Status Aspect of Age: Opportunities and Restrictions

Magomed Hizrievich Kilyaskhanov, Hizri Shapievich Kilyaskhanov, Aleksandr Viktorovich Betskov, Olga Anatolievna Guk, Viktor Vladimirovich Buryak, Nataliya Vyacheslavovna Safonova

Abstract: One of the most interesting aspects of the problem of age is that it is considered as an objective characteristic. The article discusses the main aspects of social restrictions related to age. The category of age inequality is analyzed. However, the category of age contains in itself an extremely large amount of semantic load, age-related social expectations, stereotypes of perception, and ways of self-identification. Despite the fact that aging is determined by biological processes, the age category itself has acquired a social dimension. At the same time, a set of social conventions associated with age can have both a positive value, associated with the expansion of opportunities and the acquisition of a favorable status, and a negative value. A negative manifestation of social age is to limit the range of opportunities available to members of society and to form a number of age restrictions. Within the framework of the system of social conventions, there are explicit and unwritten prescriptions, which together determine the decline in social activity, in fact, self-exclusion of the elderly from social life.

Keywords: age, social opportunities, social restrictions, age stereotypes, society, social expectations, social self-determination.

I. INTRODUCTION

The age category contains an extremely large amount of meaning associated with age-related social expectations, stereotypes of perception, and ways of self-identification. Despite the fact that aging is determined by biological processes, the age category itself has acquired a social dimension.

II. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

A. The Technique

One of the main vectors of the development of society is the lifting of restrictions. This is the natural desire of active participants in social relations for self-realization and overcoming obstacles in its path. The society is built on numerous conventions that define behavior, prescribe acceptable and unacceptable forms of behavior. And one of the aspects of social order imposing restrictions is group division. Some groups are endowed with an expanded set of rights and opportunities, while others, are limited to a significant degree. It is here that we are confronted with the fact that a conflict is born in the conditions of awareness of group limitations, which is aimed at overcoming the existing conventions. However, this process becomes possible only if the unequal group division itself becomes the object of an external reflexive consideration, and the prerequisite of such a division is questioned. Thus, we are dealing with two diametrically opposite states in the conditions of group inequality: its consideration as a reasonable, natural order of things and critical, aimed at overcoming the existing order relationship. Examples of group inequality may include estate division, gender inequality, ethnic or racial bias, and division according to the criterion of religious affiliation. Any of the social separation scenarios, as a result of which the emerging groups are characterized by different levels of rights and opportunities, retains its viability only if there is a justification at the ideological level, or if there is a sufficiently developed coercive mechanism. Thus, for example, inequality according to the class criterion has a deep rootedness in culture, in fact, leading to the formation of various types of self-awareness within groups and different types of attitude to external groups. Gender inequality also finds justification in culture. Speaking about justification, we don’t mean validity as logical following. For the most part, inequality is justified not in logical philosophical constructions, but in the methods of self-identification, types of external relations and value attitudes. The idea of superiority is not so much a conclusion but a prerequisite of a world view. This is one of those reasons why critical thinking is one of the most destructive forces for a social order based on the ideas of inequality. One type of unequal consideration of members of a society that has yet to be comprehended and overcome is inequality by the criterion of age certainty. In this article, we have to substantiate the fact of the inequality of representatives of different age groups on the one hand, and consider the main types of age inequality and possible ways to solve this problem, which is certainly important for modern society on the other.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First of all, for a more effective consideration of the issue, it is necessary to give a basic definition of inequality.
Since social inequality is a phenomenon that has yet to be proved a clear definition of the justified principle is necessary. The basic definition of inequality in society is the discrepancy in opportunities, referring not to the area of personal characteristics of subjects of social activity, but to their external social certainty. In other words, there are differences in opportunities that are natural (for example, differences in physical indicators, beauty, coordination, predisposition to different areas of activity) and differences in opportunities based on a system of social conventions. Speaking about the social aspect of age inequality (and, especially, considering it as a problem), we do not raise the question of the natural limitations that a biological age imposes on a person. Also, we are not talking about the quantitative difference in obtain social experience. The social aspect of age inequality is the external and internal limitations that a person receives due to his age, irrespective of others, including closely related to age, social qualities. In this case, it should be emphasized once again that we are talking about conventions that are implemented at the level of models of external relations and self-identification.

One of the most fragile moments in the construction of a theory that reveals the social aspect of age inequality is separation of objective differences from the differences imposed and, accordingly, constructed in the system of social relations [1]. Since the existence in society assumes as one of its moments the adherence to accepted models of action, the principles of inequality embedded in the system of social relations and received at the level of public consciousness receive their actual confirmation already because people follow these principles. A typical example of this kind of tendency is the idea that people from lower classes do not possess such developed intellectual and spiritual abilities as exist in the upper classes. The presence of discrepancies in the institutional sphere, in particular, the lack of an educational system among the peasantry and the presence of the latter among the nobility, leads to actual differences in the level of development of representatives of different class groups. However, this difference is positioned as a difference in nature, determined by gender, which is a controversial statement. Original differences that exist between representatives of different class groups do not have a clear expression. But socially assumed differences, which fixed by the practice of social relations, get their practical confirmation.

Considering the age aspect of social life, it stated that age differences are scientific fact. There are sections of social psychology, medicine, epistemology, revealing the variability of human capabilities. These capabilities depend on human’s stage of ontogenesis. However, the content of these differences and the degree of their intensity are variable. systems of social worldview based on this mention. These systems suggest specific way of understanding possibilities of different age groups [2].

Speaking about age division, it is necessary to pay attention to one of the most important criteria of age division – social capacity. From this point of view, there is a group of people who have not yet entered the stage of independent social life. They are not endowed with all rights and responsibilities (children). Group of people who actively involved in public life (young people over 18 and Mature people). Also, members of society who lost their ability to participate in social life (elder people) Social rights and opportunities are extremely effective criterion for studying the issue of age inequality. Differences between the lack of opportunities, as a personal characteristic, and as socially-determined characteristic should be distinguished.

Considering the problem, we can distinguish three aspects of age, which are socially-determined. They are: methods of social age perception and age identification; legal certainty of age; social practices, traditions and attitudes associated with age-specific object of interaction.

Let’s take a closer look at each of these aspects. First of all, we consider legal aspect of age. Since it has, on the one hand, a pronounced character of conditionality, on the other – has a universal objective value for all members of society. Special attention paid to the fact that age determines rights and obligations for society members. It is valuable from the point of view of initial issues raised in this article. Legal age estimation defines such things as progressive acquisition of rights and, at the same time, the acquisition of different types of responsibility. In this regard, age limits of obtaining an identity card, entering into criminal liability, acquiring rights to marriage, work, and politic processes participation are remarkable. Finally, retirement age determined at legal level. This determines possibility of obtaining state support. Thus, at the legal level, members of society have a number of social restrictions, removed in during person’s aging. Growing elder brings various forms of social accountability and responsibilities. Also, aging determines growth in number of social opportunities.

Methods of social perception of age significantly differ from situation of legal estimation of age. Permissible actions set during adulthood also increasing. However, age framework is not as clear as in legal sphere. At the same time, there is a developed system of social stereotypes concerning abilities and prospects of different age groups representatives [3]. On one hand, there is a limitation of children and young people in a number of areas. Such limitation caused by limited opportunities and experience of this age group. On the other hand, situation is similar for older persons, who lost their social opportunities. This is due to statistical, deterministic biological aging, deterioration of the physical capabilities of elderly, common diseases, a change in reaction, lower trainability and adaptability. All this represents stereotypical image of an elderly person with a number of negative qualities. Society faces the situation of underestimation of older people capabilities. Underestimation reflected both in communication and social practice. In particular employment of an older person often considered undesirable. This fact reduces range of available workplaces for older persons. Another example is denial of bank loans to older persons. Denial associated with increased risk of non-return of funds. Thus, social perception of age leads to reduction of older persons’ opportunities. It is also forms additional barriers in communication and external social activity [4-6].

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According to the study of social opportunities, role of external age definition by social environment considered. However, way of forming personal strategy of social activity under conditions of personal age certainty also important factor. Negative age stereotypes as well as existing set of age expectations have a serious formative effect. For the younger age groups these stereotypes considered as obstacles to overcome. Among the older generation age stereotypes become basis for rejection of ambitions and formation of “old man” model of behavior. This model corresponds to prevailing ideas about old age. Thus, reaching certain age limits becomes the basis for changing social activity, mainly in the direction of its curtailment. This is another aspect of transformation of social opportunities based on social conventions of age.

The third of considered aspects is the field of implementation of social attitudes and institutional relations. Social practice both implements social models that impose restrictions on different age groups and also strengthens age-related stereotypes. Those representatives of age groups who implement expected forms of behavior actively contribute consolidation of stereotypes. On example of older people, we note that this leads to discrediting the representatives of older age groups. This stereotype also reduces their level of social inclusion and enforces emergence of additional barriers in the interaction. Family members and state get increasing burden via support of older people. It is necessary to consider restrictive social age stereotypes as serious issue of obvious practical importance [7].

IV. CONCLUSION

One of the most interesting aspects of age problem is that it is considered as objective characteristic. However, age category contains a lot of semantic load associated with age social expectations, stereotypes of perception, ways of self-identification.

Development and aging determined by biological processes, but age category itself has social estimation. Set of social conventions associated with age has both positive (associated with expansion of opportunities and the acquisition of favorable status), and negative value. A negative manifestation of social age is limitation of opportunities available to members of society and formation of a number of age restrictions.

Within the framework of social conventions system, there are explicit and tacit prescriptions, which together determine the decline in social activity. This leads to self-exclusion of older people from social life.

Further research will be dedicated to consideration of age qualification and its indicators in the implementation of social models.

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