

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

Elena Valeryevna Fakhrutdinova

*Doctor of Economics, Professor, Head of the Department of Human Resource Management
Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University
420008, Republic of Tatarstan, Kazan, Kremlyovskaya St., 18
E-mail: efahr@mail.ru*

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Abstract

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

Keywords: quality of life, human capital, socio-economic policy

Introduction

As early as 2004, the President of Russia for the first time defined quality of life as a target criterion of the country’s socio-economic development. Since then, the problem of measuring and evaluating the quality of life of the population has moved into the practical domain. In June 2004, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia issued the *Methodological Recommendations for Preparing Reports on the Results and Main Directions of Activities of Budget Planning Entities*, which contained the first official nomenclature of quality of life indicators.

In subsequent years, speeches by state leaders repeatedly emphasized the importance of orienting socio-economic policy toward improving the quality of life of the population. They highlighted the need to search for such directions of activity that would improve the quality of life in Russia and ensure the country’s leading positions.

In recent years, the issue of studying the quality of life has come to the forefront among a large number of scholars, who deal with theoretical and methodological aspects of the problem, as well as practitioners, whose studies have a distinctly applied focus. As a result, there are numerous 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 living standards

and consumer budgets developed by the All-Russian Center for Living Standards; and the system of health indicators applied by the Ministry of Health of Russia, among others.

This article relies on a synthesis of theoretical and practical studies by scholars who propose the following elements of the quality of life structure: quality of health, quality of education, quality of recreation (restoration of strength, leisure activities, and free time), nutrition, housing, living conditions (territorial amenities, quality of social infrastructure), social protection, legal protection, and the environment.

The emergence of the category “quality of life” is associated with the limitations of purely quantitative assessments of human living conditions. The term is believed to have first appeared in J. K. Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society* (1958). Expanding the framework of quantitative assessments of living standards, the author wrote about the possibilities of consuming goods and services provided by “developed industrial society.” In societies where people suffer from hunger, inadequate clothing, and illness, the primary task of the economic system becomes income growth, since income determines the ability to access goods and care about leisure.

Income growth and material well-being are not ends in themselves but desirable as means of freedom and a more dignified life. As A. Sen rightly noted, prosperity should be measured not by surrounding things, but by a person’s state, arising from their ability—or inability—to control these things.

The American futurist A. Toffler supplemented the economic aspect of well-being with the development of living standards and the transition from satisfying basic material needs to meeting refined, personalized consumer demands—such as beauty, prestige, individuality, and emotional relationships. He emphasized that people increasingly focus not on the functional purpose of goods and services, but on the psychological satisfaction they provide.

Theories and methodologies for assessing the quality of life require a systemic approach, since they encompass social, economic, political, cultural, environmental, and other aspects of human existence. As A. T. Petrova argued, quality of life is a unique, integral concept characterized by complexity, structure, information, and subjective understanding. It reflects a sphere where economic, social, ecological, psychological, and political factors intersect and are formalized through a system of interrelated statistical indicators that determine governance as a mechanism for resolving the contradiction between the capabilities of a country or region and the needs of its population.

According to L. A. Krivososova, the use of quality of life in public administration represents a synthesis of objective and subjective indicators. On the one hand, it is reflected in official statistics describing social processes. On the other, it is revealed in subjective perceptions of individuals as an integral measure of satisfaction with their lives.

M. M. Magomaev notes that differences in the interpretation of quality of life stem from several reasons: (1) the category encompasses diverse human needs; (2) it reflects both quantitative and qualitative characteristics of these needs; (3) it is influenced by many

external factors (economic, sociopsychological, political, demographic, environmental, climatic); (4) it overlaps with related categories such as living standards, lifestyle, and conditions of life; and (5) it is relatively new in Russian academic discourse. In a broad sense, Magomaevev defines quality of life as the degree to which a population's needs are met, while in a narrow sense—as access to various goods required for satisfying rational needs.

E. V. Agapova refines the definition, stating that quality of life is the degree of access to material and non-material goods and the extent to which needs corresponding to a given level of socio-economic development are satisfied. The author also emphasizes the subjective perception of quality of life, as it is shaped by individuals or groups. Consequently, the concept includes characteristics such as self-control, dignity, individuality, social activity, opportunities for personal development, material security, job satisfaction, social participation, growth potential, and life fulfillment.

I. V. Bestuzhev-Lada interprets quality of life as “a set of essential values: how a person lives, 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) as a general scientific concept encompassing human living conditions; (2) as an economic category reflecting the level and satisfaction of needs; and (3) as an indicator of social management, representing the provision of rational needs in resources, energy, and information. In the latter sense, the author cites K. Marx's assertion that “people must first eat, drink, have shelter, and clothe themselves before engaging in politics, science, art, or religion.”

According to L. V. Parkhomenko, quality of life is a complex economic category that involves both market (food, goods, services) and non-market needs (rights, education, health, environment). It should be viewed as a dynamic socio-economic category described by a system of attractor functions, such as stability, observability, adaptability, motivation, and cost functions.

Thus, quality of life is a systemic concept defined by the unity of its components: the human being as a biological and spiritual entity, life activities, and the conditions in which they unfold. Consequently, the nomenclature of quality of life indicators should include both objective characteristics and subjective assessments. In Russia today, quality of life must be understood as the aggregated quality of life of its citizens, requiring improvement in all dimensions and measurable by objective and subjective indicators aligned with the long-term goals of socio-economic development. Ultimately, quality of life is manifested in both people's satisfaction with themselves and their lives, and in the objective characteristics inherent in human existence as a biological, psychological, and social phenomenon.

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