

PROFESSIONAL RECONVERSION AND REINTEGRATION OF THE ELDERLY

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Abstract. In the near future, the dynamics of old age will look completely different than it does now. According to recent research, the idea of retirement will disappear. The pace of work of a person aged 65 plus will slow down, they will work less, they will change their work profile, explore new areas, but most important, they will be involved in income-generating activities. These trends have led to the development of concepts such as professional reconversion and reintegration of the elderly on the labor market. Starting from these data and corroborating them with the statements of the inpatients of “Ana Aslan” National Institute of Gerontology and Geriatrics (NIGG), Otopeni clinic, regarding the effects of retirement and of inactivity, we initiated a project in order to inform and raise awareness about professional reconversion and reintegration of the elderly into income-generating activities. Following the results obtained from the questionnaire and the discussions with the participants, regarding their interest for professional reconversion and reintegration on the labor market, we are motivated to continue the necessary steps for that project to be successful.

Key words: elderly, professional reconversion, reintegration

Rezumat. În viitorul apropiat dinamica vârstei a treia va arăta complet diferit față de prezent. Conform cercetărilor recente, ideea de pensionare va dispărea. Persoana cu vârsta de 65 ani plus o să încetinească ritmul muncii, o să muncească mai puțin, o să își schimbe profilul muncii de-a lungul vieții, o să lucreze în arii noi, dar o să fie implicat în activități generatoare de venit. Aceste tendințe au dus la dezvoltarea conceptelor de reconversie și reintegrare profesională la vârsta a treia. Pornind de la aceste date și coroborându-le cu afirmațiile pacienților internați la INGG „Ana Aslan”, secția Otopeni, privind efectele pensionării și a lipsei de activitate, am demarat un proiect de informare și sensibilizare privind reconversia profesională și reinserarea persoanei de vârsta a treia în activități generatoare de venit. În urma aplicării chestionarului și discuțiilor avute cu pacienții participanți la aplicarea chestionarului, a reieșit un interes pentru reîntoarcerea pe piața muncii și/ sau reconversia profesională, lucru care ne motivează la continuarea pașilor necesari continuării proiectului.

Cuvinte cheie: persoane în vârstă, reconversie profesională, reintegrare

INTRODUCTION

After World War II, the issue of aging has come to the attention of the international community, and has triggered medical and social measures and research and development programs aimed at increasing life expectancy and longevity. At present, life expectancy has increased significantly, and therefore, in 2015, in Western Europe, North America, Canada and Australia, it had reached 80-85 years, and in the African countries, between 50-55 years. Before the 19th century, for the United Kingdom, life expectancy was between 30-40 years [1].

At global level, we are witnessing an increase of the elderly population. According to the statistical data provided by the United Nations Organization, in

2017, the population of the world that was over 60 years old occupied a percentage of 13%. Estimates indicate that, by 2050, this percentage will double, and by 2100, it will triple [2].

At European Union level, in 2017, people over the age of 65 had a weight of 19.4%. It is estimated that, by 2070, it will reach 51.2% [3].

An increasingly older population implies high costs in terms of pension, care and social protection systems, and is determining deeper changes in the way we perceive and approach this stage of life. Many of the modern institutions were built on the idea of retirement. Retirement refers to the period following the interval of time of income-generating activities, before approximately 65 years of age. It is a

period dominated by relaxation activities, which is paid out of the savings and benefits accumulated during the employment phase. Retirement as concept has been developed on a series of elements [4].

At present, 65 years of age does not mean being old and powerless. The 65-year-old person from the beginning of the 20th century is similar to a person who is 75-80 years old at present time. The working pattern has changed; we are not talking that much about physical work, but about intellectual work able to satisfy a person who is over 65. In 2011, in the United States, there were 2 employees who paid taxes of 15,000 \$ each to support 1 retired person. The family structure has changed fundamentally, children are no longer living with their parents, single-parent families are more and more numerous, the divorce rate and consequently the rate of single persons has increased. Loneliness, lack of communication and of motivation is associated with mental and physical health problems that increase the costs of health services.

In the light of demographic, medical, technological, social and psychological changes, this creation of the 20th century, retirement, is likely to disappear towards the middle and/or the end of the 21st century. The dynamics of third age, in the future, will look completely different from how we conceptualize it today. Recent researches outline the idea that the elderly will no longer retire. The pace of their work will slow down, they will work less, they will change their work profile during their life, they will work in new areas, but they will continue to be involved in income-generating activities [5].

These changes have begun to occur. New concepts have been developed, such as reintegration and professional reconversion of the elderly. The professional reconversion during the third age implies the partial or total change of the field of activity and it involves a series of stages:

- identify the training programs and the specialized courses that are suitable for the physical, mental and psychic capacities and for the motivations of the concerned person;

- identify job options.

Romania follows the same trend of increase of the elderly population. In 2017, 17.4% of the total population of Romania was represented by people over 65 years old, 15.0% of the total population of Romania was economically active (more than at EU level), and 35.6% lived alone.

Departing from these globally and universally valid statistical data, and corroborating them with the inherent changes that occur in Romanian society, but also with the patients' statements regarding the effects of retirement and the lack of activity, the idea of developing a project was born: to inform about, and raise the awareness on, professional reconversion and reintegration of the elderly in income-generating activities.

METHODOLOGY

In developing our project, we began by selecting the theme: "to what extent the persons of retirement age, between 64 and 75 years old, admitted at "Ana Aslan" NIGG, Otopeni clinic, are interested in resuming professional activity and in taking professional reconversion courses?"

The general goal of the project is "to facilitate the access of the direct beneficiaries to a standardized program of professional reconversion and reintegration", and the specific goals are:

O.S.1: Inform and raise the awareness of the elderly about the processes of professional reconversion and reintegration;

O.S.2: Carry out professional reconversion courses for the elderly

O.S.3: Facilitate the access of participants to courses on the labor market.

The target group is represented by persons between 65-74 years old, retired, from the urban or rural environment.

In order to analyze the knowledge, skills and behavior of the target group, we

developed a questionnaire concerning their needs (Annex 1), and we corroborated the results with the individual interview in order to gather a series of quantitative data regarding the issues involved, and in order to understand the respondents' perspective.

The gathered data showed us the extent to which such a project is necessary and welcome. The questionnaire was applied between March - May 2019, to 200 persons admitted at "Ana Aslan" NIGG, Otopeni clinic.

Annex 1 – Questionnaire – Retraining

"Ana Aslan" NIGG is conducting a study on the opportunity of professional reconversion for the hiring of retired persons between 65 - 74 years old. Please answer the questions below by circling the variant that suits you and giving the necessary explanations to the questions, where appropriate.

Annex 1 – Questionnaire – Retraining			
1.	Are you interested in working during your retirement period?	YES	NO
2.	If you are NOT interested, what are your reasons?		
If you are not interested, you can stop here and no longer fill in the questionnaire. Thank you!			
3.	If you are interested, what are your reasons?		
4.	Would you be interested in working in the same field that you were active in?	YES	NO
5.	Would you be interested in taking professional reconversion courses?	YES	NO
6.	What are the areas or courses that would appeal to you, should you decide to work again?		
	Computer courses for beginners	YES	NO
	Foreign language courses for beginners	YES	NO
	Babysitter courses	YES	NO
	Cosmetics-facial esthetics courses	YES	NO
	Plumber courses	YES	NO
	Tailoring courses	YES	NO
	Massage courses	YES	NO
	Secretarial-office courses	YES	NO
	Security agent courses	YES	NO
	Decorator florist courses	YES	NO
	Nursing courses	YES	NO
7.	Would you be interested in other areas of activity? Do you have any other proposals?		
	Age: Gender: F/M Environment: R/U Educational level: Financial income: < 1000 lei; 1000 – 2000 lei; > 2000 lei		
Thank you!			

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The structured questionnaire, as a basic tool for need analysis, is developed following two important directions: the declared interest to work during retirement, and the willingness to attend a series of professional reconversion courses. These courses, and a subsequent employment, represent the goal of impact of the project.

The processing and interpretation of the collected data indicate that 72% of the interviewed patients showed interest in working during retirement, as opposed to 28% who stated that working at this stage of their life was no longer of interest to them (Fig. 1).

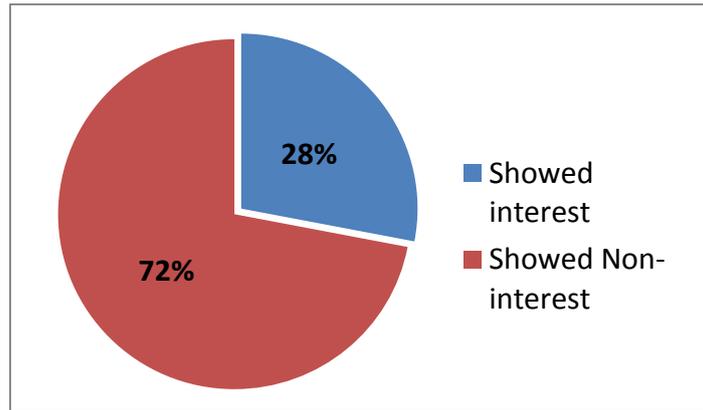


Fig. 1 Distribution of interest

The correlation between the socio-demographic variable and the expressed interest has identified a greater tendency to work of persons coming from the urban environment, compared to those from rural area, but there is high willingness in both environments. Thus, the difference in the urban area is of 78.8% of expressed interest, compared to 21.1% of non-interest, and in the rural area, the difference is of 61.1% to 38.8% (Fig. 2). The higher

proportion of non-interest responses may be found in the different dynamics of life in rural versus urban areas. Living in a house with a yard and garden, having animals and solariums involves a continuous work, an aspect that we do not find in the city, living in a block of flats. It must be mentioned that the respondents come to a greater proportion from the urban area, an aspect that may influence the dynamics of the differences.

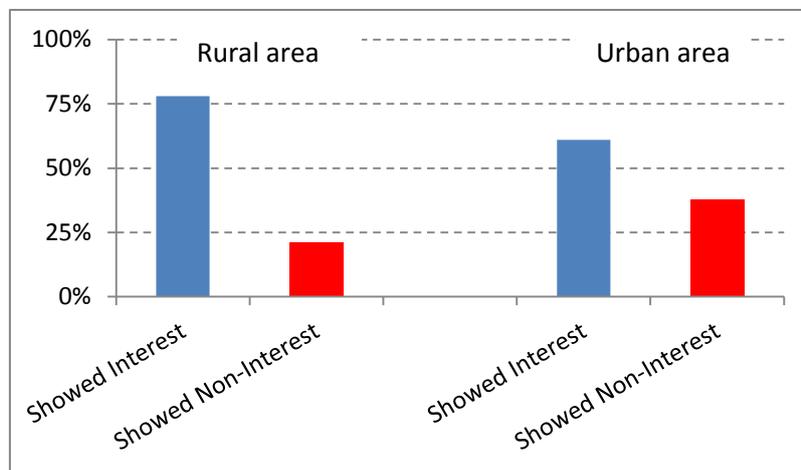


Fig. 2 Distribution of interest per living environments

The correlation between the socio-educational variable-level of education and the interest in working during retirement or not, has helped us collect data that confirm the expressed interest. Thus, we found that,

regardless of the level of training, the respondents show a greater interest in working and in taking professional reconversion courses to support this (Fig. 3).

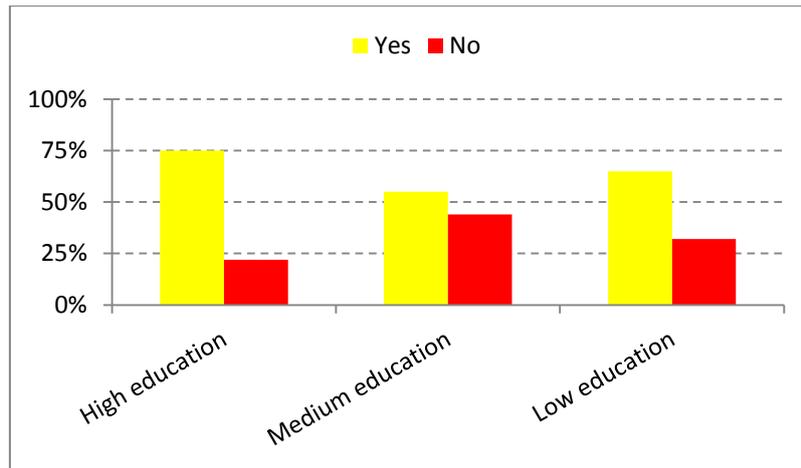


Fig.3 Distribution per educational level

In terms of the gender identity variable, the same tendency could be noticed, but with a greater willingness from female persons to respond positively, compared to males. Thus, out of the total of 30% of the male respondents, 61% responded positively, unlike the female gender, which responded positively in proportion of 77% out of the

total of 70% (Fig. 4). The explanation for this fact may be complex, starting from the pension differences between women and men (men have bigger pensions), passing through family status (single women) and reaching the psychological aspects (greater adaptability of women).

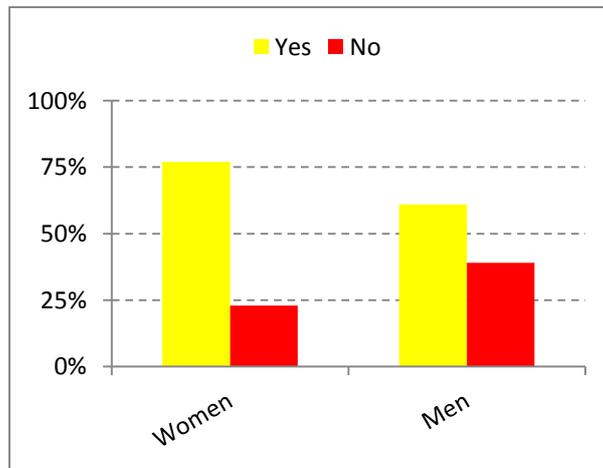


Fig. 4 Distribution per gender

The collected data indicate that, regardless of the educational level, the environment of origin and the gender identity, the respondents show high interest in taking professional reconversion courses and in working during retirement. Moreover, about 96% are interested in such courses even though only 41% of the interested respondents answered that they do not want to work in the field of activity in which they have been active. Regardless of

the area in which they will activate, there is willingness to take such courses.

In structuring the questionnaire, we were also interested in the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation that supports their choices. As regards the persons who have not stated their interest in working, the range of reasons includes three motivational types: the good financial status, the time occupied with caring for their grandchildren or their ill partners, and the existence of health problems. All have an approximately

similar impact on the manifested option (Fig. 5). A greater motivational effect is given by the existing health problems. We must specify that the existing questions did not concern their degree of invalidity. A

further study might focus on this dynamics in order to capture the difference between the existing invalidity and the perceived invalidity.

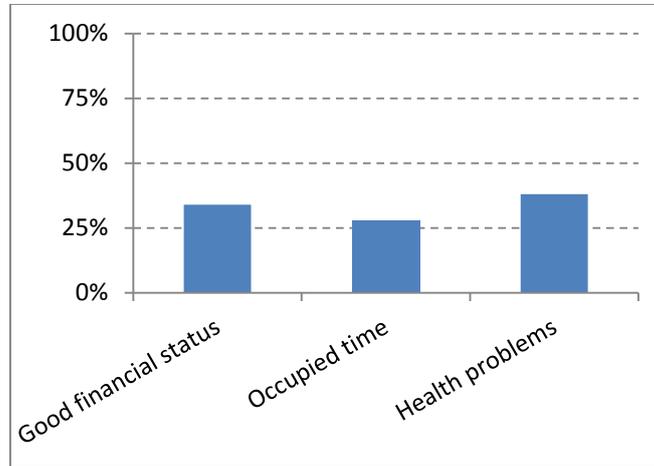


Fig. 5 Distribution of motivational types of persons who declared lack of interest

The motivation based on which the interest to work during retirement has been built consists in two types: the need to occupy their time doing something that matters, and the need for money. The collected data show that the intrinsic motivation is stronger, namely that 59% of the respondents mentioned, as reasons to resume working, the need to give a meaning to life, to occupy their time and to

be active. These aspects provide indications about the identity of the retired person, how they perceive this period of stopping to work, what their needs and interests are. It should be mentioned that only 33% of these respondents have material incomes of over 2000 lei. The remaining others earn average incomes between 1000 and 2000 lei per month.

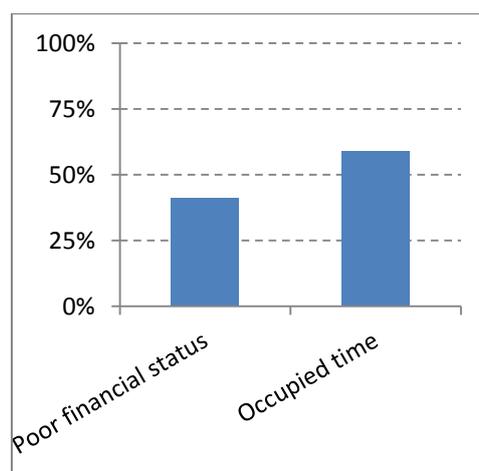


Fig. 6 Distribution of motivational types of persons who showed interest

According to the previous statements, regarding the willingness to take professional reconversion courses, it is a high one, and the respondents showed interest in the proportion of 96%, regardless whether they wish to work in the same field in which they have previously worked or not. The graph of the choices made (Fig. 7) indicates an increased interest for cosmetic courses, in proportion of 27%, and a limited to low interest, of 6-4%, for other types of fields:

floral design, tailoring, secretariat, and plumber. A relatively high weight was obtained by computer and English courses for beginners, respectively of 25% and 8%. It should be mentioned that the interest for these two types of courses cannot be associated in practice with getting a job in these fields, as the acquisitions are limited. However, they represent an indicator of the interests and needs that the elderly are manifesting at present.

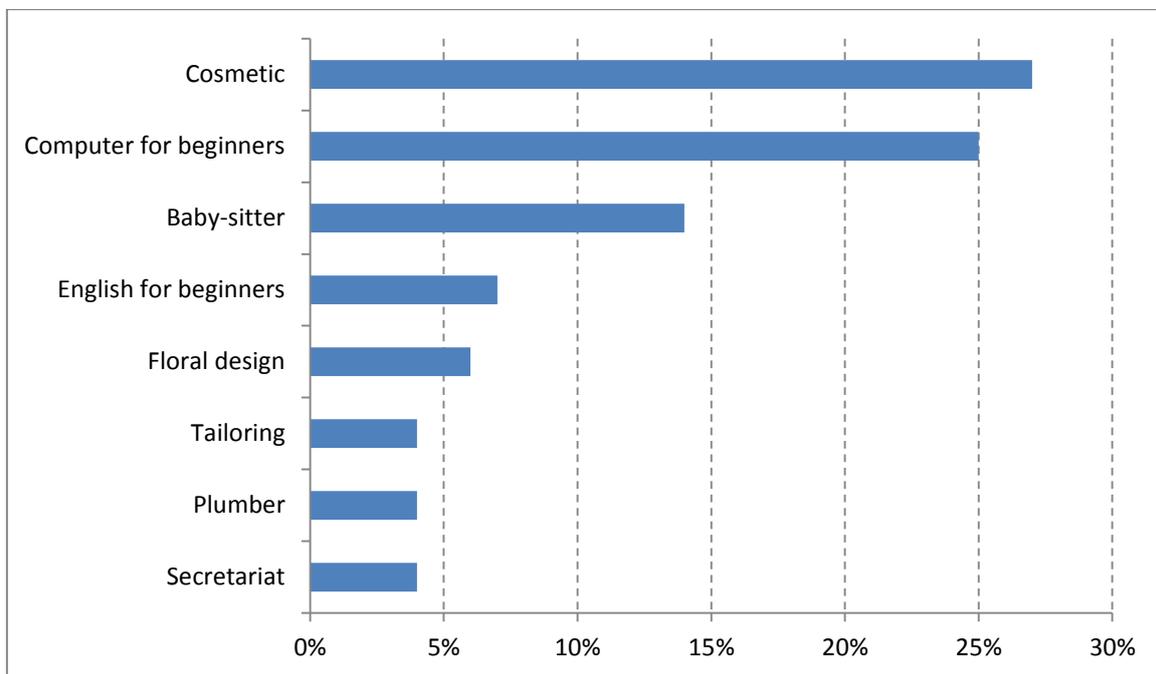


Fig. 7 Distribution of choices

In interpreting the choices made, we acknowledge the existence of gender stereotypes with an influential role. Thus, women predominantly chose types of courses specifically assigned to the female gender - cosmetics, babysitter, floral design, tailoring, while men opted for computer courses (the weight being of 66% M to 34% F), plumber courses. The respondents did not come with personal suggestions regarding the topic of professional reconversion courses.

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVE

- There is interest and willingness for not giving up completely on working after retirement.
- There is interest and willingness for taking professional reconversion courses, regardless of the activity field chosen.
- There is interest and willingness for personal development courses in order to acquire modern acquisitions.
- The interest and the willingness are manifested independently of the socio-demographic variables, such as the environment of origin or the educational level. In both environments, the manifest

tendency is of activation. There is a similar situation in terms of study level as well.

- The female gender shows a higher interest in professional activation during retirement.

- The motivation of the stated interest is predominantly given by the need to occupy free time, to do something that matters. It

is a type of intrinsic motivation. Money is the secondary motivation.

- The motivation of the stated non-interest is predominantly due to the existence of health problems.

- There is a gender stereotyping of the types of courses for which options have been expressed.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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