



Anxiety about Aging in Middle-Aged Adults: Gender Aspects

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Introduction



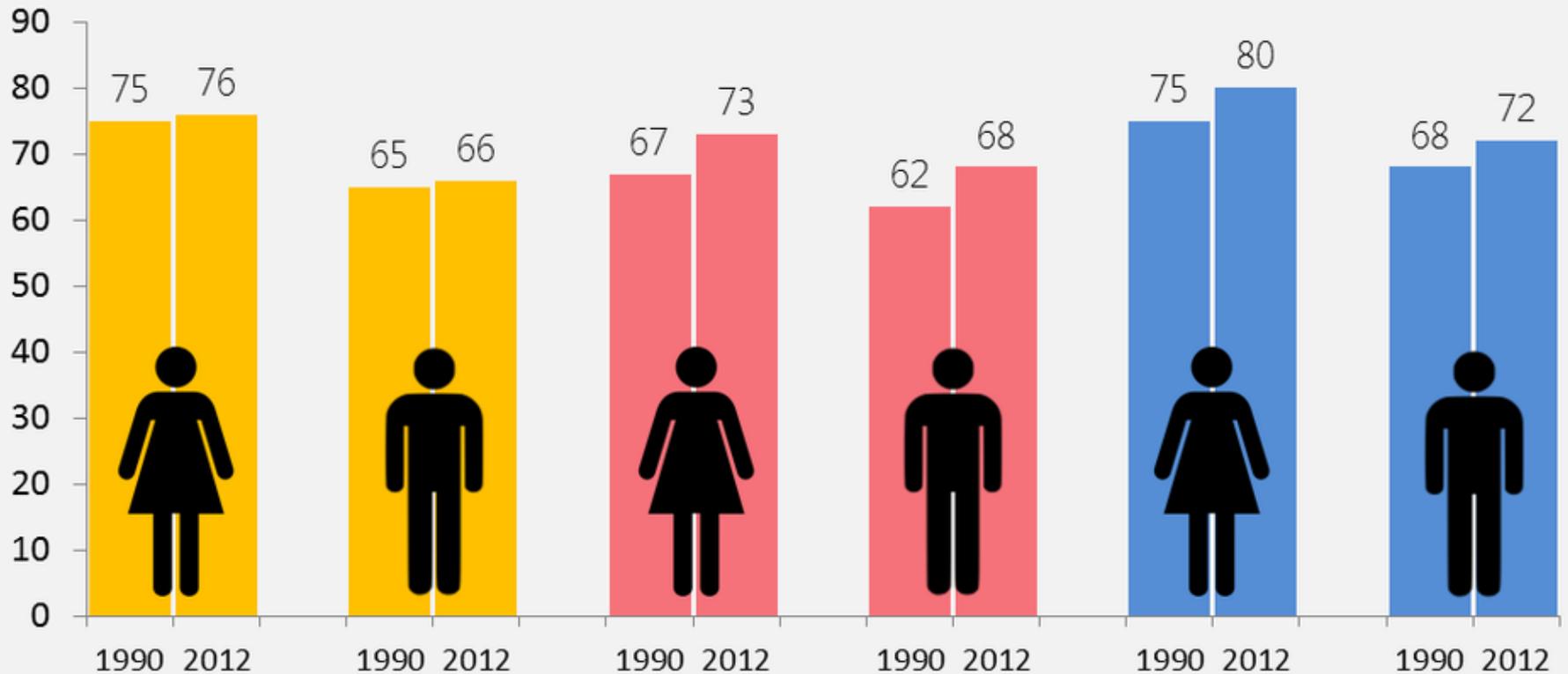
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- "You can take the old people out of the house, from different spheres of life, but you can not remove that elderly person who is in each of us." It is impossible to turn away from this populous continent of old people, from this old man's body, the face of an old man gradually manifesting in my body, on my face, an old man emerging from the heart of every person. "
(Andrea Riccardi, 2015)



Life expectancy (for those born in 1990 and 2012)



Ukraine

World

Europe



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Research questions

What awaits an adult after adulthood?

Will these be the years added to life or the life added to the years?

Why do adults fear to grow old? What is their idea and attitude to aging and old age?

What is the specificity of the anxiety of aging for middle-aged men and women?

With the increased life expectancy and actual longevity of older adults in society, it is important to address negative attitudes to help change them into more positive attitudes (Harris & Dollinger, 2001).

We rely on the notion that old age and gender are close phenomena. Because they are socially constructed. Gender and aging stereotypes can overlap each other, than to increase discrimination in people in modern society



Aim Research

- The aim is to empirically investigate the anxiety of aging in adults, to find out its gender characteristics, to develop and test the technique of "swinging" the gender-age stereotype of aging.





The present research



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Definition of the concept

Anxiety about aging is a little studied phenomenon in psychology.

The psychological essence and nature of the anxiety of aging we studied in three directions:

Analysis of theoretical approaches to the understanding of fear and anxiety in psychology (Izard, Bandura, Boody).

An analysis of existing definitions of fear and anxiety of aging in modern psychological literature.

Study of the results of comparative empirical research on the fear of aging and old age, where the dependent variable is sex (Vicky C. Tomlin, 2006; Rashmi Saxena, Archana Shukla, 2016)

As a result, we managed to reach some generalizations:



1. The experiences of adults associated with inevitable aging should rather be called anxiety than fear. Why? The term "fear" is generally used when the source of the feeling is known. Anxiety, on the other hand, refers to the general apprehension toward an unidentifiable source or uncertain future event. Fear occurs when something threatens the very existence of a person, the integrity of his organism, that is, in the case of a "vital threat", and anxiety - when, the danger is connected with the destruction of the values of man, his relations with other people, his needs, in other words, when the threat is personal.



2. Anxiety about aging can be identified as worry, concern, or nervousness about the ability to care for oneself as well as anticipated decline in health and eventual death. The Ontario Welfare Council (1971, p. 14) describes anxiety about aging as «apprehension, regret, or general negativism toward the aging process and what lies ahead».



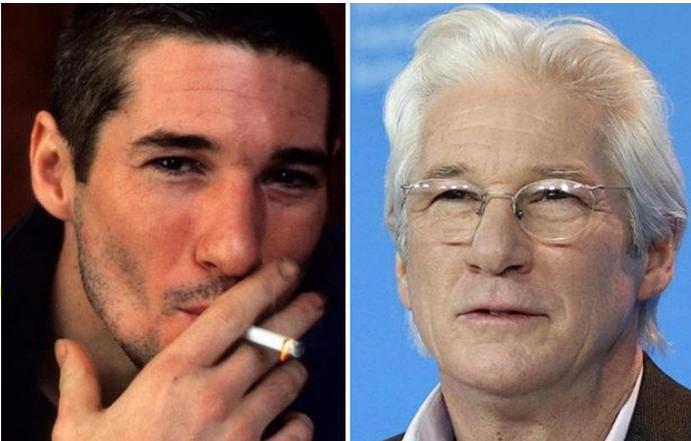


3. Anxiety about aging is a social feeling. It formed in society, people learn it in the process of socialization and the appropriation of stereotypes of aging.



4. Anxiety about aging is a complex set of feelings. It is not only fear but also sadness, shame and guilt.

5. Anxiety of aging performs an important warning function about threats to self-esteem, integrity and life in general. Therefore, it is important not to ignore it, to realize threats and to check the reality or the artificiality of the dangers associated with age.



What causes anxiety associated with aging?

These anxiety about aging result from various factors:

- associations with older adults;
- personal attitudes;
- stereotypes of older persons;
- doubling stereotypes: old age and gender (Harris & Dollinger, 2001; Kafer, Rakowski, Lachman & Hickey, 1980; Lynch, 2000).

In addition to attitudes, the stereotype of the older population in Ukrainian society is discriminatory. Ageism (Butler, 1975) refers to prejudice and discrimination against older adults and a fear of the aging process. Ageism is similar to racism and sexism except that ageism affects everyone (Palmore, 2001).





The main danger of aging anxiety about aging is the unconscious formation of protective strategies based on it.

Typical practices of coping with the anxiety of aging in women:

- Plastic surgery;
- Expensive cosmetology
- Later motherhood



Typical practices of mastering anxiety aging men:

- Avoid
- Acceleration
- Relationships with young women
- Later fatherhood



Earlier comparative studies anxiety about aging show contradictory and heterogeneous results (American, Greek and Indian samples)

- the anxiety about aging decreases with the approach of old age, the anxiety increases on the scale of "psychological problems" (Lasher and Faulkender (1993), Nick M. Wisdom, 2016) ;
- the data on gender differences in the intensity of anxiety aging are contradictory and mutually exclusive (Lasher and Faulkender, 1993; Vicky C. Tomlin, 2006 Dr. Rashmi Saxena, Prof Archana Shukla, 2016);
- women are more concerned about the loss of external attractiveness than men (Lewis & Cachlein, 2001; Zerbe, 2003);
- women are more concerned about the loss of personality than personal death (Stein, 1995; Koukouli, Pattakou-Parasyri, Kalaitzaki, 2013).



Methods and organization of research



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Staregia and stages of research

The study was of a comparative nature, the independent variable was the sex of the subjects. The study took place in two stages: the ascertaining and correction.

1. Anxiety about aging was investigated in the context of middle aged crisis experiences at the ascertaining stage.
2. Narrative technique was used for the development of awareness of the gender-age stereotype at the correctional stage, a.



Empirical methods

Several empirical methods were used in the study:

- a) Questionnaire of O. L. Soldatova «Normative crisis of middle age» for determine the strength and type of crisis experiences;
- b) associative experiment (word-stimulus "aging") for studying subjective semantics of old age and aging in adults;
- c) unfinished sentences to find out emotional experiences: «Most people of my age ...», «The most difficult for people of my age ...», «Women of my age are very worried ...», «Men of my age are very worried ...», «I'm afraid, that over time ...», «I feel more often than ever before ...», «I began to appreciate more ...».
- d) the narrative reception of the «Book of Life» (M.L.Smullson) with the author's modification to find out the personal image of the future of aging and cultural specimen underlying it, as well as to transform the personal image of old age. It was anticipated that the creation of alternative history would help to "shatter" the stereotype of old age and aging, will be an impetus for the development of a conscious «aging policy».

Methods of data processing

To process the data obtained, quantitative and qualitative methods were used.

The texts of the respondents were subject to content-analysis: units of analysis in the image of aging were the modality of emotions, aspects of aging (somatic, social, psychological), the balance of acquisitions and losses due to aging, the time range of forecasting..

Methods of statistical analysis of data. The cluster analysis of associations on the word-stimulus "aging" was used. The reliability of the differences between sub-samples was verified using the Mann-Whitney method (U-test).



Research sample

The research sample is formed by people of the age of an average adult (40-59 years) in equal proportions of women and men.

The total number of investigated was 70 people.



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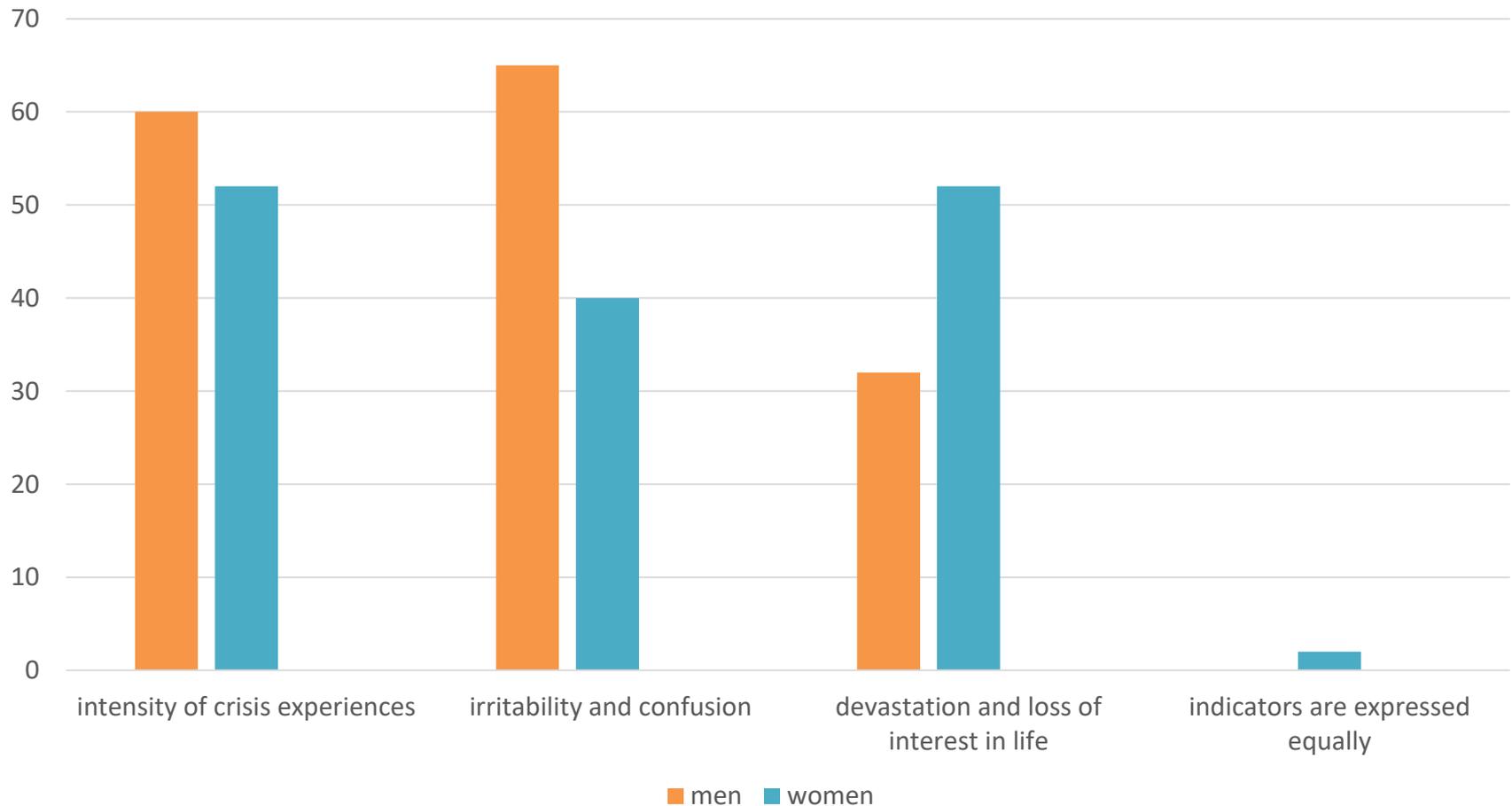
Results



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Gender differences in the intensity of the experience of the midlife crisis

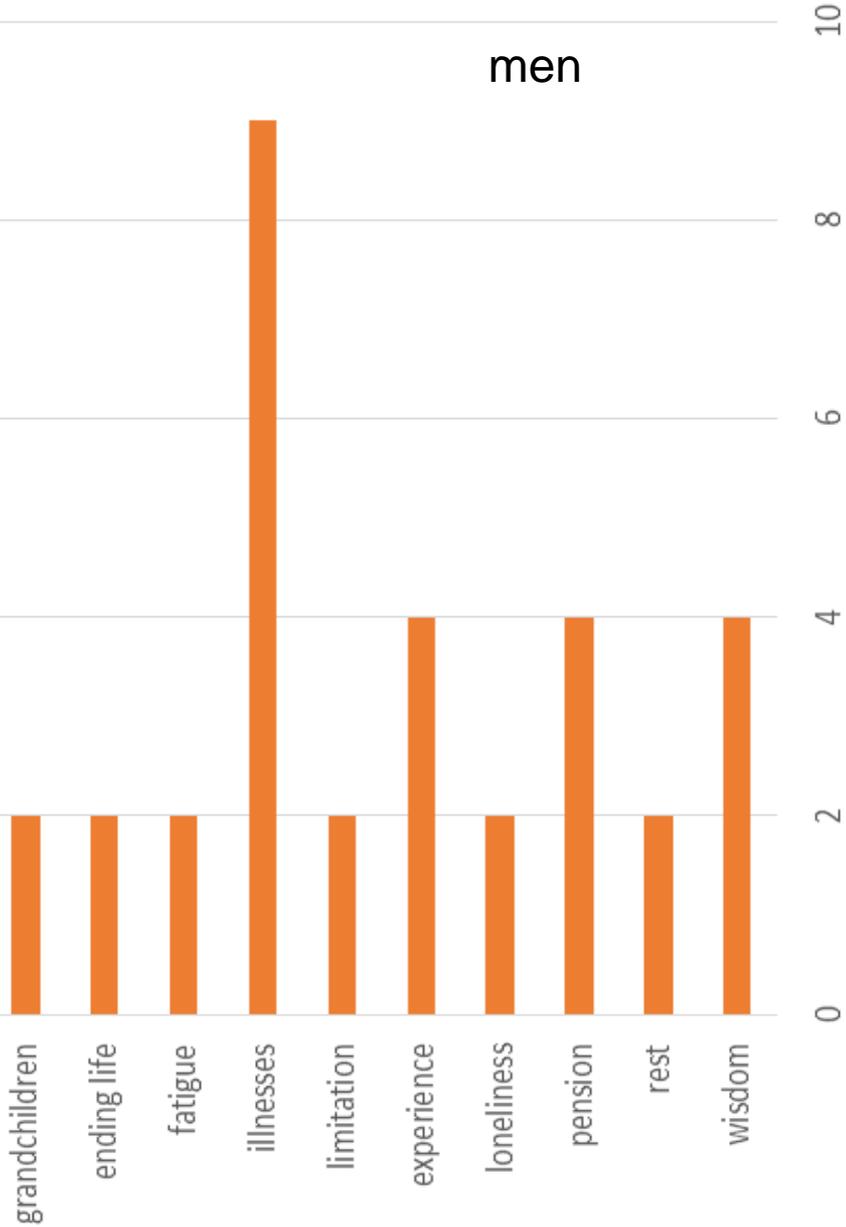


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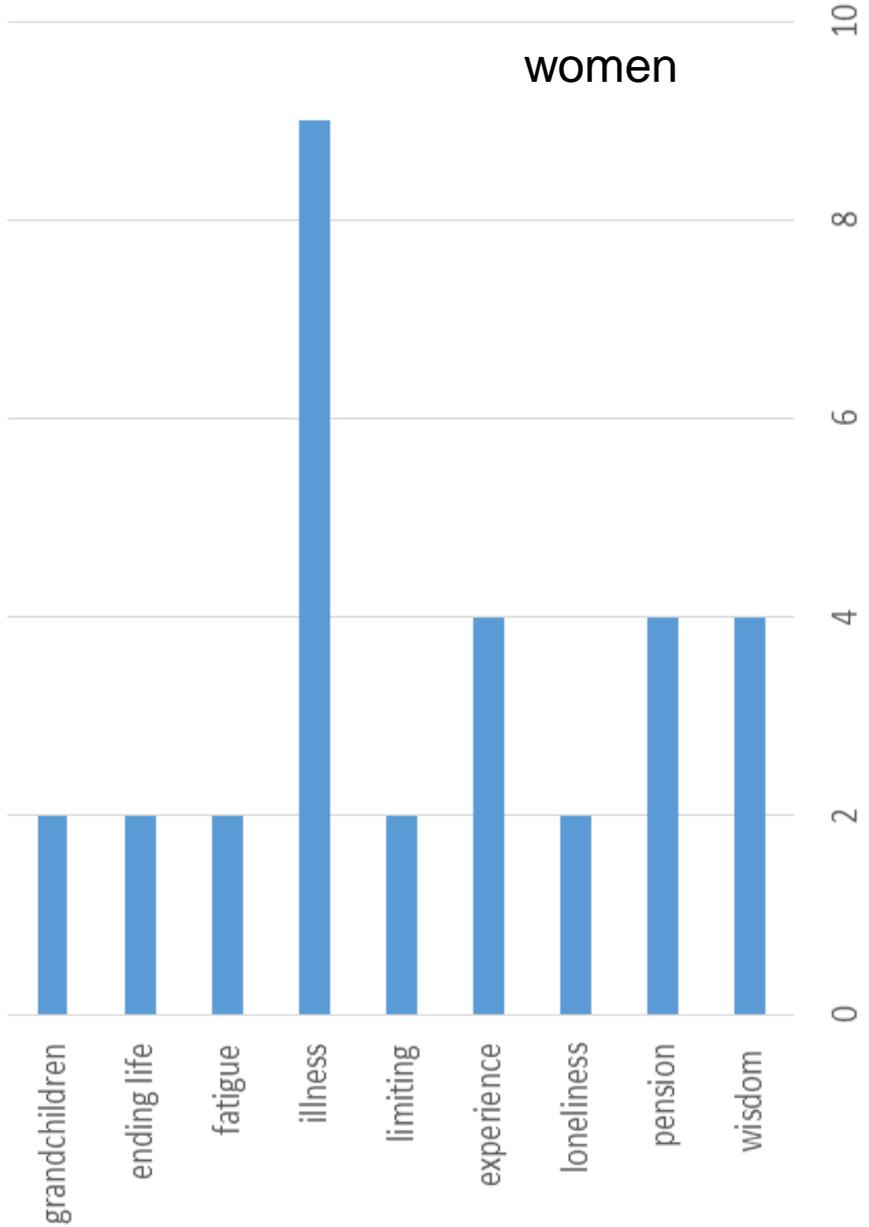


The subjective image of aging of adults

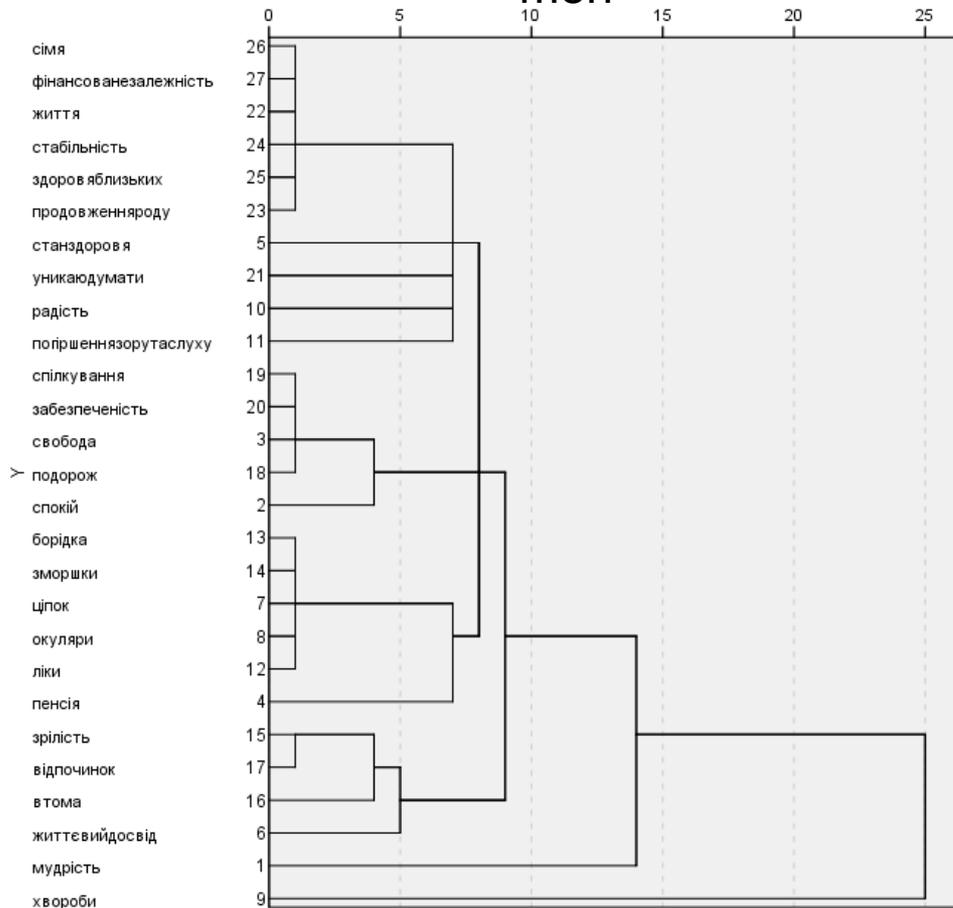
men



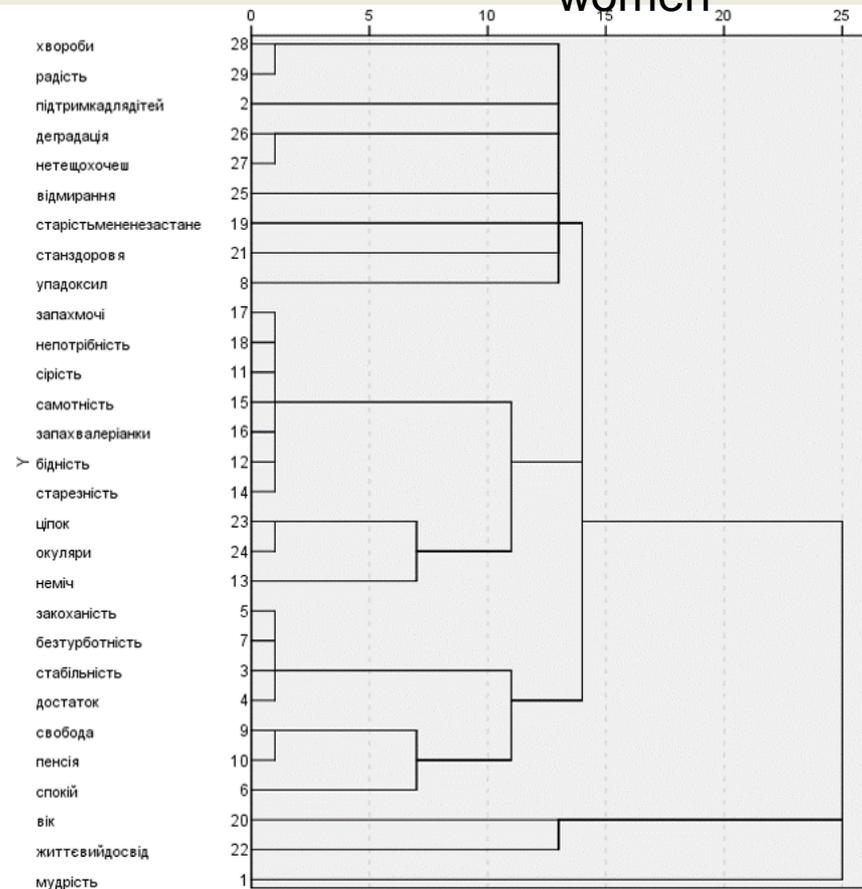
women



men



women



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Creation an alternative history of aging

For the writing of an alternative story of the future, women and men usually choose high-status and public people whose actions do not usually fit into gender stereotypes. Alternative stories were about interest in the new, case, creativity, activity, help others. The reviews of the research writing of alternative history made visible new opportunities not only for the future but also for the present.



Conclusions



The empirical results show that the aging process is an important determinant of the mid-life crisis. His awareness generates a complex set of experiences: fear, sadness, despair, pain, which is holistic in the form of anxiety. According to our data, middle-aged women are more open to aging-related experiences than men. The anxiety of women's aging is mainly due to loss of external attractiveness and health, and men lose men's health and status. There are gender differences in the forms of identity transformation due to the awareness of aging: women choose compensation strategies, while men are avoidsing. The adult life perspective builds on the stereotype of survival, the cultural model, which contains serious limitations for developing beyond the average adult, both for women and for men.



As long as aging is the latest achievement of mankind, there are no strict standards for its residence. A person has the opportunity of late freedom: not to rely on expectations and assess others, get rid of their own expectations about the future and more trusting in life. However, for many, this freedom of choice is unbearable, because adults are accustomed to living on standard normative ages and gender patterns and are not ready to take advantage of old age that are manifested. Approved by us reception "Alternative History of Old Age" allows adults to find the possibilities of old age, reduces the anxiety of aging and contributes to the harmonization of the "I" personality of middle age.



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Thank you for attention!