qershkovich (2003) emphasized the need for readiness to accept age related changes. The absence of fear for inevitable changes in an old age may become the basis for a positive perception of the elderly and the old age as a whole.

What is meant by readiness for age-related changes and how can it be estimated? Readiness is an integrative psychic formation to the development of age-related changes that determine the individual's awareness of the fact of his own aging and a tolerant attitude towards it, manifested by actively searching for productive strategies for adapting to this process (Qlukhanyuk & Qershkovich, 2003).

Components of the readiness for the development of age-related changes include physiological, social, personal-psychological and professional readiness (in accordance with the main aspects of aging), which take shape on three levels – cognitive (awareness of the current age related changes, knowing ways to overcome it and getting adjusted), affective (experiencing emotional attitudes toward age related changes) and motivational (active search and use of adaptation strategies to age-related changes).

The component composition of the readiness reflects the main aspects of human aging, which are traditionally are subjects of gerontology: physiological (increasing the vulnerability of the organism, aging of basic physiological systems, manifestation of external signs of aging), social (changing attitudes, changing the nature of communication, losing old ones and acquiring new social roles), personality-psychological (changes in the cognitive sphere, the appearance of a propensity to transmit experience, the vision of one's place in the age structure), professional (reducing the role of professional activities in life, mentoring, retirement).

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The main goal of the study was to investigate the views of youth on old age changes and their readiness for these changes. We did a comparative analysis of specific mechanisms and determinants of the realization of psychological readiness for the development of age-and-time related changes at various stages of the life.

### METHOD

To study the features of readiness for age-related changes, the authors Qlukhanyuk & Qershkovich (2003) developed a "Readiness for temporary changes" questionnaire. The questionnaire allows distinguishing both the general indicator of readiness for the development of age, and its components, levels, as well as structural elements, which gives a complete characterization of readiness for the development of age-time changes.

Respondents are provided with a list of 28 statements about old age-related changes. For each statement, three questions need to be answered. An answer to each question required the choice of one out of the three proposed options, respectively, reflecting the cognitive, affective and motivational levels of readiness. For each given option, a weighting factor of 2, 1, and 0 was assigned. All submitted statements (total 28) were grouped by components (total 4). In the list of statements, each component was assigned 7 statements. Evaluation of the components of readiness was carried out according to the following formulas:

#### *Readiness components:*

- 1)  $KPe + APe + MPe = Pc$  - Physiological component.
  - 2)  $KSe + ASe + MSe = Sc$  - Social component.
  - 3)  $KPere + APere + MPere = Perc$  - Personality-psychological component.
  - 4)  $KProe + AProe + MProe = Proc$  - Professional component.
- (1)

#### *Levels of readiness:*

- 1)  $KPe + KSe + KPere + KProe = Cl$  - Cognitive level.
  - 2)  $APe + ASe + APere + AProe = Al$  - Affective level.
  - 3)  $MPe + MSe + MPere + MProe = MI$  - Motivational level.
- (2)

#### *Overall readiness:*

$$Cl + Al + MI = Or \text{ - overall readiness.} \quad (3)$$

#### *Notes:*

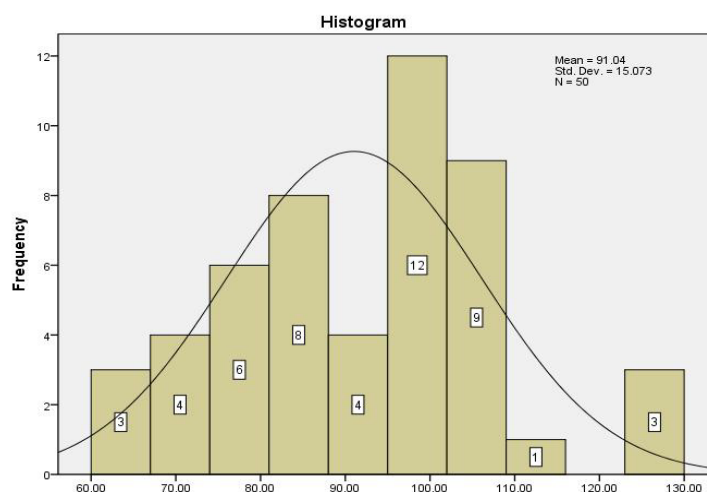
$KPe$  – cognitive level of physiological component;  $APe$  – affective level of physiological component;  $MPe$  – motivational level of physiological component;  $KSe$  – cognitive level of social component;  $ASe$  – affective level of social component;  $MSe$  – motivational level of social component;  $KPere$  – cognitive level of personality-psychological component;  $APere$  – affective level of personality-psychological component;  $MPere$  – motivational level of personality-psychological component;  $KProe$  – cognitive level of professional component;  $AProe$  – affective level of professional component;  $MProe$  – motivational level of professional component.

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Calculated values of the elements and the total indicator of readiness were compared with the range of data given in the questionnaire, which can be used to assess the degree of readiness to a development of age-related changes of each respondent. Based on the statistical analysis, we were able to determine the average readiness of all respondents ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to above-mentioned methodology, an empirical study was conducted to determine the level of readiness for the development of age-related changes. 50 students of the ASPU aged 18 to 25 took part in the study. Half were males and the other half were females. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS 23 and Excel software (Martin 2016, Thomas 2015). Readiness indicators (Or) were calculated for each respondent, according to the formulas (1-3). It is known that the most important stage in the study of socio-psychological phenomena is the systematization of results and obtaining on this basis of a summary characteristic of the whole object with the help of generalizing indicators, which is achieved by summing up and grouping the statistical material. It involves the construction of a variation series in the form of a histogram. The histogram is used to graphically display the interval variation series. Below in Fig. 1, in a histogram we are showing a range of distribution of readiness indicator



**Figure 1. The histogram shows distribution of scores of the total readiness.**

It can be seen from the histogram that most of the estimates of the overall readiness indicator fall in the range of 90-100. However, without checking the normality of the distribution of these values, it is still too early to conclude the correct average statistical estimate of the overall readiness indicator. It is known, that one of the most important and most widespread ways of the theoretical-applied plan is so-called normal distribution law. Figure 1 shows the normal distribution curve or so-called Gaussian distribution (Martin, 2016). In the theory of statistics, there are various criteria used to confirm the normality of data distribution; one of which is the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion (Martin, 2016). A computer test of the distribution normality law according to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion gave a positive result (0.037), which confirmed the normality of the sample distribution.

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A positive assessment of the normality of the distribution allowed us to calculate the arithmetic mean of the overall availability indicator for all respondents. It was 91.04 point. This value was calculated using Qlukhanyuk and Qershkovich (2003)'s method and it enters the range of average degree of a formation to the development of age-related changes.

Here we give the calculated average component composition of the readiness form:

- Physiological component of readiness (Fk) – 22.62 points;
- Social component of readiness (Sk) – 21.94 points;
- Personality-psychological component of readiness (Perc) – 21.72 points;
- The professional component of readiness (Proc) – 24.76 points.

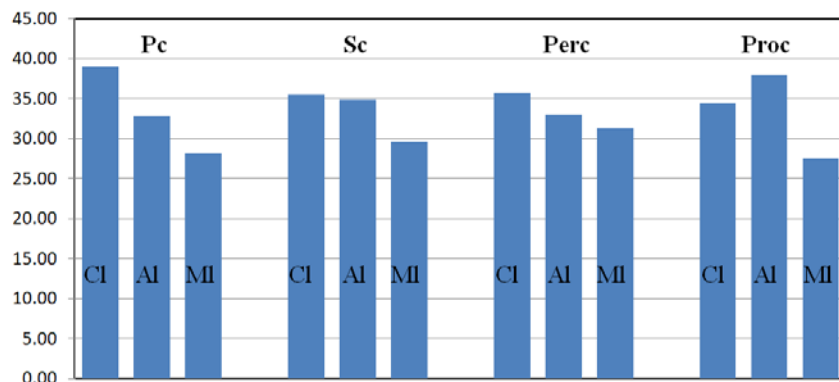
As the typology of old age is the main factor that influences the sub consciousness of youth and forms their answers according to the proposed questionnaire, it is advisable to characterize the general typology of senile age peculiar to our country. In general, judging by the typology of Ansiferova (2006), the elderly in our country should be attributed to those who calmly perceive old age. And there are certain reasons for this. Firstly, it is our state's concern for the elderly. When they retire, they receive timely enough a sufficiently high pension, which makes them independent in material terms. Another major and important factor is mutual attachment to their children, grandchildren. In our country very few nursing homes. According to our mental culture, older people stay with their children and live with them. In our country, look at it very negatively if the children give their elderly parents in nursing homes. This, in turn, solves the problem of loneliness in the old age, as the warmth and comfort of their children, grandchildren pleases the elderly and has a positive impact on their psyche. Thus, such a respectful attention to the elderly can not affect the positive respondents' answers.

The average level of overall readiness indicator allows one to judge the undifferentiated nature of readiness for age-related changes, the lack of clear ideas about the forthcoming physiological, social, personal and professional changes (Qlukhanyuk & Qershkovich, 2003). From the above diagram (Figure 1), we can see that only a small part of the respondents (8%) are in the range of a high level of readiness. For them, readiness manifests itself in an awareness and understanding of natural flow of the process and realization that manifestations of aging are unavoidable (i.e. changes in physical appearance, reduced visibility and hearing, exacerbation of various diseases), changes in social status and attitudes of others, qualitative transformations in the cognitive sphere, and withdrawal from professional activities. Readiness is characterized by a calm, tolerant attitude to the ongoing and future age-related changes without acute experiences and negative emotional reactions.

The values obtained according to the evaluation scale by Qlukhanyuk and Qershkovich (2003) are included in the range with an average degree of formation of the readiness components (15-28). It's noticeable that the average values of each component do not differ much from each other. This tells us that practically every component contributes equally to the overall readiness indicator.

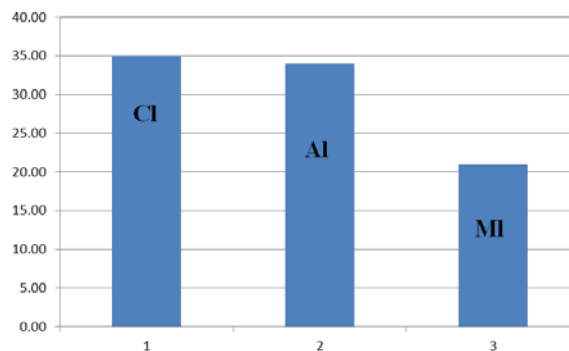
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However, it should be noted that the values of the levels that form the value of each component can differ significantly from each other. A histogram of the distribution of the levels of the components was constructed.



*Figure 2. The level of distribution by components.*

As we can see (Fig. 2), the values of the levels of each component differ from each other. We summarized the corresponding levels of each component, i.e. determined the values of CI (cognitive level), AI (affective level), MI (motivational level). Obtained results are represented in the form of a histogram (Fig. 3).



*Figure 3. The histogram of the distribution of readiness levels.*

An average indicator of the level of readiness for age-related changes can be regarded as insufficient for a tolerant attitude towards one's own aging, accepting the fact of its inevitability.

As can be seen from Figure 3, the cognitive and affective levels of both indicators are high relative to the motivational level. This means that the level of general readiness manifests itself in a clear awareness and understanding of the naturalness of aging. The motivational level of readiness for age-related changes allows a person to look for effective strategies for adapting to an old age and new living conditions. The calculated value of the motivational level suggests that respondents do not have the desire and motivation to look for productive methods to adjust to age-related changes. Many of them look at the aging process as an inevitable process.

It was interesting to identify the differences in readiness between males and females. The Mann-Whitney criterion (U-test) was used for that purpose as it is the most famous and



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widespread test of nonparametric comparison of two independent samples. Nonparametric methods are methods that do not require any specific distribution of data. Here, the parameters of the general population are not used (for example, the average arithmetic and standard deviation, as for criteria requiring a normal distribution), but the absolute values are ranked, which makes it possible to level out the effect of the pop-up values and the slowness of the distribution. The test is conducted as follows:

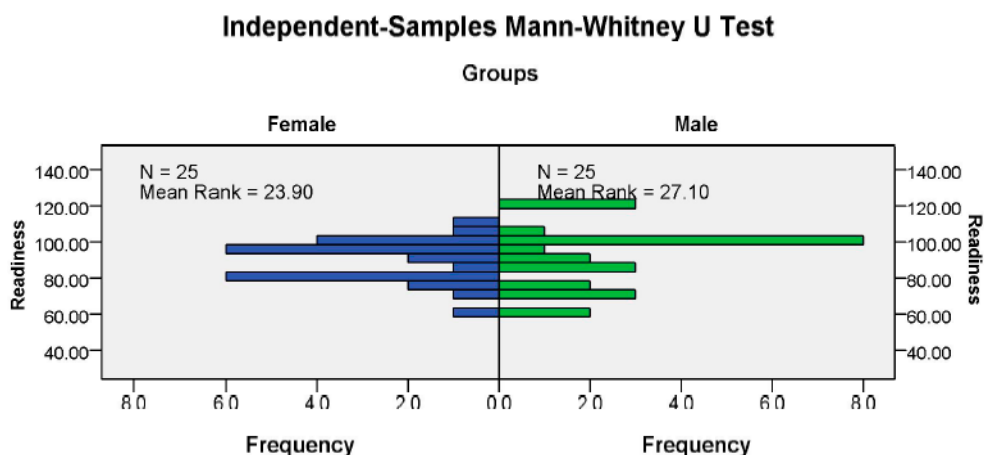
- The obtained U-criterion value is compared according to the table for the selected level of statistical significance ( $p = 0.05$ ) with the critical value U for a given number of compared samples;
- If the value of U obtained is less than or equal to the tabulated value, then the statistical significance of the differences between the levels of the characters in the samples considered is recognized;
- If the resulting value of U is greater than the table value, a null hypothesis is adopted. This indicates that there is no difference.

The calculation of this criterion was carried out in the software environment SPSS 23. The results of the calculations are shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Readiness is the same across categories of Groups.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.437	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

**Figure 4. Calculation of Manna-Whitney test.**



**Figure 5. Comparison of the distribution of male and female responses.**

As can be seen from figure 4, the criterion value U is 0.437, which is much higher than the critical value (0.05). This tells us that responses of male and female students do not differ from each other. And figure 5 shows a sufficiently high zone of crossing values between two

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rows. The distributions of responses of male and female students are almost symmetrical, which confirms the similarity of their responses.

### CONCLUSIONS

An empirical study was conducted to assess the level of readiness of youth for old age changes. Results showed that the average score of the level of readiness among respondents aged 18-25 is 91 points. This score shows an undifferentiated level of readiness of youth, the absence of a clear idea of the future physiological, psychological and professional changes in the personality changes related to aging. Only 8% of respondents were classified as highly prepared, indicating that they are tolerant, mature and do not have negative emotional attitudes towards age-related changes. A study in both sexes calculated by Mann-Whitney test showed that there is no difference between groups, the distribution is almost symmetrical, which confirms the similarity of the responses obtained. This study shed the light on the intergenerational characteristics of readiness for aging among youth.

In the future, we are planning to determine the intergenerational characteristics of readiness among adult generation. This will allow us to study the dynamics of age-related changes.

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