



Universities for Seniority: A New Perspective of Aging

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Authors DP and FBBC designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors GAR and DSP managed the analyses of the study. Authors DNS and MAA managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJESS/2020/v10i230267

Editor(s):

(1) Dr. Nasser Mustapha, University of the West Indies, Trinidad.

Reviewers:

(1) Roghayeh Mehdipour-Rabori, Kerman Medical University, Iran.

(2) Sumitra Melinamani, Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, India.

(3) J. V. N. Lakshmi, Jain University, India.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/59031>

Review Article

**Received 22 May 2020
Accepted 28 July 2020
Published 27 August 2020**

ABSTRACT

Universities for the elderly are places focused on learning, well-being, and quality of life of the elderly which ensures healthier aging. Objective: To describe the contributions of universities of the elderly to the healthy aging of their participants. Methodology: The work is characterized as bibliographic research. Regarding inclusion criteria, the bibliographic study included national journals on the theme, of the free access databases SCIELO and LILACS from 2008 to 2018. Results: Social experiences in universities promote the elderly a pleasurable old age, with socialization, the maintenance of friendships, self-knowledge, self-esteem, learning, the satisfaction of living. All this helps in coping with crises and losses of this phase and enables successful aging. Final considerations: given what was raised, it is concluded that the participation of the elderly in a university for the elderly contributes positively to a better quality of life in the aging process. This is because these sites offer the elderly the opportunity to live in a pleasurable and healthier way, as well as favors in maintaining biopsychosocial well-being.

Keywords: Aging; University for seniors; elderly; quality of life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Aging can be conceptualized as a series of biopsychosocial changes that transform the individual throughout his life. It is a natural process p, where each age in a different way, according to factors in his life history, such as genetics, the Estilo adopted throughout his life, access to health services, and socioeconomic conditions [1]. Even a person with high age (over 85+) has all the possibilities to learn and enjoy learning. There is decline in some areas of cognitive capacity but cognition on the whole is well preserved and makes it possible to continue a normal good life and lifelong learning. E.g. life experience and wisdom compensate cognitive decline [2,3].

With the increase in the elderly population in Brazil, it increasingly reinforces the creation of public policies, intending to offer decent aging to this age segment. Models of programs aimed at the well-being of the elderly have proved practical alternatives to remove the elderly from isolation and obtain positive results about the prognosis of old age. In this perspective, Moliterno, et al. [4], universities for the elderly arise, places focused on the reception, dignity, and quality of life of the elderly and ensures greater social integration, knowledge, and healthier life.

These universities in the context of aging aim to review prejudices regarding old age, increase self-esteem and the rescue of citizenship, encourage autonomy, self-knowledge, and social reintegration in search of a successful old age and productivity. They consider aging as a natural process and that needs to be well-lived as a phase in which it is possible to enjoy in a pleasurable way, emphasizing the good aging [5].

According to Eltz [6], the goal of the University of The Third Age is to provide the elderly with a better quality of life, offer training, leisure opportunity, and socialization, maintain autonomy and independence physical, social, emotional, and intellectual. It also aims to develop actions that promote the integration of older people with the community in general. The author mentions that the participation of the elderly in these universities increased over the years, these programs have been arousing the interest of this population, probably because they

represent one of the few possibilities of significant experience in the scope of well-being [7].

Because of the benefits of these programs for seniors, Simoneau and Oliveira [8] points out that these spaces seek a different alternative for the elderly to occupy their free time in a cultural, social and sports way. It aims at the opportunity of integration, coexistence, and strengthening of new friendships, thinking, doing, the acquisition of new knowledge, enables the increase of self-esteem and contributes significantly to the improvement of quality of life. The first university for the elderly emerged in 1973 in France, to take the elderly out of isolation, provide health, interest i9 life, and modifying their image before society [6]. Currently, these programs are not limited only to taking the elderly out of loneliness, today the universities focused on this age group, assume a role of permanent education, because it encourages the elderly to use their cognitive functions, and causes them to acquire and update their knowledge.

The authors mentioned above, Irigaray and Schneider [9], describe that the role of education for the elderly within a university is quite important because this process of education and learning is not entertainment for the elderly, but, moreover, serves so that the elderly regardless of their chronological age, can maintain their normal levels of cognitive functioning and development, also offers values to the elderly regarding their rights and opportunities, which contributes even more to their appreciation, and participation in society as a conscious citizen, promoting more autonomy, trust and as a consequence the quality of life.

In addition to learning, the university for the elderly promotes biopsychosocial and spiritual self-knowledge, objective among other initiatives, the improvement in the quality of life and well-being for those who age, reconstruct the conception of old age, strengthen the conception of old age, strengthen the conception family and social relationships contribute to the maintenance of the functionality and autonomy of the elderly, raising their self-esteem and rescuing social participation, consciously and critically, providing its participants with a successful old age and Productive. In summary, the elderly participants seek, in these programs, to satisfy the desire to obtain new knowledge, to be

updated, to gain their citizenship, to be part of the modern world, and develop in it with health and quality of life [10]. Because it perceives this importance about the way a university for the elderly public looks at the aging process, bibliographic research was conducted to describe the contributions of universities from the elderly to the healthy aging of their participants.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This work is characterized as bibliographic research, considering that relevant information on the proposed theme was investigated in the literature. The search method used consisted of the use of the following descriptors: Aging; university for seniority, quality of life in the elderly.

As for the inclusion criteria, the bibliographic study included national journals on the theme, of the free access databases SCIELO and LILACS from 2008 to 2018.

Regarding the exclusion criteria, the bibliographic study excluded materials that do not meet the inclusion criteria mentioned above.

The selected 30 scientific articles were analyzed in which 12 articles were used in this study because they corresponded to the central theme and because they fit within the inclusion criteria. After the selection of scientific articles, we sought citations of relevance to complete the result obtained in the research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using the analysis of bibliographic research allowed describing the contributions of universities of the elderly to the healthy aging of the elderly participants. We can emphasize that living in this environment favors the elderly to increase life satisfaction, improve health and cognitive skills, provides the opportunity to obtain emotional support, and acquire knowledge, which can have important effects in coping with the challenges related to aging. In his study on well-being in universities for the elderly, Cachioni [11] stresses that the benefits of the activities involved in these places go beyond improving cognitive functions, as they affect other aspects, such as well-being and health, as well as the increase in social contacts which, in turn, has a positive influence. It also states that living with people of their generation favors the psychosocial adjustment of the elderly because it

facilitates the emergence of common meanings and greater interpersonal approximation.

In one study, where the objective was to understand the perception about aging by elderly people attending the Open University of the Third Age, Dátilo and Marin [12], found that the elderly participants had a perception of aging as a process of gains and losses, and the most important thing was that they recognized that, even with the changes that make them slower and less agile, they can strengthen themselves concerning social and cultural aspects to living better, with more health, experiencing what they believed to be a healthy old age.

Dawalibi, et al. [13], researched with quality of life with 182 elderly participants from 3 universities for the elderly and concluded their study emphasizing that the elderly studied differentiated from the elderly of the general population to age with quality of life, to seek access to knowledge, to have health care, to be an active subject in society.

It is of paramount importance for the elderly to remain active, stimulate affective, cognitive, and social life. Maintain and cultivate friendships and ties with the family, participate in actions of health promotion, physical and mental well-being, and social interaction, in which Alves and Lopes [14] state that these are the proposals of a university for the elderly that has as main objective to provide improvements in the quality of life of the elderly.

The research of Binotto, et al. [15], on the evaluation of a university for the elderly, recognizes that this program provides development and gains both individual and collective and allows the expression and construction of different ways of thinking, feeling and experiencing old age. Also, it promotes health, psychological, social well-being, and citizenship of the elderly contributes to the acquisition of new knowledge, new friendships, the new meaning of life, help in the occupation of free time and leisure. In the same study, the authors show that participation in the university caused the elderly fewer feelings of loneliness, better self-esteem, more joy, and pleasure in living.

Social experiences in universities promote the elderly a pleasurable old age, with socialization, the maintenance of friendships, self-knowledge, self-esteem, learning, the satisfaction of living. All

this helps in coping with crises and losses of this phase and enables successful aging.

As can be observed in the bibliography, universities for the elderly, lead this public to have a motivation to participate and seek new opportunities and new knowledge. It also raises a reflection of a new sense of life and aging. The elderly participants are active subjects, occupy their free time in a pleasurable way, with leisure, cultural, physical, and social activities. This university and the elderly favor a good quality of life and a minor presence of depressive symptoms.

Regarding the changes observed in the data, the elderly participants of universities felt less alone, had better self-esteem, acquired new knowledge, presented more joy and pleasure in living, which allows new meaning to old age. The highlighted changes point mainly to the improvement of personal aspects, such as valorization and interior cement.

4. CONCLUSION

Given what was raised, it is concluded that the participation of the elderly in a university, contributes positively to a better quality of life in the aging process. This is because these sites offer the elderly the opportunity to live in a pleasurable and healthier way and favor the maintenance of biopsychosocial well-being. Participation in a university for the elderly brings benefits in the personal, intellectual, and social areas. There is also a positive change in the conception of aging, in the care of its health.

There is no doubt that the offer of activities in Universities Open for The Elderly is a valuable strategy to improve the quality of life of this public, especially in regions with leisure and cultural opportunities. However, there is a need to create public policies and strategies aimed at the social integration of the elderly so that everyone can enjoy different intervention programs and actions that contemplate the exercise of citizenship, and that meet the different demands, pertinent to the aging process, promoting health and avoiding the prejudice and discrimination of the elderly.

It is also suggested that there are more studies focused on the quality of life in aging, aiming at understanding this process under different perspectives. Develop new strategies for the maintenance and improvement of these programs, such as increasing the frequency of

dissemination of activities carried out at the university so that more older people are contemplated and participate actively.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:

*The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
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