

MANAGING QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE POST-PANDEMIC PERIOD

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Purpose: The main purpose of the article is to draw attention to the subject of quality of life, with particular emphasis on Poland. An analysis of this guess is particularly important at the moment we have it right now, namely right after the covid-19 pandemic and in the face of the ongoing war in Ukraine. It can be easily noticed that situations such as a pandemic or war have a diametrical impact on the quality of life not only in the areas where they take place, but also these factors have a much wider impact, such as the ongoing war, which affects not only neighboring countries, but in this case also all of Europe, and even beyond. For this reason, it is worth trying to assess the quality of life and compare the current state with previous years.

Design/methodology/approach: The article uses the method of analyzing the results of quality of life research available in the literature on the subject and in Internet sources, the so-called desk research. Desk Research is a research method that boils down to the analysis of records of available data sources, including in particular their compilation, mutual verification and processing. Such an analysis is the basis for drawing conclusions regarding the problem under study. Desk Research analysis is most often based on official statistical documents, reports, analyzes and publications, statistical yearbooks. Then, after data mining (during which generalized rules and knowledge contained in the database were discovered), the obtained results were analyzed, which led to the formulation of conclusions - the results presented in this article.

Findings: The most important thing for every person is their individual quality of life. From time to time, we reflect on the course of our lives, evaluate them and make a balance of events and expectations according to our own subjective criteria, using the methods and measurement tools we have chosen. Particularly noteworthy is that these criteria are not constant and change over time, and with them measurement methods and tools. Different types of achievements and problems may occur in a person in the next decades of his life and he will perceive the expectation module and the desired quality of life differently. All this means that the assessment of individual quality of life is subjective and variable over time, as it depends on the criteria of assessment that change along with the course of life, as well as the methods and tools for measuring individual quality of life.

Research limitations/implications: The article refers to the results of research on the quality of life, both in Europe and in the world, with emphasis on the place of Poland against their background. Research is conducted on a continuous basis, because the factors that directly affect the quality of life can change dramatically in a relatively short time, which can be seen, for example, through the prism of the last pandemic or the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

Social implications: The research results shown are important from the point of view of society. They are also a hint and a hint for future situations that may happen that it is worth being prepared for any changes, which is of great importance from the point of view of quality of life and crisis management.

Originality/value: The article is innovative based on an in-depth analysis of the factors contributing to the increase in the quality of life, with particular emphasis on the place of Poland. The obtained results of the analysis and the formulated conclusions may allow their implementation to improve the quality of life in the future.

Keywords: quality of life, management, pandemic, covid-19, sustainable development.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

There are many definitions of quality of life that cover both material standard of living and a host of other factors such as employment opportunities, education, social status, health, environment and more. The main aspects of quality of life statistics are: overall life satisfaction, personal relationships, living space, commuting, living environment, local recreation, workplace, time use and financial situation.

Another aspect also related to the quality of life is the sense of security (ensuring objective safety and improving the subjective sense of security among the population, fighting crime, ensuring road safety, restructuring the asylum system and ensuring professional, risk-oriented enforcement of penalties and measures).

In addition, issues related to sustainable development (in the context of spatial planning and investment) and environmental protection are also discussed as leading topics in the discussion on quality of life in Europe, in addition to: promoting sustainable spatial development; business location enhancement; infrastructure optimization; ensuring social stability in areas such as health, education and social policy; careful use of natural resources (promoting biodiversity and supporting the optimization of the material cycle), i.e. helping to ensure that the natural bases for life are available to the next generation as much as possible; continuation of the advanced energy policy (reduction of CO₂ emissions in line with target values) (Kuzior et al., 2022).

However, the concept of quality of life takes on a broader dimension, especially in crisis situations, such as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects (Vasylieva et al., 2020a, 2020b; Smiiianov et al., 2020; Letunovska et al., 2020; Kuzior et al., 2021a, 2021b), or the outbreak of war, when the conditions and rules of functioning in social life are changed. The aim of the paper is therefore to present precisely those areas that are subject to change in the transformed living conditions.

2. The concept of Quality of Life

R. Kolman understands the quality of life as "the degree of fulfillment of the requirements determining the level of material and spiritual existence of an individual and of the entire society" (Kolman, 2007, p. 14).

E. Skrzypek proclaims that "the quality of life is not only physical existence, but also the possibility of enriching the spirit, mind, education and creativity [...] the sum of efforts, struggles, struggles often with oneself, it is the sum of skills right choices is also a dependence on compromises; it is primarily the ability to make decisions and accept their consequences with full responsibility" (Skrzypek, 2001, p. 8).

K. Lisiecka sees the quality of life as a philosophy of life based on responsibility, morality and purpose of life. The idea of life, based on true and healthy morality, on honesty, encourages people to reflect more deeply and to look ahead than ever, to reflect on the meaning of life (cf. Lisiecka, 2001, p. 4).

According to A. Niesior, quality of life is "the degree of fulfillment of the requirements determining the level of material and spiritual existence of individuals" or, more broadly, "it is a function between expectation (expectativity) and their fulfillment (perspective)" (Niesior, 2000, pp. 8-9).

Therefore, in his opinion, the quality of life of a given individual should be defined taking into account the time perspective and the social context.

According to R. Kolman, the quality of life (QL) depends on the set of qualitative changes (Ch) that take place in it the following component areas:

- quality of family life (F),
- quality of mental life (M),
- quality of functional life (F),
- quality of somatic life (S),
- quality of environmental life (E),
- quality of habitat life (H) (cf. Kolman, 2004, pp. 129-130).

According to A. Kuzior in the book entitled "Axiology of sustainable development", "The quality of life is a central category of sustainable development and one of the basic values which, using M. Scheler's typology, can be situated within the vital values.

[...] W. Tyburski, the value of life in the axiology of sustainable development relates mainly to human life, although due to the holistic approach to the value of health (human health and the health of ecosystems) as the basic factor determining the quality of life, the range of life values is extended also to other beings animated. [...] Human life and quality of life largely depend on the condition of the environment, nature as a home in which he lives and the possibility of creative development in harmony with nature" (Kuzior, 2014, p. 76).

Moreover, A. Kuzior draws attention to the very important fact that there is no uniform definition of the quality of life, which would include social, biomedical and natural aspects. Also in medicine, no single definition of this concept has been developed (cf. Kuzior, 2014, p. 76).

The quality of life is closely related to its measurement and assessment by each individual or group of people; so we can distinguish:

- individual quality of life, relating to individual people,
- group quality of life, relating to a group of people, distinguished on the basis of the adopted criterion, e.g. occupation, capital resources, place of residence, etc.

The most important thing for every person is their individual quality of life. From time to time we reflect on the course of our lives, we evaluate them and make a balance of events and expectations according to our own subjective criteria, using the methods and measurement tools we have chosen.

Particularly noteworthy is that these criteria are not constant and change over time, and with them, measurement methods and tools.

“People in Scandinavia or Switzerland [other countries] are simply not keeping up, at least not in terms of satisfaction/contentment.

In [these countries] people are not really happy in any area of life” (Spiegel, 2015, f.p.).

According to the ranking of the Eurostat statistical office - the EU statistical office - the following data appears: Statistics rate the quality of life on a scale from "0" (not at all satisfied) to "10" (completely satisfied). The following aspects are taken into account: general satisfaction with life, personal relationships, living space, commuting, living environment, local recreation, workplace, use of time and financial situation.

3. Quality of life in the post-pandemic period

The table below with data from (cf. Numbeo, 2022) provides a complete overview of data on life satisfaction in different countries around the world.

Table 1.*Quality of Life Index by Country 2022 Mid-Year (top 10 + Poland) by Quality of Life Index*

Rank	Country	Quality of Life Index	Purchasing Power Index	Safety Index	Health Care Index	Cost of Living Index	Property Price to Income Ratio	Traffic Commute Time Index	Pollution Index	Climate Index
1	Switzerland	195.27	118.44	78.32	74.85	123.35	8.29	28.50	19.59	80.21
2	Denmark	192.36	99.45	73.44	80.07	84.12	6.78	28.52	20.97	81.80
3	Netherlands	185.38	87.99	72.12	75.56	75.66	7.15	27.40	25.07	87.11
4	Finland	184.96	91.02	72.75	76.31	73.20	7.95	27.80	12.09	56.64
5	Australia	183.81	104.63	56.15	78.14	77.75	7.20	34.78	23.85	92.70
6	Iceland	182.26	77.06	76.47	66.36	94.86	6.36	19.77	15.83	68.81
7	Germany	180.27	103.08	63.63	73.25	65.58	8.93	31.14	27.75	82.44
8	Austria	179.16	77.25	73.92	76.75	71.04	10.75	25.55	21.73	77.15
9	New Zealand	176.81	83.63	56.70	73.32	74.52	7.96	30.78	23.62	96.69
10	Norway	176.39	83.11	66.15	76.83	100.90	8.04	26.91	17.95	68.68
38	Poland	140.02	59.95	70.21	57.76	38.95	11.21	31.81	54.74	76.03

Source: Own study, based on data from: Numbeo, 2022.

The above data shows that Poland is among 38 countries in the world in terms of the quality of life in mid-2022. Compared to 2019 (the time before the pandemic), Poland fell from 35 to 38 in this ranking in terms of quality of life.

The table below with data from Numbeo (2022) provides a complete overview of data on life satisfaction in individual countries only in Europe.

Table 2.*Quality of Life Index by Country only in Europe 2022 Mid-Year (top 10 + Poland) by Quality of Life Index*

Rank	Country	Quality of Life Index	Purchasing Power Index	Safety Index	Health Care Index	Cost of Living Index	Property Price to Income Ratio	Traffic Commute Time Index	Pollution Index	Climate Index
1	Switzerland	195.27	118.44	78.32	74.85	123.35	8.86	28.50	19.59	80.21
2	Denmark	192.36	99.45	73.44	80.07	84.12	6.30	28.52	20.97	81.80
3	Netherlands	185.38	87.99	72.12	75.56	75.66	7.36	27.40	44767	87.11
4	Finland	184.96	91.02	72.75	76.31	73.20	7.54	27.80	44816	56.64
5	Iceland	182.26	77.06	76.47	66.36	94.86	6.80	19.77	15.83	68.81
6	Germany	180.27	103.08	63.63	73.25	65.58	10.60	31.14	27.75	82.44
7	Austria	179.16	77.25	73.92	76.75	71.04	10.88	25.55	21.73	77.15
8	Norway	176.39	83.11	66.15	76.83	100.90	7.83	26.91	17.95	68.68
9	Sweden	175.30	98.14	51.00	68.71	71.74	9.52	29.43	18.32	74.92
10	Estonia	174.19	63.46	76.18	73.33	53.68	10.06	24.51	19.75	64.28
25	Poland	140.02	59.95	70.21	57.76	38.95	13.49	31.81	54.74	76.03

Source: Own study, based on data from: Numbeo, 2022.

When it comes to the quality of life in Europe, Poland ranks 25th in mid-2022. It is worth adding that compared to 2019 (before the pandemic) Poland fell from 23rd to 25th place among European countries ranked according to the quality of life index.

It is worth noting that the decline in the quality of life index in Poland is related to many factors, including the effects of the pandemic.

The table below with data obtained on the basis of online research by the Department of Theory and Research of Social Practices at the Faculty of Sociology of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (cf. Drozdowski, Frąckowiak, Krajewski, Kubacka, Modrzyk, Rogowski, Rura, Stamm, 2020) contains information on our feelings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3.

Distribution of answers to the question: Please specify how intensely you feel individual emotions in recent days [during the pandemic]

	Very strong	Rather strong	Neither strong nor weak	Rather weak	Very weak
Fear for your own health	11%	30%	33%	16%	9%
Concern for the health of loved ones	36%	45%	13%	4%	2%
Fear for your own financial resources needed to live	17%	30%	29%	14%	10%
Fear of running out of food in stores	3%	11%	32%	31%	23%
Fear that the pandemic will last for a very long time	19%	42%	22%	12%	5%
Dissatisfaction with too burdensome measures taken by the authorities to curb the epidemic	7%	11%	25%	22%	35%
The frustration of not being able to do my job normally	17%	27%	23%	18%	15%
The frustration of observing those who don't have to work	5%	9%	24%	15%	47%
Frustration of inactivity and the belief that I am wasting my precious time	10%	18%	23%	18%	31%
Frustration of not understanding everything that is happening right now	4%	15%	25%	21%	35%
Fatigue with the epidemiological crisis	17%	31%	25%	15%	13%
Pleasing to have more time	8%	19%	32%	17%	24%

Source: Own study, based on data from: Drozdowski, Frackowiak, Krajewski, Kubacka, Modrzyk, Rogowski, Rura, Stamm, 2020.

On the basis of the results presented in the table above, it can be concluded that to a large extent we have started to be accompanied by negative feelings related to our sense of security, primarily about health, therefore it can be stated that our perception of the quality of life has deteriorated. Appreciation of the benefits of having more time at home due to the pandemic has proved to be only marginal.

4. Sustainable development and quality of life

A. Kuzior notes that "[in] e all documents resulting from debates at United Nations conferences on sustainable development we deal with a global approach to the issue of quality of life" (Kuzior, 2014, p. 78).

Sustainable development also has a high priority for the current governments of Europe, as reaffirmed in all governmental guidelines as an overarching maxim. In the current years, three political priorities are shaping the work of European governments and thus the political discussion: finance (develop a tax strategy), spatial development (use of available land is still being developed, also for further development), and investment and promotion of innovation, but finally also the protection of cultural property.

Environmental policy should therefore, first and foremost, consist in carrying out all activities only in a responsible and sustainable manner, which can help to reduce negative effects on the natural environment and ensure that future generations can meet their needs. And so, as part of a joint effort to help our planet, buildings / commercial premises are improved in all countries where we operate in such a way that they are consistent with the principles of sustainable development. This involves, among other things, reducing the consumption of water and paper, fossil fuels: gas and oil (the use of videoconferences is promoted instead of traveling to meetings by car), and above all, reducing the emission of pollutants and the amount of solid waste generated as part of recycling, through education, better monitoring and management of waste streams, as well as by introducing dedicated recycling points in all publicly accessible buildings, in line with the principle that it is necessary to work towards creating a "paperless" environment and to encourage optimization of energy consumption and gas emissions to the atmosphere. thus reducing the carbon footprint per capita (CF), educating all citizens on environmental issues through regeneration or volunteering.

In addition, providing alternative means of transport (as well as limiting business trips to videoconferences, or jointly driving to work), educating and encouraging not to spare efforts to protect the natural environment not only in public places, but also outside your workplace, at home and in your neighborhood.

Given the enormous importance of infrastructure for economic development, it is important that sufficient resources are made available in the current years for future investments. On the one hand, they should serve to maintain and renew existing infrastructure, as well as targeted extensions.

5. Conclusions for the future

In conclusion, the goals of greatest importance for the present and future development of Europe as a whole should therefore be defined in the following points:

- “Promoting sustainable spatial development – i.e. spatial requirements to create jobs in Europe.
- Strengthening the business location - further implementation of the economic strategy.
- Optimization of infrastructure despite the difficult financial situation.
- Ensuring social stability in areas such as: health, education and social policy.
- Careful use of natural resources (promoting biodiversity and supporting the optimization of material cycles), i.e. contributing to ensuring that the natural bases of life are accessible to the next generation as much as possible.
- Continuation of the advanced energy policy (reduction of CO₂ emissions in line with target values).

- Strengthening education (continuing consolidation of the education system, improving employment conditions for teachers and maintaining and developing operational capacity, ensuring the financial stability of educational institutions).
- Ensuring safety (ensuring objective safety and improving the subjective sense of security among the population, fighting crime, ensuring road safety, restructuring the asylum system and ensuring professional, risk-oriented enforcement of penalties and measures).
- Effective region positioning (cooperation between regions that jointly implement key projects and take greater account of common interests at national level)” (Postrzednik-Lotko, 2020, pp. 602-603).

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