

SUMMARY

In the process of preparing the doctoral thesis, the author focused on a thorough examination of the issues related to the lives of elderly individuals in nursing homes as care institutions. This paper comprehensively presents an analysis of the conditions, challenges, and experiences faced by seniors residing in such facilities.

The main objective of the study was to gather a sufficient amount of data and accumulate experiences related to residing in two selected nursing homes as a resident. During their stay in these facilities, the author, additionally relying on autoethnographic description, conducted a detailed analysis of the living conditions of the residents.

In preparing the research plan, the author drew on the experiences of Yann Strauss, a French researcher and public health specialist who explored the issues of nursing home residents through ethnographic research based on hidden participant observation. Like Strauss, the author immersed themselves in the environment of nursing home residents and experienced the daily life of an elderly person in a care institution. The author prepared for this role for a year and a half, undergoing a physical transformation to better understand the experience of homelessness and seamlessly blend into the facility's environment. It is important to note that the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, a challenging time for these homes. Throughout their stay in the selected facilities, routine activities of the residents were observed following the daily schedule. However, the study delved into their world of emotions, social relationships, and the impact of the institutional environment on their experiences. By participating in the residents' daily lives, the author gained insights into the issues encountered by nursing home residents and compared their living conditions.

The thesis comprises three parts: theoretical, methodological, and analytical-interpretive. The theoretical part addresses issues related to aging, the elderly, and phenomena accompanying this process. It also discusses senior policy in Poland, its development directions, and the perspective concerning nursing homes as essential elements of elderly care structure. Additionally, an attempt is made to explain Goffman's concept of the "total institution" in the second decade of the 21st century, using the example of nursing homes.

The methodological part presents the foundations of the author's own research, and the third part details the course of the research based on the author's experiences. The author resided in two described nursing homes, collecting research material to formulate conclusions contributing to further actions aimed at improving the quality of life for elderly individuals in such care facilities.

In analyzing the functioning of care institutions, particular attention was given to the quality of care, accessibility to various forms of support, and the quality of life for seniors in both physical and psychological aspects.

The entire thesis encompasses not only a comprehensive overview of the issues of caring for nursing home residents but also a presentation of the author's individual experiences, who, for the project's needs, became a resident. Sharing living space with elderly individuals allowed the author to understand their daily challenges, emotions, and experiences, and helped identify difficulties faced by the elderly, such as loss of autonomy, social isolation, and health challenges.

Keywords: elderly individuals, nursing home, COVID-19 pandemic, total institution, quality of life for the elderly.