

## Problems of Third Age According Cases Study at Daily Elders Centre of Durrës Municipality

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**Abstract:** The object of this study is Daily Elder Centre (DEC) in Durrës. Subject of this study is the target group that it is support DEC. The aim of this study: "To known social problems that has elder people, members of Daily Elders Centre (DEC) in Durrës. The objectives of this study: To identify problem of DEC members, and to evaluated every problem. There were study 90 persons (member of DEC); were created two questionnaire formats to collect the information by DEC members. Were used as source the basic registers of DEC and personal files of members. Were considered as indicator assessment "hierarchy of needs" according to Maslow's theory, and low number 7703 on 11/05/1993 for "minimal and maximal pension for old people in urban aria of Albania; contemporaneous services offered for old people in the developed countries. Discussion of the results brought some of these conclusions: 1. The elderly of the DEC consider the income level insufficient. 2. The elderly of DEC do not have the life that desire. 3. The elderly of DEC feels in threatened from old age. 4. The elderly of DEC feels alone. "Aging at home" is identified as a very significant desire among the elderly. This preference for living in a family environment seems to indicate a desire to maintain independence, and not to withdraw from society.

**Keywords:** elderly, needs, incomes, loneliness, decreased physical activity

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To my elderly brothers and sisters!

**"Our longevity is 70-80 for the strongest. Almost all these years are fatigue, pain, quick passing years and we are no longer "**

70 years were a lot for the time when these verses were written, and there were not numerous persons crossing this age. Today, thanks to progress, medicine and improvement of social and economic conditions, life has been prolonged. It always remains true though that years pass so fast. Granted life, even though marked by fatigue and pain, has always been very precious.

Pope John Paul II <sup>(1)</sup>

### Introduction

In the world practice, as the entry threshold in the elderly group, the age of 60 or 65 years is used. The limit 65 years is usually used in cases where the country's population is characterized by a high degree of obsolescence. But there are few cases in which an elderly can maintain vital features of a young man, regarding psychic abilities such as attention, memory, logic, creative feelings etc. It is important to remember that the beginning of aging is a personal phenomenon that has different rates and depends on numerous psychological, social, environmental factors, which promote or inhibit this phenomenon.<sup>(2)</sup>

In our country under the applicable law an "Elder Person "<sup>(3)</sup> is a person who has reached the retirement age. In Albania, one of the most five threatened groups that constitutes a social problem is the third age group. <sup>(4)</sup>

The Albanian population, like many other developing countries is at a fairly rapid transition phase. The reduction of fertility and the increased longevity of the Albanian population have led to the classic demographic transition. For our country, a distinctive feature of population has been its young age. According to INSTAT (the Institute of Statistics), the elderly in our country occupy 8% of the population, of whom 52% are female and 47% are male. Thus Albania as a nation currently has a relatively young age, but its falling trends tend to be visible, and if we refer to INSTAT, from 2001 to 2010, the third age population is increasing by 14.7% or 33,470 of elderly. Therefore, as a result of continuing the trend of fertility decline since 1961, as the specific weight of the first age group will continue to decrease gradually, the third age group will grow so much that, in about four decades, the specific weight of the elderly over 60 years, not only will reach but, perhaps will pass the first age group. According to rough estimates, in 2050 it is thought that the elderly will reach

about 25% of the population,<sup>(5)</sup> a figure close to the current average of two countries like Italy and Spain, which are among the top aging countries in Europe.<sup>(6)</sup>

Durrës has about 195,135 inhabitants, of whom 26,569, or 13.6% are elderly. The number of elderly is increasing to 14.7% or 3347.<sup>(7)</sup>

Aging of population has social implications that go beyond the fact of collecting demographic data. The progressive industrialization and urbanization are effectively contributing in our population geographical distribution. Above all, the mass migration to a new sector of the population from rural to urban areas is not only adding the older population in rural areas, but at the same time is depriving this group of people of the traditional economic and social support. This phenomenon, on the other hand, has made formal requests for support grow more and more.

As for those elder people who have moved to urban areas, except the problem of accommodation, they are added the problems of poverty, health and nutrition. All these changes have been presented as a challenge in front of the Albanian government, bringing social, economic, medical and political implications.

To cope with the aging population, it was previously thought as a matter belonging to the family and in this light, the family or its members who offered services were underestimated and, in many cases, even excluded from the formal system of social services. It was only given in extreme cases or when the crisis was too late.

There exists a network of state and non-state services operating in this direction by offering day care centers and residential social services for senior citizens. These activities are conducted in a limited number of residential state institutions, respectively in Kamëz and Saranda.

Cities like Durrës and Tirana have day centers for elderly, supported by local budgets and projects which they apply for. These centers have been established alongside the community. The existence role of these centers is supportive, entertaining and integrative.<sup>(8)</sup>

The object of this study is the Day Center for Elderly (DCE) associated with the target group it supports. Currently it supports respectively 110 elderly people per year. DCE is an institution which has been supported by the Municipality of Durrës since September 2001. Overall, it has supported 380 senior citizens. The center offers numerous psycho-social programs, that intend to improve the quality of life of the elderly.<sup>(9)</sup>

At the time of the survey the center is attended by 95 members. Part of the study have been 90 of them or 94.7% of the attendees.

For this study the basic registry books were used, and the data were collected by personal cards that each member of the center possesses.

## Methodology

This study sample consists of 90 individuals, of whom 47.7% are female and 52.3% are male. A necessary condition for the individuals who became part of this survey was their inclusion as beneficiary members of services at the "Day Centre for Elderly" Durrës. The age of the sample belongs to the group of 65 years and above, or the elderly. All the individuals who participated in this study reside in Durrës. The sample has an extension in 94.7% of total mass for a year of services or 23.6% of all beneficiaries in years.

## Instruments

We used two types of tabs in this survey. *The first tab* has to do with bringing in a format as an unstructured interview. This file collected data about "issues" considered as a problem for the senior citizens of the center. This format contains comments from the elderly about these issues. The comments contain their natural feelings about several issues. These sensations were used to give a real tangible character of the problem and to help us develop a second tab. *The second tab* has to do with the identification of the current social situation of elderly people who attend the center, giving statistical information about the issues which they pose as problems. This file brings us statistical information about the identified problems in the first file. Unlike the first one, the second tab is structured in the form of a questionnaire that contains definite elements which need to be found. From the first tab, 20 free interviews were conducted, or 22.2% of beneficiaries. The second tab was handed out to 90 members of the center, and was supplemented with information by 90 elders or 94.7% of attendees.

## Data Analysis

Instruments used in this study were put into a database using SPSS. Data analysis consists of a descriptive analysis

conducted through the program by calculating frequencies, percentages, elements of average and correlations between problems such as loneliness and loss of spouse etc.

Also, helpful indicators such as the "Hierarchy of Needs" according to Maslow's Humanistic Theory were used in the evaluation. The evaluation is intended to identify the sort of the problem under the level of personal needs; Law no. 7703 dated 11/05/1993 for "Retirement Pension", which aims to find which group of pension benefits the elderly of the day center are part of; DCM (Decree of Council of Ministers) no. 209, dated 12.4.2006, "On the Determination of Criteria and Required Documentation for Admission of Persons in Residential, Public and Private Institutions, Social Care", Chapter 3, on "Beneficiaries Considered Seniors in Need"; "Contemporary Service Models for the Elderly, and social policy", which aimed at the identification of what is called a problem based on the philosophy of services to the third age group that these models bring.

## Discussion and Results of the study

In this study, the "first tab" was created in the form of a non-structured interview. This file collected data about "issues" considered as a problem for the senior citizens of the center. Moreover, the "first tab" contains comments from the elderly about problems of these issues. Comments contain their natural feelings about issues. For the "first tab" 20 free interviews were conducted, or 22.2% of beneficiaries were involved. A set of variables have been extracted from this file, which emerge as a problem for the senior citizens in a certain extent. Precisely, measure values of each problem are presented in Table (01.) This table expresses in percentage the measure of the value to each problem. These problems not only occur at high rates, but they can also be seen as interdependent on each other.

Types of problems	Low income	Dependence	Alteration of Civil Status	Hermi-tage	Alteration of Health diseases	Alteration of Cohabitation	Alteration of Housing	Alteration of social status	Alteration of appearance	Mentality	Lack of privacy
<b>Value in %</b>	95%	87%	53%	73%	89%	78%	68%	67%	60%	70%	63%

The survey data showed that the problems of concern to seniors in DCE Durrës are the income, the amount of benefit, type of benefit, education, loneliness, the social status of the members of the center that expresses the loss of spouse, cohabitation, dependence etc.

Personal income are a problem in 95% of members. They are identified as a problem, because the elderly say they are very low in comparison with the needs they have to meet. "With this pension I cannot afford even my medication," said the elderly lady R.B.

"Insufficiency of income brings dependence on others", says A.M. This kind of dependence on others appears in 87% of the concern of members. Addiction is a kind of slavery! Especially in the situation of a "conditioned slavery" <sup>(10)</sup>. According to INSTAT publication in 2010, in the region of Durrës, the number of pensioners was 34,041, of whom 17,122 are women and 16,919 men. In the "Day Center of Elderly", Durrës, the number of beneficiaries should not be greater than 110 elderly people. Is there a need for other centers? Figures speak for themselves.

But let's analyze the recorded and placed problems that the first tab helped us view in the table (01.) To analyze these problems we used the second tab, which relates to the identification of the current social situation of older people who frequent the center. It gave us statistical information about the issues that pose a problem for them. This file was compiled in the form of a survey and helped bring us statistical information about the problems that the first tab identified.

The information on "income" from table (01.) which result as a problem in 95% of cases of members of the Center, was treated in two variables, "the source of income" and "measures of profitability". This is to see how much the measure of profitability from the revenue source is.

From the results of the study, the variable “the data for the income source for the members of the DCE” the results obtained from the table (1.) were put aside for an interpreting effect in Table (1.1), and if we refer to this table, we note that 88.9% of the members of the center benefit a retirement pension.

Type of income	Retirement pension	Retirement + Disability pension	Economic aid	Disability pension	No income	Total
Value in %	88,9%	4,5%	2,2%	3,3%	1,1%	100%

This shows that the main source of visitors on the center is the retirement pension. But why do 95% of old people say that their revenues are not sufficient or even a problem?

To come to the conclusions of Table (1.1), we also studied another variable that is the “measure of profitability for each source”. Based on these two variables, namely “the recognition of income source”, and “benefit amount” minimum and maximum, we decided to look at the addition that these variables have from each other. Thus the measure of profitability variable was divided into four values, which include the contributions from any source of income and all no income households that included 1.1% of visitors on the center. So referring to the Table (1.1), the voices of variable “measure of benefit” include all kinds of sources of income that beneficiaries of the center have.

But what do we understand with the problem of income, if members receive a retirement pension? According to DCM no.763, of Law no.7703, dated 11/05/1993 for “Retirement Pensions” we have data for the maximum and minimum types of pensions that the Social Security Institute provides in the country. So according to this source, the minimum retirement pension in the city (the place where our study takes place) is in the amount of 13,600 lek per month (95EU). The maximum retirement pension in the city is given to the extent of 22,000 lek per month (160 EU). Let's see how the income from the survey results are, referring to these profitability measures, minimum and maximum.

According to the Table (1.2). only 4.5% of the members of the center are near the maximum pension benefit. While 78.9% of the members have an income below the minimum limit of the pension benefit.

Amount of benefit	0-5000 lek/month	5100 -10 000 lek/month	10 100 – 15 000 lek/month	15 100 – 22 000 lek/month
Value in %	3,3%	13,3%	78,9%	4,5%

These data came from the analysis of these two variables, which means the analysis of the income source and the amount of benefit which is shown in Table (1.) below.

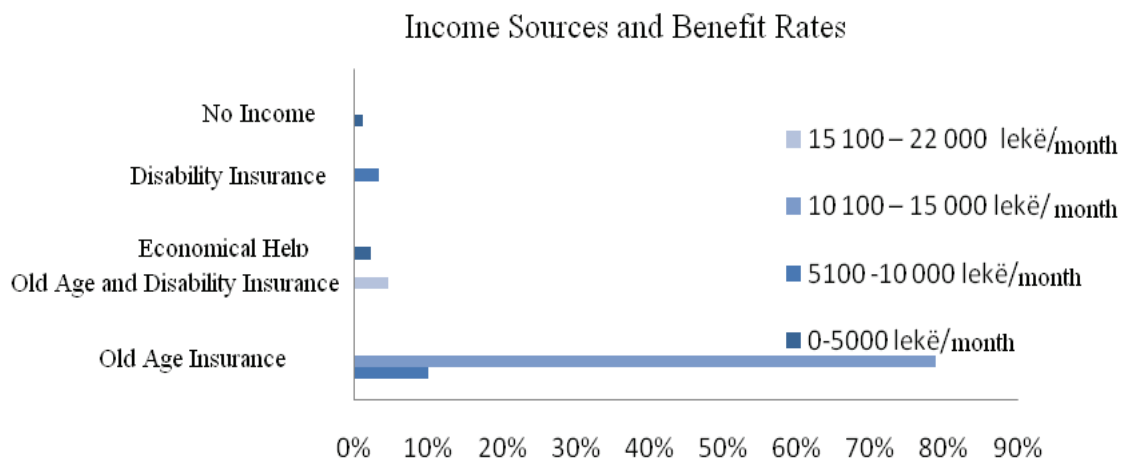
Amount of benefit	Retirement pension	Retirement + Disability pension	Economic aid	Disability pension	No income
0-5000 lek/month	0%	0%	2,2%	0%	1,1%
5100 -10 000 lek/month	10%	0%	0%	3,3%	0%
10 100 – 15 000 lek/month	78,9%	0%	0%	0%	0%
15 100 – 22 000 lek/month	0%	4,5%	0%	0%	0%
Sum	88,9%	4,5%	2,2%	3,3%	1,1%

So as we can see from the table there is an important link between the income source and the amount of benefit ( $r = 0.143$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ).

This table shows that 78.9% of attendees receive a retirement pension near the minimum 13,600 lek/month. And only 4.5% of them benefit income over the minimum or maximum retirement pension of 22,000 lek/month. This part of the beneficiaries or "privileged", in the case of our study, are those members, who receive two pensions, both the retirement and disability. In this category of beneficiaries there are included 4.5% of the members, who have severe health problems.

According to the "Financial Assistance and Social Services" law no 9355 dated 10/03/2005, the income from the disability pension is not counted as such, inasmuch as this income is used for disability, while these elders apparently seem "privileged" by the amount of profitability.

Another category of beneficiaries is that of the members who have no income, which occupies 1.1% of members. 2.2% of attendees are included in the voice that benefits from the financial assistance scheme. The economic aid is not more than 5000 lek/month (36EU). These identified elderly with no income or insufficient income live with the help of both their relatives and the center.



From these data we notice that the old people who come frequently in the center benefit from the pension scheme to the extent of 93, 4%, and considered as revenue source, the pension is insufficient and this is a problem for them. These results can be considered as a negative impact on the members' lives.

In developed countries, such as Italy, there is developed a social policy which is very supporting for the third age people regarding their income. This refers to the liquidation that the individual gets after retirement. The Liquidation or "Trattamento a fine rapporto" TFR, under the Article No 297, dated on May 29, 1982, guarantees to every employee their TFR, which is calculated based on their last salary from their employment, multiplied by the years they have worked. This amount serves as a savings fund of the personal income, which is collected by the government based on the social security contributions, which is then delivered in the end of labor contribution.<sup>(11)</sup> Thus it is an income that creates a kind of guarantee in the future. The lack of income constrains individuals in choices of their everyday life.

According to Maslow's Humanistic Theory on the Hierarchy of Needs it is worth repeating that: 1. The Physiological Needs, according to Maslow, include needs such as food, water, sexual relationship, exercising and rest. Man has physiological needs until some of these needs are met, at least partially. The highest-level needs in the hierarchy may become more needful when the physiological needs start being met.<sup>(12)</sup> If we refer to the data of the results, the income of 95,5% of the members of the center is below the average, the remaining of 4,5% receive a disability insurance, thus they belong to those elderly people that have specific needs depending on their health conditions, meeting partially the physiological needs that Maslow poses.

According to Maslow, after the basic needs are met, comes another stage that needs to be met, which is the security need. The need for security involves such needs as safety, stability, protection and freedom. During all his life, man needs not only to meet his needs, but also needs them to be stable. The investment throughout our lives, on education and career, aims to return in the end of the social security contributions an income such as the pension, which depends on the rate of social contribution.<sup>(13)</sup> For example, education is an instrument that provides the possibility of being involved in a certain profession, on which you may rely during your life. In countries like Italy, France, England, etc, pensions and their benefitting rates is differentiated. One of the causes of this differentiation among others is education.<sup>(14)</sup> Based on the data we have about the minimum and maximum pensions, the difference doesn't seem to be

so significant referring to the amount of benefit from the pension and education. In the members of the center, taking into account the dependence of these two variables, of the “education of the elderly” and of the “benefit rate”, we notice that they do not have a significant interdependence. This is shown even in the following table. Let us refer to the table (2.):

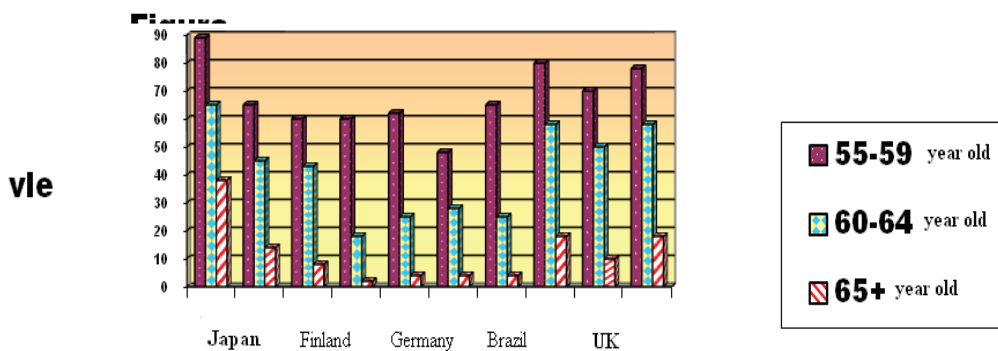
<b>Table (2.)</b>		<b>Division based on the education of the members of QDM</b>				
<b>Benefit Rate</b>	No Education	primary education	secondary education	middle education	Higher education	
0-5000 lekë/month	2,2%	1,1%	0%	0	0	
5100 -10 000 lekë/month	0%	5%	3,3%	5%	0%	
10 100 – 15 000 lekë/month	5,6%	17,2%	29,7	24,6%	1,8%	
15 100 – 22 000 lekë/month	0%	0%	1,5	1,5%	1,5%	
Sum	7,8%	23,3%	34,5%	31,1%	3,3%	

As we can see on the table, the above data shows that there is no significant relation between the benefit rate and education ( $r= 0,079$ ,  $p=0,221$ ). The uneducated benefiter occupy 7,8% of the total benefiter, but more than half of them benefit a minimum pension, same as the other benefiter with primary, secondary, middle or higher education. Thus education does not affect the increase of the amount of pension benefit that the center’s members have.

Old age affects drastically the human’s ability to work. Of course, with increasing age, productivity affects, but this is generalized. Elderly people often balance their physical loss, caused as a result of old age, with a contribution that does not require the use of physical strength, but the use of knowledge and experience. The work activity of elderly people, if it is properly chosen, does not wear off the potential of the human life, but preserves it, inhibits the aging process and also helps in choosing an active life.<sup>(15)</sup>

In Japan we see a model that is followed in order to maintain the social status of elderly people. The content of the Japanese model is related to the model of the active elder person.

Figure 1 shows at its best the situation of the employment of these ages, compared with other countries’ situation.



In Japan the employment level of elderly people, even of those who have passed the retirement age, results to be very high. Thus we see a power of the system, when it’s used in life. Often Japan is mentioned for the increase of the level of the active elderly population, mostly of males. In 2008, almost 95% of men of the ages of 55 and 59 years old were active at work. Almost ¾ of those between the ages of 60 to 64 were equally active at work, and 1/3 of those at the age of 65 were following the same example. Among them nearly all preferred to work: The elder individuals or those near the third-age work in sectors protected by the state. This is the “life use” system, which settles the compensation based on seniority, thus practically based on age. This system that is used by Japan requires a highly developed state.<sup>(16)</sup>

Our country does not follow such policies, which create the opportunity for people to choose by themselves when to retire, because as we said the aging process is not only a natural issue but also a personal one. In our country, people are forced to retire (excluding any special case). The retirement creates a series of problems such as the loss of social status, dependence on others, feeling worthless, loss of spouse, loneliness, etc, which are accompanied by fear and insecurity.

The State Care for its individuals is a constitutional obligation. It is the individual's right to feel safe and protected as part of the community where he lives. Thus the social treaty aims the protection of the contractors, which in this case refers to the third-age generation. They should feel the presence of the State by being involved in helping, not in being excluded and abandoned.<sup>(17)</sup> They need to be considered as an inseparable part of society, not as a black excluding stain of it.

The demographic movement in the country brought many changes in the pace of life, in its needs, etc. Changes happened even in the mentality of people. Before the 90's it was a "great shame" if the "oldest son" or the one that "was supposed" to live with the parents would leave. From the family and society it was regarded as abandonment. Whilst after the 90's this mentality started to change. Looking for jobs in the national labor market, and most of the time in the international labor market, the children were obliged to get separated from their families of origin in order to make a living. This phenomenon, did not only "shock" the traditional family, but also made the phenomenon of "loneliness" of the third-age generation even more frequent.<sup>(18)</sup> Loneliness, based on the table (0.1), constitutes 73% of the concerns of elderly people. In order to analyze the loneliness problem, in this research, for the elderly people of the QDM, was thought to be chosen two variables contained on the second card. These variables are: "the status of the members of the center" and "perception of this status". From the processing of the data collected from these two variables, the result was table (3). In table three we notice how these two variables get intertwined with each other. And if we see carefully, we notice that these variables have an important connection with each other.

<b>Table (3.)</b>	<b>The Status of the members of QDM</b>			
<b>Status Prception</b>	Widowed	Married	Divorced	Unmarried
Lonely	50%	0%	15,5%	7,8%
Not lonely	0%	26,7%	0%	0%
	50%	26,7%	15,5%	7,8%

So there is an important connection between the "perception of the status" and "marital status or social status", since (r=0,303, p=0,041).

Those elderly people who lost their spouse, in 100% of the cases, they feel 100% lonely, and in this case they constitute 50% of the frequenters. The same thing happens with the divorced and unmarried ones. The old people that are still married do not feel loneliness up to 100%. According to Maslow, the needs for belonging and love are related to such motives as love and affection, which are considered as the need for belonging and the need for love. When we have such needs, we feel the urge to have friends, a family and social contacts. We need to be part of a social group or family. As adults we need to give and receive love. Maslow believes that if the needs for belonging and love are not met, then psychological problems will come to light even in love.<sup>(19)</sup>

In order to analyze again the "loneliness" phenomenon, we took under consideration even the interconnection that it might have with the "cohabitation of the member" of the center. Therefore, does a member generate loneliness, in combination with his cohabitation type? According to Table (4) we notice that elderly living with their children and spouse do not feel lonely. Also, even the elderly living with their spouse do not feel lonely.

<b>Table (4.)</b>	<b>Some types of cohabitation of the members of QDM</b>					
<b>Loneliness Perceptions</b>	Living with their spouse and their children	Living with their spouse	Living with their relatives	Living with their children	Living with their parents	Living alone

Lonely	0%	6,9	17%	6%	1%	42,4%
Not Lonely	3,3%	14,2%	1,9%	6,2%	0%	1,1%
Sum	3,3%	21,1%	18,9%	12,2%	1%	43,5%

In 42, 4 % of the cases, those people who have lost their spouse feel lonelier. Thus we see that there is an important connection between the loneliness feeling and the type of cohabitation of the members ( $r=0,209$ ,  $p=0,024$ ).

The factors that we mentioned above, such as the loss of the spouse, the children’s departure, enhance the loneliness feeling in the elderly people and make them feel as if the house is empty.

“After my husband’s death, if I wouldn’t have come in this center, I would have ended up in a mental hospital”, said the elderly woman T.N, who lives alone but has the economical support of her daughter who lives abroad.

The loss of the spouse leaves a huge emptiness in the life of the old person. This is what the member R.I says for the loss of his spouse:

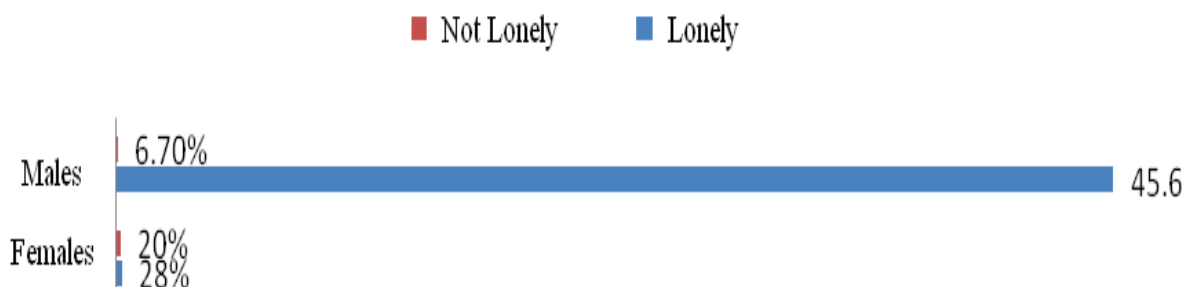
“When L.....went out of my life, a part of me was buried with her. Now we needed each other more than ever, but we didn’t know it! It’s so sorrowful, so painful!”

Those individuals who used to live only with their spouse, so had no children or other relatives, get worse because of the loss of their spouse. However, there are even some old people that consider the loss of their spouse as a “temporary separation towards the next life”, that’s what the old H.K says. Men suffer more that women for the loss of their spouse. From the socializing process, men are not used to take care of themselves in the everyday life, such as to cook, clean, do the laundry, iron etc, and as a consequence they suffer more than women for the loss of their spouse.<sup>(20)</sup> To analyze this conclusion, were chosen two variables, “loneliness” and “gender, or division according the sex”. This variables’ analysis, from the processing of the data was summarized on Table (5).

Table (5.)		Gender	
Loneliness perceptions	Gender		
	Females	Males	
Lonely	27,7%	45,6	
Not Lonely	20%	6,7%	
Sum	47,7%	52,3%	

Table (5) shows us that there is an important connection between the status perception and gender ( $r=0,555$ ,  $p=0,037$ ). So the men frequenting the center have a higher percentage of loneliness than the women.

### Demonstration based on gender and loneliness perception





In the graphic we see that 45, 6% of men who frequent the center, feel lonely, or 87% of men in the total male frequenters, feel lonely. Even females feel lonely, but compared to men we have the 28%, or 58, 3% of all women in total, feel lonely. So men feel lonelier than women, in cases of their spouse loss or because of living with relatives or alone.

## Conclusions

The elderly people of the center consider their income as a problem and insufficient. 95% of the benefiterers think that the income is insufficient. 78, 9% of them have an income nearly to the minimum pension. Elderly people rely mostly on their families, relatives and daily institutions like this center in order to make a living.

Lack of income deprives them from the opportunity to live as they would wish to. Regarding this they feel dependent on others and have a low self-esteem. From the study (table 0.1), 87% of them feel dependent on others, 63% of them feel they lack private life and 70% claim to suffer from the mentality that the society has about these elderly people depending on daily centers. The lack of income makes the food medication needs that they have, to remain unmet. The elderly people of the center feel threatened by old age, based on table (01), 89% of them are worried about their health and diseases. Also loneliness was one of the problems of the elderly, which was highlighted. It is caused from many factors, such as the loss of the spouse, departure of children on immigration, loss of friends, etc. From the study it results that 73, 3% of the elderly people feel lonely and live with the loneliness burden. Mainly those who have lost their spouse, up to 50% of the frequenters, feel lonelier. The elderly living with their spouse and children constitute 3, 3% of the cases and according to the study, they do not feel loneliness. But nowadays the traditional family has a tendency to fall apart and as such, institutions like the family are becoming less supporting for the third-age. Therefore it is the duty of the community and of the government to provide the ways to support the third age and their problems. The elderly of the center need more love, because the loss of their loved ones, the social status change, loneliness, mentality and other problems illustrated on table (0.1), show what a nightmare age becomes for them.

- Retirement pensions should ensure a dignified life for the elderly people.
- Day care centers should be focused on the loneliness issues. (the loss of the spouse, friends, relatives, the change of the social status)
- Besides the supporting role, daily care centers should have an integrating role.

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