At the present stage, the problems of social work with the elderly are at the center of attention of many social institutions, which direct their activities to scientific substantiation and development of strategies to ensure a sufficient standard of living for this age group. The article reveals the socio-psychological characteristics of the elderly, namely the feeling of loneliness, the value of social understanding of which is to emphasize the importance of this phenomenon for a person as a member of society. The danger of understanding loneliness only as an individual phenomenon lies in the fact that many dynamic factors directly related to the essence of loneliness as a social phenomenon are not taken into account. On the other hand, excessive attention to social manifestations of loneliness without taking heed of its significance for the inner world of a person can lead to misunderstanding of the individual functions of loneliness.

The modern tendencies in application of principles, forms and methods of social work with elderly people are determined. In determining the types of social work with the elderly, it becomes evident that social work with this age group is not always effective and sufficient due to the lack of well-grounded service strategies and the limitation of socio-economic opportunities of the state to provide sufficient resources for this area of activity.

The features of the experience of loneliness of the elderly are empirically investigated. The system of social and psychological support as a targeted activity of a specialist in the social sphere (or interprofessional interaction of specialists in the social sphere) has been developed and tested for creating the necessary conditions for the optimal functioning of the elderly.

The system of socio-psychological support of the elderly developed by us includes the following types of work: information (aimed at informing social workers about the prevention of loneliness in elderly people); preventive (aimed at building confidence in their own social suitability and restoring the behavioral activity of the elderly); diagnostic (aimed at studying the individual characteristics of the personality of the elderly and their relationship with close relatives (children, grandchildren) from the point of view of the elderly); consultative (aimed at increasing the psychological culture of the elderly, relatives, and social workers); correctional (aimed at overcoming the occurrence of loneliness and elimination of deviations in the functioning of the emotional sphere); rehabilitation; work with relatives.

It is important to explain to the relatives of the elderly that social support allows the elderly to feel competent. It is necessary to convey the positive feelings to the elderly, so that they feel that they are cared for, appreciated, and respected. It is an important factor contributing to adaptation at a later age.

An essential characteristic of social and psychological support is the creation of conditions for the transition of personality and (or) family to self-assistance. One of the areas of work with elderly people is the creation and implementation of social projects. The social significance of this problem in modern socio-psychological science has led to the creation of a social project "Art of Aging", which was implemented during 2016-2018.

Keywords: elderly people, loneliness, inner loneliness, external loneliness, intimate loneliness, social assistance, psychological help, principles and methods of social work, support, system of social and psychological support, rehabilitation.

1 INTRODUCTION

Problem statement. Under the current conditions, the problems of social work with the elderly are at the center of attention of many social institutions, which focus on scientific substantiation and development of strategies for ensuring sufficient standards of living for this age group. In the conditions of social, economic, political, cultural transformation, industrialization and urbanization, intensive technology development, over-saturation of information and, as a consequence, the
inclusion of a person in an ever-increasing number of horizontal level social contacts, the problem of providing social assistance to the elderly becomes especially acute.

**Analysis of recent research.** A large group of scholars are engaged in the specifics of social work with the elderly, among the former one can name: I.D. Zvereva (examines the levels at which social work with elderly people is carried out and the principles of this activity) [1], I.G. Zainyshev (highlights the constituent elements of social policy in relation to the elderly, describes the activities and assignment of social services for the elderly) [2], A.I. Kapska (investigates the directions and tasks of social work with the elderly, as well as the problems of loneliness in this time frame, analyzes social protection of the elderly and directions of its implementation) [3], L.T. Tyuptia (analyzes the perception of the elderly by society and the stereotypes that have developed in relation to them; considers the preparation of a person prior to the onset of aging and the adoption of their status of an elderly person) [5], and V.M. Shakhray (examines the theory of old age and the principles of social work with the elderly) [6].

**The purpose of the paper** is to reveal the main features of providing social assistance to the elderly; define modern tendencies in the application of principles, forms, and methods of social work with the elderly.

**Theoretical analysis.** In today's living conditions, the elderly encounter many problems, namely: material, economic, everyday and psychological, which put their lives at the level of survival. These problems are caused by the fact that most elderly people remain alone, experience difficulties because of lack of support from the people next to them, they start ailing and become infirm.

Social work with the elderly is multifaceted and multivariate. It concerns such spheres of life as health, finances, leisure activities, crisis management, formation of the "I-concept", and here it is crucial for social workers to acquire knowledge about the psychological characteristics of people of this age group, their needs and opportunities.

One of the key problems in the life of the elderly is loneliness, where there is a decrease in social links due to retirement, separation from the children, and the inevitable reduction of the number of friends and relatives, constant feeling of abandoned man, aimlessness and uselessness of his/her existence.

Older people are faced with many problems that lie in the area of economic, domestic, psychological, medical, and social services. Also, for elderly people, the characteristic problem is social isolation, suffering from loneliness, misunderstanding due to their entrenched habits and unwillingness to change them.

In order to understand the phenomenon of human loneliness, one needs to divide loneliness into three kinds: external loneliness, inner loneliness, and intimate loneliness. **Inner loneliness** is the path of a person to non-existence, because an individual does not fully realize the inner loneliness, he adorns it with the external attributes of the world, that is, people, animals, and material things. We can call inner loneliness a spiritual non-existence when we do not want to realize our inner-spiritual problems. **External loneliness** is the kind of loneliness that does not like the material world, or just does not derive any pleasure from it. That is, external loneliness is present in people suffering from sociopathic mood. **Intimate loneliness** is a kind of loneliness that allows a person to stay for a short time on one’s own, being aware of his/her external and internal problems. Intimate loneliness is the only correct loneliness that is needed by all people to understand and recognize themselves, their environment.

Work with the elderly is carried out on two levels:

1. **Macro level** (formation of social policy taking into account the interests of the elderly, creation of pension and other support funds, formation of a comprehensive system of social insurance, medical, psychological, and consulting services);
2. **Micro level** (investigation of the living conditions of the elderly, the level and quality of their social assistance).

The main thing in working with elderly people is to involve them in "social amateur activities", which in many ways can solve their problems. Such "amateur activities" are carried out on the basis of corresponding programs. The main objectives of such programs are: to enable elderly people to be of use to citizens, the infirm, sick people, the disabled, and the lonely people who need help. By providing help to others they earn their respect, feel pleasure from the awareness of their usefulness and the ability to change life for the better. Additional services may be organized by the elderly who voluntarily provide assistance to their peers. Using their experience and knowledge, the elderly assist public authorities, kindergartens, schools, and administrative structures through consultations; they
promote better communication between generations, bringing the elderly and young people closer together, share their life experience, knowledge and skills with young people, preserving the links to the places where they used to work.

Social work with elderly people has always been thought and is still considered one of the most difficult in psychological terms. Therefore, social workers should have a universal training in all aspects of the life of the aging people and the elderly, to realize the huge amount of psychological, psychopathological, somatic, moral and ethical problems that arise in people of this age.

Work with the elderly involves a purposeful impact on the person with the aim of correcting their mental state to facilitate the process of adaptation, increase the activity and responsibility of man.

2 METHODOLOGY

The study of socio-psychological features of the experience of loneliness in the elderly includes the following stages of work: Stage I - development of diagnostic tools and acquaintance with the participants in the study group; Stage II - conducting research aimed at studying the experience of loneliness in elderly people; Stage III - processing results, summing up; Stage IV - creation of the system of social and psychological support of the elderly, implementation of "The Art of Aging" social project, provision of recommendations to alleviate the experience of loneliness in elderly people.

In the course of the study, we developed a test questionnaire for the definition of loneliness, a questionnaire for the definition of the adaptation process of the elderly and used the "Methodology for diagnosing the level of subjective sense of loneliness" suggested by D. Russell and M. Ferguson.

The main tasks faced by specialists in the social sphere have led to the creation of a system of social support for the elderly.

We consider social support of the elderly as a targeted activity of a specialist in the social sphere (or between the professional interaction of specialists in the social sphere) in order to create the necessary conditions for the optimal functioning of the elderly. An essential characteristic of social and psychological support is the creation of conditions for the transition of personality and (or) family to self-assistance. It can be said that in the process of psychological support a specialist creates conditions and makes necessary and sufficient (but in no way superfluous) support for the transition from the position "I can not" to the position "I can cope myself with my own problems".

The system of socio-psychological support of the elderly developed by us includes the following types of work:

1. Information (aimed at informing social workers about the prevention of loneliness in elderly people).
2. Preventive (aimed at forming a desire for cooperation of the elderly with social workers and psychologists in identifying and eliminating problems, building confidence in their own social suitability and restoring the behavioral activity of the elderly).
3. Diagnostic (aimed at studying the individual characteristics of the personality of the elderly and their relationship with close relatives (children, grandchildren) from the point of view of the elderly).
4. Consultative (aimed at increasing the psychological culture of the elderly, relatives, and social workers).
5. Correctional (aimed at overcoming the occurrence of loneliness and elimination of deviations in the functioning of the emotional sphere).
6. Rehabilitation (rehabilitation work with elderly people after retirement).
7. Work with the relatives (organized through consultations.) It is important to explain to the relatives of the elderly that social support allows the elderly to feel competent. It is necessary to convey the positive feelings to the elderly, so that they feel that they are cared for, appreciated, and respected. It is an important factor contributing to adaptation at a later age.

The social significance of this problem in modern socio-psychological science has induced us to create "The Art of Aging" social project.

The purpose of the social project is to create a perfect and effective system of socio-psychological assistance to the elderly.
In accordance with the goal, the main tasks were defined:

1. To inform social workers about the advent of loneliness in the elderly.
2. To determine the essence of the concept of "loneliness", its typology and specifics of the experience of loneliness.
3. Develop and implement the "Art of Aging" program;
4. To develop recommendations to alleviate the experience of loneliness in elderly people.
5. To carry out measures of medical and social orientation, which would ensure the prevention of the most common diseases and improve health of the elderly.

Project implementation base: TURBOTA Territorial social care center.

Description of the project:

- End result: practical-oriented
- Nature of the planned changes: innovative
- Financing mode: charitable
- Scale of implementation: small
- Number of participants: collective (group)
- Duration: long-term
- Territorial basis: local
- Kind: non-profit
- Character and sphere of activity: social

Implementation period: 2016-2018

Beneficiaries: Employment Center, Family Medicine Center, Primary Health Care Center, Center for Social Services for Family, and Children, and Youth.

Resources: human, material and technological, information.

Level of implementation: realization of the preparatory stage and the main stage (stage three of the "Art of Aging" program)

Expected results of the project, their impact on public life:

Positive outcome as a result of such a project is:

1. Acquisition of new knowledge by social workers to prevent the emergence of loneliness in the elderly.
2. Analysis of the study of the features of the experience of loneliness of the elderly;
3. Development and implementation of the "Art of Aging" program;
4. Development of recommendations to improve the experience of loneliness among elderly people.
5. Conduct measures of medical and social orientation, which would ensure the prevention of the most common diseases and improve health of the elderly.

Methods and technology of the project used in the process of research: an integrated approach including a set of theoretical (analysis, synthesis, and generalization of materials), empirical methods (structured interviews, questionnaire, questionnaire on the definition of the adaptation process of the elderly), a method for diagnosing the level of subjective sense of loneliness (suggested by D. Russell, M. Ferguson), and technologies (diagnosis, prevention, rehabilitation, correction, social therapy, and counseling). One of the biggest problems of the elderly is the loss of meaning in life. The result is depression, aggressive mood and other deviations in behavior. In this case, logotherapy is used. This technique does not offer and does not "prescribe" meanings. It is important to make it clear to the client that is not a person who raises the question of the meaning of life - life itself poses a question to him/her, and the person has to constantly respond to it, not with words, but with actions. Training work with the elderly produces a very positive effect.
We have developed a program of social and psychological support for the elderly, "Feel Life in a New Way" for the TURBOTA (Care) Territorial Center for Social Care, which includes four stages.

The first stage is to inform the elderly about old age. It includes various information, namely: old age as the last stage of human ontogenesis; the role of the family in supporting and caring for the elderly and their relationship; readiness of a person to retire. Such measures are carried out in such forms as: report, group conversation, group discussion, and tests.

The second stage - conflicts between elderly people and their families: (children, grandchildren); peculiarities of their occurrence, ways of solving. It includes 3 activities, namely: What is "conflict"? It is conducted in the form of brainstorming, thematic conversation in the group, art therapy exercises, group discussion, and testing. The topic of the next event is "Ways to constructively resolve conflict situations and conflicts"; it is conducted in the form of brainstorming, thematic conversation in the group, art therapy exercises, and group discussion.

The third stage is the emergence of problems and ways of their solution. This stage includes the following 2 activities: "work with letters", it is conducted in the form of a thematic conversation in the group, and group discussion. The next event is called "work with psychoactive problems"; it is conducted in the following form: report, group discussion, thematic conversation in the group. Such activities last from 2 to 4 hours.

The fourth stage is the activity of the elderly in the process of leisure. This stage includes 3 events, namely: art therapy, mnemonic psychotherapy, and bibliotherapy, they are conducted in such forms as: report, thematic discussion in a group, group discussion, and drawing [4].

3 RESULTS

According to the results of the study, 10% of men and 5% of women never feel lonely. Other 30% of men and 45% of women very often, and even constantly feel lonely. Only 5% of men and 5% of women sometimes feel loneliness. The obtained data show the predominance of a high level of loneliness in elderly people (75%).

According to the analysis of the study results, whose purpose was to identify the main causes of the experience of loneliness, we concluded that 25% of the men questioned and 20% of women lacked a loved one; 5% of men and 15% of women lacked true friendship; 20% of men and 15% of women lacked the attention and care of their relatives (children, grandchildren); and only 5% of men and 5% of women lacked a friendly and sympathetic attitude of others.

According to the results of the questionnaire on the definition of the adaptation process of the elderly to the period of retirement, it was established that 25% of men and 35% of women have achieved a high level of adaptation process. Another 10% of men and 15% of women have an average adaptation process. Whereas only 10% of men and 10% of women have a low adaptive process.

According to the results based on the methodology for diagnosing the level of subjective sense of loneliness (suggested by D. Russell, M. Ferguson), we have established three levels of subjective sense of solitude: high, medium, and low. The obtained values of indicators of the level of subjective sense of loneliness in the elderly indicate that the proportion of subjects with a high level of subjective sense of loneliness is 55%, average - 35%, and low - 10%.

According to the results of a test-questionnaire on the definition of loneliness, questionnaires on the definition of the adaptation process of the elderly and "Methodology for diagnosing the level of subjective sense of loneliness" suggested by D. Russell and M. Ferguson, we distinguished the following five types of adaptation of the elderly to old age:

- internally balanced (they are in a good mood, enjoy emotional contacts with other people, are both critical to themselves and at the same time sufficiently tolerant to others, to their possible shortcomings, have live interests and constant plans for the future, thanks to their positive life balance they surely count on the help of the others);
- dependent on the environment (the elderly person is dependent on the spouse or his / her child, does not impose heavy demands on life and therefore willingly leaves the professional environment);
- cautious (excessive emotional restraint, some straightforwardness in their actions and habits, aspiration for self-sufficiency and reluctance to accept help from other people. Occasionally,
defensive position is taken in relation to the whole family: should there be even some complaints about the family, they do not openly express them);

- hostile (aggressive, explosive and suspicious, trying to "shift" the guilt and responsibility for their own failures on others, who do not fully adequately assess reality, do not accept their old age, they are desperately thinking of a progressive loss of powers);

- passive (do not rebel against their own old age, only obediently accept what fate sends them, actually aging is estimated fairly realistically, the completion of life, death is interpreted by these people as a release from suffering).

According to the results of a test-questionnaire on the definition of loneliness, questionnaires on the definition of the adaptation process of the elderly and "Methodology for diagnosing the level of subjective sense of loneliness" suggested by D. Russell and M. Ferguson we were able to identify a dynamic change in the quantitative composition of the five types of adaptation of elderly people to old age (See table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of adaptation to old age</th>
<th>Men before program</th>
<th>Men after program</th>
<th>Women before program</th>
<th>Women after program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>internally balanced</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment dependent</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cautious</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hostile</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passive</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consequently, the result of the implementation of the developed program revealed a positive dynamics of the level of solitude, helped establish the main causes of the loneliness experience and the level of adaptation process, which led to quantitative changes in the types of adaptation of the elderly to old age.

4 CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing old age as a social and scientific problem one can argue that the elderly face many problems, namely: material, economic, everyday, and psychological, which bring their life to the level of survival. These problems are caused by the fact that most elderly people remain alone, they experience difficulties because of lack of support from the people who are close to them, become ailing and infirm.

Further prospective exploration of social assistance for the elderly will be rehabilitation work with the elderly after retirement, work with the relatives, which is to be organized by the interprofessional joint effort of specialists in the social sphere.

REFERENCES