
SOCIAL ASPECT OF HUMAN BEING

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Age Discrimination as a Threat to the Anthropological Absolute of Human Being (Using the Pandemic Crisis as an Example)

Purpose. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the anthropological and socio-philosophical dimensions of human existence of the older age group given the challenges of pandemic threats caused by COVID-19. To this end, it is planned to solve a number of tasks, among which one should distinguish the following: 1) to investigate the manifestations of age discrimination in the context of the social and labor areas of human existence; 2) to focus on the asymmetry of the behavior of society and the state relative to persons of the older age group in the field of healthcare in the context of a pandemic crisis; 3) to represent the anthropological features of changes in the socialization and activity of older people under the current conditions of globalization-pandemic challenges. **Theoretical basis.** Despite such a broad representation of the age-related issue in public relations, there are still no practical guarantees that would apply to discriminatory aspects of older age groups in various areas of their manifestation. The synergistic evolution of social reality requires substantive analysis of the issue under the current conditions for the transformation of social life, which is affected by globalization crises caused by the pandemic threats of COVID-19. **Originality.** The stereotypical assumptions underlying legal policy and established social relations are based solely on the application of chronological age. The novelty is in justifying an individual approach to the elderly through the personification of the personal characteristics of a person. The study of anthropological and socio-philosophical dimensions of the existence of a person of the older age group in the face of the challenges of pandemic threats caused by COVID-19 has made it possible to analyze the destructive nature of age discrimination in the context of the social and labor areas of human existence. As well as focus on the asymmetry of the behavior of society and the state in relation to these persons in the field of health care, and emphasize the anthropological features of changes in the socialization and human activity under the current conditions of globalization-pandemic challenges. **Conclusions.** External threats to human existence call for special attention to the implementation and protection of human rights, freedoms, individual freedoms, and identity. Pandemic threats have transformed all dimensions of human existence, especially for those groups of society that are less socially protected. The pandemic crisis has created additional grounds for discrimination against older people in various areas of human existence. Equalization of persons by age without personifying the personal characteristics of an individual is discrimination on an age basis, which violates the principles of democracy and humanism in the society, leads to stigmatization of the person, is the cause of the anthropological crisis of a person.

Keywords: pandemic; COVID-19; anthropological area; human existence; human rights; civil society; the state; anthropological crisis

Introduction

Infringement of rights, humiliation, giving preference to others are manifestations of discrimination, which is an important problem of modern society since it expresses encroachment on individuality, democratism, humanism, equality, and other value-based categories formed by mankind over a long time of its evolution. Non-discrimination and equality are the basic concepts of the spiritual culture of mankind, are an absolute of the development of the anthropological essence of the individual. Equality is an established philosophical intensity that is beyond

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doubt, implying the existence of absolute truth in humans. Discrimination affects the very essence of a person, violating internal imperatives and overcoming his/her individualization, due to external rejection of human identity.

Discrimination should be understood as a broad phenomenon that includes "a variety of forms (types) of guidelines and actions that lead to differences and advantages (inequalities) towards people on any grounds that are incompatible with the idea of dignity, which is inherent in every member of the human family with equal and inalienable rights" (Kapustin, 2003, p. 16).

Everyone has the right to the same attitude, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, caste, religion, beliefs, gender, language, sexual orientation, sexual identity, sexual characteristics, age, health, etc. only on the basis that s/he is a self-sufficient person and has individual dignity. However, social stereotypes often violate the individual value of a person only on the basis that s/he belongs to the "other group".

Age-related discrimination is a particularly pressing issue of our time. Ageism is the stereotypical, prejudice, and discrimination of people by age, which leads to devastating consequences for society in general and individuals in particular. Age-related discrimination incurs the idea of the value of the timeless absolute of the human being.

Effective protection against discrimination is a monumental task at the state level. First of all, it relates to the problem of equality and human rights violations in the context of new social and economic challenges. The global COVID pandemic has transformed much of our lives, putting a disproportionate burden on all, and especially, discriminated groups, including racial minorities, low-income communities, and the elderly. Even though adults bear a significant part of the social burden caused by COVID-19, for the most part, they have remained outside state politics and civic discourse.

Age-related discrimination has been considered in the scientific literature in detail. Depending on the characteristics of age, experts focus their attention on the status of the child in society, for example in the school environment, by E. Hargreaves, L. Quick, and D. Buchanan (2021), and in the field of health care, by J. Yang-Huang, A. van Grieken, Y. You, V. W V Jaddoe, E. A. Steegers, L. Duijts, M. Boelens, W. Jansen, and H. Raat (2021).

As regards the social status of the elderly, it was also analyzed quite deep within certain areas of knowledge, countries, and fields of research, in particular, by K. Terrell, E. Brynjolfsson, J. Horton, A. Ozimek, D. Rock, G. Sharma, H. Y. T. Ye in the field of labor; by D. O'Shea, H. H. P. Kluge, S. Harper in medicine.

At the same time, despite such a wide representation of the age issue, there are still no comprehensive developments in public relations that would concern discriminatory aspects of older age groups in various areas of their manifestation. The synergistic evolution of social reality requires substantive analysis of the issue under the current conditions of transformation of social life, which is affected by globalization crises caused by the pandemic threats of COVID-19.

Purpose

This paper aims to study the anthropological and socio-philosophical dimensions of the existence of older age groups in the face of the challenges related to pandemic threats caused by COVID-19. To this end, it is necessary to solve a number of tasks, among which one should distinguish the following: 1) to investigate the manifestations of age discrimination in the context of the social and labor area of human existence; 2) to focus on the asymmetry of the behavior of society and the state in relation to persons of the older age group in the field of healthcare in the

context of a pandemic crisis; 3) to reflect the anthropological features of changes in the socialization and activity of older people given the current conditions of globalization-pandemic challenges.

Statement of basic materials

Age-related discrimination is due to the fact that regardless of age, any person can confirm the impact of this circumstance. However, the problem of discrimination is especially significant for older age groups since the increased life expectancy, the larger group of elderly people create an additional burden on the state and society. The Statistics Office of the European Union shows that 17 percent of Europeans were aged 65 not so long ago but forecasts predict doubling this figure – the number could increase to 30 percent in 2060 (European Commission, 2011). Life expectancy in all developed countries increases while fertility decreases. The general development of science and technology has caused the overall growth of people's lives. Life expectancy has increased to 70 years or more in many countries while the overall fertility rate over the past seven decades has decreased from 5 to 2.5; for the first time, individuals over the age of 60 exceeded the number of children under the age of five (Global Future Council on Longevity, 2020, p. 3).

That changes the whole established structure of human existence. According to EU analytics, it is becoming "increasingly gray" as a result of dynamic changes in fertility and life expectancy and there is considerable pressure on the economic, social, and competitive potential of the EU. Note that huge efforts are being made at the EU level to encourage the full participation of all age groups in a diversity of potentials in order to encourage active and healthy aging (European Commission, 2020). Trends in the aging of the inhabitants of the planet Earth are essential and cause consequences for many aspects of modern life: the labor market, technology in the workplace, consumer behavior, social security system, national health measures, and economic indicators of state growth in general.

Among the most common signs of discrimination, it is age-related discrimination that is one of the most common. The survey once again proved that ageism (age-related discrimination) is the most common practice of discrimination in Europe for each age group. Thirty-five percent of respondents reported being treated unfairly based on age; more than gender-related (25 %) and race/ethnicity-based (17 %) (Abrams, Russell, Vauclair, & Swift, 2011). The 2019 Eurobarometer Report on Discrimination in the EU confirms that 40 % of people in the EU are convinced of the significant spread of age-related discrimination in their countries (Directorate-General for Communication, 2019, p. 75).

Age-related discrimination is contrary to the anthropological nature of a person due to the indignation of the authenticity of an individual by the generalization of it to the general factor. Thus, the personality's own authentic nature is neutralized under the influence of the general social stigmatization of a group of older people as physically and mentally incapable and requiring excessive additional guarantees from society. Discrimination provokes the inability to realize a person's autonomy, destroys personalization, and makes people susceptible to external influences.

The stereotypical assumptions underlying legal policy and established social relations are based solely on the application of chronological age. Using age only as a criterion for decision-making is fundamentally wrong. Age-related discrimination tends to depict all older people as the same. In fact, the issue of age discrimination has a long history and is not eradicated, despite

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the presence of international and national legal regulations prohibiting a direct or indirect form of discrimination (Bazaluk, 2021). The problem is the intensification of discrimination caused by pandemic threats. The elderly are portrayed as in need of protection, especially vulnerable and weak, etc. The pandemic has turned them into victims of discrimination and isolation. The authority of the individual decision has ceased to be dominant, legal policy imposes age restrictions.

The British Society of Gerontologists sharply denies any policy that differentiates the population by applying an arbitrary chronological age to restrict the rights and freedoms of people: "We call on the government to reject the wording and implementation of policies based on the simple application of chronological age. We also urge government and media organizations to be cautious about language use" (BSG, 2020).

The impact of the pandemic crisis is especially painful in three areas of social life: labor, health care, and communication. Let us investigate them in more detail.

Age-related discrimination in the social and labor area of human existence

The issue of discrimination against the elderly in the field of labor has long been the subject of scientific analysis and legislative preventive measures. For example, in the United States, The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (1967) has been in force since 1967 and is intended to counteract discrimination against people over the age of 40. Since 2000, the European Union has enacted the directive ("Council Directive", 2000), which prohibits, among other things, age-related discrimination in the field of labor and occupation, including on an age basis. The key to normative regulation is to achieve the principle of equal treatment, which means the absence of any form of direct or indirect discrimination. However, despite the existence of normative regulation, even in a pre-pandemic society the issue has become significantly widespread. In 2018, a survey by the American Association of Retired Persons confirmed that nearly one in four employees over the age of 45 experienced negative comments about their age, and one in five employees saw or experienced age-related discrimination in the workplace (Verel, 2020).

The problem has become critical due to the economic threats of the pandemic. As an example, according to AARP, "during the first six months of the pandemic, workers aged 55 years and older were 17 percent more likely to lose their jobs than employees who were several years younger" (Terrell, 2020). The older age began to act as a criterion for limiting the right to work of people.

Not only the loss of work but also technical mobility has become an obstacle in the field of work since many elderly people do not have sufficient skills to dramatically change working conditions. In early April 2020, approximately 40 % of U.S. workers aged 25-34 began working at home as a result of the pandemic; however, only about 30 % of older workers (aged 65+) were able to work from home (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020).

At the same time, such an unambiguous general position on the primary dismissal of retirement age persons is not justified since such people often have the highest professional qualifications, significant practice, and a high level of responsibility. Moreover, according to the AARP report for 2019 "Longevity Economics", people over the age of 50 contribute USD 8.3 trillion annually to the U.S. economy, which is about 40 percent of U.S. GDP. According to the same report, "the potential economic contribution of people over 50 can increase by USD 3.9 trillion annually in an economy without age-related biases, which would mean a contribution of USD 32.1 trillion to the GDP by 2050" (Accius & Suh, 2020).

In a health crisis, it was older people who practically saved the medical system from collapse. For example, in Ireland, there was a national "call" for retired medical staff (doctors, nurses) to

return to work. The Be Call for Ireland initiative was launched by Prime Minister Varadkar; 24,000 applications were received in three days. In March 2020, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio called on retired doctors to take part in volunteer activities. In one day, 1,000 doctors of retirement age responded (Marsh, 2020). In total, almost 37 thousand doctors returned to their workplace in the UK (BMA, 2020).

Age-related discrimination in healthcare

Older people are at increased risk due to the significant mortality from COVID-19 and the negative impact of concomitant diseases. According to medical statistics, more than 95 % of those deaths occurred in persons over 60. More than 50 % of all the dead were people over the age of 80. 8 out of 10 deaths occur in individuals with at least one concomitant incidence, including cardiovascular disease/hypertension and diabetes, but also with a number of other chronic diseases (Kluge, 2020). In addition, the WHO Regional Center for Europe in its reports indicated that adults over 60 years of age have worse symptoms, including pneumonia, with a much higher mortality rate than young people (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

The health care system of all states, including economically developed ones, cannot fully cope with the pandemic waves of disease activation. With a significant number of patients, doctors are forced to choose priority patients. Such messages came from Italy, Spain, Portugal, and other countries ("Spanish Doctors", 2020).

According to the older criterion, patients over 60 years of age remain discriminated against. As O'Shea (2020) points out, it is troubling that other states report that when it comes to deciding on available treatments – whether home aids or medications, or oxygen – only age has been used as a criterion.

During this pandemic, we must remember that, like every age group in society, the elderly are a very heterogeneous group. We must be careful not to refer all elderly people to one large "homogeneous" group. Attrition of all elderly to vulnerable, weak, and passive patients is obviously wrong and inappropriate.

Age-related discrimination in the social and communication area

Since older age groups are at risk of increased mortality from COVID-19, there are regulatory recommendations (even legal requirements) for their complete self-isolation at home. This leads to a distinction in attitude towards people. For example, in Ukraine, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers "On preventing the spread of acute respiratory disease COVID-19 caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2" of March 11, 2020 (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020) required self-isolation of persons older than 60 years.

The problem is not only related to discrimination on the right to movement but also the possibilities of communication and social activity. Even before the pandemic, reports showed that many older people were already more socially isolated and felt lonelier than the rest of the population. Coronavirus containment measures, including physical distancing, restriction of movement, and social gatherings, increased the risk of social isolation and loneliness (Akinola, 2020).

Protecting the elderly from the effects of COVID-19 through social distance creates the potential for social isolation and loneliness, which can negatively affect their mental and physical health. During a pandemic, adults are becoming more isolated and socially separated, especially older adults who are geographically distant from family members. Many older people who rely

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on social contacts from community centers and places of worship also experience significant disruption in their social media and relationships (Armitage & Nellums, 2020).

In addition, this normative approach excludes the principle of individualization and personalization of a person. Not always such age restrictions meet the medical need. Gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and concomitant diseases also constitute a significant factor in mortality but it is not taken into consideration in the state legal policy on social isolation. Experts say that "overall, women have a 5-year advantage over men in relation to risk". In addition, the existing disease increases this risk, therefore, for example, both men and women aged 50-60 years have about 4 times the weighted average gender risk of death at that age if they have chronic kidney disease, and 3-4 times if they suffer from cardiovascular diseases. For women (at any age), the risk is lower while the overall risk of death even in chronic disease is lower than in men (Harper, 2020).

Thus, as a summary, we want to note a few thoughts. The pandemic crisis has exacerbated the problem of discrimination against older people and exacerbated the crisis between generations. Media studies prove such a modern trend, according to which, for example, a quarter of tweets "downplayed the importance of COVID-19 because it was more deadly among older people, and 14 % contained offensive content or jokes about older generations" (Jimenez-Sotomayor, Gomez-Moreno, & Soto-Perez-de-Celis, 2020). News headlines came from statements such as: "The elderly have died from coronavirus so far" (Skipper & Rose, 2020).

The elderly often experience loneliness, social isolation. The best solutions to overcome the problem of indirect discrimination are to show solidarity between generations. Innovative and inclusive virtual solutions that can re-profile "old" technologies such as phone, television, and radio, in addition to allowing internet access for all, can also promote social participation and interconnection. Technological progress is the most important tool to prevent isolation from loneliness. However, inequality in access to such technologies should be overcome, as well as the need to train the elderly so that they feel protected.

Age-related discrimination can lead to an anthropological crisis as a person's inability to adapt to external conditions. The increase in the level of crisis is stated by scientists in many countries. In particular, the research for countries such as Norway, Sweden has shown that age-related discrimination can lead to negative feelings such as futility, powerlessness, and decreased self-esteem. This study develops and approves a scale for monitoring age-related discrimination in the workplace (Furunes & Mykletun, 2010). For example, according to the analysis of the situation in Poland, experts state that ageism can be a chronic stress factor, which leads to both a deterioration in physical health and a decrease in activity in healthy behavior (Nelson, 2016).

Originality

Discrimination against a group of elderly people contradicts the anthropological nature of a person by infringing on the authenticity of an individual through generalization to the general. The authentic nature of the person is neutralized under the influence of the general social stigmatization of a group of older people as physically and mentally incapable and requiring excessive additional guarantees from society. Discrimination provokes the inability to realize a person's autonomy, destroys personalization, and makes people susceptible to external influences.

The stereotypical assumptions underlying legal policy and established social relations are based solely on the application of chronological age. The novelty is in justifying an individual approach to the elderly through the personification of the personal characteristics of a person.

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The study of anthropological and socio-philosophical dimensions of human existence of the older age group in the face of the challenges of pandemic threats caused by COVID-19 has made it possible to analyze the destructive nature of age-related discrimination in the context of the socio-labor area of human existence, to emphasize the asymmetry of the behavior of society and the state in relation to these persons in the field of health care and to emphasize the anthropological features of changes in the socialization and human activity under the current conditions of globalization-pandemic challenges.

Conclusions

External threats to human existence sharpen the attention to the realization and protection of human rights, freedoms, free will, and authenticity. Pandemic threats have transformed all aspects of human existence, especially groups of society that are less socially protected. The issue of infringement on and negative attitude towards persons from the older age group is constant. The pandemic crisis has created additional grounds for discrimination in various areas: social and labor (prioritizing older people when dismissed from work, their inability to rapidly change working conditions, in particular, remote work); medical (through the generalization of the criterion of a younger age for the provision of the prerogative of medical care); social and communication areas (requirements for isolation and reduction of social activity).

Equating people by age without personification of personal characteristics of an individual is age-related discrimination, which violates the principles of democracy and humanism in society, leads to stigmatization of the person, and is the cause of the anthropological crisis of a person.

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Вікова дискримінація як загроза антропологічному абсолюту людського буття (на прикладі пандемічної кризи)

Мета. Мета статті полягає у дослідженні антропологічних та соціально-філософських вимірів існування людини старшої вікової групи в умовах викликів пандемічних загроз, зумовлених COVID-19. Для цього передбачено розв'язати низку завдань, з-поміж яких необхідно виокремити такі: 1) дослідити прояви вікової дискримінації в контексті соціально-трудової сфери буття людини; 2) акцентувати увагу на асиметрії поведінки соціуму та держави стосовно осіб старшої вікової групи у сфері охорони здоров'я у контексті пандемічної кризи; 3) відобразити антропологічні особливості змін соціалізації та активності людини старшого віку в сучасних умовах глобалізаційно-пандемічних викликів. **Теоретичний базис.** Не дивлячись на таку широку репрезентацію вікової проблеми у суспільних відносинах все таки відсутні є практичні гарантії, що стосувалися б саме дискримінаційних аспектів осіб старшої вікової групи у різних сферах їх прояву. Синергетичний розвиток соціальної реальності вимагає предметного аналізу питання в сучасних умовах трансформації життєдіяльності соціуму, на який впливають глобалізаційні кризи, зумовлені пандемічними загрозами COVID-19. **Наукова новизна.** Стереотипні припущення, що лежать в основі правової політики та усталених суспільних відносин ґрунтуються виключно на застосуванні хронологічного віку. Новизна полягає в обґрунтуванні індивідуального підходу до осіб літнього віку через персоніфікацію особистих характеристик людини. Дослідження антропологічних та соціально-філософських вимірів існування людини старшої вікової групи в умовах викликів пандемічних загроз, зумовлених COVID-19, дало можливість проаналізувати деструктивізм вікової дискримінації в контексті соціально-трудової сфери буття людини. Крім того, акцентувати увагу на асиметрії поведінки соціуму та держави стосовно цих осіб у сфері охорони здоров'я та наголосити на антропологічних особливостях змін соціалізації та активності людини в сучасних умовах глобалізаційно-пандемічних викликів. **Висновки.** Зовнішні загрози людського існування загострюють увагу реалізації та захисту прав, свобод людини, її свободної волі та ідентичності. Пандемічні загрози трансформували всі виміри людського буття, особливо груп суспільства, що є менш соціально захищеними. Пандемічна криза створила додаткові підстави для дискримінації осіб старшої вікової групи у різних сферах людського буття. Урівнювання осіб за досягненням певного віку без персоніфікації осо-

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бистісних характеристик індивіда є дискримінацією за віковою ознакою, що порушує принципи демократії та гуманізму в суспільстві, призводить до стигматизації особи, є причиною антропологічної кризи людини.

Ключові слова: пандемія; COVID-19; антропологічна сфера; людське буття; права людини; громадянське суспільство; держава; антропологічна криза

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