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LIVING STANDARDS AS AN OBJECT OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT: A STUDY OF OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE INDICATORS

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Abstract. *Quality of life is a complex phenomenon that incorporates socio-economic, political, cultural, ideological, and environmental factors, as well as the conditions of a person's existence. To ensure the modern quality of life of the population, systems for managing their quality of life are being formed, work is underway to create optimal technologies for ensuring a decent quality of life in difficult social and economic conditions, and new mechanisms are being developed to manage the quality of life of the population in municipalities. This study is relevant due to the lack of a unified methodology or indicators for assessing the quality of life of the population of municipalities. The study of the quality of life of residents was performed on the basis of assessing subjective and objective indicators of quality of life. 1,204 residents of the city of Novosibirsk participated in the survey. The questionnaire contained 49 questions that allowed us to study subjective indicators that are rarely used, such as living comfort, level of trust in the government, and personal security. As a result of the study, the authors suggest an interconnected system of quality of life indicators: living comfort; level of development of the consumer market; housing provision and quality of housing; job security; population income level; level of development of healthcare, education, and culture; the effectiveness of government; trust in government agencies; state of the environment; and personal safety. The results of the study can be used in further work on the quality of life of residents of the metropolis.*

Keywords: *quality of life index, quality of life indicators, municipal formation development strategy, municipal government activities, innovative development of the metropolis.*

Raktiniai žodžiai: *gyvenimo kokybės indeksas, gyvenimo kokybės rodikliai, savivaldybių plėtros strategijos formavimas, savivaldybių valdžios veikla, inovatyvi didmiesčių plėtra.*

Introduction

In modern thought, quality of life is understood as a complex phenomenon characterised by socio-economic, political, cultural, ideological, and environmental factors, as well as the conditions of a person's existence, i.e. a person's position in society. Currently, in international research, quality of life is correlated with the balance of the objective conditions of existence, and a subjective assessment of these conditions at the level of society and the individual (Rogerson 1999; Soleimani et al. 2013; Forouhar and Hasankhani 2018).

The quality of life of the population is a complex functional phenomenon. Issues of increasing the efficiency of state and municipal government on the basis of a radical improvement in the activities of executive bodies, strict compliance by the state and municipal officials with the rule of law, the provision of high-quality public services, and ensuring a decent quality of life for the population are identified as priority tasks in reforming the public administration system in Russia. In metropolises, ensuring a high quality of life for the population is of particular importance. As a municipal formation, a metropolis is constantly in the process of remodelling the management structure and forming of a new management system, therein choosing effective areas for socio-economic development.

The strategic purpose of the innovative development of the metropolis can be understood as the provision of modern living standards and the sustainable development of the city by means of modern innovative technologies. For this purpose, systems for managing living standards are being formed, work is underway to create optimal technologies for ensuring decent living standards in complicated social and economic conditions, and new mechanisms for managing living standards are developed and subsequently implemented in many regions of Russia (Shchetkin 2009).

The phenomenon of quality of life is multidimensional. It includes not only statistical data reflecting the performance of municipal authorities, but also citizens' subjective assessments of the conditions for the satisfaction of their needs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is predetermined by the search for and measurement of the system of optimal indicators of living standards, including the consideration of the fact that the ultimate goal of effective municipal administration is to improve the quality of life.

The essence of the issues surrounding study of quality of life in a municipal formation, as noted by I. A. Kulkova and A. Yu. Ragozina (2015), lies in the fact that there are currently a multitude of methodologies for assessing quality of life in regions and coun-

tries and, at the same time, a unified methodology for assessing quality of life in a municipal formation is yet to be developed. Such a methodology should include the study of an interconnected system of indicators which, in aggregate, reflect the level of quality of life of a given municipal formation.

Materials and Methods

A specific feature of the study of quality of life is that the definition and evaluation of this phenomenon is performed on the basis of a wide variety of methodological approaches. This is connected with the lack of a unified definition of quality of life in the scientific literature. Thus, in economic science, quality of life prioritizes the objective living conditions of the population and their level of welfare. Some researchers believe that quality of life is determined by the achievement of a certain standard of living, income level, demographic indicators, pollution of the environment, etc. as indicators of material welfare (Astratova 2012). D. Bell considered quality of life as an attribute of a post-industrial society, which is associated with various amenities and services (Bell 2004). For sociology, social relations are significant in the study of quality of life (Wnuk and Marcinkowski 2012). Quality of life is a category that goes beyond the material security of a person, which distinguishes it from living conditions. Studies show that an objective improvement in the material conditions of life, i.e. the satisfaction of many necessities of life, are not accompanied by an improvement in subjective assessments of the quality of life (Mikhalska-Zhila and Stolbov 2018). A study in the slums of Calcutta, for example, suggests that life satisfaction is higher than what would be expected judging by living conditions (Biswas-Diener and Diener 2001). Therefore, upon studying quality of life, there should be an assessment of the totality of conditions and features of human life, both objective and subjective. Objective factors include employment, professional demand, prosperity, the environmental situation, and the accessibility of cultural institutions, whereas subjective factors are associated with satisfaction with life, work, and the possibility of personal fulfilment (Tsapko 2017). As scientists point out, assessments of measuring the quality of life should include: material living conditions; health; education; economic activity; social ties and relationships; the functioning of the state; the quality of infrastructure; and the natural environment (Stiglitz et al. 2009).

We should point out that international researchers, upon studying quality of life, draw attention to such non-material elements of welfare as satisfaction with life in general and its individual areas, and issues related to mental welfare and emotional state (Diener and Suh 1997; Stiglitz et al. 2009). P. Dolan and R. Metcalfe identified three components of quality of life: assessment studies; research on personal experience; and research on happiness (Dolan and Metcalfe 2012). Within the framework of psychology, the phenomenon of quality of life is associated with the subjective perception of a state of happiness (Anielski 2007).

It is noteworthy that Russian researchers are actively working across the theoretical, methodological, and practical aspects of studying quality of life (Toschenko 2018;

Choi and Oberemko 2017; Rudneva and Mosyakina 2016; Anisimov et al. 2013; Belyaeva 2009), factoring in regional factors as well (Tokarskaya and Marasanova 2015).

Specialists from The Economist Intelligence Unit have developed a unique methodology that links the results of a study on subjective satisfaction with life of the population and the objective determinants of quality of life in various countries (*The Economist Intelligence Unit* n.d.; Karasik and Sayfutdinova 2014).

The main advantage of the proposed method is the scientifically substantiated choice of a system of private indicators, and the determination of their significance on the basis of subjective assessments of the population's satisfaction with life for the subsequent construction of an integral quality of life index (Table 1).

Table 1. The methodology for calculating the quality of life index presented by The Economist Intelligence Unit

| No. | Indicators | Calculation mechanism | Sources |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Health | Life expectancy, years | US Census Bureau |
| 2 | Family life | Divorce level (on a scale from 1 to 5) | OOH, Euromonitor |
| 3 | Public life | The variable takes the value of 1 if the country has a high level of church attendance or union membership | World Values Survey |
| 4 | Material welfare | GDP per capita, purchasing power parity | Economist Intelligence Unit |
| 5 | Political stability and security | Political stability and security ratings | Economist Intelligence Unit |
| 6 | Climate and geography | Latitude and longitude for determining cold and hot climates | CIA World Factbook |
| 7 | Employment guarantee | Unemployment level, % | Economist Intelligence Unit |
| 8 | Political freedom | Average index of political and civil freedom, on a scale from 1 to 7 | Freedom House |
| 9 | Gender equality | Measured by dividing the average wage of men by the wage of women | UNDP Human Development Report |

Source: Data from the official website of The Economist Intelligence Unit Media Company.
<http://www.eiu.com>

Researchers also describe the characteristics of a high quality of life. One can here refer to high living standards being formed if there is self-identification with a society, which causes pride and desire to live in the country and region with which a person identifies themselves. Through this, the 'positive life potential' of a society is formed, wherein social practices in the political, social, scientific, entrepreneurial, and cultural spheres contribute to improving the quality of life of the population. These developments run in parallel others, including: high standards of social quality of life for all residents of the country; the population considering the state as an effective defender of vital interests; and authorities at all levels being credible, with individuals having the ability to influence their activities (Belyaeva 2009).

However, with all the existing variety of approaches to assessing quality of life, there are still no methods for studying the quality of life of the municipal formation, and the indicators for assessing the living standards of the municipal formation do not have the same wide range compared to indicators at the levels of region and country.

Considering the fact that a scientifically founded methodology for assessing living standards should use indices and indicators that reflect the conditions of satisfaction of material and non-material needs that are objectively essential for a person, including subjective perception of the degree of satisfaction of these needs and interests, we identified a number of indicators for measuring the living standards of a municipal formation. These indicators included: comfort of living; level of development of the consumer market; housing provision and quality of housing; job security; population income level; level of development of education, culture; the effectiveness of government; trust in bodies of authority; state of the environment; and personal safety. Note that within the framework of the article presented, in making no pretence to be exhaustive, we shall limit ourselves to the presentation of indicators of quality of life without describing the actual methodology for assessing quality of life at the level of a municipal formation. It is worth stating that we propose indicators that are little used or not used at all. These include comfort of living, trust in bodies of authority, and personal security. We shall point out that international scientists note the special importance of trust. Thus, in an environment with a high level of trust, a high level of satisfaction with life is also noted (Helliwell and Wang 2011), and hence quality of life. We shall also note that the research largely does not cover gender factors but, nevertheless, it is not possible to completely ignore them (Ilinykh and Udaltsova 2014). The presented system of indicators and basic indicators for assessing the quality of life of the population is not closed to subsequent changes, clarifications, and additions.

The study of the quality of life of residents of such a metropolis as the city of Novosibirsk was performed by a scientific team led by S. A. Ilinykh in June 2018. The sample was formed through a three-stage selection of territories. At the first stage, all of the administrative districts of the city were selected. At the second stage, this was focused on streets and residential buildings. At the third stage, respondents were selected in observance of a quota for gender and age. The calculation of quotas was performed on the basis of statistical data on the age and gender composition of the population of Novosibirsk. A total of 1,204 respondents were interviewed, comprising of 542 men and 662 women. The

questionnaire contained 49 questions that allowed us to study the quality of life indicators outlined above. The research method can therefore be defined as a survey.

Results and Discussion

Comfort of living was verified through two indirect questions: 1. 'Do you like living in Novosibirsk?'; and 2. 'Would you like to leave Novosibirsk?' In total, 91.7% of Novosibirsk residents indicate that they like living in Novosibirsk, and 52% of respondents would not want to leave Novosibirsk. It was our experience that women referred to this a little more often than men. In an open question, it was found that Sochi (13.7%), Kazan (12.6%), Krasnodar (12.3%), Yekaterinburg (9.3%), and other cities were more attractive than Novosibirsk (excluding Moscow and St. Petersburg). 61 cities were named, and 700 responses were received. Proceeding from the content analysis (548 answers), aspects of the attractiveness of Novosibirsk were identified. Respondents noted the modernity and development of the city (13.9%), infrastructure (8.0%), the cultural development of the city (7.3%), architecture (5.8%), and other factors. High comfort of living in Novosibirsk characterizes the activities of the municipal administration in the field of the city's policy on social and economic development. The *level of consumer market development* was assessed by several indicators. The results of the study show that respondents rated the quality of the convenience stores as 'high' (41.6%) and 'very high' (33.5%). Men referred to this a little more often than women (76.7% versus 73.8%, respectively). The need to maintain a high level of service is associated with the fact that stores of this type are more oriented towards citizens who are regular consumers of goods. At the same time, when assessing the state of trade in stores and markets, 48% of respondents indicated that they were only partially satisfied, which again was explained by the expansion of the circle of customers, and the minimization of orientation towards regular customers.

In assessing *housing provision*, 61.7% of men and 54.6% of women indicated that they were satisfied with the availability of housing. About two thirds of the respondents lived in their own housing – a house (10.8%) or an apartment (61.9%). Of these, 69.7% were men and 75.2% were women. Gender is essential here, as women who are less satisfied with housing affordability are more likely to make efforts to purchase it. We shall point out one implicit factor that affects the activities of the population in relation to behavioural strategies for housing provision. A significant role is played by the geographical location of Novosibirsk, which is located at the centre of the intersection of rail, air, road, and river transport links to Europe and Asia, including from the European part of Russia to the Far East. The city's ability to act as the largest transit and logistics centre in the eastern part of the country leads to the increased business and consumer activities of citizens. This implicit factor acts as an impetus for improving the quality of life, including in the studied aspect.

This is indirectly evidenced by the results obtained by S. A. Ilynykh in the course of the study of the middle class in Novosibirsk in May–June 2015, which involved 276 men and 395 women. The representativeness of the sample was ensured by observing the age and sex structure of the adult population, as well as the proportions between the popula-

tion of different areas of the city (with a sampling error of no more than 3%). A two-stage selection was used to form a sampling frame. According to the data received, more than 95% of the middle class lived in their own housing – an apartment, a house, or a cottage. It is significant that the middle class also had other real estate objects – one apartment (21.7% men and 16.7% women), several apartments (6.5% men and 2.3% women), or real estate abroad (1.4% men and 0.3% women).

Thus, the study results of the quality of life index associated with housing conditions display that approximately two thirds of the population have their own housing and are satisfied with these welfare indicators. With that, such factors as the dynamism and development of the city, a large amount of construction and commissioned housing, the availability of ‘enhanced comfort’ homes, or luxury homes in the area of daily social space implicitly influence the desire of citizens to have their own housing. This encourages the adoption of an active life position regarding the improvement of the quality of one’s life.

To study the issue of guaranteeing employment, respondents were asked questions about their satisfaction with the possibility of employment, including indirect questions about how they assess their level of security against unemployment or an unreasonable employer.

Satisfaction with employment opportunities was observed in 69% of men and 61.6% of women. Evidently, some gender factors are present. But at the same time, it is notable that a rather high proportion of men and women are satisfied with their opportunity to get a job.

According to the survey, natives of Novosibirsk feel insecure both with regard to unemployment and to the unreasonable actions of an employer. In comparing both factors, it can be noted that respondents perceive their vulnerability to unemployment to a greater extent.

With regard to safety from the unreasonable actions of an employer, it is noteworthy that 37% of respondents were unable to assess their security/insecurity from the actions of the employer. This may indicate that citizens do not assess their economic risks in relation to a specific employer, but associate them with the general socio-economic situation. Therefore, in our opinion, quality of life is influenced by fears of being unemployed more significantly than in relation to the actions of a particular employer.

The *income level of the population* was studied through 3 indirect questions – on the description of the financial situation, on measures to improve it, and on the level of family welfare. In general, the financial situation of 81.3% of respondents can be said to be quite satisfactory. Of these, 21.9% of respondents required a mortgage to purchase expensive goods such as an apartment. With regard to gender distribution, 84.4% of men and 79.1% of women were satisfied with the financial situation, which is again consistent with gender theory.

The second question concerned measures to improve the financial situation of the respondent. The distribution of answers to the question ‘What are you doing to improve your financial situation?’ displays that nearly 70% of respondents use restrictive consumption strategies: reduction of daily expenses – 19.8%; refusal of major purchases –

22.6%; restrictions on paid services – 10.5%; and reduction of spending on entertainment – 20.3%. With that, an active position is taken by 35.2% of men and 26.8% of women (indicated by the response ‘I take on any part-time job’). These results are, to some extent, consistent with the results of A. A. Vozmitel (2013), according to which 2/3 of Russians took on any job to provide themselves (and their family) with decent living standards.

The same situation can be seen in our study of the middle class (2015). When compared with financial situation improvement strategies, a larger number of respondents took on an active life position: 27.9% of men and 16.5% of women worked part-time, and 31.2% of men and 20% of women used any opportunity for additional earnings. The third question, ‘Determine how the welfare of you and your family has changed over the past 2–3 years’, allowed us to assess the subjective perception of the financial situation of the family. The data obtained indicate that 40% of men and 33.2% of women began to live better, and for 35.2% of respondents (with an approximately equal distribution by gender), nothing has changed.

The *level of healthcare, education, and cultural development* question indicated that the level of healthcare development is essential to the quality of life. The quality of the work of hospitals and clinics is rated by 38.3% of respondents as average. At the same time, 22.5% of respondents indicate that the level of development is high. In our opinion, such assessments of healthcare in the minds of Novosibirsk citizens are connected with the fact that a number of federal and departmental healthcare institutions are located within the territory of the city. These include the Academician E. N. Meshalkin Scientific Research Institute for Circulatory Pathology – the largest diversified high-tech medical and educational centre in the country; and the FSBI I. L. Tsviyvan Novosibirsk Research Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedics, one of the leading industry research centres in the country, providing highly specialized care to patients with pathology of the musculoskeletal system and central and peripheral nervous systems. In other words, residents of the city can receive timely, qualified help.

The *level of educational development* in Novosibirsk is estimated as high (46.3%). The high educational potential of Novosibirsk is based on a close relationship with science, as the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences is located in Novosibirsk.

The *level of cultural development* is perceived by respondents as very high (46.9%). This is due to the fact that theatres, exhibition halls, and museums function successfully in the city. Cinemas, entertainment centres, clubs, and other such venues fill every district of Novosibirsk.

The question of *efficiency of authorities in power and trust in them* highlighted the idea that living standards are directly related to the activities of local authorities. Most of the respondents consider that local authorities are efficient. It is notable that a significant proportion of the respondents (93.7%) trust the police, the governor, and local authorities. The efficiency of the work of the authorities is also associated with the confidence of the residents of the metropolis in their future. Thus, 73.8% of men and 66.9% of women expressed their confidence in the future.

Personal security as a quality of life is predetermined by the degree to which a person feels protected from various threats. According to the study results, respondents are pro-

tected from harassment due to age, gender, nationality, religious beliefs, violation of civil rights, or persecution for political beliefs. It is indicative that, in assessing the degree of their protection from crime, 30.6% of respondents chose the option 'difficult to answer'. In our opinion, this may indicate that respondents do not face these threats, which does not allow their proper assessment. Personal security can also include the level of residents' satisfaction with their lives. According to the results of the study, 67.7% of men and 56.9% of women are satisfied. Once again, we can note a slight difference due to the influence of gender factors.

Conclusions

1. The authors conducted an analysis using many scientific methods for assessing living standards in the municipal formation. Due to the lack of a unified methodology for assessing the quality of life of a megalopolis population, the authors carried out a survey over the course of which the main indicators affecting quality of life were identified.
2. On the basis of the survey results, the authors presented an interconnected system of indicators for assessing the quality of life of the population of a metropolis as a municipal formation. These included: living comfort; level of development of the consumer market; housing provision and quality of housing; job security; population income level; level of healthcare, educational, and cultural development; the efficiency of the authorities in power; trust in authorities in power; the state of the environment; and personal security. Each indicator is operationalized through a set of basic indices.
3. Considering that the study of quality of life was performed on the basis of assessing subjective and objective indicators, the authors studied such rarely used subjective indicators as living comfort, trust in the government, and personal security. The conclusion of the high quality of life of the inhabitants of the studied metropolis was made.
4. It was established that certain indicators reflect the influence of gender factors. However, it can be noted that in some cases they play not only a negative, but also a positive role. For example, a study found that women that are less satisfied with housing affordability were more likely to make efforts to purchase housing than men.
5. The presented system of indicators and basic indices for assessing living standards is not closed to subsequent changes, clarifications, and additions. In this regard, further development of a universal methodology for assessing the living standards of a metropolis is possible.

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Gyvenimo lygis kaip savivaldybių valdymo objektas: objektyvių ir subjektyvių rodiklių tyrimas

Anotacija

Gyvenimo kokybė yra kompleksinė savybė, jungianti socio-ekonominius, politinius, kultūrinius ir ideologinius, aplinkos veiksmus bei asmens egzistavimo sąlygas. Siekiant užtikrinti šiuolaikinę gyvenimo kokybę, formuojamos populiacijos gyvenimo kokybės valdymo sistemos, kuriamos optimalios technologijos, užtikrinančios tinkamą gyvenimo kokybę sunkiomis socialinėmis ir ekonominėmis sąlygomis. Siekiant sureguliuoti gyventojų gyvenimo kokybę savivaldybėse kuriami nauji mechanizmai. Šis tyrimas yra aktualus tuo, jog trūksta vieningos metodikos ir rodiklių, kaip įvertinti savivaldybių gyventojų gyvenimo kokybės reguliavimą. Gyvenimo kokybės tyrimas atliktas įvertinus subjektyvius ir objektyvius rodiklius. Apklausoje dalyvavo 1204 Novosibirsko miesto gyventojai. Anketoje buvo pateikti 49 klausimai, kurie leido išnagrinėti retai naudojamus subjektyvius rodiklius, tokius kaip gyvenimo komfortas, pasitikėjimo vyriausybe lygis ir asmeninis saugumas. Remiantis atliktu tyrimu autoriai siūlo susieti gyvenimo kokybės rodiklių sistemą: gyvenimo komfortą; vartotojų rinkos išsivystymo lygį; aprūpinimą būstu ir būsto kokybę; darbo saugumą; gyventojų pajamų lygį; sveikatos priežiūros, švietimo ir kultūros išsivystymo lygį; valdžios efektyvumą; pasitikėjimą valdžia; aplinkosaugos

būklę; asmeninį saugumą. Tyrimo rezultatai gali būti panaudoti tolesniuose didmiesčių gyventojų gyvenimo kokybės gerinimo tyrimuose.

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