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RESEARCH

O envelhecimento ativo como experiência de vida: narrativas de pessoas idosas

The active ageing as life experience: narratives of elderly people

El envejecimiento activo como experiencia de vida: narrativas de los ancianos

Nanci Soares¹, Alcione Leite Silva²

ABSTRACT

Objective: Analyze the experience of active aging in the life's history of old people in the city of Franca (SP). **Method:** Study bibliographical, documentary and field research. Use the qualitative approach, we have opted for the oral history method, because it searches to explain the meanings of daily has grown significantly through the stories of lives, gathering information through interview. **Results:** The theoretical-methodology referential has found in following categories: 1) identity in old age: person, sociability and labor, 2) identity and active ageing. **Discussion:** The analyses of the data comprised three distinct phases: organizing and structuring of data, classification and interpretation of data. **Conclusion:** The challenge of the XXI century is to ensure the active and dignified ageing of the population, it seeks a society for all ages, so that older people have a participation in social life, to fight the determinants that compromise the active aging. **Descriptors:** active ageing; life's experience; narratives of older people.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Analisar a experiência de envelhecimento ativo na história de vida de pessoas idosas ativas, na cidade de Franca-SP. **Método:** Utilizamos a pesquisa bibliográfica, documental e de campo. Fizemos a abordagem qualitativa, optando pelo método história oral, pois este procura explicar os significados do cotidiano de maneira significativa através das histórias de vidas, recolhendo informações por meio de entrevista. **Resultados:** O referencial teórico-metodológico encontra-se nas seguintes categorias: 1) identidade na velhice: pessoa, sociabilidade e trabalho e 2) identidade e envelhecimento ativo. **Discussão:** As análises dos dados compreenderam três fases distintas: organização e estruturação dos dados, classificação dos dados e interpretação dos dados. **Conclusão:** Assim, o desafio do século XXI é garantir o envelhecimento ativo e digno à população, buscando uma sociedade para todas as idades de forma que as pessoas idosas tenham participação na vida social, combatendo os fatores determinantes que comprometem o envelhecimento ativo. **Descritores:** envelhecimento ativo; experiência de vida; narrativas de pessoa idosa.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la experiencia del envejecimiento activo en la historia de vida de los ancianos en la ciudad de Franca -SP. **Métodos:** Vamos a utilizar la investigación bibliográfica, documental y de campo. Haremos una aproximación cualitativa, optando por el método de la historia oral, pues este busca explicar el significado de la vida cotidiana de una manera significativa por medio de las historias de vida, la recopilación de información a través de entrevistas. **Resultados:** El marco teórico y metodológico se encuentran en las siguientes categorías: 1) la identidad en la vejez: persona, sociabilidad y trabajo 2) la identidad y el envejecimiento activo. **Discusión:** El análisis de datos fue compuesta por tres fases distintas: la organización y estructuración de los datos, clasificación de datos e interpretación de los datos. **Conclusión:** El desafío del siglo XXI es asegurar la el envejecimiento activo y digno de la población, en busca de una sociedad para todas las edades para que los ancianos tengan participación en la vida social, en la lucha contra los determinantes que comprometen el envejecimiento activo. **Descriptor:** Envejecimiento activo, experiencia de vida, narrativas de los ancianos.

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INTRODUCTION

The increase in the elderly population is a worldwide phenomenon, and in developed countries gradually happened and in developing countries occurs at an accelerated rate in recent years. This population increase is associated with several factors, among them include: falling birth rates, infant immortality, scientific and technological advances, finally, there was improvement in the quality of life of the general population.

The Brazil until 1980, could be considered a predominantly young country, but from then the falling birth rate and increased life expectancy is gradually changing this profile. Demographic studies conducted by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Health Organization (WHO), Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) among others, show that the age with Brazilian contingent from 60 years already approaching 18 million people, about 10% of the population should double in absolute terms by 2030 and, in relative terms, by the middle of this century, when may correspond to one fifth of the population¹⁻².

This rapid growth of the elderly population requires more dedication of professionals from different fields who are committed to the elderly segment, to join forces for the Brazilian elderly, is recognized as a subject that has capacity, ensuring access to social rights and protecting the power of Elder decision on the issues that concern you.

The objectives of this study were analyzing the active aging of experience in the life history of active elderly in the city of Franca, Brazil; and comparing them with those experienced in the city of Aveiro/Portugal.

METHOD

This study was developed based on qualitative approach, focusing on the oral history of Paul Thompson³. According to this author, oral history and research methodology aims to learn and deepen the knowledge that people have about informants certain reality.

This information is obtained through informal conversations with these people, trying to focus on your personal memories related to the issue and assess the importance of these events in their lives. In this research we will adopt the perspective of Narratives Collection. This approach aims to a construction and interpretation of history in a broader sense, gathering the various narratives around common themes. It is used when you want to study family life or a community³.

The scenarios of the research were the Open University of the Third Age (UNATI) of the São Paulo State University of São Paulo (UNESP) and the Community Center for the Elderly "Spiritualist Home Avelina Maria de Jesus", both in the city of Franca, Sao Paulo. In

this research participated 11 elderly, all of them female. Inclusion criteria were: age less than 60 years, were enrolled in a care program for the elderly, have perceived ability to control, handle situations and make decisions on the day-to-day, according with their own rules and preferences⁴.

The instrument used in the interviews was composed of two parts: the first containing the characteristics of the informants and the second with questions relating to four areas of study: Individual and identity, identity and sociability, Identity and Work and Identity in active old age and aging.

Second, Thompson³, the construction of oral history is made through an interview, so this technique is the most appropriate way for the oral history because, through a "conversation" free, the person who narrates is "invited talking "on a matter of common interest without time limit. In this sense, historians used the interview to learn from a person who is aging actively, on this theme to be studied. The informant person becomes thus the focal point of the investigation, as holder of that knowledge.

The interviews were conducted from May to August 2012, in a calm environment and without interruptions UNATI and Elderly Community Centre, lasting on average 40 minutes. They were recorded in audio recorder, allowing the story to be presented by the very words of the informant person. During the interviews we also used a field diary aiming to take notes of the reactions, attitudes and impressions interviewed, difficulties on the information obtained, which caused her memories, innovations in information or content, among others⁵.

Data analysis comprised three phases: organization and structuring of data, data classification and interpretation of data³. The first phase consisted in transcribing the data, reading the interviews as a whole and afterthought. The second stage involved several readings of the interviews, to seek internal coherence of each narrative and identify the key ideas, key moments and positions on the subject in focus. This phase made it possible to construct the empirical categories and their subcategories from the four themes of the study, later to be transformed into analytical categories, theoretically established. Each category brought together excerpts from interviews, related to one theme. Still in the second phase, we proceed to a cross-reading of interviews by category, proceeding to review and change where necessary. In the third phase, we interpret the categories based on the theoretical and empirical framework of the study, focusing on the purpose of the study⁵.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Paulista State University "Julio de Mesquita Filho" - UNESP - Franca, in accordance with the standards laid down in Resolution no. 196/96 of the National Council of Ethics in Research (CONEP). The entire research process carefully followed the ethical precepts, while maintaining the anonymity of the participants, the confidentiality of information, and the signing of the Term of Consent. The intention to preserve the anonymity of each participant, we used a conference identification code (E) numbered in order of the interviews.

The rigor of the study was ensured through the credibility criteria (respect for the truth as known and expressed by participants), confirmability (obtaining and validating primary data), meaning in context (done in the context of activity - UNATI and Centre coexistence of the Elderly), standardization (repeated experiences about the studied

object) and the saturation of data (data collection until the time that showed no further information about the object under study)⁶.

RESULTS E DISCUSSION

According to the results, the elderly who participated in this study, eleven are women, aged 60-75 years old, with an average around 66 years. Of the total, nine women were born in the State of São Paulo and two in Minas Gerais and all lived in Franca, State of Sao Paulo. Marital status comprised widows (n = 5), married (n = 4) and single (n = 2).

The professions exercised, were three teachers (elementary and high school), a home, a nursing technique, two nursing assistants, two shoes in a factory, one in maintenance service and a state school secretariat. The teachers all have exercised the office of teaching in state schools of the city of Franca, Brazil. All they retired in that capacity. They come from large families with about 5-13 brothers. Regarding the proximity and contact with other people in the household, (3) no longer has his companions and live with their children; (3) live with their mates; (2) live with their partners and children; (2) live alone and (1) lives with his mother.

In the narratives of the participants we can grasp the significance of active aging, which were grouped into two axes of the study: 1) identity and life path and 2) identity and active aging. In this article we will present the result of axis 01.

Axis 1 - Identity and way of life

Women's life course memories of this study portrayed experiences of a particular historical moment of their lives with many challenges that permeated the different phases of their existence. The accounts showed a happy childhood with their families (parents and siblings), despite the family's financial difficulties. Recalled in his speeches the many games that they invented and toys that they themselves did, because they could not buy them. For seven of them, the joke has as context the countryside, where they lived.

Well, I had a childhood so with financial difficulty, but I was very happy (E2); Part of feeling was a childhood very happy ... Played a lot, had no toy, but toy we used at home, with the very things that had at that time (E7) the childhood I lived on the farm (...) we used doll clothes that was my joke (E8).

The narratives also noted the work in the infant stage because of the socio-economic condition of families, especially for agriculture, housework and the care of younger siblings. They were treated with rigor and had no room to express themselves. Hard times have been reported for two of them when they have lost a parent at this stage (mother and father), which influenced all their life stories.

At five years old I've worked. I was going to help Daddy cut potato on the farm (E11); We were created to help each one indoors. (...) There were 6 women and 5 men, then each person had a task of House, (...) but it was a very good time (E8); (...) those so comes from strict parents. So, at that time, children didn't have much space, she was created as well (E1). Ah, Yes in the first place is that I lost my mom too early, is one of the greatest feelings I have. And not having the opportunity to have been created and lived with her (E1).

In adolescence the narratives indicate that four participants consider it a happy time with their families. Four other narrate who have difficult times, much associated with work in agriculture, domestic and entering the labor market. In the speech of the interviewees most continued to study even working since claimed that the families had financial difficulties and therefore needed help supplement income. Thus, through the narratives we found that it was not by choice that some women left school, but by the cultural and economic situation that prevented this stage⁷. To recall those memories reveals that one participant had long wanted to study, had to interrupt his studies and returned to study after marriage with many difficulties, lived in a ranch, reporting that the route to get to school was difficult, it mentions that she and their children attended the same time, however despite all hindrances the interviewee managed to complete the course of teaching, thus realizing his dream.

Adolescence was very good too ... I could study (E7) Ah! Was sustained... Work in the bog, planting rice was very tiring. I don't remember ever playing or have left. Our family was large: six brothers that, thanks to God, are all alive to me. When I won my first shoe, my mother said she had no money, but also could not enter Church barefoot. Then the mother said the money she had enough to buy a plastic shoe. I bought a green that matched the dress. Used for many years, just to get out, go to mass. Now I don't ever want to plastic shoe, I can't even see! After I got married that my life began to improve, that's when I came to live here in France, in the city. (E4) And I only came back to study after married. My son was in fifth grade; and I've been studying too. Because it's always been my dream. But, there was no way. That brother, that thing. Then I went back to school, I made teaching (...) Then I lived in finchley. Came by herself. Was hidden in the Woods, because I had to cross the Highway Cândido Portinari. Then I came home, he was afraid because the bouncer gave deep to a bad neighborhood. I played my notebooks under the gate, hopped the gate. Still had to reach and climb on the bench, in the table above to get the key. My husband said he wasn't married to study woman. And I told him: I for domestic work to take care of her husband. And I went to study. After that, I stopped. Majored in 80, stayed till 88, stop again. One day, a little without having to do was satisfied. And I went back to school. Then, I called the school girl. She said I could go back to school. Asked her: but it's March. .. She said: "no problem, the teachers are on strike. I'm already doing your registration. You can come "then I went back and did the Magisterium. (E11)

Another participant shows in his speech that neither she nor the brothers studied because they lived in the countryside, so they had to fulfill his father's order, which was to work in agriculture to help the family survive. Another participant tells the studies were hampered by the fact that parents moved to another farm.

When I was twelve, I was studying at the farm, and when I was getting close to exams, concluding the class, my father moved from the farm (E11); (...) I've always worked since I was five. It was a struggle to go to school and still the Dad wouldn't let me, because we lived on another farm (E4)

In the narrative appears parental rigor, coupled with freedom, with the leave the house was conditioning his father's wishes and they had to submit to their orders. In another speech participant reports that helped care for siblings up to the age of twenty four years and when he decided to join the labor market did not accept the father, spent four months without talking to her. The rigor two parents also appears in the speeches of interviews regarding dating, she reports that her husband took her in his arms only after marriage.

Now, teenage already wasn't very good was not fifty-fifty (laughs) because everybody's parents were very strict, so it's held a lot to us, we had a lot of freedom, so we stayed half ... so much so that even today I am half so... quiet! I play everything, more an am so ... Spontaneous like that. (E6); As a teenager, my Dad wouldn't let us leave no way, was dying of jealousy. Beat us. It was at the base of the fight, to catch, right? But I don't have that revolt. We loved too much huh? It was a different way of loving. We respected him. I don't know if it was or was afraid. All I know is that away from them we didn't make things so wrong about the youth of now. (E11); Reminder that age to 24 years of age is that I took care of my younger brothers and I was studying at that time, it was only until the fourth grade and just and it was super literate. Scored a lot this season because I couldn't take it anymore the kids, then I'm going to work "I rebelled out", I got a job without my dad leave because he didn't want us worked because we had everything, so he always questioned "is getting undressed? You're running out of food? ", then I explained that I didn't have any children and I was tired of looking at each other children, they obeyed me more, then started working out, he didn't like it, it was 4 months without talking to me, then slowly he was coming to talk to me. (E8) Dating hidden from my parents, when we went to live in a colony, but it was different. My husband took my arm the day I got married. Today I tell my granddaughter did, she has it all, and Grandma had nothing. Now I can buy a more expensive doll to the provision. (E4)

In the narratives they also mention the losses, one witness recounts that adolescence was very difficult after the loss of his father in childhood, generating insecurity and through so many difficulties for the lack of parent.

(...) in adolescence, the insecurity already no longer with my father and the difficulties to go through all that and also in adulthood much, much, a lot of insecurity in order to face really problems that still remain, but everything past the few so isn't it? I managed to overcome and now a good stage, I feel good for having overcome all this. (E9)

In adulthood narratives demonstrate that these women mostly (9) were married, with children, and yet continued to be part of the labor market, both dedicated themselves to housework, to care for and educate their children. In the professional field the majority narrated that despite numerous difficulties managed to continue their studies, and the data showed that nine have completed higher education, ensuring the qualification, the right to enter the labor market and thus ensuring better living conditions in old age. One of the speeches of the participants illustrates this, showing that, despite the socio-economic difficulties, remained working and studying, dedicating the children and her husband. It narrates that, to complete college, she applied and joined the public school of São Paulo, serving as a teacher. Only one of the participants has not finished elementary school, but his talk shows that could barely read and write, but today went back to school.

(...) I worked hard, laborious post; so I stood up too early because I was married, I had, I have three children and a widow too early (...), lucky I had to adapt to two types of work (...) gives an account of my capacity and raising children, right? (E1); Oh, I went through several stages of professions. I was ... is... cooperating services () ... some time ago wore cooperates. I worked in the ... in the ... the ... Bank of credit 29 years as cooperate, then followed was in charge of ... of services of maintenance, graduated to teacher then went teaches too.. is ... then I went then teaches us beginner work is very difficult, isn't it? So I started as possible and went to school in the countryside, so the farms ... so, I was dealing with a child too needy, but I'd love to do that. (E1); In my family everyone began working early, me and my other brothers, we are in eleven and

everyone helped. None of them had study. Remember I wore clothes of calico and always took the brothers' clothes; I didn't matter if it was a male or a female cloth, because I ended up using in the farm, huh? (E4)

It is evident in the various narratives help to families early on, both financially and through activities and have always been pleasantly. By portraying family relationships the participants showed that parents spent values such as responsibility, security, persistence, among others. Second, the reports participation in cultural and social activities are associated with religious character, sports and family parties.

Yes, it helped ... Ooh! I've always helped and until today I help. (E1); Yes. Since, at the time of a child, who has collaborated, isn't it? From the harvesting of coffee, had a stage that my mother worked part time and let the House is. .. cooked beans, (...) she left the designated tasks for us to do there if I didn't ... the punishment was ready and we could handle it. And financially since the time I started working, a part of the salary, I would have passed to my family, which was to help pay the expenses. (E2); I thank the parents for being lay (...) they have given is responsibility, is ... that felt so, (...) they would do anything to have the family get-together, which today we seem to have got a little forgotten. (E2); (...) of values, (...) I received from my mother (...) to be persistent, enjoy life, keep fighting, I guess that's it, isn't it? (E5); (...) pilgrimages had too much, always so I had the chance I would follow. (E1); Yes, I attended a lot of games (...) basketball, football for women was welcome, so we played a lot more was it... killing, one that today we speak moped. (E2); My very large family there in São Paulo, isn't it? And so we always, every weekend had a little party to go or an event to go, okay? (E3)

In his lines also depict the current phase, all aged 60 or more, and eight of the participants are retired, one pensioner, two about to retire and report feeling well at this stage of life. Also narrate changes in marital status: some were widowed, emphasizing the difficulties of living with the loss. In relation to where they live their speeches mentioned the positives, most related to social life, especially with neighboring receiving friendship, help, or affection. In their narratives also appears family support and social groups to confront the changes resulting from the aging process. Eleven nine participants mentioned that women can count on family support. This support has been associated with friendship, take to the doctor, shopping in supermarkets, where necessary stay in the same residence.

I think after that I entered the group of seniors; I'm aging with joy, with lots of friendship, with much joy. (E6); (...) kept thinking that we will be with various difficulties of all, not? To walk, to participate in all these difficulties, which today I realize it's not. (E9); (...) I miss that from my parents. For being an only child and they passed us misses. And now five years since I lost my husband, I miss him too. He was a companion to me. (E3); (...) so I like very much neighbors, neighbors are my friends, it's like a family for me ... when I get sick they take care of me, so I really like there. (E6); Financially, but not take the doctor, go to the supermarket to do shopping. (E8)

CONCLUSION

Society is contradictory, because while considering retirement a worker's right, she considers the retired elderly unproductive and useless. Still predominates, a vision that values opportunities to be offered to younger instead of channeling resources to older.

To age well, even in the presence of prejudices and exclusion, which are inherent to the dynamics of society and the relationship of humans with life, death and old age depend on long-term socio-cultural investments. An investment is education, because according Cachioni⁸ educate seniors, adults, youth, and children, it means believing in their ongoing process of development and possibilities of its buildings as subjects. Education creates conditions to face prejudice, exclusion, and lack of opportunities at all ages, generating increased income, promoting quality of life and promotes genuine citizenship.

The analysis of the speeches of the interviewees infers important aspects that should be highlighted. The perception of aging lifelong shows changes before negative image (loneliness, isolation, health problems, inactivity) and start to have a positive image of old age, associated with participation in senior programs, physical activities, acquisition of new knowledge, among others. The results showed that functional independence promotes the inclusion of older people in the community, participating, formally and informally, social life, leisure activities, social and cultural rights, so continue to exercise their autonomy, to enjoy respect and maintain their relationships⁹⁻¹⁰.

The activities offered by UNATI are important rescue mechanisms of citizenship of the elderly segment. Participation in debates and group process provides coexistence with people of his generation and younger, exchange of experiences, new friendships, gain new knowledge, promoting quality of life and understanding and acceptance of old age.

The collected data also demonstrate the heterogeneity of old age, pointing out that people experience differently their lives, and that even being in the same age group does not mean they have gone through the same experiences, nor have the same needs and characteristics.

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