

Gender and Age Features of the Self-Concept of a Pensioner

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Abstract

Currently the Ministry of Finance is considering the question of the gradual increase of the retirement age, while the various specialists are actively discussing the pros and cons of such change. The question of determining the characteristics of the labor force participation of older people and their participation in society is complex and multifaceted. A pensioner's capability for activity, their willingness to fulfill themselves in society vary considerably, depending on the state of health, psychological well-being of man, his relation to himself.

As a central component of identity and self-regulation of the pensioners this article examines the one's self-concept as a generalized set of ideas about their own physical, psychological, social features.

The results of the study presented in the article reveal the retirement age as a period of human ontogenesis, during which their self-concept is undergoing many changes. Based on theoretical analysis and empirical research, the following periodization of the development of the individual in this age is proposed: early retirement, mid retirement, late retirement periods. Each of the periods is described through the age peculiarities of self-awareness and the self-concept. The article shows the crisis nature of the development of the self-concept in people of retirement age, it also highlights normative age crises of the period: the retirement crisis, the crisis of self-sufficiency, the crisis of integrity. The article also highlights gender-specific features of the self-concept of the pensioners.

The study was conducted on a sample of 120 non-working pensioners from Yekaterinburg and Sverdlovsk Oblast. To study the features of the self-concept of the pensioners the following methods were used: "Who am I?" (M. Kun) for the content of the self-concept, the self-relation test (V. V. Stolin, S. R. Pantileev) for the analysis of the self-relations of the pensioners, the technique of personal differential for the studying of self-attractiveness, strength and activity of pensioners.

Keywords: *Self-Concept; Consciousness; the Crisis of the Development; Self-Attitude; Self-Esteem; the Retirement Age; Generativity; Wisdom; Self-Sufficiency*

Introduction

Retirement age is a period of a person's life, after which he can apply for an old-age pension. Given the natural laws of age-related changes, the World Health Organization has proposed the following classification of late ontogenesis: 60 - 74 years old age, 75 years old and older-old age. Separately allocated age of 90 years and older-longevity.

However, activity and activity opportunities can vary significantly among different elderly people. A pensioner's readiness for vigorous activity is largely related not only to physical, but also to psychological well-being, his idea of his own physical, psychological and social capabilities [1,2]. The image of the "I" as the central component of self-identity includes the generalized knowledge of a person about himself, the world around him, as well as unconscious motives, hidden meanings, feelings and relationships [3-8].

As a rule, in various studies related to adult self-consciousness, its features are distinguished in middle-aged and elderly people. Middle-aged problems are considered in the context of experiencing and resolving a mid-life crisis [9-13], as well as in connection with professional development and then avoiding an active professional life [14-16]. The identity of older people is traditionally studied as a component of the psychology of people of late adulthood. It is assumed that retirement determines a person’s self-identity in the image of people of late adulthood (the age of survival), as a result of which insufficient attention is paid to the study of self-identity and self-image of people of retirement age. However, this period occupies a significant place in the ontogenesis of humans, during which the image of the “I” undergoes numerous changes and is not a frozen formation [17-21]. In addition, in the context of discussing the boundaries of the retirement age for men and women, data on the age and sex characteristics of the self-image of people of retirement age are currently not sufficiently presented.

Given the boundaries of the retirement age, legislatively fixed in our country and the classification of late ontogenesis proposed by WHO, it is most appropriate to divide this period into the following chronological stages: 55 - 64 years old - early retirement age, 65 - 74 years old - average retirement age, 75 and older-late retirement age. Let us consider in detail the features of self-awareness and the image of the “I” at each stage of the retirement age. An empirical study was carried out together with OA Shirina among the respondents of this social group to study the substantial features of the image of the “I” of a pensioner. The entire sample of 120 non-working pensioners in Yekaterinburg and the Sverdlovsk Region was divided into three age groups of 40 people, taking into account the periodization of retirement age described above: 55 - 64 years, 65 - 74 years, 75 years and older. Each group represents an equal number of men and women. Average age of respondents: 73 years.

The content of the “I” image of pensioners was studied using the “Who am I?” Test (M. Kuna modified by T. V. Rummyantseva), which allowed us to describe the following characteristics of the “I” image: gender identity, social identity, time aspect of identity, presented in identities social spheres and characteristics, as well as the general valency of identity. The procedure involved writing characteristics about yourself, their calculation and emotional assessment. Table 1 presents the results obtained in the form of the number of respondents (% of the total number of respondents in the specified age and gender group) who demonstrated the severity of a specific indicator.

Respondent Characteristics	55 - 64 y.o.		65 - 74 y.o.		75 years and older	
	Husband %	Wife %	Husband %	Wife %	Husband %	Wife %
Indicators of the image “I”						
Sex Identity						
High Value	85	75	75	80	45	80
Average Value	15	25	25	20	50	15
Low Value	0	0	0	0	5	5
Identity crisis	0	0	15	5	10	5
Social identity						
Prevalence of social role	70	60	35	25	20	15
Prevalence of social features	30	40	60	75	80	85
Temporal Aspect of identity						
Past	10	20	10	20	20	30
Present	60	60	80	70	80	70
Future	30	20	10	10	0	0
Social spheres and characteristics revealing the identity						
Family	35	50	60	70	80	90
Professional sphere	65	45	35	25	30	15

Spouse relations	40	50	35	20	40	20
Education	35	25	15	25	15	15
Resources: age, health	10	35	55	40	65	55
Citizenship	25	10	5	20	5	10
Attitudes and hobbies	10	10	10	15	25	35
Total Valence of Identity						
Positive	85	50	75	70	65	70
Negative	5	20	5	15	15	5
Neutral	10	30	20	15	20	25

Table 1: Representation of various indicators in the image of "I" of pensioners
(Results of the study using the test «Who am I?» M. Kuhn).

The study showed that for people of retirement age, the importance of gender identity is high. Moreover, in women, the high significance of this indicator remains in all age groups and in men it decreases slightly with age. But a low level of significance of this indicator was revealed only in isolated cases and is associated with a crisis of gender identity in the late retirement age.

The social identity of pensioners is characterized by the predominance of social-role characteristics over individual personality characteristics in the early retirement period (55 - 64 years). In the self-identity of people of middle-retirement age (65 - 74 years), individual personality characteristics become more important than social-role ones. In the late retirement age (75 years and older), this tendency is further enhanced and social-role characteristics already occupy the minimum value in the self-identification of respondents, giving way to individual personality characteristics. In all age groups, for men, social-role identity is more important than for women and in women the value of individual characteristics is higher than in men.

In the temporal aspect, the identity of the respondents of the early retirement period is mainly associated with the present. The past tense is minimally represented in men of this age and the future tense in women. In women, this specificity of temporary self-identity persists and intensifies at a later age. In middle-retirement men, the greatest representation of temporary self-identity is also concentrated in the present tense and past and future tenses are represented equally. In the late retirement age, the self-identity of both men and women is not at all connected with the future, but focuses mainly on the present.

The analysis of social spheres and characteristics through which the respondents' self-identity is revealed allowed us to identify the age and gender features of the image of the "I" by this indicator. Representation of the family sphere increases with age in both sexes, but in women this sphere is always more expressed in self-identity than in men. The professional sphere has the opposite tendency - its representation decreases with age in both sexes, but in men this sphere is always more pronounced than in women. The sphere of marital relations has different dynamics in men and women: in men, its representation in self-identity persists throughout the study period and in women it gradually decreases. Thus, in the early retirement period, the sphere of marital relations in women is represented to a greater extent than in men and in the middle pension it is already less pronounced than in men. In the late retirement age, this difference increases even more due to a decrease in the representation of this sphere in women. The education sector is of average importance for both sexes and gradually decreases with age. Resources (age, health) in the early retirement period are represented more in women than in men and in subsequent periods of development in men are more pronounced than in women. However, with age, this sphere gradually occupies an increasing place in the self-identity of respondents of both sexes. Citizenship is of little importance in the self-identity of pensioners and is gradually even more squeezed out of their image of "I". Moreover, in men this trend is stronger than in women. In women, this characteristic is relatively stable, although insignificant during the study period. The representation of the sphere of beliefs and hobbies

in women gradually increases with age and in men the significance of this sphere increases only in the late retirement age. But in general, the importance of this sphere in the self-identity of pensioners is small, contrary to the widespread stereotype of their passion for their hobbies.

The overall valency of self-identity in the predominant number of respondents is positive. The smallest number of respondents showed a negative valency (more often in women than in men).

The self-attitude of senior citizens was investigated using a self-attitude questionnaire (V.V. Stolin, S.R. Pantileev). The results obtained are described by such indicators as: global self-attitude (integral sense of “for” or “against” one’s “I”), self-esteem, self-sympathy, expected attitude from others, self-interest. These indicators characterize the attitude of respondents to themselves. And also through this technique, additional indicators were studied aimed at measuring the severity of the attitude toward internal actions regarding one’s “I”: self-confidence, the attitude of others, self-acceptance, self-consistency (self-guidance), self-incrimination, self-interest, self-understanding. The results obtained are presented below in table 2 in the form of the number of respondents (% of the total number) who demonstrated the level of severity of the studied indicators of self-relationship indicated in the table.

An analysis of the dynamics of various signs of self-relationship shows that in retirement age, self-relationship has pronounced gender and age characteristics. Global self-esteem in women gradually increases with age. In men, the dynamics of this indicator is uneven: in the middle-retirement age, most men show a slight decrease compared with the early-retirement period and increase again in the subsequent period.

Indicator Level	Respondent Features		Self-Relationship Indicators					Attitudes towards internal activity towards I						
	Age	Floor	Global self	Self-esteem	Autosimpatia	Expected attitude of others	Self-interest	Self confidence	Attitude of others	Self-acceptance	Self-consistency (self-leadership)	Self-incrimination	Self-interest	Self-understanding
High	55 - 64 y.o.	M	60	80	65	10	10	60	15	35	25	0	0	25
		F	50	35	20	10	30	90	45	30	65	50	25	35
	65 - 74 y.o.	M	35	30	25	0	35	0	45	60	30	20	25	50
		F	60	20	5	0	45	5	45	60	85	60	20	70
	75 y.o. and older	M	70	50	60	0	55	0	55	70	50	30	60	80
		F	70	45	30	0	55	0	65	60	60	40	40	70
Average	55 - 64 y.o.	M	40	20	25	45	20	40	40	25	25	30	15	30
		F	35	45	50	10	35	10	40	35	35	40	45	50
	65 - 74 y.o.	M	45	60	30	55	25	10	45	40	30	20	10	30
		F	25	65	15	15	0	40	55	30	15	25	40	30
	75 y.o. and older	M	30	0	30	30	30	0	45	10	15	20	5	10
		F	20	5	30	20	30	20	35	20	20	20	40	30
Low	55 - 64 y.o.	M	0	0	10	45	70	0	45	40	50	70	85	45
		F	15	20	30	80	30	0	15	30	0	10	30	15
	65 - 74 y.o.	M	20	10	45	45	40	90	10	20	40	60	65	20
		F	15	15	80	85	55	55	0	20	0	15	40	0
	75 y.o. and older	M	0	50	10	70	15	100	0	30	35	50	35	10
		F	10	55	40	80	15	80	0	10	20	40	20	0

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by severity levels indicators of self-attitude in the image of “I” (the results of a study of self-attitude using the test of V.V. Stolin, S.R. Pantileev).

Self-esteem is expressed differently in women and men in early retirement age: among men, a high level of severity of self-esteem prevails (in the absence of respondents with a low level) and in women there is an approximately equal distribution in terms of severity of self-esteem. In the middle pension age, the average level of self-esteem prevails among men and women (a slight decrease in both gender groups). And in the subsequent, late retirement, period, regardless of gender, all respondents are divided into two subgroups - with a high and a low level in the absence of respondents with an average level of self-esteem.

Autosympathy in men in all age groups is more pronounced than in women. In women, a gradual decrease in autosympathy was distinguished from a prevailing average level in the early retirement age to a predominantly low level in later periods of development. In men at an early retirement age, a high level of severity of autosympathy prevails. At the next stage, this indicator in most men decreases to the prevailing low values and again increases in the late retirement period to the prevailing high values.

The expected attitude from others reflects stably low values for all age and gender groups, which indicates the assumption of a negative attitude of others.

Self-interest is less pronounced in men at an early retirement age, among which a low level of severity of this indicator prevails, in contrast to women, among whom a uniform distribution by levels is revealed. In the middle-retirement age, men showed a slight increase in the severity of self-interest and the group of women was divided into respondents with high and low levels (in the absence of an average level). In late retirement age, the severity of self-interest increases, which is recorded in the predominance of medium and high levels of manifestation of this indicator in both gender groups.

In addition, the measurement of the severity of the attitude toward internal actions relative to one's "I" made it possible to describe the age and sex features of managing one's self among pensioners. A high level of severity of the indicator reflects its importance in self-regulation of the Self and a low level of severity indicates the absence of its influence, the non-use of it by a person in his internal actions regarding the image of the "I".

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The significance of the relationship of others for self-regulation of the image of "I" in early retirement age is higher for women (high and medium levels prevail) than for men (low and medium levels prevail). In later age groups, men and women equally have a high and medium level of severity of this indicator.

The self-acceptance rate in early retirement age for men and women is distributed at all levels approximately equally (individual differences). In mid-retirement age, the severity of this indicator in both gender groups increases (a low level is practically not represented). In late retirement age, groups of men and women are divided by the level of severity of self-acceptance: a high and low level of severity of this indicator prevails with a rare occurrence of an average level.

Self-consistency (self-leadership) prevails in self-management of women at an early retirement level and for most men of this age group this indicator is low. In the middle pension age, in both gender groups, the severity of self-leadership increases, but for women it still remains higher than for men. In late retirement age in women, the value of this indicator decreases slightly. In men, the dynamics of the severity of self-leadership is ambiguous: in some men, the severity of this indicator is even higher compared to the previous age stage, while in some it remains unchanged.

Self-blaming in early retirement age is more pronounced in women (high severity prevails) than in men (low severity prevails). At the subsequent stages of development in men, the severity of this indicator increases. And for women, the dynamics of self-accusation is ambiguous: in some women, the significance of this factor increases, in others it decreases. In the late retirement age, the group of women is divided into respondents with a high level of severity and respondents with a low level of severity of self-incrimination (the average level of severity is practically not represented).

Self-interest as a factor in regulating the image of "I" in early retirement age is medium in women, its value is minimal in men. At a subsequent stage, self-interest in most men increases and in women it decreases. In the late retirement age, the importance of self-interest in managing one's self is increased in both gender groups. However, in some men, the severity of this indicator does not change and remains at a low level.

Self-understanding for men of early retirement age is not significant and for women is of maximum importance. In subsequent age periods, the severity of this indicator increases in both gender groups. This tendency is most pronounced in men. Thus, in the late retirement age, the significance of this indicator in men and women is equally high.

The methodology of the personal differential made it possible to study the image of the "I" of pensioners for self-assessment of the level of attractiveness, strength and activity. For this, respondents were asked to rate these indicators on a scale from 0 to 3 with a positive or negative value. Positive (+) evaluation values correspond to the severity of this indicator in self-esteem and negative (-) - to its rejection. Table 3 shows the features of self-esteem in men and women of different age groups.

Respondent Characteristics		Personal differential indicators					
		Attractiveness		Power		Activity	
Age	Sex	Average arithmetic value for the sample	Standard deviation	Average arithmetic value for the sample	Standard deviation	Average arithmetic value for the sample	Standard deviation
55 - 64 y.o.	M	+ 2,7	0,7	+ 2,9	0,3	+ 2,0	1,2
	F	+ 2,1	1,0	+ 1,9	1,2	+ 2,8	0,2
65 - 74 y.o..	M	+ 2,3	0,9	+ 2,2	2,6	+ 1,2	0,6
	F	+ 2,0	0,6	+ 1,3	1,4	+ 2,8	0,3
75 y.o. and older	M	+ 1,4	1,6	+ 1,3	0,7	+ 1,0	1,3
	F	+ 1,8	0,4	- 1,0	1,1	+ 2,0	0,8

Table 3: Age and gender features of self-esteem of the personal differential of pensioners (research results using the method of personal differential).

The data obtained indicate the predominance of positive characteristics in the self-image of the image "I" ("+" prevail over "-" in the choice of qualities). Assessment of attractiveness in most men with age decreases from high positive to low positive. In this case, men revealed a significant variation in individual assessments of this indicator. In women, an average positive score prevails, which persists in all age groups.

Estimates of strength vary greatly among respondents. Strength ratings among men are higher on average and among women grades are distributed across both polarities. A high positive assessment of strength on average is only in men of the early retirement period, which then gradually decreases with age to a low positive. In women of early retirement, an average positive assessment prevails and at a later age, a weakly expressed negative assessment prevails.

Assessment of activity in men in all age groups is lower than in women: from the average positive in the early retirement age, the assessment of activity changes in men to a weakly expressed positive at a later age. In women, a high positive score remains in the early retirement and mid-retirement ages and decreases slightly to an average positive score in the late retirement age.

Self-esteem indicators of the personal differential indicate that some pensioners are still active and feel confident in their abilities, while others feel that they are dependent on their assessments, situations and are subject to circumstances. In men, with age, first decreases the self-esteem of activity, then strength, then attractiveness. In women, the assessment of strength decreases first of all (already by early retirement age it is estimated by an average of most women and continues to decline further) and the assessment of activity and attractiveness remains medium positive until late in old age.

In general, in men, the average estimates of the personality differential are higher, but have more individual differences than in women (higher standard deviation).

In addition to age and gender characteristics, a generalized characteristic of the pensioner's "I" image was compiled, which was the result of a factor analysis of the data obtained by the varimax method using the Kaiser transform and R. Kettell's method ("scree"). This analysis made it possible to identify the following factors in the content of the self image of pensioners, explaining 97.65% of the total variance: dependence (31.86%), emotional self-attitude (24.64%), need for communication (10.26%), termination of professional activity (8.73%), self-esteem (6.36%), limited ability (5.42%), limited material wealth (4.03%), uncertainty (2.78%), problematic identity (2, 09%), self-incrimination (1.48%).

Consequently, factors such as the termination of professional activity, the restriction of wealth and problematic self-identity, which are often considered in the context of the emotional experience of retirement, are not significant in the general variance of the pensioner's self image. In the pensioner's self-image, factors such as dependence on others, increased emotionality in self-attitude (including sensitivity, vulnerability, resentment), as well as the need to communicate with other people, have the greatest weight.

So, the analysis of the image of "I" of an elderly person showed that the most resistant to changes in retirement age are such characteristics of the image of "I" as gender identity (consistently high severity), temporary identity (focus on the present tense), positive overall valency of identity, insignificant representation in the identity of education and citizenship of the individual, as well as the expectation of a negative attitude from others.

The greatest age differences were found among indicators such as social identity (gradual displacement in the self-identification of social roles by individual characteristics), family (increase in age with representation in the image of "I"), professional sphere (decrease in age with representation in the image of "I"), resources (increased representation of the characteristics of age and health in the image of "I"), self-interest, self-acceptance and self-understanding (increase with age), self-accusation (decreases with age).

The greatest gender differences were identified in the following characteristics of the image of "I": social identity (for men, the professional aspect prevails, for women it is individual and personal), autosympathy and self-confidence (for men is higher than for women), global self-attitude (different age dynamics), self-interest (in women is higher than in men). In men, individual differences in the image of "I" are more pronounced and in women, age-related features of the image of "I".

In addition, in terms of self-esteem, the expected attitude of others, self-accusation, self-interest, as well as among social spheres represented in identity, significant individual differences were revealed in all age and gender groups.

Analysis of the age-related features of the image of the "I" of pensioners made it possible to reveal the crisis nature of its development.

The early retirement period is associated with a retirement crisis, which may be exacerbated by an unresolved generative crisis. The study showed that the majority of respondents effectively resolve the crisis of generativity: the need for creation is manifested in men

in professional identity, marital relations and in women in the sphere of family and marital relations. The effectiveness of living in this crisis is reflected in the fact that in the image of the "I" of respondents of this age there are few indicators indicative of the egocentric orientation of the person (orientation to internal activity in relation to the I). However, the image of "I" of respondents of this age group reflects reflections on the termination of professional activity and restriction of social activity, which is accompanied by the expectation of a negative attitude of others and reveals the difficulty of living on retirement.

The mid-retirement period is characterized by a decrease in self-confidence, anxiety about health and a slight decrease in self-esteem and self-sympathy. Such features of the image of "I" indicate a crisis of solvency, lived by people at this stage. Effective resolution of this crisis is not characteristic of all respondents, which is reflected in the indicators of self-esteem and self-acceptance, the expected attitude from other people. The severity of these indicators in the image of "I" indicates the formation of self-esteem and the constructive nature of crisis resolution, which is typical for about half of the respondents. Another part of the respondents demonstrated difficulties in overcoming this crisis, reflected in a negative attitude towards themselves and others, self-accusation, dissatisfaction with life.

The crisis of integrity in the image of the "I" of people of late retirement age is manifested in indicators of reflective interest in their self, self-esteem, self-acceptance and self-leadership, as well as self-confidence. The severity of these indicators differs significantly among different respondents of this age group, which indicates that the integrity crisis is resolved among them with different results. A distinctive characteristic of this age is the convergence of the characteristics of the image of the "I" in men and women.

Conclusion

Summarizing the data of the study, we can conclude that the image of "I" in conditions of an individual's retirement has all the signs of development, is characterized by age and gender characteristics and common features inherent in this social group.

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