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"Global Challenges and Prospects of the Modern Economic Development"****THE QUALITY OF LIFE AS SEEN BY RUSSIAN STUDENTS**

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***Abstract***

The reappraisal of values in society, in which more and more importance is attached to the modern quality of life and future trends along with the need for its regulation, makes the problem of studying the quality of life as seen by students especially relevant. In the article, the authors analyzed several conceptual approaches to defining the category of «the quality of life». Basing on a questionnaire survey and a conversation with students the main components of this concept were identified. Quality of life was assessed through several basic questions: What does the quality of life depend on? I suppose that the quality of life is ...? What measures are being taken by the government to improve the population's quality of life? The population category characterized by the highest quality of life? The population category characterized by the lowest quality of life? What measures must be taken to improve the quality of life? How has the quality of life changed in the digital economy? What are the threats to the quality of life? Analysis of the questionnaire survey results has shown that two thirds of the respondents believe that the quality of life depends on the social, economic, environmental, political conditions and only one third of the students comment that the quality of life is determined by each individual's system of values and lifestyle. The article also presents a number of threats as well as measures aimed at improving the quality of life of people.

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## **1. Introduction**

Improving the population's quality of life is one of the key priorities of the country's social and economic development. The concept of «the quality of life» first appeared in 1977 and is now widely used in politics, economics, sociology, medicine, and other spheres in different countries (Agadzhanian, Makarova, Aksenova, & Strakhov, 2014). The quality of life is determined not only by the objective environment of human life and activity, it also depends on the person's vision of his or her own life. As per Jani, Alias, Bandar, and Arunasalam (2018) «the population's quality of life can be measured by assessing external factors associated with objective conditions (unemployment, criminality, etc.); through a subjective assessment of human life based on life experience» (p.702). The analysis of the quality of life should take into account the complex nature of the relationship between objective living conditions and their subjective assessments (Kulthickiy & Kurko, 2013). The observation that people living in good conditions are more satisfied with the quality of their life than those living in objectively bad conditions seems obvious. Some researches, however, show that this is not always the case. According to some researchers, the quality of life depends on the level of spiritual development: the higher the level of spirituality, the higher the level of quality of life (Deb & Strodl, 2019).

Evaluation of the quality of life quite often depends on subjective perception, so it is very important to study different population categories' observations of the quality of their lives. According to researches, migrant students are less satisfied with the quality of their life in comparison with local students (Zhang, 2018). The quality of students' life is influenced by contextual stress: ethnicity, cultural conflicts between parents and children (Bakhtiari, Benner, & Plunkett, 2018). Analysis of subjective perceptions allows us to identify the most problematic aspects of the quality of life which should be in the focus of attention of the government in the process of determining the directions of priority for the development of social and economic policies (Sirgy, Grzeskowiak, & Rahtz, 2007). The study of students' subjective assessments of the quality of life is of research interest because studentship is a period of personal maturation as an individual with manifestations of his or her interests and hobbies, the time of formation of a future professional and a citizen of his or her country. According to Maunder R.E. (2018), the outlook and active social position foundation is laid in the student's age, so it is crucial to understand how modern students apprehend and perceive the environment, how satisfied they are with their own lives and what they are ready to do to improve it.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Of particular interest is the study of the student youth's quality of life as students are one of the driving forces of social progress, on whose potential the development of the country largely depends. Student youth will determine our country's intellectual level and its competitiveness. Therefore, examining modern Russian students' ideas about quality of life is one of today's urgent task.

## **3. Research Questions**

As for the students' quality of life, it is worth mentioning that incessant changes are taking place in the society, including those in the education system: modernization of the educational process,

introduction of innovative training programmes, deploying a two-step system of higher education, reduction of budget places in universities. All this has a direct impact on the student youth, on their quality of its life. Taking into account the fact that the quality of life implies a subjective assessment of reality by a person, it is interesting how modern students evaluate their quality of life? What does the quality of modern student's life depend on? What measures, according to students, does the state take to improve the quality of life? What measures, according to students, should be taken to improve the population's quality of life? How does the quality of life change in the digital economy? What are the threats to quality of life?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The goal of the study is to analyze the theoretical approaches to the definition and evaluation of the concept of the population's «quality of life» as well as to examine modern students' vision of the quality of life. The study focuses on identifying internal and external factors that influence students' quality of life assessment. The study examined the students' opinions on the causes of the deterioration in the quality of life and the measures that must be taken in order to improve the quality of life of the population.

#### **5. Research Methods**

During the study a set of complementary research methods was applied: theoretical analysis and synthesis of philosophical, psychological, economic, and methodological literature. A study of the literature makes it possible to find out which aspects and problems of the quality of life of the population are already well studied, on which scientific discussions are being conducted, and which issues have not yet been resolved. Empirical research methods such as including observation, questioning, conversation provide the opportunity for direct knowledge of the quality of life problems of modern students.

#### **6. Findings**

The concept of «the quality of life» is currently one of the most frequently used in social and economic studies. The increasing interest to the issue of the quality of life may indicate that modern Russian society is concerned with the problems of sustainable development of the society rather than the issue of self-preservation. The concept of «quality of life is studied from the perspective of various approaches» (Mazepina, 2014). When looking at the quality of life from a philosophical point of view, it represents the satisfaction of an individual with the level of spiritual and cultural needs realization, his or her life activity in the society. From an economic point of view, the quality of life is the level of satisfaction of the material, spiritual needs and social interests of different population groups. In medicine, quality of life refers to the preservation and reproduction of human life and health by promoting a healthy lifestyle; formation of the regulatory framework for modern health care development and of primary care systems. The quality of life is also studied from the position of the geographical approach as an integral phenomenon determined by many factors, namely: human health (Shevchenko et al., 2014), economic, social, political, ecological, natural and other conditions of his life activity (Rozenberg, Lazareva, Kostina, & Rozenberg, 2018), as well

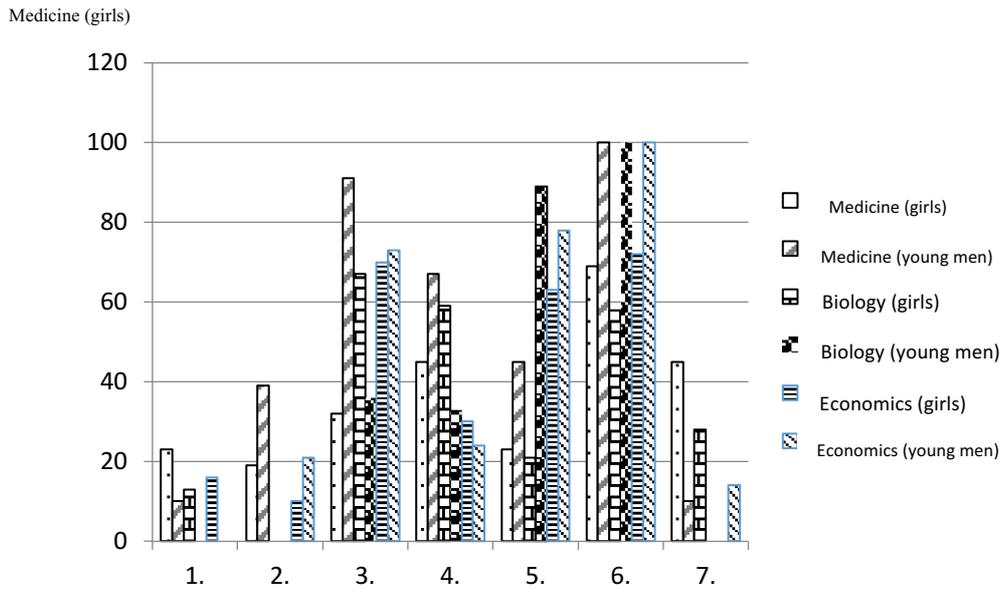
as the subjective assessment of the individual of various aspects of his life. The representatives of the ecological approach treat the quality of life as creating conditions in which the environment is not disturbed and the question of the existence of man as a biopsychosocial being is not raised, but the natural resources necessary for the existence of future generations are preserved.

A number of studies emphasize the important role of social work in improving the quality of life of the population (Konovalova, Laas, Svistunov, & Starun, 2018). From the psychological point of view, the quality of life is the contentment of a person with his or her life (Leshchenko, 2015), expressed by the level and the degree of the person's needs realization. Analyzing the presented approaches to the definition of quality of life we can identify a general trend in the evolution of the concept. Initially the quality of life was related to ensuring human rights, therefore, the key indicators were labor activity, income, medical services, education, etc. (dos Santos, Sarriera, & Bedin, 2019) Somewhat later environmental issues (the state of the environment) were added to this list (Bulcock, Mendoza, Crane, & Lee, 1991). At the present stage a number of essential indicators were included: social activity, psychological comfort, the ability to participate in solving important problems, etc.

In order to examine Russian students' subjective ideas of the quality of life, a questionnaire study was conducted. The sample totals 488 people, which was defined by the target set. Among the respondents students are presented as follows: under or at the age of 18 y.o. - 18.182% of respondents, 19-20 y.o. - 51.435% of respondents, 21-22 y.o. - 30.383% of respondents. The gender composition of the students group was represented by 142 young men (29.1%) and 346 girls (70.9%). A selective aggregate was represented by students studying medicine (74% of respondents), biology (7.4% of respondents), economics (18.6% of respondents). The survey was conducted by means of a specially designed questionnaire «The Quality of Life». The latter included open and projective questions.

The results of the questionnaire survey show that 68.13% of respondents highlight the importance of both material factors and psychological attitudes in determining the quality of their lives and the life of the modern society, which confirms the general trend of defining the concept of «the quality of life» as satisfaction with life. When completing the phrase «Quality of life for me is ...» the respondents used the following phrases: «safety level», «satisfaction with life», «the level of the society development», «comfortable living conditions, including the environmental situation», «interest in life», «prospects and opportunities for self-development», «income level», «satisfaction of one's needs», «life with God», «freedom in everything».

Thus, 69.78% of respondents stressed the importance of social, economic, environmental and political conditions determining the quality of life, and only 30.22% of respondents believe that the quality of life is determined by the values and lifestyle of each individual (see Figure 01).



where 1. – society development level; 2. – education level; 3. – one’s own needs satisfaction; 4.- comfortable living conditions and security 5. - perspective (opportunities); 6. – income level; 7. – one’s own and close people’s health

**Figure 01.** Russian students describing the idea of «the quality of life» in percentage correlation of choices

Analysis of the answers to the question «What does the quality of life depend on?» revealed the dependence of the quality of life on the following factors: material well-being (57% of the respondents); reasonable allocation of their own and environmental resources (57% of the respondents); their life encirclement (49% of the respondents); environmental situation in the neighborhood (38% of the respondents); level of development of the state and the political situation in the country (29% of the respondents); their own health and the health of their nearest and dearest (26% of the respondents); social support provided by the government (15% of the respondents); level of education (14% of respondents); cultural legacy and the set of traditions and values in the neighborhood (7% of the respondents); person’s emotional state (6% of the respondents); availability of innovations (4.8% of the respondents); free time (4.8% of the respondents); availability of information technology and network resources, awareness of one’s opportunities (4.8% of the respondents). Gender differences were revealed in the process of answering the questions of the survey: young men tended to be more laconic when answering the open questions giving not more than three options. The girls’ answers tended to be more detailed: they offered from 5-7 options.

Answering the question «What measures are taken by the government to improve the population’s quality of life?» 57% of the respondents commented that the social support policy has little effect and does not cover all segments of the population, 13% of the respondents (mostly young people) answered that no measures are being taken by the government, moreover, they indicated that there is some deterioration in the population’s quality of life caused by the governmental actions. Among measures that the government can take to improve the population’s quality of life the respondents indicated: educating people (34% of the respondents); developing social institutions (23% of the respondents); improving settlements infrastructure, housing and utilities sector, arranging trees and shrubs planting in cities, towns

and rural settlements (18% of the respondents). The answer to this question reflected the respondents' professional orientation: medical students believe that the government should focus more on social protection of the population and the innovative development of the society, meanwhile the students of biology assume that the activities carried out by the government can in no way affect the quality of life as it depends on each individual person and their own psychological state.

In their answers to the question «Which population category is characterized by the highest quality of life?» 89% of students indicated the political elite, oligarchs, artists and government officials. This kind of answers may point at the decisive role of the material factor in assessing the quality of life. 3% of students suppose that people of active working age (25-45 years old) can be described as a population category with a high quality of life. 5% of the respondents referred to healthy people as a population category characterized by a high quality of life, 3% of the respondents referred to the middle class.

Answering the question «Which population category is characterized by the lowest quality of life?» 80% of students indicated homeless people, 76% - the retired people, 64% - the unemployed, 47% - students, 17% - disabled people, 14% - people having extremely low-paid jobs arising no interest, 13% - the working class, 4% - drug addicts and alcoholics, 3% - single people.

The students questioned suggest that in order to improve the population's quality of life it is necessary to «prohibit the sale of alcohol and cigarettes», «provide health care institutions with modern technological equipment», «save and augment considerably cultural values», «stop fake diplomas issuing», «fight against fraud and corruption», «to promote economic growth in the country», «reallocate resources», «pay decent wages», «get involved in self-development», «be responsible for one's own life», «reduce military budgets», «encourage robust competition», «to ensure the equality of all citizens before the law», «to provide countenance to each other».

Commenting the question «How has the quality of life changed in the digital economy?» 89% of the respondents said that it had improved, but at the same time highlighted a number of problems that could have a negative impact on the quality of life, namely: digital, network and Internet addictions, contamination of informational, economic and social security in relation to both personal data and professional information; fraud increase and, as a consequence, a decrease in the level of comfort for people who are not very competent in information technologies. 5% of the respondents pointed out a decrease in the quality of life caused by the lack of free time and multithreaded life and work environment which leads to increased level of dissatisfaction with oneself and causes more stresses and diseases. 6% of students believe that digital economy has no impact on the quality of life.

Analysis of the answers to the question «What are the threats to the quality of life?» showed that 73% of the respondents consider as such loss or decline in income, 67% - loss of health, 33% - illness or death of loved ones, 29% - the threat of wars, technogenic catastrophes, natural disasters, epidemics, terrorist acts; 27% - the economic crisis and political instability in the country. One fifth of the students surveyed consider expulsion from the university, transfer to the paid education or loss of work as a threat. The list of threats also include petroleum prices going up; losing Internet connection; the use of hazardous technologies; the abolition of the Unified State Exam, which will deprive students of a chance to occupy a state-funded place at the university, disclosure of personal data.

In the process of identifying the ways the students are improving their quality of life 60% of the respondents commented that were getting their education, 13% lead and promote a healthy lifestyle, 10% do nothing to improve their quality of life because they consider it sufficient, and 7% believe that the quality of life does not depend on them, but on the measures taken by the government or the immediate environment (family).

## 7. Conclusion

The results of the study have shown that Russian students do not have a shared vision of the quality of life, there are also significant differences in the indicators characterizing the quality of life. One can be encouraged by the optimism of Russian students who believe that they can provide a high degree of comfortable living by themselves, having realized themselves in their future profession, family life, and social activities. It seems interesting that almost one third of the respondents total number describes threats to the quality of life as the threat of wars, technogenic catastrophes, natural disasters, epidemics, terrorist acts, the onset of the economic crisis and the presence of political instability in the country; these responses may indicate the presence of global problems and are a reflection of the student youth's fears. The positive thing is that students are ready to take an active part in improving the population's quality of life, they suggest starting to improve the quality of life, changing themselves in the process of growth and are willing to support others by their own example. In addition, the responses of students practically did not revealed a negative (nihilistic) attitude or sarcasm in relation to the problem of the quality of life, the responses reflected the real situation in society with elements of constructive feedback, which gives hope that today's young people are ready to take up the challenge of improving their country's population quality of life.

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