THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY ON THE QUALITY OF THE LIFE AMONG ELDERLY PEOPLE IN THE MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

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Abstract - The aim of the research is to compare the well-being and social life of people over sixty years of age depending on the degree of national spirituality. The goal is to capture and describe the quality of life and spirituality among the Bhutanese, Norwegian and Chinese populations in comparison with Czech participants, mainly by semi-structured interviews and the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis serving as a tool for evaluating given interviews. For research work, it is crucial to contribute to the understanding of phenomena that can lead to greater seniors' satisfaction, which is important because the amount of these people is still increasing. The current results have shown a big difference between the religion in Norway and Bhutan, the country of happiness. There was found a strong belief in Tibetan Buddhism among Bhutanese participants so far. None of the participants considered himself an atheist or a person with non-religious spirituality. All respondents showed a high level of satisfaction with life, and they often experienced joy. They come from well functional families and are happy with themselves. Norwegian participants are mostly agnostic or non-religious spiritual persons. None of them has proved to be a practicing believer nor a strict atheist. They felt the sense of life primarily in sport and in nature, they often mention cross-country skiing as a way of getting closer to the spirit. Furthermore, the intention is to extend the research on other nations.

Keywords - well-being, spirituality, belief, Christianity, Buddhism, quality of life

I. INTRODUCTION

The topic of this article is the study of the connections between the different types of spirituality and the well-being of the elderly. The research should be based on the findings of the diploma thesis, in which I examined the mental well-being and attitude towards the spirituality of the participants with Czech nationality. The present work extends the acquired knowledge about the multicultural context. This is the inclusion of other nationalities in research. The aim is to capture and describe the quality of life and spirituality in the Bhutanese, Norwegian and Chinese populations in comparison with Czech participants, mainly based on semi-structured interviews and the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis serving as a tool for evaluating given interviews. For research work, it is crucial to contribute to the understanding of phenomena that can lead to greater seniors' satisfaction, which is important since the number of these people is still increasing. In their research, Lun and Bond (2013) found differences in the perception of quality of life and satisfaction, depending on the concept of spirituality in national contexts across all continents. In countries with more widespread spiritual life, a higher level of life satisfaction was found than in countries with a lower degree of spirituality. The positive influence of faith on the feeling of happiness among older people is presented in the Euroamerican sample of respondents Argyle (1999), Blazer and Palmore (1976) and Velasco-Gonzalez and Rioux (2013). Yoon and Lee (2008) also found a positive relationship between spirituality, religiosity, social support and well-being in the elderly, which is in line with the research findings of my previous diploma thesis focusing on wellbeing and spirituality in the Czech population (Tronečková, 2016). Fry (2010), who found that religiosity and spirituality contribute significantly to the mental well-being of older people, came to similar conclusions.

However, in some researches with Euro-American respondents, the positive effect of spirituality on the well-being of seniors was not found. An example is the Telliys-Nayaka study (1982). McFadden (1995), in his study, states that religiosity may in some cases also act negatively. Conclusions of the Vidovičová and Suchomelová (2013) research aimed at Czech respondents show that religious seniors do not have a higher quality of life, and impaired subjective health is associated with a higher religiosity/spirituality that was religiously considered in their research. Courtenay et al. (1992) did not find the relationship between mental well-being and spirituality in his study. In my present work, I deal with more of these confusions stemming from the researches mentioned above. I focus more on the quality of life and spirituality of selected nationalities. The work can find out what contributes to the elderly's life satisfaction regarding different kinds of spirituality and cultural differences, which due to population aging and multicultural development is a relatively actual topic.

Vohralíková and Rabušic (2004) and Říčan (2007) agree that people of senior age are constantly growing and humanity is the oldest in its entire history. Usually, in old age, there is a desire to get closer to God, for it is the age when one is closer to death (Sale and Khan, 2015). That is why I consider it a matter of dealing with the research with the spirituality of older people at selected nationalitie

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

2.1. The aims of the thesis and the research question

The research focuses on the exploration and description of the connections between the different types of spirituality and the quality of life of seniors. From this broad range of work, the aim is to describe the important relationships of seniors to their spiritual life and personal satisfaction in a multicultural context. The research work intends to contribute to understanding the factors that can lead to greater seniors' satisfaction, which is important because these people are still increasing. By capturing the unique experience of spirituality in the context of quality of life. In the research, I could consider the possible inclusion of more than two ethnicities according to the context of the results. To achieve the research goal, the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen as a research strategy. The research question is: What is the experience with experiencing the quality of life among seniors with different types of spirituality in a multicultural concept?

2.2. Research file

Respondents in the research should characterize the given ethnicity. Respondents must be senior citizens, i.e., over sixty years old. In the research, there should be 12 from each country, including six women and six men. The choice of respondent takes place using the snowball method. The condition is also the possibility of conducting an interview in English. Another criterion for the selection of respondents of all nationalities is education and the number of children. All respondents should have high school education and 2 to 3 children. Respondents from this research should live in marriage and a common household. Thanks to these criteria, greater sample homogeneity will be guaranteed, which is desirable for the interpretive phenomenological analysis that is used for this research (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009).

2.3. Method of collecting and processing research data

For this research, a qualitative approach was chosen, which corresponds to the type of problem being investigated, i.e., a case study (Yin, 2014). As a kind of qualitative approach, an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is used. It is an approach that provides more space for creativity and freedom of research than other qualitative approaches (Willig, 2001). Experience is understood here as the result of sharing the researcher and the participant, while both views should be and clear. However, the goal is the lived experience of the participant (Larkin, Watts, and Clifton, 2006). Thanks to the IPA, it is possible to look for common denominators and differences of the studied ethnicity. I obtained the data for my diploma thesis in semi-structured interviews, which is also recommended by IPA (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). In the same way, I proceed in the research. The questions in this research are divided into five areas covering life satisfaction and spirituality. The origins of this division are the Areas of Life as a source of life satisfaction (Hawis and Fahrberg), where life satisfaction includes intimate relationships, relationship to one's own person, relationship to the environment, social relationships, and spirituality. The issues of this research should reflect the area. For new respondents, I use similar questions that were created together with prof. PhDr. Vladimír Smékal, CSc. for the diploma thesis. I was also inspired by the questionnaires called Expressions of Spirituality Inventory (MacDonald, 2000) and The Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989; Ryff and Keyes, 1995). In some areas, however, questions will be more specifically specified to address the issue of quality of life more fully. For more detailed information on the respondent, I also administer The Life line method according to Tyl (1985). The Living Environment Scheme as a source of life satisfaction (Hawis and Fahrberg)[1] should serve as an orientation point for the interview, as well as for the orientation of the participants, with whom I develop the issues within each area. However, the resulting IPA does not hold the original ones, and the topics in the interview analysis are determined independently of the original scheme. Classification of participants' topics corresponds to IPA requirements (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

The data are processed using an audio recording, which according to Miovsky (2006) can capture all the qualities of the spoken word, is impartial and completely authentic. This method is therefore perfectly suitable for this research.

III. RESULTS

A sample of the Czech population found (Tronečková, 2016) that most of the participants were agnostics and persons with non-religious spirituality. Only two respondents experienced intense spirituality and showed satisfaction with life and with themselves. Healthy feel good. Other participants searched for the meaning of life difficult and also experienced less joy, support them are children, but the marriage tends to be a rather problematic. These respondents tend to be less satisfied with themselves. They complain about their health and the economic situation regarding a bad functioning state. Most of the participants were forced to go to church in their childhood, which deepened their dislike for the church.

[1] The scheme was provided for this research by prof. PhDr. Vladimír Smékal, CSc.

The year of creating this schema could not be traced.

For Bhutan participants, a firm belief in Tibetan Buddhism has so far been found. None of the participants considered himself an atheist or a person with an unreligious spirituality. All respondents showed a high level of satisfaction with life and often enjoyed joy. They come from working families and are happy with themselves. They often refer to personal questions about the Buddha's teachings, which help them solve their life situations satisfactorily. There is a great humility among respondents, an effort to help and take care of the other and a tendency to adhere to Buddhist rules. Most of them regularly pray for an hour and a half in the morning and for an hour and a half in the evening. Norwegian respondents are mostly agnostics and persons with non-religious spirituality. None of them appeared as a practicing believer or as a strict atheist. The meaning of life is mainly seen in sports and nature, often mentions cross-country skiing as a way of getting closer to the spirit and way of meditation. They are more skeptical about direct faith, but they do not strictly deny religious things. Most of them are not concerned with the question of spiritual life; their reflection is reflected in the uncertainty of the future. Respondents are predominantly open to different viewpoints and do not strictly disclose their views. About half of them are happy with family life. They rate themselves satisfactorily but see big gaps in where they are now and where they want to get.

Themes that crossed across the groups of studied nations are spirituality, contentment, interpersonal relationships, and approach to life. Common themes and subtopics based on IPA for given nationalities are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Topics based on IPA for given nationalities

1. Spirituality			
	Czech Republic	Bhutan	Norway
Inner Spiritual Experience		*	
Openness to religion		*	*
bligation to go to the church	*	*	
Meditation and prayer		*	*
Spiritual elder age		*	
Religious foundation		*	
2. Satisfaction			
	Czech Republic	Bhutan	Norway
Satisfaction with oneself	*	*	
Everyday joy	*	*	*
Self-sufficiency	*	*	*
Physical health	*		*
3. Interpersonal relationships			
	Czech Republic	Bhutan	Norway
Family background	*	*	*
Happy marriage	*	*	*
Caring for others	*	*	*
4. Attitude to life			
	Czech Republic	Bhutan	Norway
Freedom	*	*	*
Satisfied view of the world	*	*	*
Meaning of life	*	*	*
Volunteering			*

IV. DISCUSSION

The research data was made up of twelve semi-structured interviews with the respondents from each country. The interviews were processed utilizing an interpretative phenomenological analysis, which gave rise to several themes and subtopics for each group of respondents. Themes that appeared across the groups of chosen nations are spirituality, contentment, interpersonal relationships, and access to life. Bhutan, the constitutional monarchy, known as the Land of Happiness, has a deeply rooted Tibetan Buddhism. GHN (Great National Happiness) became popular and it is prioritized over GNP (Gross National Product). The most important in the functioning of the country is the inner and spiritual experience of the happiness of the population, which is often recognized simply by the smiling face (Tshering, 2013).

Norway, the constitutional monarchy, is one of the richest countries in the world with the strongest economy and social security. According to the World

Happiness Report (2017), it is the happiest country in the World. The economic situation, health care, social security are taken into account. Therefore, the results are based on the Euro-American perception of happiness based on material values. The Czech Republic ranks 58th and Bhutan 97th. In Bhutan, the Euro-American material concept of happiness is not as important as the inner and spiritual experience of happiness. So far, the results of the research do not correspond to the World Happiness Report (2017), but the content of the participants shows life satisfaction mainly with Bhutanese, although their material security is not high. Support in their happiness is in Buddhism. They try to live according to dharma, including gratitude for life, humility, helping others, and experience joy. Norwegian respondents do not complain about the conditions in their lives; they often mention that they are sufficiently secure, which corresponds to the results of the World Happiness Report (2017).

They often find the sense in their lives in nature and cross-country skiing, which may correspond with their good physical health. Satisfaction with oneself is manifested in only a few of them. Spirituality is not an important part of their life. Czech participants mostly find difficult to experience daily joy and a sense of life. They find their support in the family. They often complain about their lives and economic situation and politics.

The results so far are consistent with findings from the research conducted by Lun and Bond (2013). They found differences in the perception of quality of life and satisfaction depending on the concept of spirituality in national contexts across all continents. In countries with more widespread spiritual life, a higher level of life satisfaction was found than in countries with a lower degree of spirituality. The results are influenced by the researcher's personality and its context of life. Another limitation is the willingness to answer the questions because some respondents could partly conceal their true stories and the answers could be distortive. The limit was also the choice of respondents when they were chosen by the snowball method as part of the selection.

Research in the countries will continue and will be extended to other participants. At the same time, research will be launched in China where is a different concept of spirituality, which is reflected in the diversity of cultures. The final research will then be able to reflect on their experience with spirituality and life satisfaction with selected participants, with an emphasis on cultural and religious differences in the countries of the world.

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