

Abstract:

The population is getting older. Prognosis predict increasing numbers of people in the age group 65+ in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to think about involving senior citizens in social development and supporting their self-sufficiency up to a higher age. Education is one of the ways to achieve that.

The focus of this thesis is on education within the Universities of the Third Age, which it studies from a new point of view. Hardiness is seen as part of personal characteristics which helps the individual cope with stressful situations. Research in this thesis is trying to find out if the senior citizens attending the Universities of the Third Age have a higher scores on hardiness then those who do not attend, and also whether they have a more positive outlook on their health and meaning of their lives. The thesis also studies whether the scores on hardiness depends on gender, formal education level and whether it is connected to perceived social support.

The results show that there is no difference in the scores on hardiness resulting from gender. Senior citizens attending the Universities of the Third Age have a more positive outlook on their health and they also perceive their lives as more meaningful. No difference in the scores on hardiness was found between the two groups. Also, no dependence on the level of formal education or correlation to perceived social support was found.

Key words: education, hardiness, lifelong learning, senior citizen, university of the third age