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A socio-cultural approach to the importance of community spirit for the elderly in Lithuania

Postawy społeczno-kulturowe wobec znaczenia ducha wspólnoty osób starszych na Litwie

Abstract

Aim. Social care institutions in Lithuania meet the major physical needs of elderly people in Lithuania; however, the psychological, social, and emotional aspects can often get neglected. The aim of the article is to find a theoretical solution to the problem of satisfying the community needs of the Elderly at long-term inpatient care institutions.

Methods. The article uses theoretical methods of reviewing, analyzing and summarizing the scientific literature to reveal the following problematic issues: What is the meaning of community spirit for the elderly in social care institutions? How Socio-cultural activities can strengthen the sense of community in care homes for seniors?

Results. The results of the study revealed that a sense of community and safe emotional bonds in care institutions are especially important for psychosocial health and strong social ties for elderly. Socio-cultural work in communities is not only concerned with people's social well-being and their most basic needs. It also involves interpersonal interaction between seniors of the community, helping with their self-realization, sharing common spiritual values - trust, gratitude, and respect - for a full sense of life.

Conclusion. Community spirit can be strengthened by the socio-cultural traditions at the institution, the opportunities for self-expression stem from artistic activities, participation

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in self-education, and cultural events. The role of social workers is important, especially in motivating and involving people with greater health constraints to participate more actively in community life, ensuring equal opportunities for a full, high quality, and dignified old age.

Keywords: community spirit, elderly people, social exclusion, socio-cultural activities

Abstrakt
Cel. Ośrodki opiekuńcze na Litwie, w dużej mierze, zaspokajają znaczną część potrzeb fizycznych i medycznych starszych osób. Jednakże zdarza się, że aspekty psychologiczne, społeczne i emocjonalne są zaniedbywane. Celem artykułu jest znalezienie teoretycznego rozwiązania problemu zaspokajania potrzeb środowiskowych osób starszych w stacjonarnych zakładach opieki długoterminowej.
Metody. W artykule wykorzystano teoretyczne metody przeglądu i analizy literatury naukowej, w celu opracowania następujących zagadnień: jakie znaczenie dla osób starszych ma duch wspólnoty w instytucjach pomocy społecznej? Jak działania społeczno-kulturalne mogą wzmacniać poczucie wspólnoty w domach opieki dla seniorów?
Wyniki. Wyniki badania wykazały, że poczucie wspólnoty i bezpieczne więzi emocjonalne w placówkach opiekuńczych są szczególnie ważne dla zdrowia psychospołecznego i silnych więzi społecznych osób starszych. Praca społeczno-kulturalna dotyczy nie tylko społecznego dobrobytu ludzi i ich najbardziej podstawowych potrzeb. Obejmuje również interpersonalną interakcję między seniorami społeczności, pomagając w ich samorealizacji, dzieląc wspólne wartości duchowe - zaufanie, wdzięczność i szacunek - dla pełnego sensu życia.
Wnioski. Duch wspólnoty może być wzmocniony przez tradycje społeczno-kulturalne w instytucji, autoekspresję wyrażaną działalnością artystyczną, udział w samokształceniu i wydarzeniach kulturalnych. Ważna jest rola pracowników socjalnych - szczególnie w motywowaniu i angażowaniu osób z większymi problemami zdrowotnymi do bardziej aktywnego uczestnictwa w życiu społeczności, zapewniając równe szanse na jakościową i godną starość.

Słowa kluczowe: duch wspólnoty, osoby starsze, wykluczenie społeczne, działalność społeczno-kulturowa

Introduction

The situation of the elderly in Lithuania is one of the worst in Europe when it comes to social inclusion: living in social care institutions is characterized by a specific "institutional culture," the main features of which are the depersonalization of an individual, strict order, group care, and social distance (Mikulionienė, 2016). All these aspects are not aimed at meeting the personal and community needs of the elderly people living in institutional care. As noted, a negative outlook or, in other words, a cultural unacceptability, exists, where people feel shame for having to live in permanent care homes or to move their parents there. These institutions are

associated with hospitals, and a homely environment is often missing (Genienė, Šumskienė, 2018).

Reducing the social exclusion of elderly people is identified as one of our national priorities: in 2014, the Action Plan for Healthy Ageing Protection in Lithuania 2014–2023 was approved by ministerial order (Ministry of Health, 2014). The plan focuses not only on the prevention of the most prevalent health problems but also on the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, for example, physical activity. One shortcoming of this plan is that the group of older people is not explicitly defined, which raises questions about its implementation.

The review of the care system for the elderly is also relevant due to the transformation carried out in recent years, which aims to replace inpatient institutional care with integrated, community-based services. One of the factors contributing to social exclusion it is the lack of community spirit (Šinkūnienė, 2012). Therefore, the analysis of community needs among the elderly is a relevant and unexplored topic. Social care institutions in Lithuania meet the majority of the physical needs of the elderly in Lithuania. However, the psychological, social, and emotional aspects of their care are often neglected. It is the poor psychological indicators that strongly influence physical health, so efforts to improve it and strengthen social ties in inpatient care institutions are essential (Roszmann et al., 2014). However, it is unfortunate that there is no legislation concerning these needs, community spirit included, so these matters are often left to the understanding and good-will of the heads and employees of specific care institutions. The current COVID-19 pandemic presents an especially significant number of challenges because isolation and social exclusion has become a global phenomenon.

Socio-cultural work in the community does not only involve taking care of people's social well-being and providing the most essential services. It is an opportunity to encourage the interpersonal relationships between the members of the community, foster self-realization, and nurture spiritual values, with the goal of improving communication and the sense of a wholesome life (Šinkūnienė, 2012). There are still no unified criteria for the evaluation of socio-cultural services in Lithuania, so it is hard to expect high quality. On the other hand, improving service quality is a never-ending multi-faceted process, which includes various levels of evaluation of social service quality and features, requiring a strong methodological basis (Gečienė, Gudžinskienė, 2018). Socio-cultural work in the community – therapeutic or creative recreation, art therapy, including music, art, and drama – is likened to a luxurious item that is only needed after the economic and spiritual crises that plagues Lithuania resolved. How to create a community of elderly people? By what means could we ensure the dignity of senior citizens? How to create a celebration of daily life in the heart and convey these values to your immediate environment?

The meaning of community spirit for the elderly in social care institutions

Looking at old age from the sociological perspective, it becomes clear that human social systems are not determined by biological or genetic factors. They are the result of social interactions. These interactions create values and norms, which determine the social structures of human groups. So, based on this presumption, old age could be understood as a socio-cultural process, which is decided by the values of the society, instead of a pure result of time and biological processes. Social roles and norms of acceptable behaviour are decided by the social environment instead of being decided by a person. A person is considered old when the society considers him to be and treats him as old (Orlova, 2014; Zeleniūtė, Kviatkovska, & Aleksienė, 2016).

The Meaning of Community provides a theoretical concept of a sociological and anthropological approach to changes of community, analysing the problems of how to reveal the internal structure of a sense of community, and community spirit, in the institutional care system of the elderly. Definitions put emphasis on relationships, communication, sense of community, traditions, and social cohesion:

> Community is the fusion of feeling and thought, tradition and commitment, membership and desire, which is based on the concept of a whole person and not on the person who just acts his part in the social order of things (Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002, p. 24).

While belonging to a community, an elderly person can feel safe, represented, and empowered, no matter how severe the disorder or health problems he has.

Since 2014, Lithuania has been undergoing a process of deinstitutionalisation, with the goal of moving away from long term inpatient care facilities for the elderly to a communal system, but the process is slow-going and complicated, because of lack of political will and high loyalty to care institutions by employees, who are afraid of losing their jobs. The staff also avoid new developments and support the old and clear "institutional culture," where strict rules reign supreme and the person that is being cared for is depersonalised. The process is also being made more difficult by the existing infrastructure, renovated buildings, which should "pay off the investment" (Genienė, Šumskienė, 2018, p. 73). One of the challenges noted by experts is that the material base of these institutions was refurbished or created after Lithuania reinstated its independence. It is not economically viable to close down institutions, which received significant investment.

Another challenge is the intertwined nature of care institutions and community efforts because resources must be dedicated to both models while the transition is taking place. The last challenge is that alternatives are too "institutionalized." They are created with input from the employees of the institution that is being reorganised,

too little attention is paid to the experts' opinions. So, the features of the isolated environment, exclusion from the community, and other downsides of the inherited work method and hierarchical relationships remain (Genienė, Šumskienė, 2018). Without clear service quality standards, care institutions lack individuality, they remain strongly bureaucratic.

Even though the country has been striving to abolish long-term inpatient care of the elderly by decentralising it since 2012, the alternative has not been sufficiently developed yet. Slowly, small parish or community-based care homes are being established. Newly founded independent living homes are oriented towards the elderly who are at least partly self-sufficient. However, these are precisely the institutions that can strengthen the sense of community of the people living there, because they encourage acting independently, helping each other, and spending time together. Additionally, this model helps to reduce the social exclusion of the elderly, because they are not left to their own devices, they can always ask for help or just talk with their peers (Van Groenou, De Boer, 2016). At the same time, the sense of community between the residents and the employees taking care of them is also being fostered because a closer bond can be built in smaller groups, the possibility grows that the residents and staff will communicate directly (Matonytė, Kazlauskaitė, & Poškutė, 2019).

The goal of a community is to live life closely surrounded by an atmosphere of good intentions, a spirit of trust, actively developed love, and willingness to help your neighbour. Intensive and multi-faceted communication between the members of a community, based on emotional and spiritual connection instead of just rational or self-interested goals, is considered to be its most important feature (*Developing Quality in Community Empowerment – An Evaluation Model*, 2009). The sense of community is the way people lead their lives, recognizing their neighbour's merits, safety, social and living skills, positive relationships with others, professional skills, and quality of life. The purpose of the community is not just to increase the sense of community among its members but also to affect the moral judgment of the society at large (Talò, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2014).

While belonging to a community, an elderly person can feel safe, represented, and empowered, no matter how severe the disorder or how special the needs he has may be. Care homes should be small, the staff should wear their street clothes, the client should be able to actively express their opinions, choose the activities they like, efforts should be made to reduce the monotony of routine according to the individual needs of each client. Another important but often impossible-to-ensure feature is geographical accessibility so that the elderly could be visited by their families often (Skučienė, Bartkus, Moskvina, & Uleckienė, 2015).

The principles of a successful community are honesty, learning from the experience of others and being mindful of not repeating your own mistakes, the ability to

adapt to change in living conditions, flexibility, and open-mindedness. This can be achieved when the members of the community are linked by the same values; its members have trust in each other and clearly understand the goals of the community (Lee, Kim, & Phillips, 2015). Meaningful cohesion of the community develops altruism, friendliness, compassion for your neighbour, and responsibility. When members have a common spiritual bond, they share their troubles and their achievements, by participating in community activities as equals.

The meaning of institutional community could be determined by George S. Wood and Juan C. Judikis (in: Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002), that the community is the people, who have a common goal or interests which inspires them to assume responsibility for each other, respect their differences, also honestly commit to seeking the good of the group at large.

For the creation of institutional community, these "self-creation conditions" must be present:
 – The approach of commonality among people and groups that are formed with pre-conceived moral notions of conscience, volunteering, responsibility, social bonds, and self-worth, must be present;
 – The actual presence of social commonality, including activities direction and meaning;
 – The state and quality of communication that is enriched by allowing the possibility to communicate;
 – The intricacies of moral compatibility among different social groups;
 – Properties of social activities among social groups: direction, publicity, commonality, positivity, openness (Šinkūnienė, 2012; in: Puddifoot, 1996).

A psychological sense of community provides a sense of belonging, identity, emotional connection, and wellbeing. There are many positives that result from people experiencing and perceiving a sense of community. People are better adjusted, feel supported, have connections to other people and to goals that are above and beyond their own limited areas, and have stronger levels of social support and social connectedness (McMillan, 1996).

Psychological sense of community consists of four elements: 1) membership, 2) influence, 3) integration and fulfillment of needs, 4) shared emotional connection (Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002). The first aspect of the Sense of Community is membership of that community. Reviewing relevant literature on particular dimensions of membership, five attributes were identified: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system. Symbols used in a community, for example, rituals, ceremonies, and rites define boundaries for those, who are the *real* members of the community in question, not the *outsiders*.

Another problem worth researching – is it more important to research community spirit on the level of the individual or community; or maybe, the dynamics of the individual-community relationship may be more important? Researching the sense of community from the psychological perspective allows us to flexibly apply various methodologies, paying more attention to the essential aspects of social problems, the community itself, and cultural phenomena (Valsiner, Rosa, 2007). In descriptive studies concerned with communal everyday life, where the goal is to understand human action and expression, the meanings of people's actions are not revealed immediately, so interpretative techniques have to be sufficiently clear. So, such a measurable, provably real, and unifying phenomenon like the "sense of community" describes the quality of the community, enveloping a wide array of components, which combine to create a spiritual atmosphere (Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002).

Discussing the features of community spirit revealed that a significant portion of social care institutions exhibit more or less expressed signs of a sense of community, so, on this basis, one can evaluate communal activity. Analysing an elderly care facility from the community perspective, close interpersonal connections help people to feel safer, calmer, and happier. In a close-knit community of the elderly, every single one of its members feels valuable, because he or she does what he can, according to his capabilities and abilities.

Next, we will look at how socio-cultural activity (recreational, artistic/therapeutic, or educational) can influence the quality of communality and spiritually strengthen the elderly in a long-term inpatient care facility.

Socio-cultural activity possibilities to strengthen the sense of community in care homes for seniors

The word "socio-cultural" naturally implies a duality with two main elements, enveloping the material (social) and spiritual (cultural) concepts of reality. Sociality is a condition which is required for people to interact. In turn, culture strengthens and infuses this condition with meaning (Šinkūnienė, Savickaitė, 2008). In Lithuania, the links between cultural and social spheres are neither developed nor defined, so social workers are left with performing both functions in social institutions. The gap between these two important community areas results in insufficient development of human resources utilization, devaluation of the efforts by cultural workers and artists in the social sphere, and the growing separation of social issues and culture.

The Lithuanian government provides annual funding for cultural and artistic projects, which aim to encourage older people to participate in creative activities and cultural initiatives. As a result, many elderly people are members of cultural institu-

tions, such as cultural centres, that offer amateur artistic activities, as well as public libraries that promote public access. There are also public libraries for disabled and elderly people supported at home. These libraries bring printed matter by bus to the homes of such persons and set up out-patient items in remote rural areas, disabled communities, and society centres. To a certain extent, these projects help older people in dealing with social exclusion, employment, education, and lifelong learning issues and enable them to foster their social connections (Pavlova et al., 2017). It is a pity that the elderly living in long term inpatient care homes are not a part of these projects.

Socio-cultural activity in communities is geared towards completing five goals (Šinkūnienė, 2012):
- – to improve quality of life by solving common problems;
- – to reduce social injustice caused by separation and discrimination;
- – to develop and protect social and cultural values as a part of the community development process and the result of its evolution;
- – to empower people to reach and express their individual potential;
- – to develop a sense of community, encourage solidarity with each other, and act as a part of society instead of mere individuals in a community.

The spiritual and emotional life of a community depends on the continuity of its traditions and customs, instilling traditional values in the next generation. Community-organized traditional celebrations and events encourage citizens to come together because a tradition is not necessarily an expression of cultural heritage passed down from the past, it has a certain meaning and practical usefulness in the present as well. Shared traditions form a sense of affection, as well as a dependency (or limitation), help us understand the importance of unity in communal life.

Socio-cultural activities include recreation, non-formal education, arts and culture, community building, and management. The objective of the field of art and culture is to ensure the essential aspects of a person's empowerment, communication, and self-expression. The main aspiration of socio-cultural activity is the empowerment of the elderly. Socio-cultural work facilitates the creation of bonds between people; in other words, it is an activity that helps to harmonize the relationships within a community and among its members.

Social and cultural contexts are closely related to each other and mutually reinforcing. In order to develop the sense of community, social community activities are based on four key principles (Spiers, 2003):
- – commitment to maintain and strengthen local organizations' and people's abilities, competencies, skills, and motivation to solve the problems that the community is facing;

–   an aspiration to ensure overall community members' wellbeing;
–   obligation to carry out preventive measures in order to eliminate the hot spots of social problems, before those problems occur;
–   collecting and using the data on community members' needs.

Culture evokes affinity and shapes people's identity, which is an essential component of humanity and community. Culture is a key element of the development of human resources: to each other people communicate their selfhood, ideas, feelings, and intuition, learn, and evolve as people.

Looking at an elder as a source of life experience and wisdom, who is able to share and receive new knowledge encourages recreation organisers to work with this in mind, aiming for the improvement of quality of life at gerontological institutions, aiding in the maintenance of the elders' social, cognitive, motor, and emotional skills. A recreation specialist needs to consider these goals (Zeleniūtė, Kviatkovska, & Aleksienė, 2016):

–   to pay attention to the aims, needs, and hobbies of the group;
–   to inspire the group to work;
–   to encourage and organise cultural activities;
–   to strive for the development of group work experience, a sense of belonging in the community, knowledge of themselves and other members of the community;
–   to improve quality of life by working on the physical, educational, and social levels.

Culture is a source of vitality in every community, promoting unity, creativity, and opportunities for self-expression. The phenomenon of culture is inevitably integrated into social life and, therefore, social and cultural aspects of life overlap in various areas, causing diverse discussions and interpretations of concepts.

The most important functions of culture are:

–   socialization (to take over community's collective experience, social norms, cultural values, and symbols);
–   inculturation (to take over cultural elements specific to the native culture);
–   integration (to maintain the unity of the people, protect the social experience of previous generations and rely on it);
–   creative (to spread new values, knowledge, traditions, and update the prevailing cultural values and symbols);
–   cognitive (to structure and transfer knowledge);
–   communication, information, value-forming, and others (Spiers, 2003).

Socio-cultural work is used as a tool to preserve and use traditional cultural values, enabling an elderly person to confidently express his/her opinion, facilitate self-identification processes and provide changes in people's attitudes, systems of values, and self-esteem. Also, it is a good opportunity to present new ideas, plan, organize, and systemize activities, estimate results of experience. Communal life development trends show that the majority of them are dominated by cultural artistic activities. Appropriately organised musical, theatrical, or fine arts expression helps to bring people together, create community spirit, strengthen trust between the members, safeguard common values by creating a space where every member can discover and showcase their own abilities and talents. Different activities are not only concerned with care and social wellbeing. They are also concerned with opportunities for interaction, self-realization, and fostering of spiritual values in order to promote communication and a sense of fulfilment in life (Šinkūnienė, 2012).

Cultural activities and art are understood as specific means of social practice. The purpose of art is to harmonize life and make people's communication forms more perfect from the viewpoint of spiritual values. Music can be a very attractive form of wellbeing, especially for the elderly in a community (Aleksienė, 2010). The arts, especially music, perform a variety of social functions. Self-expression of the elderly through music, drama, or painting serves to bring people together, create a sense of community, help strengthen confidence among the members of the community, protect common values, and create a platform for each person to realize their abilities and talents.

Music, the social plane, and community spirit are closely interconnected: let's analyse music's ability to strengthen and nurture communities on a socio-cultural level. Music therapy is an active alternative when it comes to carrying out socialization or health prevention programmes, so music therapy is becoming increasingly more popular in social work because it can strengthen the health of an individual, group, and community as well. Community music therapy presents a new culturally, socially, and politically relevant way and method of putting it into action. It's a 21st century way of thinking, which forces you to change perspective and, in some ways, critiques the previously used methods of music therapy (Stige, Ansdell, Elefant, & Pavlicevic, 2010). Vilmantė Aleksienė (2010) in her analysis of the theoretical aspects of music therapy application in a social work setting, said that the potential for applied music therapy services in Lithuania has not been sufficiently respected.

Social and cultural functions of music

Speaking of the elderly community in the context of music functions, the communication part of the equation gains exceptional importance on the social level. The commu-

nicational aspect of music is the ability to enable a person's emotional self-expression, with the aim of sharing their experience and feeling with another – the listener. However, their ability to communicate depends on the specific qualities of the elder in question: the individuality of their way of thinking, neuromotor and sensory abilities, and social behaviour (Spirgienė, Macijauskienė, 2008). When solving the problem of social exclusion among the elderly, it is possible to involve professional artists or hobbyist musicians by organizing artistic musical projects, while properly presenting, balancing, and organising artistic activities for people with different capabilities.

The main social and cultural musical communication activity functions can be defined thus (Šinkūnienė, 2012):

– "Social" musical activity functions:
  • socio-psychological function, which, in essence, is the ability to understand, identify and express the needs and problems of people with disabilities, making their social adaptation easier;
  • inclusionary function, which provides competent participation, ensuring the compatibility of actions by several parties, constructive and positive inter-institutional relations;
  • communicational function, which is the sustainment of positive and developing relationships between partners and the social environment;
  • integrational function, *i.e.,* the prevention, minimalisation, or removal of social factors standing in the way of integration, by affecting the social environment, modifying social norms and values in the environment (society).

– "Cultural" musical activity functions*:*
  • compensational function – to allow supplemental opportunities for partners' (especially disabled) creative growth and self-realization by including them in socio-cultural artistic activities, steering their unused personal energy in a positive direction;
  • social-cultural function: meeting impersonal socio-cultural needs;
  • emotional expression function – self-expression, the opportunity to share feelings and experience, self-establishment, success, self-confidence, initiative, strengthening the sense of self-reliance (in an inner sense more than the physical);
  • educational function – social interpersonal interaction – due to the means of artistic expression and with a positive emotional atmosphere in the group, a two-way spiritual connection, understanding, and sense of solidarity are discovered, values are gained, fortified, or revaluated.

Only interaction and cooperation between people can properly reveal the real social meaning behind art. Thanks to art, social phenomena in society become more

close-knit: traditions, beliefs, and behavioural expressions bring people together and build more harmonious communities by using artistic means. In socio-cultural practice, the application of music theory is considered to be a specific tool to instil meaning, form, and expression to the community members' communication, experiences, and expression. The aim of communal music therapy is to define and develop a theory, which would tightly unite the concept of musicianship with social and cultural practice, and act as a natural way to support health, while also enable some members of the community (Stige, Ansdell, Elefant, & Pavlicevic, 2010).

It should be noted that spirituality in a given community also could be expressed through specific traditions and celebrations observed in that community. Socio-cultural work in a community is like a constant and never-ending carousel of juggling everyday life and celebrations in an endless stream of contacts. An event or a celebration can be a highlight that is meaningful to the members of the community. A celebration is a great place to improve self-esteem: when an elder gets to feel important, he will not feel sad and guilty about his possible infirmity, about his inability to deal with the constant stream of incoming information, and the technical novelties of the modern world. Such an elder will become more resilient when coming face-to-face with the stereotypical way of thinking prevalent in today's society, changes, and material problems. A celebration is one of the most pleasurable means of communication, because, by gathering people together, it serves to solve several social problems: a meaningful celebration can be a good alternative to social work in the community (Šinkūnienė, 2012).

The socio-cultural potential of a community can be gleaned from the way people communicate, listen to each other, tidy up their environment (especially before celebrations), while also encouraging people's sense of togetherness, self-expression, creative endeavours, purging the everyday rut people get into while living their life, diving into what's important and valuable in the specific community they are a part of (Spiers, 2003). A celebration is, in a way, a therapeutic initiative, which jolts people out of their everyday routine: it provides them with an "energy charge" of positive emotion, which, in a sense, acts as a method of pain relief. After being removed from everyday life, people forget conflicts, forgive past transgressions, and start admiring others, which allows them to look at their problems from a different point of view. This is an obvious expression of community spirit that is at the centre of what living in a community is all about for both the people who organise celebrations, take part, and evaluate their success (Šinkūnienė, Savickaitė, 2008).

According to their means, social workers help Seniors in long term inpatient care homes to meaningfully plan their leisure activities, encourage them to actively take part in community activities, enabling them to share their personal worries and troubles at the same time. Additionally, social workers should be responsible to self-expression and spiritual improvement, as well as more active and involved life, led by

the elderly they take care of. The social workers in the socio-cultural field represent and support the elderly in a three ways: they act as "enablers," creating situations that give people a chance for communication and self-expression and as "facilitators," helping people overcome obstacles by offering corresponding means and methods. In certain situations, a social worker combines the support sources and acts as a "mediator," he/she has to be able to creatively intertwine different methods and techniques.

While acting in a cultural environment, the social worker must learn to use every celebration and event to maximize the amount of love and hope the elders feel from each word uttered, expression shown, and aestheticized phenomena witnessed. It would be preferred if each member of the community would be an active participant, each person would participate in the creative process according to their capabilities.

Conclusion

Ensuring the communal needs of elderly people, and at the same time reducing the risk of social exclusion, depends on the type of care institution, the competence of social workers, and the variety of methods used: by building institutional traditions, creating a community environment where the people that are being cared for feel comfortable and safe, creating emotional connections.

The opportunity for the elderly to express themselves in artistic/therapeutic activities, engage in self-education, participate in cultural activities and events, the possibility to express personal views, shared common values – trust, gratitude, and respect. Strategies of active and successful ageing should include all meaningful pursuits of artistic activities that contribute to individual health and well-being.

The role of social workers is important, especially in motivating and involving people with greater health constraints to participate in community life, ensuring equal opportunities for a full high-quality time in their old age, spent in a dignified manner.

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