

IDENTIFICATION OF SIGNS OF DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR: ON THE EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL WORK WITH THE ELDERLY

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Abstract: The article considers the issue of identifying signs of destructive social behavior in the sociological dimension, namely, on the example of social work with the elderly. The results of the sociological study conducted by the authors actualize the role of institutionalization of social work in overcoming destruction in relation to the elderly, in the process of which it is necessary to raise awareness of social workers about the signs of destructive behavior and their ability to predict possible manifestations of such destruction. It is shown that social workers' knowledge about signs of destructiveness in the lives of the elderly is necessary to determine the range of social services and effective forms of social work with this category of social services recipients.

Keywords: Aggressive behavior, Destructive behavior, Destructiveness, Self-destructive behavior, Social behavior, Social destruction, Social work.

1 Introduction

Scientific and practical interest in the subject of numerous destructions in various spheres and at various levels of public life has been growing in recent years [3]. The process of social destructuring of the individual is especially intensified in a crisis society, the development of which is influenced by the global trend of population aging [2, 24].

Social destruction in relation to the elderly in modern society, which seeks to demonstrate the values of humanism, cannot be perceived as an acceptable social practice, rational and acceptable lifestyle [1, 9]. The study of this problem is extremely important for a transitive society, in which the system of social institutions has insufficient capacity to influence the overcoming of social destruction. However, a clear generalized concept of destructive behavior does not yet exist.

Preventive, prophylactic, corrective and rehabilitation measures to overcome destructive behavior through the institutionalization of social work require scientific, including sociological, support [3].

The purpose of the article is to investigate the problem of identifying signs of destructive social behavior in the sociological dimension, namely, on the example of social work with the elderly.

2 Literature Review

The analysis of various forms, types of destructiveness in modern society is based on the fundamental work of E. Fromm [19], its humanistic orientation and, at the same time, a critical rethinking of its basic provisions [12, p. 178]. The study of manifestations, means of prevention of destruction in various spheres of life of individuals, groups, and communities is intensified, namely: in family and marriage life through the prism of role interaction [17]; in the youth environment [39]. There are many interpretations of the formation of deviant behavior and its impact on the process of personality destructuring in adolescence [36].

Much attention is paid by scientists to the role of destruction, its types, antisocial, addictive and suicidal behavior in the mechanism of criminal behavior [3]. Manifestations of destructive leadership in the organization [46], which may also apply to organizations in the field of social work, are highlighted.

However, the peculiarities of destruction among the elderly need in-depth study, because its study is not based on established theoretical and methodological principles.

In the book *Old Age*, J. Vincent considered the situation of older people, the number of which grows in the process of population aging in the world, through the dichotomy "liberalization from aging liberalization of aging" [47]. I. Schmerlina questioned the model of aging put forward by J. Vincent, based on this dichotomy, which does not allow describing the following basic scenarios of aging, characteristic for the Russian Federation: survival [3]; reorientation to social and personal realization in new spheres of life [4].

Empirically derived scenarios do not "fit" well with the called dichotomy. In fact, one can talk about "liberalization" only in relation to the third scenario, while the second is realized faster than the first one among these alternatives [43, p. 78]. In the end, it is worth agreeing with Rogozin, who believes that the liberal approach to aging has now been transformed, "Liberation from the dictates of political will, economic determinism and medical stigma represent a triad of liberal approach for the next decade" [36, p. 177].

The authors of the article are based on the view expressed by Yu. Shaygorodsky on the state of research on destruction in a democracy, "The interpretation of destructiveness as a process aimed at destroying a certain structure, destructive behavior (as aggressive, deviant and delinquent) acquires new features. The main characteristic of destructive behavior is its social determinism by socio-political practices and dominant meanings" [41, p. 241].

Analysis of scientific sources on the topic of destructive behavior allows making the following generalizations:

- Destructiveness is presented in interdisciplinary discourse [1, 5];
- Destructiveness is manifested in all types of social behavior and its social manifestations are actively studied within the behavioral sciences [20, 28].

If in the natural sciences the recognition and treatment of destruction is relevant, in the social sciences, it is identification and social work with the aim to prevent negative manifestations of destructiveness in the social life of individuals, groups, communities of different levels.

The authors of the article, in the course of the study, encountered such a problem as terminological instability in the description of destructive behavior. For example, such concepts as "deviant behavior", "self-destructive behavior", "aggressive behavior", and others are widely used. Therefore, it is no coincidence that in recent years the need for "integration of already accumulated knowledge about destructive behavior, the formation of a holistic concept of destructiveness and differentiation of destructive behavior from related and associated concepts" is realized [49, p. 71].

The subject of discussion of scientists is 1) the theory of deviant behavior; 2) study of varieties and forms of deviant behavior; 3) social work with deviants and prevention of deviant behavior [21]. T.Z. Garasimov convincingly showed that "social institutions, solving the problem of correcting deviant personality, use the achievements of special disciplines, which are, in particular, law, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, medicine, anthropology" [11, p. 244]. Destruction is also manifested in various types of gerontological violence, which are recorded in many countries around the world.

Scientists are still debating both the limits of old age and the age characteristics of the elderly [29]. M. Kukhta, reflecting on the age division of old age, in particular, on the criteria for allocating the boundaries of old age, which are different in different approaches, notes that today not only social criteria for allocating the boundaries of old age (due to economic challenges) are decreasing, but also medical and biological ones

(due to the prolongation of well-being). Preliminary criteria can work no longer [30, p. 67]. Despite a comprehensive and systematic study of the problem of behavioral destruction in the practice of social work with the elderly, many aspects of this social phenomenon have not yet been clarified.

3 Materials and Methods

The authors of the article in July - August 2020 at the initiative of the public organization "Social Communication Center" (Kharkiv) conducted an online survey of social workers of territorial centers of social services in Kharkiv and Kharkiv region in Ukraine.

Empirical basis of the study is the following: 535 specialists of territorial centers of social services in Kharkiv region were interviewed as experts, by the method of a continuous online survey. The criteria for selecting experts were determined by their involvement in the process of providing social services to the population, including in the practice of social work with the elderly. Experts are represented by two groups that had permanent employment in the territorial center: social workers (34%) and social workers who communicated directly with the clients of the territorial centers and provided them with social services mainly at their place of residence (66%).

Distribution of experts by socio-demographic characteristics is as follows: recorded feminization of the profession of social worker (among experts, 97% – women and 3% – men); by age: up to 29 years – 4%, 30-39 years – 16%, 40-49 years – 31%, 50-59 years – 39%, 60 years and older – every tenth expert; by length of service in the field of social assistance: up to 1 year 6%, 1-3 years – 12%, 4-6 years – 12%, 7-9 years – 13%, 10-19 years – 34%, 20 years and more – 23%; by education – those who have a secondary professional (vocational) education – 64%, bachelor's degree – 8%, higher education (specialist, master) – 28%.

Based on the materials of the conducted survey, we will consider the ability of social workers to identify manifestations of destruction in social behavior in relation to the elderly.

4 Results

The analysis of data obtained through an expert survey of specialists in the field of social work allows expanding scientific understanding of the role of social workers in the institutionalization of social work with the elderly, in particular, in solving the problem of identifying destructive behavior towards the elderly with the aim of overcoming (prevention) of its negative consequences.

We share the view of O.V. Borodenko, who considers deviance as a cultural phenomenon, and the power of deviant and delinquent manifestations in the modern global world is associated by him primarily with the inability of social institutions to respond to new deviations and develop and implement scientifically sound strategies for them [6].

Noteworthy ones are four generalizations of the world experience of institutionalization of counteraction to gerontological violence as a kind of social destruction, made by P.V. Puchkov and O.P. Puchkov [35].

First, "prevention of gerontological violence at the state and regional levels is carried out on the basis of existing social institutions. This is, first of all, the institute of social security, the institute of health care, the institute of law enforcement agencies. For each of them, there are different types of services that perform different functions depending on the goals and objectives, such as detection of cases of gerontological violence, their prevention, short-term protection of victims with assessment of risk factors to determine further intervention: long-term intervention or emergency intervention, which requires urgent action. The most developed system of prevention of gerontological violence is in Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and the USA" [35, p. 83].

Second, such activities are carried out in different countries:

- At the national, state, and regional levels (Australia, Great Britain, Canada and the United States);
- On the initiative of various public organizations supported by the state (Brazil, Norway, South Africa);
- On the basis of the activities of non-governmental organizations that operate independently and are supported by various ministries (France, Germany, Italy, Poland, New Zealand)" [35, p. 90-91].

Third, "the activities of a number of these social institutions in many countries are poorly organized. This can be explained by the fact that violence against family members, including the elderly, is not always regarded as criminal behavior due to certain implicit cultural norms, although the punishment for such actions is enshrined in law" [35, p. 91].

Fourth, the institutionalization of actions related to the prevention of gerontological violence can be most effectively carried out in the following areas: "socio-legal (development of legal framework); educational and informational (dissemination of information about gerontological violence); consultation and rehabilitation, which includes the provision of qualified medical, financial, social assistance to the elderly" [35, p. 91].

The destruction can be overcome by the inclusion of the elderly, their interest in life, motivation to understand the new social reality and the desire to integrate into society. At the same time, according to empirical research, "In all developed countries, the elderly lag significantly behind the younger generations in terms of digital culture, they have much lower skills of IT competencies, they are more wary of any innovation, related to the field of information technology" [16, p. 338–330]. Therefore, the following conclusion is logical as a result of the analysis of the new social reality.

The transformation of social institutions, designed to prevent and overcome the negative manifestations of social destruction, is that, as noted by Ruban, "Social institutions must not only meet certain needs and interests of people, but also should form such. Ideally, social institutions should form normative attitudes and patterns of social activity, indicating the limits of permissible and impermissible restricting freedom of action, defining behavior that does not fit into generally accepted norms as deviant and resorting, if necessary, to coercion to stop it, i.e., applying partial restriction of freedom. On the other hand, social institutions must ensure the realization of freedom, because the greatest stability of norms, values and ideas declared by social institutions, are found only through the internalization of individuals, losing their external and coercive nature" [37, p. 331–332].

The practice of social work with the elderly testifies to the significant role of the personality of a social worker [4, 33]. We are talking primarily about his professional qualities, among which there is the ability to identify signs of destruction in the daily life of this socially vulnerable group.

O.V. Sorokin, studying the deviant behavior of young people, came to the conclusion that the general criteria of deviant behavior in modern changing society are blurred [39]. This applies to the criteria of both deviation and destruction among the elderly.

5 Discussion

Destructive behavior is considered by us as a kind of social behavior [7]. The latter is multidimensional [32]. There are many typologies of social behavior [21, 32, 36].

To achieve the goal of this article, the authors selected a triad of such types of social behavior that describe the activities of older people: destructive behavior, self-destructive behavior, aggressive behavior (Figure 1).



Figure 1 – Triad of types of social behavior in the daily life of the elderly

We rely on the research position formulated by Shapoval, “The main forms of human destructiveness can be determined by the following:

- 1) Physiological and psychological properties of human;
- 2) Lie in the plane of social relations;
- 3) Flow from the spiritual nature of human.

Accordingly, the ways and means of their neutralization and minimization will depend on what forms of destructiveness and their consequences will be decisive in each case” [42, p. 97].

Analysis of certain aspects of destructiveness (biological, psychological, legal, etc.) does not allow a systematic and comprehensive study of this phenomenon. Social destructiveness is due to socio-cultural factors and situations, which makes it the subject of study of sociology [40, 43]. Destructions of the social order are widely represented in sociological knowledge [8, 10, 13]. Thus, V. Gorodyanenko suggests the following typology of destructive behavior, “Destructive behavior is directed externally: wars, terrorist acts, vandalism, etc., as well as destructive behavior directed at human to self: suicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc.)” [20].

5.1 Destructive Behavior towards the Elderly in the Imagination of Specialists in the Field of Social Work

For the needs of social work on destructive manifestations in relation to the elderly, the approach of Zlokazov is interesting, who proposed to analyze destructive behavior in three contexts of social relations:

- 1) Intrapersonal (illustrates the impact of human on his own body);
- 2) Interpersonal (includes human influence on the people around him);
- 3) Metapersonal (reveals the destructive behavior of human as a bearer of social role in the system of social relations) [49, p. 71].

Next, let us consider how destructive behavior in relation to the elderly is presented in the imagination of professionals in the field of social work, using the following indicators:

- Awareness of specialists in the field of social work with signs of abuse and violence against the elderly [14];
- The need of specialists in the field of social work for information on signs of violence, measures to prevent and combat violence against the elderly [18];
- Assessment by experts in the field of social work regarding manifestations of self-destruction in the behavior of the elderly [22];
- Specialists in the field of social work as victims of violence by elderly clients [2].

Only 58% of the surveyed specialists in the field of social work, according to their testimony, can identify such an extreme form of social destruction in relation to people of retirement age, as abuse and violence (these are conditionally distinguished forms of destruction); 31% at the time of the survey could not decide on this issue; 11% do not know the signs by which one can distinguish abuse from violence (Figure 2).

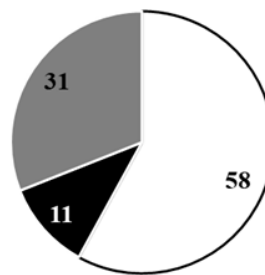


Figure 2 – Distribution of experts according to their awareness of signs of abuse and violence against the elderly (in%, n = 535)

Awareness of respondents with signs of social destruction does not correlate with their socio-demographic characteristics. That is, we can assume that this situation is related to the quality of training of specialists as social service providers.

The need for information on signs of violence, measures to prevent and combat violence against the elderly was expressed by 44% of social workers, i.e., some of those who do not know the signs of destructive behavior in the form of abuse and violence do not even feel the need for such knowledge, which, in turn, may indicate insufficient level of social responsibility of those who should professionally care for socially vulnerable individuals (Figure 3).

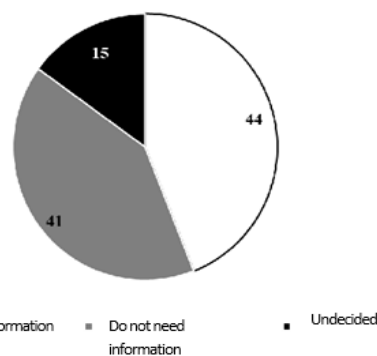


Figure 3 – Distribution of interviewed social work professionals according to their need for information on signs of violence, measures to prevent and combat violence against the elderly (in%, n = 535)

The need for information about the signs of social destruction is felt more by middle-aged and older social workers, compared to young professionals, as well as those who have work experience of 10 years or more (Figure 4, Figure 5).

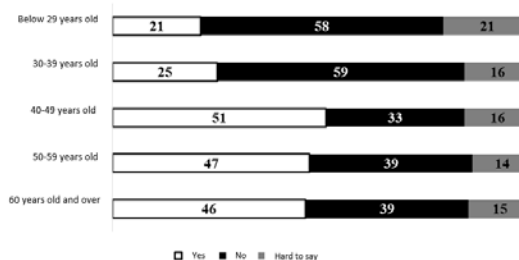


Figure 4 – Distribution of experts on the need for information on signs of violence, measures to prevent and combat violence against the elderly by their age (in %, n = 535)

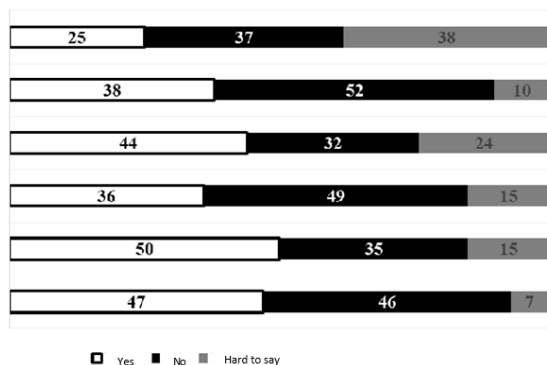


Figure 5 – Distribution of experts on the need for information on signs of violence, measures to prevent and combat violence against the elderly depending on their length of service (in %, n = 535)

There is a statistically significant relationship between the need for information and the age of professionals working in the field of social work (Cramer's ratio = 0.147, 1% significance level), as well as their work experience (Cramer's ratio = 0.175, 1% significance level).

The data of the expert survey show that the awareness of social workers about the signs of social destruction, the need for information on this topic is mainly due to spatial factors – place of residence and, accordingly, the location of institutions providing social services to the elderly (Figure 6, Figure 7).

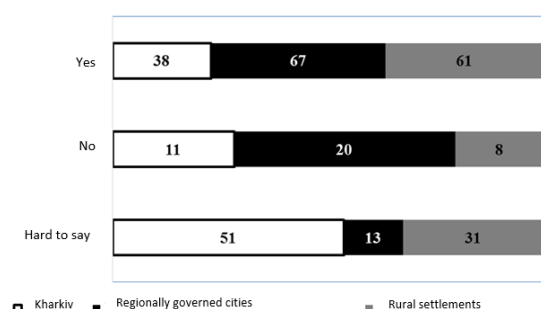


Figure 6 – Distribution of answers of the interviewed specialists on social work of the centers of social services for different types of settlements to the question, "Do you know the signs by which one can distinguish abuse and violence against the elderly?" (in %, n = 535)

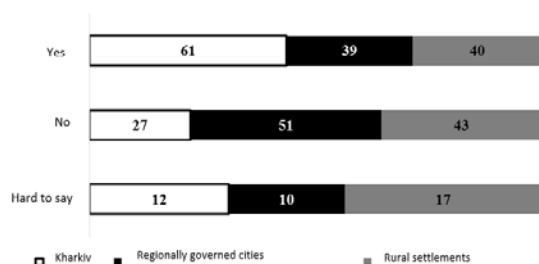


Figure 7 – Distribution of the answers of the interviewed specialists on social work of the centers of social services for different types of settlements to the question, "Do you need information about the signs of violence, measures to prevent and counteract violence against the elderly?" (in %, n = 535)

These studies allow drawing the attention of the management of territorial centers for social services to the need (in the process of professional development of specialists in the field of social work) to conduct training to improve the ability of these specialists to identify signs of destructive behavior in the elderly.

Insufficient ability of some specialists in the field of social work to identify signs of social destruction leads to the fact that, in the performance of their professional duties, some of them commit coercive actions against the elderly, not even realizing that this can be interpreted as abuse or even violence. Such respondents are in the array only 3%, but in different types of settlements this phenomenon is distributed differently (Figure 8).

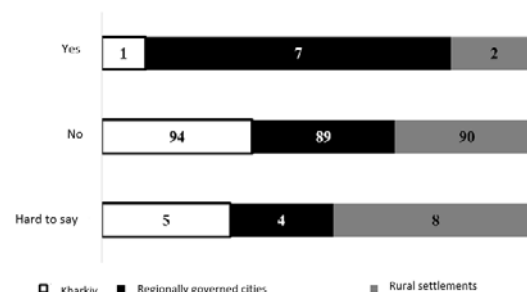


Figure 8 – Distribution of the answers of the interviewed specialists on social work of territorial centers of social services for different types of settlements to the question, "Have you personally had to commit certain coercive actions against the elderly without realizing that it is violence or ill-treatment?" (in %, n = 535)

5.2 Self-Destructive Behavior of the Elderly

Determinants and possibilities of self-regulation of destructive behavior are actively studied by scientists [15, 16]. Self-destructive behavior is characterized by self-destruction, which has numerous manifestations. In particular, this topic is comprehensively disclosed by M. Goulston and F. Goldberg, who in 40 chapters of the book conducted a thorough analysis of 40 models of self-destructive behavior [12].

As Ivanenko has shown, in the emergence of self-destructive behavior of the individual, an important role is played by psychological trauma, which affects social moods, current well-being, and long-term human behavior. Therefore, it is important to study the mechanisms of self-destructive behavior caused by traumatic effects [25].

Self-destruction becomes the response of the elderly to the inability to solve their own life problems. I. Vashchenko and B. Ivanenko established "the main ways of psychological response to a difficult life situation: automatic response – the inclusion of protective tendencies, self-destructive behavior, activation of the system of psychological defenses; conscious response – actualization of psychological potential and use of psychological resources" [45, p. 33].

The use of personal resources plays a role in overcoming a difficult life situation. Here are three well-grounded by Vashenko and Ivanenko three steps in this process: "the first one is the awareness of existence and content of a difficult situation as a real problem, the second is determination to change, the third is represented by the refusal to deal with those aspects of a difficult situation that it is impossible to change, and the reorientation of attention to the transformation of the negative situation into constructive changes through own efforts" [45, p. 46]. However, among the low-resource groups, which tend to include the elderly as recipients of social assistance, they are inclined to the third step.

The assessment of self-destruction in the behavior of the elderly by social workers was recorded through the following questions to social workers, "How do you feel about the following views on the destruction (violence) of the elderly: 1) Older people themselves commit violence against to others. 2) Do elderly people themselves provoke violence against them?" The distribution of answers of the interviewed specialists in social work does not correlate with their socio-demographic characteristics, but differs in the territorial centers of social services for different types of settlements (Figure 9, Figure 10).

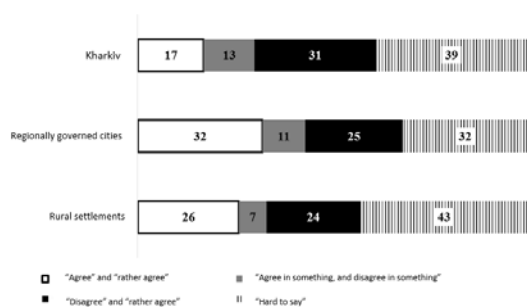


Figure 9 – Distribution of answers of the interviewed specialists on social work of territorial centers of social service for different types of settlements to the question, “How do you feel about such a view of destruction (violence) against the elderly?” (in %, n = 535)

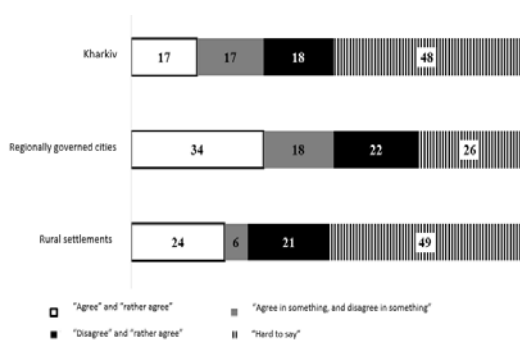


Figure 10 – Distribution of the answers of the interviewed specialists on social work of territorial centers of social service for different types of settlements to the question, “How do you feel about such a view of destruction (violence) against the elderly?” (in %, n = 535)

Specialists in the field of social work appeared to be victims of violence by elderly clients. This indicator correlates with their length of service (Cramer's ratio = 0.134, 5% significance level).

In social work, it is important to predict destructive behavior [31, 38]. However, the vast majority of surveyed experts (91%) indicated that they could not predict (forecast) the possible manifestations of violent social destruction (from relatives, friends, neighbors) against the elderly.

Zlokazov and Kappushev called the main elements of theories of predicting social behavior as follows: 1) the idea of purpose, 2) ideas about the results of behavior, 3) ideas about the attitude of others to these actions. Awareness of these components by the subject entails their implementation in behavior. At the same time, their inability to predict the risk of destructive behavior is emphasized [50, p. 93]. Equally important issue in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is the formation of self-regulation of the elderly, which acts as a factor in their psychological well-being, by means of social work [23].

6 Conclusion

Thus, for social work to act as a profession for the protection of human rights to a quality and dignified life [44], it is necessary to strive for the social well-being of individuals, groups, communities, especially socially vulnerable [40], to assess the opportunities in organizations providing social services [27]. In line with this task facing the welfare state, we have considered the problem of social destruction in an aging society.

Prevention of destructive behavior towards the elderly should include the problem of staffing social services that care for this vulnerable group of social assistance recipients. Our study confirms the conclusion of Petrasjuk, who points to the following problems in the professional activities of specialists in the field of social work, “Overload due to high staff turnover;

pressure from management, without a positive assessment of work, needed by employees; difficulties with clients, especially in social workers who work with children and families; impossibility of timely and full vacation; lack of psychological support of the employee. All this negatively affects the psychological well-being of the employee and are the most common factors that cause dismissal” [34, p. 99]. To these problems, as evidenced by our empirical research, should be added the lack of awareness of specialists in the field of social work about the signs of social destructiveness.

Social workers have the opportunity, first, to communicate with the elderly and directly obtain information about their needs, well-being, problems from them; secondly, due to the included monitoring of the life of this category of social assistance recipients, they become the primary link in the mechanism of social protection of the elderly, because they can predict, forecast possible manifestations of destruction in relation to their clients [48]. Awareness of social work professionals about the signs of social destruction, the need for information on this topic does not correlate with their socio-demographic characteristics (except for a weak correlation with work experience and age), but is mainly due to spatial factors – place of residence and, consequently, location of providing social services to the elderly [26].

The data and conclusions presented in the article are primarily important for improving the work of social services that provide social services to the elderly and should take into account both the heterogeneity of this category of recipients of social services and professional skills of social workers, in particular, their ability to identify and predict the manifestations of destruction in the daily life of the elderly.

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Primary Paper Section: A**Secondary Paper Section: AM, AN**