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Anzhelika Kolly-Shamne*

Doctor of Psychological Sciences, Professor

UniDistance Suisse

3900, 18 Schinerstrasse, Brig, Switzerland

Kherson State University

76018, 14 Shevchenko Str., Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1541-6079>

The concept of successful ageing in wartime: A review of Western scientific sources

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Abstract. Preserving the full life of an elderly person as the most vulnerable category of the population in times of armed conflict raises many methodological, theoretical, and practical issues for scholars. The article is an attempt at a problematic and reflective analysis of the heuristic nature of the concept of successful ageing for the study of ageing of elderly Ukrainians in the context of the war with Russia. The paper presents a problem-oriented review of contemporary Western literature on successful ageing. In addition to the basic empirical and theoretical works, a significant part of the theoretical analysis is based on the results of the most significant meta-analytical studies on this topic. The methodology of problem-oriented and integrative analysis was used to determine which problem areas of the concept of successful ageing can contribute to its study in wartime. The potential and limitations of the modern concept of successful ageing are considered. Eight problem areas of this concept are presented, which reveal certain contradictions, debatable issues, and gaps, which are simultaneously directions for the development of both the concept itself and its research in the context of war. Among them: vagueness of the criteria for successful ageing and its dilution with similar concepts; interaction of biomedical and psychosocial contexts of successful ageing; limits of responsibility for the success of ageing in the context of the "person – society" dichotomy; socio-structural inequalities between older people and the inability to age equally "successfully"; discrepancies between subjective and objective indicators of successful ageing; dominance of the Western model of successful ageing and levelling of its cultural specificity; integration of individual, social and scientific conceptualization of successful ageing. The author analyses the most promising theoretical and methodological concepts and theories of successful ageing that are most relevant to the problem of ageing in war. The literature review presented in the article will help to draw attention to the problem of improving and preserving the full life of an elderly person in the context of armed conflict. The results of the research will be useful to scholars and practitioners for the further development of programmes to protect the mental and physical health of older people in war

Keywords: armed conflict; problem-reflective analysis; ageing; elderly; ageism; mental health; gerontopsychology; meta-analysis

*Corresponding author



INTRODUCTION

Population ageing is becoming a key component of the transformation of the world's current demographic and age profile. However, an increase in life expectancy does not in itself mean an improvement in its quality. Therefore, the issues of developing and maintaining the functional capabilities of older people, including the problem of their successful, active, healthy ageing, are becoming a topical issue. Among them, the concept of "successful ageing" is one of the most important to explain the effective adaptation of a person to the challenges of this stage of life.

The concept of successful ageing was proposed at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s by American gerontopsychologists J.W. Rowe & R.L. Kahn (1987; 1997). It embodied the rejection of the paradigm that interprets ageing as *senectus ipsa est morbus* (from Latin: "old age is a disease") and the adoption of the paradigm of ageing as a productive stage of development. Since then, for decades, the concept of successful ageing has been the subject of considerable research attention. However, the issues related to both the integration of accumulated knowledge and the lack of empirical data on successful ageing of different groups of people in special conditions, such as armed conflicts, natural disasters, traumatic life circumstances, biographical crises, etc. are still insufficiently studied. In particular, the theoretical and methodological problems of studying successful ageing in wartime remain unclear.

In times of war, older people are the most vulnerable category of the population. Normative losses associated with ageing (exacerbation of diseases, deterioration of cognitive functions, curtailment of social roles) are accompanied by stress associated with the challenges of war (fear for life, uncertainty about the future, inability to adapt to new realities, separation from loved ones, constant psycho-emotional stress, destruction of infrastructure, bombing, interruptions in the provision of basic services, etc.) They are at risk of marginalization and social isolation, separation from loved ones, loss of identity, etc. The urgent need for large-scale programmes to support the proper quality of functioning of older people in war-affected countries should be based on the results of sound methodological and empirical research.

However, current research focuses on the consequences of armed conflicts mainly for children, adult civilians, and the military. It has been shown that war-related stressors, as well as migration and post-migration stressors, contribute to short- and long-term mental health problems in adults and children (internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees) (Carpiniello, 2023). It has been proven that military and civilian adults suffer from mental disorders and negative psychological consequences caused by war (Rozanov *et al.*, 2019). Depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health problems are long-term consequences of war for adults who survived the war and remained in the conflict zone (Morina *et al.*, 2017; 2018) or became internally displaced (Singh *et al.*, 2021). However,

the few studies of successful ageing of veterans according to N.S. Singh *et al.* (2021) do not compensate for the lack of necessary data on human ageing in war. Thus, in the current literature, there is almost no data on successful human ageing in periods of complex social change, such as war. This raises many methodological questions. For example, is the concept of successful ageing able to explain the process of ageing in war and can it be operationalized to assess and explain the ageing of people in the zone of military operations and permanent threat to life, is this concept universal and able to explain how a person here and now experiences the challenges and risks of war, and if so, how older people can maintain successful ageing in a zone of military conflict or in forced migration.

In view of the above, the purpose of the study was to analyse the heuristic of the concept of successful ageing for the study of the functioning of older Ukrainians in the context of a full-scale war with Russia. To do this, it was planned to consider the current state of the concept of successful ageing, to carry out a critical, problematic, and reflective analysis of the problem areas of the concept of "successful ageing", which are directly or indirectly related to the peculiarities of the functioning of older Ukrainians in the context of war. Research questions usually determine the decision on methodology, research design and research methods. Given that it is impossible to find research on the peculiarities of successful ageing in wartime, the article is problem-searching in nature. In particular, the methodology of problem-oriented, problem-reflective, and integrative analysis was used to determine which problem areas of the concept of successful ageing can contribute to its operationalization in war. The methods of theoretical analysis used in this study include abstraction, analysis, synthesis, heuristic forecasting, and a problematic review of contemporary Western literature on successful ageing. It was expected that the reflexive research carried out would allow formulating certain implicit and explicit ideas related to the problems posed.

To achieve the research goal, searching for relevant studies in the online databases of psychological, sociological, and medical publications PubMed and Web of Science, in the electronic reference database of the American Psychological Association PsycINFO, as well as in the biomedical bibliographic database EMBASE and the Google Scholar search engine was conducted. The search in these databases was carried out using the term "successful ageing/ageing". Then, the function of similar articles on the PubMed website was used and the lists of references from published articles were examined to obtain additional sources. The search was limited to articles published in English in peer-reviewed journals. The query identified 2319 publications, most of which contain empirical studies of the phenomenon, while others analyse the definition, operationalization issues, criteria, and predictors of successful ageing. Particular attention was paid to publications

on this topic, which are meta-analyses and comprehensive reviews of empirical studies. The focus was on sources that allowed for the implementation of problem analysis and heuristic forecasting in the context of this goal.

J.W. ROWE AND R.L. KAHN'S MODEL OF SUCCESSFUL AGEING AND ITS CRITICAL ANALYSIS

J.W. Rowe & R.L. Kahn (1987; 1997) formulated the most well-known modern theory of successful ageing based on the results of the seven-year MacArthur Ageing Study. Summarizing its results, they concluded that normal (ordinary) ageing, like the previous stages of ontogenesis, can be quite highly productive. They defined successful ageing as a combination of three elements:

- disease prevention (low probability of illness or disability due to illness);
- good physical and cognitive health (high functional cognitive and physical performance);
- maximum possible involvement in society (Rowe & Kahn, 1997).

According to the classical concept of J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn, successful ageing is defined as high physical, psychological and social activity without serious diseases. This model was the beginning of a new area of research in gerontopsychology – “successful ageing” (Stowe & Cooney, 2015; Whitley *et al.*, 2016). Over the past 50 years, it has gained considerable popularity (Katz & Calasanti, 2015; Wahl, 2020). Many scholars from different countries continue to work within this framework – China (Chang *et al.*, 2023), Spain (Blanco-Molina *et al.*, 2021), Israel (Goshen *et al.*, 2022), Singapore (Feng & Straughan, 2017), India (Bandyopadhyay & Singh, 2023), other Asian countries (Tannistha, 2018), etc. They continue intensive research on different groups of older people living in different countries to test the hypotheses of “successful ageing”. Thousands of articles have been written about the concept and its components, more than 100 variations of the original model have been proposed (Rowe & Kahn, 2015) and a significant number of operationalization of successful ageing have been made (Depp & Jeste, 2006; Cosco *et al.*, 2014).

At the same time, this concept is a subject of much debate and controversy in scientific circles (Katz & Calasanti, 2015; Calasanti, 2016). The main modern meta-analytical studies of successful ageing (Martinson & Berridge, 2015; Kusumastuti *et al.*, 2016; Kim & Park, 2017) identify the main areas of criticism and improvement of the successful ageing model. M. Martinson & C. Berridge (2015), for example, summarized the existing critical analyses of successful ageing models and proposals for improving the concept presented in 67 articles and divided them into four distinct categories. The first group of studies, “Add and stir” (25% of articles), calls for the creation of new multidimensional models of successful ageing. The second group, “The missing voices critique” (45%), advocates for increased at-

tention to the subjective components of successful ageing. The third group, Hard Hitting Critiques (20%), suggests avoiding stigmatization and discrimination against those who age poorly and calls for a more inclusive definition of successful ageing. The fourth group, New Frames and Names (10%), presents alternative models of ageing, often based on Eastern philosophy, and attempts to correct the Western cultural bias in the MacArthur model.

The broad set of criteria proposed by the authors to expand the original model of J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn and the existence of numerous models of successful ageing (Wahl, 2020) indicate the importance of further reflection on the use of the concept of “successful ageing” by gerontologists and representatives of other sciences. That is why a different approach was used, in particular, a problem-reflective analysis of the concept of successful ageing. As a result, seven problem areas have been identified that can potentially serve as a methodological basis for further theoretical and empirical research on successful ageing in wartime.

PROBLEM 1. UNCLEAR CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL AGEING AND ITS OPERATIONALIZATION

Successful ageing as an active, productive lifestyle demonstrates a break with the dark, negative vision of ageing and the stereotype of passive old age (Oris, 2020). However, current meta-analytical research shows significant discrepancies in the definition of predictors, criteria, and indicators of successful ageing. Instead, generalizing these parameters is important for understanding and finding a standard for researching successful ageing in war. E.A. Phelan & E.B. Larson (2002) were among the first to identify and present in the most generalized format the components and predictors of successful ageing that have been proposed in the literature over the past 30-40 years. The authors identified seven main elements of successful ageing (life satisfaction, longevity, freedom from disability, mastery/growth, active participation in life, high/independent functioning, and positive adaptation) and its five main predictors (high educational level, regular physical activity, high self-efficacy, social contacts/support, and freedom from chronic diseases). A. Bowling (2007), in turn, noted such indicators as high security of physical health, cognitive functioning, as well as various psychological and social factors. Another meta-analysis of the correlates of successful ageing (Kim & Park, 2017) found that most studies describe successful ageing in four domains: avoiding illness and disability, having high cognitive, mental, and physical function, being active in life, and adapting psychologically well in later life.

Like some previous authors (Phelan & Larson, 2002), L. Kleinedam *et al.* (2019) note that the operationalization of successful ageing should include measures of physiological health, well-being, and social activity, taking into account both subjective and objective aspects. J.P. Michel & R. Sadana (2017), in turn, classify operational defini-

tions of successful ageing according to four criteria: health and well-being, symptom-oriented indicators of illness or morbidity, fulfilment of roles, activities and functions, and adaptation to age-related limitations. In contrast, T.D. Cosco *et al.* (2014), based on operational definitions of successful/healthy ageing presented in 84 studies, identified five key aspects: physiological constructs, engagement constructs, well-being constructs, personal resources, and external factors. A more detailed meta-analysis showed that out of 105 working definitions of successful/healthy ageing, 92.4% included physiological constructs, 49.5% interaction constructs, 48.6% psychological well-being constructs and personal resources, and 5.7% external factors (Cosco *et al.*, 2017). At the same time, C.A. Depp & D.V. Jeste (2006) found that 13 out of 29 working definitions of successful ageing consisted of indicators of cognitive functioning. Most studies of successful ageing include results that can be interpreted as working definitions of the concept (see, for example, R. Fernandez-Ballesteros, 2019), although, according to A. Bowling (2007), in their definitions, researchers do not distinguish between predictor and component variables of successful ageing. Summarizing the identified indicators and criteria of successful ageing as much as possible, it is possible to identify two main types of models of successful ageing:

- psychosocial models that define successful ageing in the context of mental states (e.g., life satisfaction) and are based mainly on criteria of social functioning and psychological resources as factors of successful ageing;
- biomedical models, which define it as the prevention of disease and disability and emphasize physical and mental functioning as indicators of successful ageing.

The bias in one direction or another largely reflects the academic discipline of the researcher (Bowling, 2007). The authors also note that research on the determinants or predictors of successful ageing often correlates with biomedical indicators. At the same time, there are many multidomain predictors of successful ageing. The latter, along with biomedical criteria, include intelligence, personal and motivational-psychological characteristics, life satisfaction, etc. Therefore, the idea of an integrative approach is increasingly emphasized, and one of its embodiments is, for example, a “holistic” view of successful ageing (McCarthy & Bockweg, 2013). Gerontologists call for a consensus on what successful ageing is and how it should be measured (Pruchno, 2015). However, a single generally accepted definition of “successful ageing” has not yet emerged (Phelan & Larson, 2002; Depp & Jeste, 2006; Cohen *et al.*, 2020) and different studies use different working definitions of this concept (Cosco *et al.*, 2014; Urtamo *et al.*, 2019). This complicates the selection of criteria that can be most informative for assessing the success of ageing under the stress of war. The understandable multidimensionality of the phenomenon of successful ageing is related to the complexity of factors that influence the ex-

perience of ageing and the variety of dimensions involved: functional, psychological, social, spiritual, or environmental (Martineau & Plard, 2018). Thus, a multidimensional approach to successful ageing in wartime may be more informative than focusing on individual components of successful ageing.

PROBLEM 2. THE VAGUENESS OF THE CONCEPT OF SUCCESSFUL AGEING WITH SIMILAR CONCEPTS

As noted by D.R. Petretto *et al.* (2016) and colleagues, conceptual models of successful, active, and healthy ageing were developed in Europe and America in the twentieth century, mainly based on the original model of J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn. The concept of successful ageing has contributed to the emergence of dual terms, the emergence of which is associated with the emergence of progressive trends in human development in old age.

M. Menassa *et al.* (2023) conducted a mathematical analysis of 65 models/definitions of successful ageing formulated by researchers from 16 countries in Europe, Asia, and America in 1960-2022. They identified 12 terms used to describe or evaluate human ageing: active, good, healthy, resilient, positive, productive, optimal and successful, etc. Four concepts were most widely used: “successful ageing” (number of models / % – 34/52), followed by “healthy ageing” (8/12), “good ageing” (5/8) and “active ageing” (4/6), the remaining 14 models used other terms. This situation provokes confusion related to the operationalization and measurement of these phenomena (Michel & Sadana, 2017). These four main terms are often cited as synonyms in the European literature (Martinson & Berridge, 2015). Some authors even equate these concepts, especially the concepts of active, healthy, and successful ageing (Cosco *et al.*, 2014). From the point of view of the healthy ageing model (Behr *et al.*, 2023; Menassa *et al.*, 2023), the concept of successful ageing is a narrower concept that historically and conceptually underlies the concept of healthy ageing.

The problem is that these terms overlap conceptually. This makes the concept of successful ageing increasingly blurred. As a result, today there is neither a unanimously accepted definition of this concept nor a clear distinction between it and the related concepts (Depp & Jeste, 2006; Urtamo *et al.*, 2019; Cohen *et al.*, 2020). A meta-analysis of 74 studies and reviews on the definition of successful/active/healthy ageing showed that studies often use several parallel concepts – active, successful, healthy ageing (Behr *et al.*, 2023). For example, the authors reviewed four definitions of healthy ageing, all of which were based on the concept of successful ageing by J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2012). Some apologists for the concept of successful ageing believe that terms such as healthy, active, productive, good ageing, etc. are components of the concept of successful ageing (Fernandez-Ballesteros, 2019; Urtamo *et al.*, 2019) (Fig. 1).

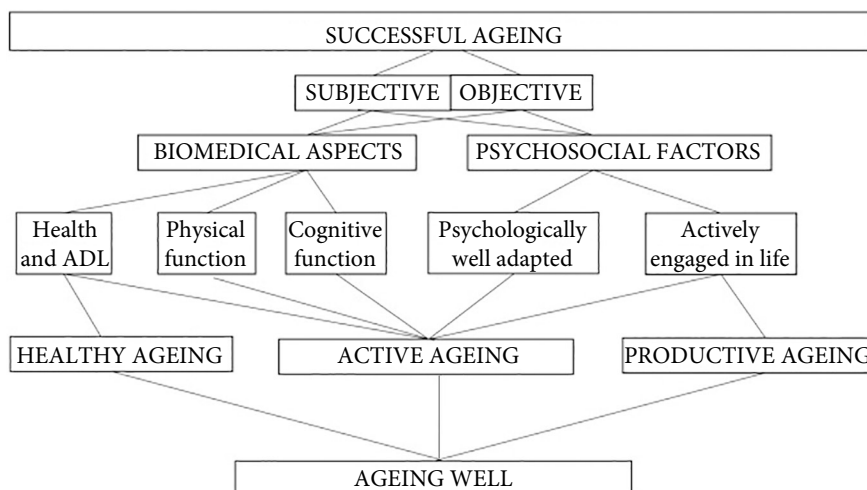


Figure 1. Dimensions of successful ageing

Source: modified with regard to R. Fernandez-Ballesteros (2019). Citation according to A. Urtamo *et al.* (2019)

Thus, healthy, successful, active, and productive ageing describe similar phenomena (Behr *et al.*, 2023), so the definition of successful ageing remains unclear to lay people and policymakers, despite decades of research on the topic.

PROBLEM 3.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUCCESS OF AGEING: THE DICHOTOMY OF “PERSON – SOCIETY”

The discourse of successful ageing overlooks power relations in society and the associated obstacles to “successful” ageing (Katz & Calasanti, 2015). This problem is represented by various aspects, but the most important for the analysis of ageing in the context of military conflict is the contradiction between the personal responsibility of a person for his or her ageing and the responsibility of social and state institutions. J.W. Rowe & R.L. Kahn (1987) believe that it is the “choices” of an ageing person (e.g., their lifestyle) that can improve each of the three components that contribute to successful ageing (disease prevention, good physical and cognitive health, and maximum possible involvement in society). As a result, successful ageing is a direct result of the choices and efforts of the individual who is responsible for his or her own ageing. Most variations of the successful ageing model suggest that a person actively fight against ageing and place full responsibility for his or her ageing on the person. The obligation of everyone to succeed in their own ageing, or at least to provide evidence of this, remains significant in the social policy of Western countries.

Therefore, the concept of successful ageing by J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn is sometimes criticized for over-emphasizing the role of individual behaviour and emphasizing personal control over life outcomes in old age (Stowe & Cooney, 2015). In this way, it absolves policymakers and social institutions of responsibility for creating an environment conducive to the health of older people. Therefore, many variations of the concept emphasize the need to take into account the historical, socio-political, socio-economic, and environmental factors of ageing that may affect the

ability to age successfully. The successful ageing paradigm aims to minimize the effects of ageing, but successful ageing does not challenge hierarchical relationships that stigmatize old age. On the contrary, it encourages people to take responsibility for the consequences of this stigma by giving them the responsibility to resist ageing (Calasanti & King, 2022). Thus, the concept of successful ageing does little to mitigate the inequalities that make old age more difficult than it should. Given these criticisms, J.W. Rowe & R.L. Kahn (2015) suggest that the concept of successful ageing should be complemented by a body of theoretical and empirical research at the societal level. They identify three main goals of scholars in this area: reorganizing basic social institutions, adopting a lifelong perspective, and focusing on human capital.

The importance of understanding this contradiction is evident in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For example, according to a survey of Ukrainian refugees, 16% of them are elderly, and a significant number of adult Ukrainian refugees who found themselves abroad as a result of the war in 2022 had old, single parents at home (Kolly-Shamne, 2022). Socially-oriented contemporary models of ageing (e.g., productive, conscious, active, solidarity ageing) (Höpflinger, 2023) and the consideration of socio-historical factors of ageing (Rowe & Kahn, 2015; Rowe, 2023) provide an opportunity to refocus discussions on the role older people can play in society during war and to counter the vision of older Ukrainians as incapacitated burdens for society as a whole and for their immediate environment.

PROBLEM 4.

DICHOTOMOUS DISCOURSE AND TYRANNY OF THE CONCEPT OF SUCCESSFUL AGEING

In recent decades, the ideology of successful ageing has been gaining momentum in modern Western society and is becoming an international trend. Its spread is a cause for concern among scientists and provokes a set of ethical and social problems. Using the term “successful” ageing,

scientists theoretically formulate a certain benchmark for comparing the ageing of a particular person, on the basis of which it is possible to assess the degree of his or her “success” or “failure”. The need to define old age as a “new youth”, “third age”, “leisure age” and “active retirement” is a symptom of the negative perception of ageing in modern societies (Goldschmidt Élisée, 2016). In an effort to get out of the negative images of old age, which can be compared to ageism, gerontology promotes an overly optimistic view of old age that also stigmatizes retirees.

It is important to note the existence of a widely recognized and implicitly dichotomous discourse on ageing in Western societies. These narratives include terms such as “successful” and “healthy” ageing, implicitly focus on positive adaptation (Hicks & Conner, 2014) and often serve as a counterweight to the negative framing of ageing. The latter suggests that ageing is inherently undesirable and needs to be neutralized, counteracted, denied, or balanced (Lacelle, 2018). Therefore, scholars call the choice of the term “successful” problematic, as it implies comparing people and that there are winners and losers (Strawbridge *et al.*, 2002). The proclamation of successful ageing implies that it is possible to age badly, and talk of successful ageing creates the fear that ageing is more of a failure than a success. Similarly, the fact that the word “ageing” needs to be prefixed with the nouns “good” and “successful” may imply that old age is inherently negative (Goldschmidt Élisée, 2016). Consequently, the pressure of social prescriptions can turn into the tyranny of successful ageing. Some researchers even believe that the concept of successful ageing has exhausted its potential. Timonen Virpi argues that the ideas of both successful and active ageing do not enrich either theory or practice, they simply model the ageing process and prescribe how older people should behave and be in old age (Timonen, 2016). Therefore, in general, and especially in the context of a society at war, it is increasingly important to build a discourse on ageing that simultaneously encompasses the vulnerabilities of the individual and their potentials in later life and the specific social situation of ageing, the importance of moving away from the dichotomous tendency in narratives about ageing and building a narrative that simultaneously encompasses difficulties, adversity, positive outcomes and the process of combining them.

PROBLEM 5. SOCIAL AND STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF AGEING EQUALLY “SUCCESSFULLY”

Recently, there has been criticism that theories of successful ageing ignore the effects of social stratification and the fact that the composition of the elderly population is heterogeneous. These theories smooth out differences in the composition of the elderly population by proposing either a reliable and rewarding health trajectory or a health deficit trajectory that must be resisted. Thus, on the one hand, a certain part of the population is excluded from the analysis of the ageing process, and on the other hand, a one-sided

image of the elderly population and the same ageing process is created (Tholomier, 2017). Objectively determined socio-structural inequalities between people do not allow all population groups to age equally “successfully” (Oris, 2020), as social factors have a significant impact on the success of ageing, even when taking into account previous achievements in adulthood and behaviour in later life (Cooney & Curl, 2019). The striking heterogeneity in the living conditions and composition of older people, as shown in the Swiss 30-year longitudinal study VLV (Vivre/Leben/Vivere) (Ludwig *et al.*, 2014), proves that there is no homogeneous and uniform ageing process.

An example is refugees and migrants (Ho *et al.*, 2022), in particular, who moved to another country at an advanced age (Willoughby *et al.*, 2017) and who, compared to the local population, have significantly fewer opportunities for successful ageing (Noubicier & Charpentier, 2013). Old age in migration can put a person at risk of marginalization, social exclusion, etc. In the context of this problem, the conceptual model of preventive and corrective proactivity, which draws attention to special, most vulnerable groups of older people, is promising (Kahana & Kahana, 2001). The opinion of V. Timonen (2016), who believes that the modern world does not need a normative theory of ageing, but instead needs research on different population groups ageing in different conditions. The advantage of recognizing the plurality of forms of ageing is that older people are no longer seen as a homogeneous population. Wide differences in the experience of ageing and the identification of groups that age more or less “successfully” are increasingly recognized (Ludwig *et al.*, 2014). That is why empirical studies of different groups of older people who age in wartime conditions, choosing their own ways of overcoming age and social challenges, are relevant. Older people can maintain successful ageing even in the face of war by using accumulated resources and proactive adaptations to actively address ageing issues (Kahana *et al.*, 2012). It can be assumed that successful ageing in war is possible, in particular, on the basis of those unique internal and external resources that contribute to the maintenance of psychological well-being and social activity of older people.

PROBLEM 6. LEVELLING THE CULTURAL SPECIFICITY OF AGEING

According to researchers, a consensus on the criteria for successful ageing cannot be reached, as it depends not only on a particular scientific paradigm, but also on socio-cultural norms and values. Attitudes towards ageing vary across cultures and subcultures and can change along with changes in norms, values, and knowledge. The concept of successful ageing, like other scientific theories, is a cultural construct (Senay, 2015). It contains both culturally universal elements and culturally specific elements of Western culture (Iwamasa & Iwasaki, 2011). The problem lies in the attempts to make the Western concept of successful ageing universal, one that “works” beyond cultural and historical

specificity (Stowe & Cooney, 2015). Universalization of the concept of successful ageing leaves aside cross-cultural specifics, such as the peculiarities of ageing in small societies. In this regard, there are warnings from scientists who believe that theories that are essentially based on the Western model of successful ageing should not be applied to all peoples, because Western samples are not representative of the entire human race (Henrich *et al.*, 2010).

The successful ageing model has been applied to different ethnic and racial groups (Zhu *et al.*, 2023). It has been determined that even the aspirations of older people for successful ageing differ from one society to another, from one culture to another (Willoughby *et al.*, 2017; Martineau & Plard, 2018). For example, there are cross-cultural differences in perceptions of ageing between Ukrainians, Swiss, and Americans (Tokareva *et al.*, 2021). Field studies of Asian populations have also shown the cultural specificity of successful ageing in Asian countries, where ageing norms differ significantly from Western ones (Feng & Straughan, 2017; Tannistha, 2018). There is also a significant difference in the progress of different countries and even regions in adapting to population ageing (Chen *et al.*, 2018; Rehkopf *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, it is noted that the influence of historical and cultural context on human functioning in later life cannot be ignored (Stowe & Cooney, 2015). This raises the question of how applicable the results of European or American research on successful ageing, which always contains both culturally specific and culturally universal elements, are to the Ukrainian sample of people ageing in war (Iwamasa & Iwasaki, 2011; Noubicier & Charpentier, 2013). Ukrainian cultural narratives shape older people's perceptions of their lives in old age and influence how and in what ways Ukrainians construct the trajectory of their lives during the war. The inevitable reorganization of personal life narratives under the stress of war prompts us to specify the role of the Ukrainian cultural narrative of ageing. In particular, the idea of a Ukrainian narrative of successful ageing in war should consider the cultural specificity of the Ukrainian nation, as well as the subjective view of older Ukrainians on the possibility, significance, and indicators of successful ageing in war, which simultaneously covers vulnerabilities and potentials, resources, and losses.

PROBLEM 7. DISPARITY BETWEEN SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE VIEWS ON SUCCESSFUL AGEING

A common criticism of models of "successful" ageing includes the disregard for older people's subjective views of what successful ageing means to them (Martinson & Berridge, 2015). Working definitions of successful ageing tend to be based on objective measures of health and functionality and do not always take into account a person's perception of their own health and well-being (Cosco *et al.*, 2014; Whitley *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, there are growing views that emphasize the need to integrate subjective and objective perceptions of successful ageing (Phelan &

Larson, 2002; Petretto *et al.*, 2016; Bandyopadhyay & Singh, 2023). The importance of this is emphasized, in particular, by the well-known model of successful ageing "selection-optimisation-compensation" (SOC) by P.B. Baltes & M.M. Baltes (1990). In 2002, the authors noted the lack of efforts to elicit the views of older people (Phelan & Larson, 2002; Strawbridge *et al.*, 2002) and stressed that understanding older people's own criteria for successful ageing "should improve the conceptualization and measurement of this elusive concept" (Strawbridge *et al.*, 2002). A more recent meta-analysis of the literature (Kusumastuti *et al.*, 2016) revealed two distinct citation networks. The first cluster (1146 publications) focused on successful ageing from the perspective of older people themselves. The second cluster (609 publications) identified by the authors considered successful ageing in terms of objective criteria and dimensions defined by researchers. The authors conclude that there are two mutually exclusive concepts of successful ageing in the current literature, depending on whether the situation is assessed by the individual or the researcher (Kusumastuti *et al.*, 2016).

This conclusion is confirmed in current empirical research, which shows a significant discrepancy between objective and subjective criteria of successful ageing (Plugge, 2021). If an objective definition is used, usually based on physical health, only a small minority of older people can be defined as ageing successfully (Jeste *et al.*, 2010). The paradox is that many older people who consider themselves to be ageing successfully do not meet the objective criteria for successful ageing identified by researchers (Young *et al.*, 2009; McLaughlin, 2012; Bandyopadhyay *et al.*, 2023).

The respondents' self-assessment of their success was quite high, but only a few of them had positive results in all six generally accepted parameters of J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn (Strawbridge *et al.*, 2002; Whitley *et al.*, 2016). Among 867 study participants aged 65-99 years, the percentage of those who considered themselves to be successfully ageing was 50.3% compared to 18.8% classified according to the objective criteria of J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn (Strawbridge *et al.*, 2002). In another study, the successful ageing of participants based on a combination of objective and subjective criteria ranged from 11.4% to 87.4%. However, the higher rates of successful ageing were associated with self-reported outcomes (Brown & Bond, 2016). Similar results were obtained in a sample of long-livers who feel successful, despite not being objectively considered so (Araújo *et al.*, 2016). Thus, older people themselves consider themselves to be successful in ageing, while according to criteria based on traditional biomedical models, they cannot be classified as such (Bowling, 2007). Thus, the authors conclude that there is a significant gap between the researcher's definition and the layperson's definition. Therefore, a more subjective definition of the concept itself and more attention to people's perceptions of their own ageing is proposed (Whitley *et al.*, 2016; Bandyopadhyay & Singh, 2023). The aim is also to compare objective and subjective criteria and to understand how

they can be combined to produce a criterion that is useful and effective for regional and global policies and practices of older people's support (Sato-Komata *et al.*, 2015; Brown & Bond, 2016; Plugge, 2021).

Subjective age, the personal sense of how old and vulnerable a person feels in difficult circumstances, is an important concomitant post-traumatic legacy of war. The question arises whether it is possible to base the success of older Ukrainians' ageing in war on objective indicators. Understanding the criteria, views, and priorities of older people ageing in war concerning their own health and successful ageing should improve the conceptualization and measurement of quality of ageing. This points to the importance of directly discussing with people their values and ideals related to the process of ageing in war, based on their personal concept of successful ageing. In addition, psychologists could consider re-evaluating people's ideas of what it means to age successfully, particularly in wartime. After all, the ability to change one's goals in accordance with changing social and personal circumstances can be a way to increase personal satisfaction with one's functioning. Successful ageing in wartime should be seen as a multidimensional construct consisting of both objective and subjective success – two independent but interrelated dimensions.

**PROBLEM 8.
THE INTERACTION (INTEGRATION)
OF BIOMEDICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL
CONTEXTS AND THE SHIFT TO MULTI-DOMAIN
PREDICTORS OF SUCCESSFUL AGEING.
PSYCHOLOGIZATION OF THE CONCEPT**

As the results of the theoretical analysis show, the concept of successful ageing was formed on the basis of two approaches: psychosocial, which defines successful ageing through certain mental states (e.g., acceptance of death, life satisfaction), social connections and activities, etc.), and biomedical, which interprets it primarily as the prevention of disease and disability. In searching for a balance between these paradigms, a dilemma arises: what is the priority in assessing successful ageing in war – biomedical criteria or sociopsychological ones; whether illness or disability is an additional factor in the marginalization of a person in armed conflict. The concept of successful ageing is associated with longevity, the absence of disease and disability, and the prevention of the latter is a common criterion in studies of successful ageing (Kim & Park, 2017). Therefore, some authors argue that it excludes sick people or people with chronic diseases from consideration. Common criticisms of models of 'successful' ageing (Martinson & Berridge, 2015) include the stigma surrounding dependency and disability and the reductionist focus on physical and mental health.

The absence of illness or disability in old age is an almost unattainable ideal that few people can achieve (Strawbridge *et al.*, 2002). Most modern proponents of the concept of successful ageing acknowledge that it depends more on social and environmental conditions, on the lifestyle

and environment that people choose, than on hereditary or purely biological factors. These conditions can be influenced, including avoiding negative factors and maintaining favourable conditions. Accordingly, age-related risks can be the subject of prevention, prevention by individuals, relevant social institutions, and the state as a whole. Recent studies such as R.A. Pruchno & M. Wilson-Genderson (2015) have shown that people with chronic diseases can also age successfully if they are socially active and psychologically well-adapted, even if they face a decline in physical and cognitive functions (Kim & Park, 2017). The authors emphasize the need to improve the J.W. Rowe and R.L. Kahn model with a more inclusive universal description of ageing (Petretto *et al.*, 2016). As an example, the model of successful ageing by Y. Young *et al.* (2009) and the model of selective optimization with compensation by P.B. Baltes & M.M. Baltes (1990) emphasize adaptive psychological and social mechanisms that can compensate for physiological health limitations. In particular, the model of Y. Young *et al.* (2009) provides a holistic perspective on successful ageing among people with chronic illness (Manierre, 2018).

Models of successful ageing often do not take into account the possibility of compensating for physiological limitations with social, spiritual and meaningful changes in later life (Martinson & Berridge, 2015). There is considerable variation in the rates of successful ageing between individuals, as well as a very diverse range of older people who actually age successfully (Kok *et al.*, 2015). This is due to the large number of multidomain predictors of successful ageing, among which psychological predictors play a significant role (Fernández-Ballesteros García *et al.*, 2010). The authors of L. Araújo *et al.* (2016) emphasize the significant role of subjectivity and psychological resources, especially in the "fourth" age. This allows talking about the trend of "psychologisation" of the concept of successful ageing, which is moving towards the definition of those traits and qualities that allow a person to age successfully. It can be considered the most significant and promising for the study of the essence of ageing in war. This trend allows suggesting some ways to build a model of successful, meaningful ageing for a person living in conditions of constant danger and threat. For example, current research often links successful ageing to the trait (coping strategy) of resilience ("résilientes"), i.e. a set of skills or abilities to overcome difficulties. Resilience is defined as one of the pillars of successful ageing (Merchant *et al.*, 2022). Instead of avoiding illness and disability, as in traditional models of successful ageing, resilience allows for adversity and determines what level of functioning a person can maintain (Behr *et al.*, 2023). The concept of resilience is useful for understanding how people cope with the typical challenges of life in the ageing period (Beeris *et al.*, 2022). Resilience factors (effective coping strategies, community resources, relationships, productivity, morale, religious beliefs, etc.) can be the subject of remedial work with older Ukrainians who are experiencing stress related to lifestyle and life events in war (bombings, sirens, news stories, etc.).

Related to the concept of resilience, the “concept of resilient ageing” can be a methodological framework for studying ageing in war. According to this concept, the prerequisites for resilient ageing are adverse and protective factors, and the main features are coping, endurance and self-concept (Hicks & Conner, 2014). One of the protective factors may be patriotism (Hamama-Raz *et al.*, 2022). It can be assumed that feelings of patriotic belonging, love, pride, and care for one’s country can contribute to successful and resilient ageing. Thus, these concepts (resilience, resilient ageing) are important for understanding the psychological factors of experiencing the stress of war by older people. The theory of successful ageing leaves out spiritual issues, which in reality are key for many older people (McCarthy & Bockweg *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, there are attempts to develop a new concept of successful ageing, which involves full acceptance of the ageing process (Sato-Komata *et al.*, 2015), attention to herotranscendence and positive spirituality as mechanisms of successful ageing. The holistic view of successful ageing is that it should result in a new personal level characterized by a decreased interest in material things and a focus on spiritual things, which can contribute to personal growth and creative development (McCarthy & Bockweg, 2013).

The psychologisation of the concept of successful ageing is also linked to the lifespan approach to ageing and the life-cycle approach according to J.D. Stowe & T.M. Cooney (2015), which is important for most models of successful ageing (Menassa *et al.*, 2023). The idea of lifelong development suggests that the theory of mindful sustainable ageing, which considers the period of ageing as a stage of development, is conceptually close to the operationalization of successful ageing in war, with particular importance to internal processes of self-understanding, reflection, and various spiritual practices as the basis for such development (Nilsson *et al.*, 2015). In this context, to explain the successful ageing of Ukrainians in the context of war, it is worth relying on the model of proactivity of older people, which focuses on how internal and external resources contribute to maintaining quality of life in old age (Kahana *et al.*, 2012; Blanco-Molina *et al.*, 2021). The possibility of compensating for physiological limitations with psychological and social aspects also allows relying on the methodological potential of the concept of resilient ageing, which is based on adverse and protective factors, and the main features are coping, endurance and self-concept (Hicks & Conner, 2014). The concepts of resilience, meaningful sustainable ageing and resilient ageing can serve to build a Ukrainian narrative of resilience and self-sufficiency that simultaneously encompasses adversity, loss, positive gains, and the process of combining both positive and negative outcomes.

Reflective inquiry inevitably raises a number of questions for scholars interested in understanding successful ageing that includes war as a latent variable. What are the minimum criteria and definitions needed to describe successful ageing of Ukrainians in the context of war? How

to reconcile different models of successful ageing in this study? How important is the individual perception of Ukrainians in defining indicators and criteria for their ageing in war? Under what conditions can older people age successfully, even in the face of war stressors? What accumulated internal or external resources can be relevant for actively addressing ageing issues? What primary interactions (e.g., social environment, personality traits, life course, self-assessment of successful ageing, etc.) should also be considered? Answers to these questions are essential for researchers and practitioners to further develop mental and physical health programmes for older people in war.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the past 50 years, “successful ageing” has become a globally recognized and influential concept that seeks to explain the ageing process. Over the past decades, it has evolved into a systemic, interdisciplinary model that seeks to explain the ageing process at different levels – political, social, physical, mental, and spiritual. However, contemporary literature contains almost no data on successful human ageing in periods of complex social change, such as war. As the analysis of the theoretical and methodological foundations of the concept of successful ageing has shown, numerous problematic and controversial issues hinder the answer to this query. Their identification is an important stage of methodological search, constitutes the scientific novelty of our study, and can contribute to both the development of the concept itself and its study in wartime.

The first group of these problems is mainly related to the theoretical and methodological definition of the concept. In particular, it is going about the vagueness of the concept of successful ageing with similar concepts, the blurring of the criteria for successful ageing and its operationalization. Despite all efforts, successful ageing still lacks a generally accepted definition, and its criteria often remain unclear to laypeople, researchers, and policymakers. This hinders the adequate use of the concept in specific research issues, including the study of successful ageing of older people in wartime. The second group of problems is related to the psychosocial and socio-cultural aspects of ageing in modern societies. The ideology of successful ageing provokes a set of ethical and social problems. These include an emphasis on personal control over the outcomes of late life and the existence of an implicit standard by which to assess the degree of “success” or “failure” of ageing. A related issue is the problem of objective socio-economic and socio-structural inequalities between people and the dominance of the Western model of successful ageing. The latter draws researchers to the idea of national, culturally determined narratives of successful ageing. The third group of issues is related to the diversity of predictors of successful ageing and the debate on the importance of its subjective, psychological, and spiritual determinants. Multidomain predictors of successful ageing are gaining recognition, and the importance of a person’s subjective perception of the success of

their own ageing is growing, which is closely related to the problem of discrepancies between subjective and objective indicators of successful ageing.

The presented research was problem-solving in nature and identified the most important areas for further scientific research. Successful ageing is not an “ideal” description of a progressive path of development in old age. However, this concept contributes to the fight against negative stereotypes of ageing, ageism, and stigmatization of this population category. This is extremely important in a society that is defending its freedom through numerous trials of

war. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important not only to answer the above questions, but also to intensify practical measures to ensure an optimal quality of life for all older people and to broadcast the image of old age and ageing that meets the needs of our society.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is none.

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Анжеліка Володимирівна Коллі-Шамне

Доктор психологічних наук, професор
Університет дистанційного навчання у Швейцарії
3900, Шинерштрассе, 18, м. Бріг, Швейцарія

Херсонський державний університет
76018, вул. Шевченка, 14, м. Івано-Франківськ, Україна
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1541-6079>

**Концепція успішного старіння в умовах війни:
огляд західних наукових джерел**

Анотація. Збереження повноцінного життя людини похилого віку, як найразливішої категорії населення в часи збройних конфліктів, ставить перед науковцями безліч методологічних, теоретичних та практичних питань. Стаття є спробою проблемно-рефлексивного аналізу евристичності концепції успішного старіння, для дослідження старіння українців похилого віку в умовах війни з росією. У роботі представлено проблемно-орієнтований огляд сучасної західної літератури на тему успішного старіння. Крім базових емпіричних та теоретичних праць, значна частина теоретичного аналізу базується на результатах найбільш значущих метааналітичних досліджень із цієї теми. Методологія проблемно-орієнтованого та інтегративного аналізу була використана для визначення того, які проблемні зони концепту успішного старіння можуть сприяти його вивченню в умовах війни. Розглянуто потенціал та обмеження сучасної концепції успішного старіння. Представлено вісім проблемних зон цієї концепції, які виявляють певні суперечності, дискусійні питання та прогалини, які одночасно є напрямками розвитку як самого концепту, так і його дослідження в умовах війни. Серед них: нечіткість критеріїв успішного старіння та його розведення з близькими за змістом поняттями; взаємодія біомедичного та психосоціального контекстів успішного старіння; межі відповідальності за успіх старіння в контексті дихотомії «людина – соціум»; соціально-структурні нерівності між людьми похилого віку та неможливість старіти однаково «успішно»; розбіжності між суб'єктивними та об'єктивними показниками успішного старіння; домінування західної моделі успішного старіння та нівелювання його культурної специфіки; інтеграція індивідуальної, суспільної та наукової концептуалізації успішного старіння. Проаналізовано найбільш перспективні теоретико-методологічні концепти та теорії успішного старіння, які найбільш дотичні проблематиці старіння в умовах війни. Наведений у статті огляд літератури сприятиме приверненню уваги до проблеми покращення та збереження повноцінного життя людини похилого віку в умовах збройного конфлікту. Результати розвідки стануть у нагоді науковцям та практикам задля подальшого створення програм охорони психічного та фізичного здоров'я людей похилого віку в умовах війни

Ключові слова: збройний конфлікт; проблемно-рефлексивний аналіз; старіння; похилий вік; ейджизм; психічне здоров'я; геронтопсихологія; метааналіз