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## IS THERE ANY NEED FOR GENDER ORIENTED EMPLOYMENT POLICY FOR THE ELDERLY?

### Abstract

This research focused on clarifying the concepts of elderly people and employment because the population is aging and older ones are mainly affected by pandemics. It requires more detail analysis in order to understand the barriers and challenges that face the elderly people during employment processes especially during pandemics. Therefore, authors tried to be concentrated on key problems of elderly employment and analyze the peculiarities such as gender imbalance. Moreover, this study has described the gender impact of COVID–19 on elderly employment worldwide and Kazakhstan. According to results, authors identified the female predominance over men before and after pandemics especially in Kazakhstan. In addition, this research has used the results of different reports developed for Kazakhstan in order to make fully analysis including our mentality and other factors that may affect to the elderly employment. The revealed women prevalence led the authors to such conclusions as developing the gender oriented employment policy for elderly people taking into account foreign experience. For example, organizing part time jobs or stimulating women in one time jobs, budget allocation for retraining elderly people after retirement, or subsidize the hiring of older workers. In addition, it may be presented as the formation of age-mixed work groups in which older workers could further transfer their experience and competencies; or in the reform of the organization of labor, in which there will be a redistribution of workloads.

**Key words:** employment of the elderly, older people, employment policy, gender imbalance, age discrimination, COVID–19, retirement age.

### Introduction

The employment category plays a decisive role in the involvement of people in productive work and the economic development of the country. Employment is core to the entire system of social and labor relations and it constantly attracts the attention of researchers. Nevertheless, the theoretical understanding of the essence of this most important category is still controversial.

One of the determining factors affecting the labor sphere is the demographic structure of the population. Trends such as an increase in the average age of the population and proportion of older people affect the labor market indicators. Therefore, the study on elderly employment requires detailing the essence of the concept and characteristics of this segment labor market.

### Literature review

It is necessary to clarify the criteria for identifying the elderly, the essence of the concepts of “elderly” and “old age”. It is obvious that the specific time frame, the specificity of the aging process has an individual nature, so that it can be variously reflected in people of the same age. However, an

“individual approach” to the aging process and old age is possible only in relation to each individual person. If we are talking about the study of socio-economic processes at the macro level, one cannot do without uniform quantitative criteria that make it possible to clearly determine the number and structure of elderly. Thus, elderly people can be classified by the following way. Firstly, elderly people was classified by chronological age according to WHO region. As you see female’s life expectancy at birth (75.9) is higher than males (70.8) in worldwide.

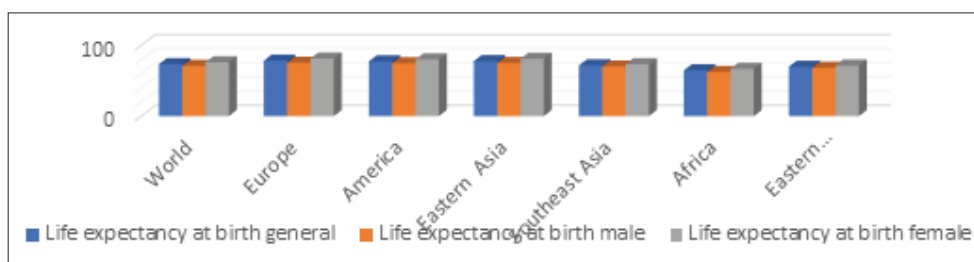


Figure 1 – Life expectancy at birth, data by WHO region, 2020

Source – World Health Organization (2020) [1].

Secondly, elderly people was classified by retirement age, which is determined by public policy makers taking into account the different factors as demography, life expectancy, supply of labor force, etc [2]. Generally, the positive dynamics in retirement age is observed all over the world [3]. For instance, according to the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan, from January 1, 2021, the retirement age for women in Kazakhstan is 60 years. In addition, women who have given birth, adopted or adopted five or more children, raised them up to the age of eight, can retire at 53. This retirement age for women will gradually increase by January 1, 2027 – rest from work will receive at 63, just like men.

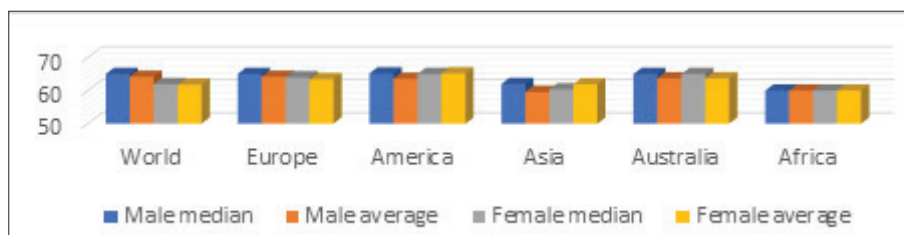


Figure 2 – The median average retirement age by regions of the world, 2021

Globally, the median average retirement age for men is 65 years, for women – 62 years. We divided retirement age by regions as Europe, America, Asia, Australia and Africa. Moreover, for comparison we have considered OECD and non-OECD countries. The average retirement age for OECD countries is equal to 64.2years for men and 63.5 years for women whereas in non-OECD G20 countries it is tend to be lower. In addition, gender differences exist in half of those countries [4]. And here according to Figure 2 above the following main difference should be mentioned as the retirement age for women is lower or equal than for men almost in all regions of the world except America and Asia. It may be explained by women predominance over men and certain preference for the sex of the child towards men. This gender imbalance may show that boys are more important and consequently hardening gender inequality from an early age [5].

The attribution of those who have crossed the retirement age to older citizens is a fairly common point of view [6]. Taking into account all the above factors it can be noted that mostly older women are more at risk group than men are [7]. Also scientists as B. Neygarten, E. Shanas revealed that the traditional structuring of life into three components – young, mature, old age, already in the 1970s. has ceased to correspond to reality, since old age lengthened and differentiated in content as “the third age” or “the young old”, as well as “the fourth age” or “the old old” [8].

In addition, the authoritative organizations also define the range for elderly people and old age. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), elderly people are from 60 to 74 years old, old age corresponds to the interval from 75 to 89 years, 90 years and more are already long-livers The

United Nations (UN) classifies elderly people as older than 65; to centenarians – people over 80 years old. Some UN documents, however, indicate that the lower age limit for older people may be earlier, for example, in some developing countries it will be 50 years.

For the purposes of this research, authors defined the potential perspective elderly workforce as individuals aged 60 (60–64) and who are capable of working, along with elderly workforce is individuals aged 65 and above [9].

Summarizing the above standards of the country and reputable organizations, the author recommends linking the onset of old age with the mark of 60 years within employment (by median).

Elderly employment. The meaning of the term “employment of older persons” should conceptually correspond to the broader concept of “employment”. Consequently, the employment of older people in the first approximation is a system of economic, social and administrative-legal relations for involving older people in work. The employment of older people has a major impact on the life and work of older people [10].

Population aging and pension reforms undertaken in many European countries have affected the employment of older workers: raising the retirement age; the level of employment of the elderly population in the labor market has relatively increased. The level of elderly employment has relatively increased with raising of retirement age within the labor market [11]. Older people take the considerable part of the workforce and they facilitate to the company’s outcomes in a good manner through experience and education [12].

The main factor that determines the ability to work of such people is their health status [13]. Therefore, illness and disability are the main obstacles preventing them from actively working in the labor market [14]. The connection between an active life position, preserved health and the fullness of filling the later period of life seems obvious. Well-being in later life is often provided by a person’s activity. V.V. Frolkis, emphasizing the special importance of activity for achieving a high quality of life in old age, pointed out that “no pills ... can replace an active rational lifestyle”. When recommending an active motor regime for older people, the author also speaks about the benefits of an active intellectual regime: “a lazy mind is destroyed faster” [15]. Elderly people, despite their age, would like to work, as they need achieving wellbeing and financial support. Consequently, in order to work, older people should take good care of their job, well physical activity would not only improve the health of the elderly, but also encourage them to stay in their workplaces longer.

## Materials and methods

This research has used secondary data as information from official statistical websites in order to make a comparative analysis worldwide and Kazakhstan. To regulate the elderly employment, it is necessary to identify its features, and development trends. In order to achieve this goal population aged 65 and above of top 10 countries were analyzed generally and by gender as Kazakhstan. Also were identified the peculiarities of Kazakhstani labor market of elderly.

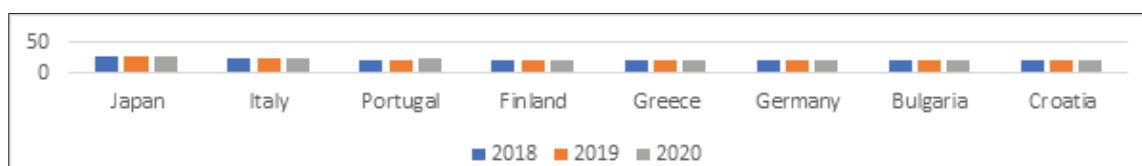


Figure 3 – Population aged 65 and above (% of total population), 2021

Source – Population Ages 65 And Above (of total population). Data. 2021 [16].

Firstly, we have listed top 10 countries who have the largest share of population aged 65 and above. Then we tried to analyze this category of population by gender. Italy takes the second place after Japan, where this indicator is less by 5% in compare with Japan. Portugal is also in the top three, behind Italy by only 1%. Countries such as Finland, Greece, Germany, Bulgaria and Croatia are all approximately at the same level (about 21–22%) for this indicator. If we compare the indicated top 10 countries in the time horizon beginning from 2018 to 2020, then in general, according to statistics, the number of elderly people does not change much even many of elderly were died from COVID–19.

Further we will properly discuss the impact of pandemic on elderly people and their employment. Also we have analyzed Kazakhstan more detail as for comparison.

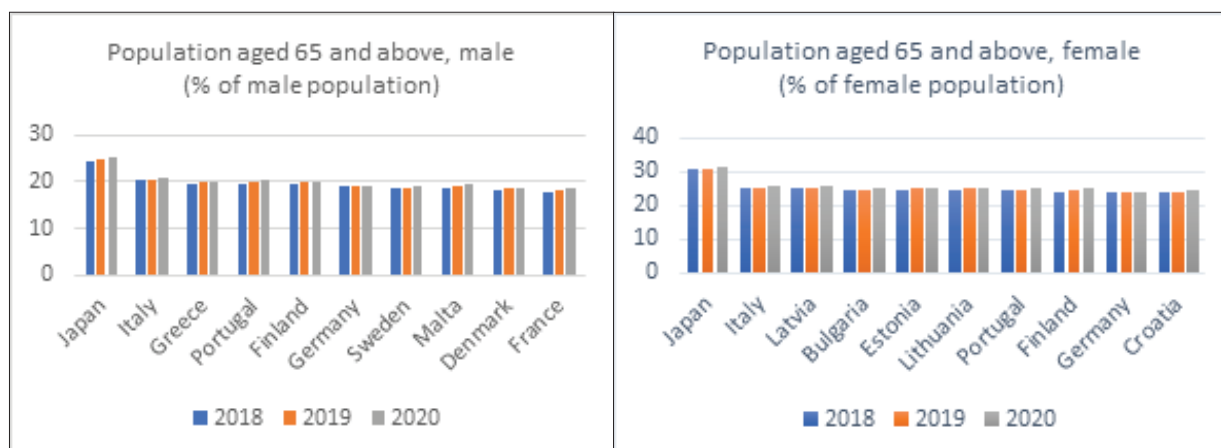


Figure 4 – Population aged 65 and above by gender (% of male/female population), 2021

Source – Population Ages 65 And Above, Male/Female (% Of Male/Female Population). Data. 2021 [17, 18].

In Kazakhstan, according to statistics, the approximate equality of the number of women and men is observed in the age range of 20–29 years. At the age of 65–69, there are already 1.5 times more women than men, and at 70 and older – 2 times more. A higher mortality rate for men at all ages leads first to an equalization of the sex ratio, and at older ages to a significant preponderance of the number of women.

According to a report conducted with the support of UNFPA [19], an analysis of the sex and age structure showed that the vast majority of these 41% of working respondents are people who have not retired due to their age, i.e. women under 59 and men under 63. In general, there are significantly more workers among men (52.1%) than among women (33.8%). In the age group 55–59 years, gender differences are insignificant (working men are 4% more than women), in older age groups there are significant gender differences: in groups 60–69 years old and 70 years and older, working men in 2.4 times more than working women.

Further, we have examined the impact of COVID–19 on elderly people worldwide and Kazakhstan. Many researchers have studied the relationship between age and gender and the severity of Covid–19. Therefore, we analyzed cases and deaths among older people, disaggregated by sex, globally and in Kazakhstan. In general, the number of cases in the 70–79 age group is lower than in all age groups and sexes, but again with a predominance of men in the cluster. Interestingly, the 60–69 age group had more cases than the 70–79 age group, and similarly, men had more cases in all countries which was analyzed according to statistics such as data trackers for COVID–19 [20]. The number of deaths in Kazakhstan showed the same trend as the world one. Moreover, in Kazakhstan, there are also more men who died from Covid–19 than women [21].

Data analysis of foreign experience in employment policies for the elderly and Kazakhstani market. It is of interest to compare the problem of elderly employment and options for its solution in our country and abroad. To begin with, a study of this situation in developed and developing countries revealed significant differences. Thus, the level of economic employmentmen over 65 in some developed countries reached 2%, while in developing countries up to half of men in this age group continued to work [22]. For example, in countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jamaica, Pakistan, more than 50% of all older men are typically involved in the labor force [23].

Here will be listed some European countries as good practices in applying elderly employment policies in their countries. Firstly, let us highlight Germany, because the labor market of this country is considered the most adaptable and popular as “German employment miracle” mostly as the miracle of employment growth for the elderly. And neighboring European countries began to use the German experience [24]. Experts recognize this success with a reservation, and mainly relate this phenomenon to the ‘bad’ jobs (part-time jobs, hard, unskilled labor). In addition it should be noted that men are more likely to work than women; self-employed make up 47% of the total number of



working pensioners, which is extremely high for the general structure of employment in Germany. This country has realized the list of programs as: legislative permission and regulation of part time employment as a basic form of involving elderly people in work; Stimulation and support of one-time jobs for the elderly; cooperation of state and public organizations in the management of elderly employment; Government subsidies for hiring older workers; financing the professional development of elderly employees in small and medium-sized enterprises; institute of free listeners for the elderly in universities for a symbolic fee. Also taking into account reluctance of employers to hire older workers government created educational programs for managers in organizing work for the elderly. Therefore, in general, Germany concentrates its attention on maintaining health for longer employment participation. Almost the same approach has applied in its neighbor country in France as part time job for elderly but in the different manner like gradual reduction of workload and working hours. Simultaneously they accents on improvement of working conditions, adaptation of workplaces to the elderly, work process, job schedule to the characteristics of older workers. The most favorable point is changing work functions within the company as retraining employees over 50 years old as auditors, quality controllers, instructors. The similar attitude has Scandinavian countries where the concept “the right to work at any age” allows to every individual to have an opportunity for active full aging. There is a system of lifelong professional training for all citizens and government assist the elderly by differentiating working conditions for this category. In addition, elderly can get a new profession by combining part time job. These kind of programs has organized in different European countries such as Denmark, England, Netherlands as well as programs that are against age discrimination [25]. Moreover, these countries has created Active Labor Market Policies (ALMP) which are aimed to improve income prospects for unemployed people, groups who find it difficult to enter the labor market including elderly people [26]. In addition, they takes into account an important aspect in these questions as gender and developed employment policies by considering all these peculiarities of the labor market.

Summing up the facts in using employment policies for elderly in foreign countries and analyzing the best practices we can say that these countries take into account its structure of their population and different peculiarities in developing employment policies such as stimulating the return of previously retired elderly citizens to work; organizing part time job, creating “public schools” where elderly people can get a new profession for free; and in many European countries the practice of early retirement has been minimized.

If we talk about Kazakhstani situation in this sphere, then we can note the only developed National Action Plan “Active Longevity” for elderly persons in order to improve their life quality and raise life expectancy by creating centers in different regions of the country. In these centers considered to support health of the elderly, make them active, and do a sport, study different courses as IT and computer literacy, language courses and so on [27].

Despite this social program, elderly do not have support from government officially in employment process as special developed employment policy for elderly. Lack of such policy do not allow them to be employed and increase their income level or improve their life quality and it has huge implications like dependency in other family members as on their younger generation. This topic has been extensively covered in the report conducted with the support of UNFPA [19]. So, in developing such policy should be considered all peculiarities of this segment in order to organize them the best working conditions.

## Results

According to results of the research using the analysis method, it is considered that the Covid–19 pandemics affected the lives of all segments of the population, but brought an exceptional threat to the life of the elderly population, especially the male half. It aimed to study the impact of Covid–19 on the elderly population by examining the prevalence and mortality rates in Kazakhstan and comparing them with countries around the world. Moreover, from this review, we were able to see the general trend for older males across all countries in both cases and deaths per 100,000 population, showing that older males are at high risk of contracting and dying from coronavirus disease. Accordingly, the world needs more innovative strategies and more research that can address the challenges and improve the lives of older people, and especially men, during and after pandemics. Also for women who lose their breadwinners in other words financial support and are out of work. Now our country

has developed the social program as “Active Longevity” to support the elderly, but they do not have created and realized the employment policy for older people yet especially taking into account such peculiarity as gender imbalance.

### **Discussions**

In this part, let's discuss the necessity of gender orientation to the employment policy for the elderly people.

As you know many studies have shown that older people who continue to work after retirement are happier and healthier than those who no longer work. Since, as noted by many researchers, work is not only related to financial security, but is also an important factor related to psychological and social aspects of life beyond basic needs. Meaningful work helps them feel the purpose of better work and more commitment. [28] Thus to support our elderlies most countries with significant proportions of older people have introduced policies to promote employment for older persons, such as the Korea Elderly Employment Promotion Act and active aging policies in European countries [29].

According to specialists of ILO, older workers should be encouraged to continue working and we should hire more women [30]. Countries with a greater proportion of women in the labor force have a smaller decline in growth. Increasing the number of women in the workforce makes the economy more elastic to unfavorable economic shocks, but a workforce with more women is also a forceful tool in the fight against poverty.

Developing gender oriented employment policy could help older male and female ones to live in a better way with high quality of life, may have more active lifestyle and feel their necessity for the community. Government can create good conditions that could help our elderly people that support mental health.

### **Conclusion**

Summarizing all the facts here should be noted the followings:

Firstly, this study focused on determining the difference between elderly and old age. Authors structured this concept by different approaches such as chronological age, retirement age, opinions of authoritative organizations as well as scientists in this sphere.

Analyzing all the regions of the world it can be noted that the average retirement age for women is lower in comparison with men even life expectancy at birth of women is higher than men. Elderly people wants to work for different reasons: to have financial support, to occupy themselves with some activity and have an active rational lifestyle. In deep analysis of elderly employment of worldwide and Kazakhstan authors noticed some peculiarities of this market as gender imbalance. And with the onset of a pandemic COVID-19 this gender difference became more pronounced. It can be seen in the results of this review: old men are highly at risk from infection and dying from Coronavirus disease as for worldwide as for Kazakhstan despite son preference in many countries of the world including Kazakhstan.

In addition, taking into account the facts such as a higher mortality rate for men at all ages leads first to an equalization of the sex ratio, and at older ages to a significant preponderance of the number of women and gender differences: in groups 60-69 years old and 70 years and older, working men in 2.4 times more than working women the government should develop a gender-oriented employment policy for the elderly population.

Because number of women have been dominated over men before pandemic and post COVID-19 statistics also showed the women predominance again and this time this prevalence is much more higher. This gender imbalance once more recommends in developing gender oriented employment policy for the elderly especially for women. There are centers of longevity in Kazakhstan, but there is no developed employment policy for the elderly, especially taking into account women, since the proportion of elderly women is greater than that of men. In this regard, the development of an employment policy for the elderly is recommended.

Foreign experience should be taken into account in developing a gender-oriented employment policy for the elderly, since this is a feature of our national market. For example, organizing part time jobs or stimulating women in one time jobs, budget allocation for retraining elderly people after retirement, or subsidize the hiring of older workers.

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## **НУЖНА ЛИ ГЕНДЕРНО ОРИЕНТИРОВАННАЯ ПОЛИТИКА ЗАНЯТОСТИ ДЛЯ ПОЖИЛЫХ ЛЮДЕЙ?**

### **Аннотация**

Это исследование было сосредоточено на уточнении концепций пожилых людей и занятости, поскольку население стареет, а также пожилые люди пострадали от пандемии. Требуется более подробный анализ, чтобы понять препятствия и проблемы, с которыми пожилые люди сталкиваются в процессе трудоустройства, особенно во время пандемии. Поэтому авторы постарались сосредоточиться на ключевых проблемах трудоустройства пожилых людей и проанализировать такие особенности, как гендерный дисбаланс. Более того, в этом исследовании описывается гендерное влияние COVID–19 на занятость пожилых людей во всем мире и в Казахстане. По результатам авторы выявили преобладание женщин над мужчинами до и после пандемии, особенно в Казахстане. Кроме того, в этом исследовании использовались результаты различных отчетов, раз-



работанных для Казахстана, чтобы провести полный анализ, включая наш менталитет и другие факторы, которые могут повлиять на трудоустройство пожилых людей. Выявленное преобладание женщин привело авторов к таким выводам, как разработка гендерно ориентированной политики занятости пожилых людей с учетом зарубежного опыта. Например, организация работы с частичной занятостью или стимулирование женщин к одноразовой работе, выделение бюджетных средств на переподготовку пожилых людей после выхода на пенсию или субсидирование найма пожилых работников. Кроме того, это можно представить как формирование разновозрастных рабочих групп, в которых пожилые работники могли бы в дальнейшем передавать свой опыт и компетенции; или в реформе организации труда, при которой произойдет перераспределение нагрузки.

**Ключевые слова:** трудоустройство пожилых, пожилые люди, политика занятости, гендерный дисбаланс, возрастная дискриминация, COVID–19, пенсионный возраст.

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## ЕГДЕ ЖАСТАҒЫ АДАМДАРҒА ГЕНДЕРЛІК БАҒДАРЛАНҒАН ЖҰМЫСПЕН ҚАМТУ САЯСАТЫ ҚАЖЕТ ПЕ?

### Андатпа

Бұл зерттеу халық қартайып, егде жастағы адамдар пандемиядан зардап шеккендіктен, егде жастағы адамдар мен оларды жұмыспен қамту тұжырымдамаларын нақтылауға бағытталған. Егде жастағы адамдар жұмысқа орналасу процесінде, әсіресе пандемия кезінде кездесетін кедергілер мен қиындықтарды түсіну үшін егжей-тегжейлі талдау қажет. Сондықтан авторлар егде жастағы адамдарды жұмыспен қамтудың негізгі мәселелеріне тоқталып, гендерлік теңгерімсіздік сияқты ерекшеліктерді талдауға тырысты. Сонымен қатар, бұл зерттеу COVID–19-дың дүние жүзінде және Қазақстанда егде жастағы адамдардың жұмысқа орналасуына гендерлік әсерін сипаттайды. Нәтижелерге сәйкес, авторлар пандемияға дейін және одан кейін, әсіресе Қазақстанда әйелдердің ерлерге қарағанда басым екенін анықтады. Сонымен қатар, бұл зерттеуде толық талдау жүргізу үшін, біздің менталитетімізді және егде адамдардың жұмысқа орналасуына әсер етуі мүмкін басқа да факторларды қоса алғанда, Қазақстан үшін әзірленген түрлі есептердің нәтижелері пайдаланылды. Әйелдердің басым болуы авторларды шетелдік тәжірибені ескере отырып, қарт адамдарды жұмыспен қамтудың гендерлік саясатын әзірлеу сияқты тұжырымдарға әкелді. Мысалы, толық емес жұмыс күнін ұйымдастыру немесе әйелдерді біржолғы жұмыс істеуге ынталандыру, зейнеткерлікке шыққаннан кейін қарт адамдарды қайта даярлауға бюджет қаражатын бөлу немесе егде жастағы жұмысшыларды жалдауды субсидиялау. Бұдан басқа, оны егде жастағы қызметкерлер өз тәжірибесі мен құзыреттерін одан әрі бере алатын әртүрлі жастағы жұмыс топтарын қалыптастыру ретінде қарастыруға болады, немесе жүктемені қайта бөлу орын алатын еңбекті ұйымдастыру реформасында ұсынуға болады.

**Тірек сөздер:** егде жастағы адамдарды жұмыспен қамту, егде жастағы адамдар, жұмыспен қамту саясаты, гендерлік теңгерімсіздік, жас ерекшелігі бойынша кемсітушілік, COVID–19, зейнет жасы.