

Modern Paradigm of Quality of Life of the Population of the Russian Federation: Theoretical Aspect

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Abstract

The article critically analyzes modern views of scholars from various fields of science and practitioners on the category of “quality of life of the population,” its elements, and its evaluation. The evolution of the category of “quality of life of the population” is considered in connection with the development of socio-economic policy in Russia.

Keywords: Quality of life, Russia, theoretical aspect, socio-economic policy

Since 2004, when the President of Russia for the first time defined quality of life as a target criterion of socio-economic development of the country, the issue of measuring and assessing the quality of life of the population has shifted into the realm of solving practical tasks. In June 2004, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia issued “Methodological Recommendations for the Preparation of Reports on the Results and Main Directions of Activities of Budget Planning Entities,” which presented the first official nomenclature of indicators of quality of life of the population. In subsequent years, in speeches by state leaders, the importance of orienting socio-economic policy towards improving quality of life was repeatedly emphasized, as well as the task of finding directions of activity that would change the quality of life in Russia and provide the country with leading positions.

In recent years, the problem of researching the quality of life of the population has come to the forefront for many scholars engaged in theoretical and methodological aspects, as well as for practitioners whose studies have a clearly expressed applied focus. Consequently, there is a wide range of approaches to defining the category of quality of life and its structure: the system of human development indices adopted by the United Nations; the set of socio-economic indicators of quality of life used by Rosstat; the list of indicators of standard of living and consumer budget of the All-Russian Center for Standard of Living; and the system of public health indicators used by the Ministry of Health of Russia, among others.

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This article is based on generalizing theoretical and practical research by scholars who propose the following structural elements of quality of life: quality of health, quality of education, quality of recreation (recovery, rest, and leisure), nutrition, housing, living conditions (territory improvement and quality of social infrastructure), social protection, legal protection, and environmental quality.

The emergence of the category “quality of life” is associated with the limitations of quantitative assessments of human living conditions. It is believed that the term was first mentioned in J. K. Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society* (1958). Expanding the scope of quantitative assessments of living standards, Galbraith wrote about the possibilities of consumption of goods and services provided by a “developed industrial society.” In societies where people suffer from hunger, lack of clothing, and disease, the primary task of the economic system is to raise incomes. The income received by an individual determines the ability to access goods and enjoy leisure.

However, the increase in income and material well-being is not an end in itself but a means to freedom and a more dignified life, as emphasized by A. Sen. Therefore, well-being is measured not merely by the material things surrounding an individual, but by the state of the person and their ability (or lack thereof) to dispose of these things. American futurist A. Toffler supplemented this economic aspect with the idea of developing living standards, emphasizing the transition from satisfying basic material needs to meeting refined, personalized needs such as beauty, prestige, individuality, and emotional relationships. According to Toffler, people focus less on the functional purpose of goods and services than on the psychological satisfaction they provide.

The theory and methodology of assessing quality of life require a systemic approach because they involve socio-economic, political, cultural, ecological, and other aspects of human activity. According to A. T. Petrova, quality of life is a unique integrative concept with complexity arising from its very nature, structure, and scope. It reflects economic, social, ecological, psychological, political, and other factors formalized through a finite set of system-based statistical indicators interconnected dynamically and statistically, all of which provide the possibility of management and help resolve contradictions between the capabilities of a country or region and the needs of its population.

L. A. Krivososova argues that the application of quality of life in state governance is a synthesis of objective and subjective indicators. On one hand, the object of study is the population of a country or region, and in this case, objectively existing processes and factors are recorded in official statistics. On the other hand, quality of life is reflected in the subjective perceptions of individuals in the form of an overall indicator of satisfaction with living conditions and life as a whole.

M. M. Magomaev explains differences in the interpretation of quality of life by noting that the category covers a broad range of human needs across many spheres of life; reflects both quantitative and qualitative characteristics of these needs; and is influenced by numerous factors (economic, social, political, demographic, ecological, and climatic) that cannot always be measured precisely. Moreover, many related categories—such as well-being, lifestyle, and living conditions—are interrelated and overlapping. Magomaev defines quality of life broadly as the degree to which the population is provided with everything necessary to meet its reasonable needs. In a narrower sense, it refers to the degree to which the population is provided with diverse benefits essential for satisfying those needs.

E. V. Agapova refines the definition by describing quality of life as the degree to which the population is provided with material and immaterial goods and the extent to which its needs are satisfied at a given level of socio-economic development. She emphasizes that quality of life is also shaped by subjective perceptions of individuals or groups. Thus, quality of life includes characteristics such as self-control, self-respect, individuality, goal achievement, social activity, development of abilities, satisfaction with work, material security, participation in society, opportunities for growth, and fulfillment in life. This indicates that simply increasing living standards is insufficient for the full development of human potential.

I. V. Bestuzhev-Lada views quality of life as a set of core values, reflecting how people live, how higher-order needs are met, the meaning of life, and satisfaction with life. V. A. Belyakov identifies three aspects of quality of life: (1) a general scientific concept that encompasses living conditions through multiple disciplinary perspectives; (2) an economic category reflecting the development of human needs and their satisfaction through labor and production; and (3) a measure of social management reflecting the provision of essential resources such as food, housing, and clothing, as Marx and Engels noted, as prerequisites for engaging in political, scientific, and cultural life.

According to L. V. Parkhomenko, quality of life is a complex economic category that includes both market-based needs (goods, food, services) and non-market needs (social rights, health, education, and environmental quality). He suggests analyzing quality of life as a dynamic socio-economic category characterized by functions such as adaptability, stability, motivation, cost formation, and information.

In conclusion, quality of life is a systemic concept defined by the unity of its components: human beings as biological and spiritual entities, their life activities, and the conditions under which they occur. Therefore, the nomenclature of quality of life indicators must include both objective and subjective characteristics. The most accurate interpretation is to view quality of life as a reflection of the essence of human life aimed at the preservation and development of humanity through creative activity and overcoming contradictions and difficulties. Specifically, in Russia today, quality of life should be seen as an aggregated indicator of all citizens' quality of life, which requires improvement across all dimensions and must be measured by both objective and subjective indicators relative to the long-term goals of the country's socio-economic development. Ultimately, quality of life manifests itself in both people's subjective satisfaction with life and the objective conditions of their existence as biological, social, and spiritual beings.

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