QUALITY OF LIFE PRIME RANKINGS AND REVIEW OF EVIDENCES

L.B Ngoze[1], Prof. Lalhriatpuii[2]

[1]Ph.D Scholar, Department of Economics, Mizoram University
[2]Professor, Department of Economics, Mizoram University

ABSTRACT

The study focused on the various indicators of quality of life with evidences conducted globally and in India. A persons or society's quality of life measurement is quite difficult to comprehend. To understand a broader welfare status of a society and material aspects GDP and per capita income are considered as poor measures since it fails to capture the welfare aspect of society. The important rankings are highlighted where different indicators and dimensions are encompassed.

KEYWORDS: *quality of life, ranking, evidences*
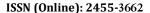
INTRODUCTION

Quality of life is an integral part of any economy. It is highly dependent on economic factors; economic policies implemented by states. A persons or society's quality of life measurement is quite difficult to comprehend. To understand a broader welfare status of a society, material aspect i.e. Income or GDP, cannot alone explain the concept and this fosters the measurement of a broader concept of well-being to overcome the GDP limitations by including non-monetary indicators. There is a need for a broader aspect and more comprehensive study. Many studies have come up with a more holistic approach like Human Development Index (HDI), Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI), Quality of Life Index (QoLI) etc. These approaches are an improved method and necessary conceptualization over the Gross National Product (GNP) method in analyzing the quality of life of any region. Three important indicator, viz. literacy rate, infant mortality rate and life expectancy at birth have been chosen and combined with equal weights to obtain PQLI and life expectancy, education and per capita income for the measurement of HDI. Literacy rate of any country or region is the percentage of the population of an area at a particular time aged seven years or above who can read and write with understanding. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is the number of deaths of infants under one year's old per 1000 live births. Life expectancy is generally recorded as a person's expected lifespan from birth and can be represented as either an expected mean or as the true average age of individuals born in that year (which can only be calculated after all people born in that year have passed away).

The value of PQLI lies between 0-100 where 1 represents the worst performance by any country and 100 is the best performance. For life expectancy the upper limit of 100 was assigned to 77 years and lower limit to 28 years. The minimum rate regarding Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) was rated 100, while the highest IMR was given the scale of 1. Whereas the literacy rates, measure as percentages from 1 to 100, provide their own scale. Once a country's performance in life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy has been rated on the scale of 1 to 100, the composite index for the country or any region is calculated by averaging the three ratings, giving equal weights to each.

Life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy are used as indicators of development, describing progress in health, sanitation, education and women's status. PQLI is the summation of complex social interrelationships on which no theoretical explanation imposes any given weights/biases. Equal weight is assigned to each component. The life expectancy in Nigeria is 49, infant mortality 180/1000 and literacy 25%. The PQLI is 25. The life expectancy at age 1 in the U.S. is 72, infant mortality 16/1000 and literacy 99% and the PQLI is 94. The PQLI informs about the changing distribution of social benefits among countries, between the sexes, among ethnic groups, and by region and sector. The PQLI facilitates international and regional comparisons by minimizing developmental and ethnocentricities. As the gap closes between current performances, the gaps between PQLI indices should close. The PQLI, with signs of lowered infant mortality and lengthened life expectancy, paints a less fatalistic pessimistic picture than the GNP.

Central to improving people's Quality of Life (QoL) is the ability to measure this concept. This is, however, made difficult by the concept's multi-dimensional nature where measurement is tasking. When assessing the diverse status of nation or region, it is necessary to move to the centre of gravity towards human welfare and quality criteria. There have been numerous attempts

to construct alternative, non-monetary indices of social and economic well-being by combining in a single statistic a variety of different factors that are thought to influence the quality of life. The main problems in all these measures is selection bias and arbitrariness in the factors that are chosen to assess the quality of life and, even more seriously, in assigning weights to different indicators (measured on a comparable and meaningful scale) to come up with a single synthetic measure. GDP, despite its drawbacks, at least has a clear, substantive meaning and prices are the objective weights for the goods and services that make it up. In measuring non- monetary indices of social and economic well-being, assigning weights to each selected indicators becomes a pr5oblem in itself.

The concept of Quality of life encompasses physical and economic improvements as well as individual,social, cultural, spiritual and political ideas. In studying this concept the researcher has the freedom to choose any indicators that he sees fit the area of study,so it is based on his/her discretions. Various indicators that suits a particular study can be selected to find the wellbeing of that study area or a set of commonly accepted indicators can be chosen.

In India, the quality of life continues to be appalling with the country ranked poorly at 132 among 191 countries on the Human Development Index of the United Development Programme (UNDP) that was released globally in September 2022. The five countries with the highest HDI are Norway, Switzerland, Ireland, Germany and Iceland.The five countries with lowest are Niger, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, and Burkina Faso. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on human development, particularly in developing countries. India scored 0.633 and was placed in medium human development category. In South Asian Region, Sri Lanka (73) emerged as the best performer followed by Maldives (87) were placed in 'high human development'category followed by India (134), Bhutan (125), Bangladesh (129), Nepal (146), Pakistan (164) and Afghanistan (182). India ranks lowest among BRICS nations and its value increased from 0.428 in 1990 to 0.642 in 2015. However, its average annual growth in HDI (1990-2015) was higher than that of other medium HDI countries. The HDI can be used to question national policy choices, asking how two or more countries with the same level of income or GDP can end up with different human development outcomes.

Published annually since 1990, the index goes beyond a nation's gross domestic product (GDP) to measure the general well-being of people under a host of parameters, such as poverty levels, literacy and gender-related issues. The goal is to contribute toward the expansion of opportunities, choice and freedom.
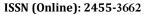
PRIME RANKINGS
While specific frameworks may vary depending on the context and purpose of the Quality of Life (QoL) index, they typically consider broader range of factors that encompass different domains of life.

The research paradigm about individual's quality of life in a society imposes a multifaceted and complex analysis. The Life Quality Research Centre (LQRC) address this as thematically divided into six scientific areas: Education and training; physical activity and healthy lifestyles; food production and technology on food behaviors; organizational dynamics; motor behavior; and individual and community health.There have been several studies conducted on the QOL Index in India, which aim to assess the well-being of the population and to identify areas of improvement.

1. Human Development Index (HDI): The HDI is widely used index that measures the average achievements of a country in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living. India's HDI has improved over time, but still lags behind many other countries, particularly in terms of health and education outcomes. The HDI has been used to assess human development in India and to compare its performance with other countries. Here are some key data points on HDI in India:

a) HDI Value: According to the 2021 Human Development Report, India's HDI value is 0.647, which places it in the medium human development category. India's HDI value has increased over time, reflecting improvements in life expectancy, educational attainment, and income.

b) Life Expectancy: India's life expectancy at birth has increased from 59 years in 1980 to 69 years in 2020. This reflects improvements in health care, nutrition, and disease control.

c) *Education:* India has made significant progress in expanding access to education, particularly in terms of primary and secondary schooling. The adult literacy rate has increased from 52% in 1981 to 74% in 2020.

d) Standard of Living: India's standard of living, as measured by gross national income (GNI) per capita, has also improved over time, although it remains relatively low compared to other countries. In 2020, India's GNI per capita was estimated at $1,910.

e) Regional Disparities: There are significant regional disparities in HDI across India, with some states, such as Kerala and Goa, having higher HDI values than others, such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These disparities reflect differences in income, education, and health outcomes across different regions.

The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IDHI) is an additional indicator introduced in the Human Development Report in 2010. It takes into account inequality as the fourth dimension alongside the three dimensions used in HDI measurement. It indicates the loss in HDI due to inequality. It takes into account not only the average achievements of a country or region in health, education and income, but also those achievements are distributed among its population by 'discounting each dimension's average value according to the level of inequality'. The approach is based on the distribution-sensitive class of composite indices proposed by Foster, Lopez-Calva, and Szekely (2005), which draws on the Atkinson (1970) family of inequality measures. It is computed as the geometric mean of dimension indices adjusted for inequality. The inequality in each dimension is estimated by the Atkinson

inequality measure, which is based on the assumption that a society has a certain level of an aversion to inequality. While the HDI can be viewed as an index of average achievements in human development dimensions, the IHDI is the level of human development when the distribution of achievements across people in the society is accounted for. The IHDI will be equal to the HDI when there is no inequality but falls below the HDI as inequality rises. The difference between the HDI and IHDI, expressed as a percentage of the HDI, indicates the loss n human development due to inequality.

Overall, the HDI provides a useful tool for assessing human development in India and for comparing its performance with other countries. While India has made significant progress in expanding access to education and improving health outcomes, it still faces challenges in ensuring equitable access to opportunities and outcomes, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

2. World Happiness Report: The World Happiness Report is an annual publication that ranks countries based in self-reported measures of well-being, such as life satisfaction, happiness, and freedom. Countries are rank based on several factors such as real GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices. The World Happiness Index is based on two key ideas- happiness or life evaluation measured through opinion surveys and identifying key elements that determine well-being and life evaluation across countries. India ranks 126th out of 143 nations in the World Happiness Report 2024 and ranked behind Pakistan, Palestine and Niger which is relatively low on this index, reflecting challenges such as poverty, inequality, and social unrest. This report is produced by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a global initiative for the United Nations. The ranking is based on data from the Gallup World Poll, which surveys individuals in over 150 countries on various aspects of their lives, including their levels of happiness and well-being.

Here are some key data points on the World Happiness Index:
a. Top-ranked Countries: The 2024 World Happiness Report ranks Finland as the happiest country in the world, followed by Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, and the Netherlands. Afghanistan was ranked the unhappiest nation, followed closely by Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe respectively.

b. India's Rank: India ranks 126th out of 143 countries in the 2024 World Happiness Report, reflecting challenges such as poverty, inequality, and social unrest. It even lacks behind neighbouring nations like Nepal, China, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Factors such as marital status, social engagement and physical health also influence life satisfaction among older Indians. Education level and social caste also play significant roles, with those with higher education and higher social castes reporting greater life satisfaction

c. Factors Affecting Happiness: The World Happiness Report takes into account a number of factors that are associated with happiness and well-being, including income, social support, freedom, trust, and healthy life expectancy.

d. Regional Patterns: The report also highlights regional patterns in happiness and well-being, showing that the happiest countries are typically those in the Nordic region, while the least happy countries are in Africa and South Asia.
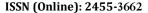
The World Happiness Report provides valuable insights into the well-being of individuals and societies, and has helped to raise awareness about the importance of happiness and well-being in policymaking and development. By ranking countries based on self-reported measures of happiness and well-being, the report offers a unique perspective on the quality of life in different countries and regions, and provides a framework for policymakers to identify areas for improvement.

However, the World Happiness Report has received some criticism over the years, with some researchers questioning its methodology and the validity of its findings. It has been criticized that the report relies on self-reported measures of happiness and well-being, which some researchers argue subjective and susceptible to bias. Critics argue that self-reported measures of happiness are influenced by cultural and social factors, and may not accurately reflect actual levels of happiness and well-being. The report also takes into account the limited number of factors that are associated with happiness and well-being, such as income, social support, and healthy life expectancy. Critics argue that other factors, such as social inequality, political stability, and environmental quality, should also be taken into account.

Despite these criticisms, the World Happiness Report remains a valuable resource for policy makers and researchers, providing important insights into the state of happiness and well-being across the world.

3. Mercer's Quality of Life Rankings: Mercer's Quality of Life Rankings is an annual study conducted by the Global consulting firm Mercer. The study provides a ranking of the quality of living in cities around the world, based on 39 factors that are deemed important for determining the quality of living. The study uses data from variety of sources, including government agencies, international organizations, and in-house research, to evaluate the living conditions in each city. The study is intended to help multinational companies and organizations determine the compensation and benefits they should offer their employees in different locations, as well as to provide information to individuals and families who are considering a move to new city.

New York is used as the base city in comparing the factors taken into account for the global ranking. Data was collected from 241 countries across 5 continents. Mercer bases its annual global ranking of cities on 'data on quality of living for employees sent to work abroad'. Therefore, Mercer's primary audience appears to be companies that operate and invest internationally and employees arranging compensation when working abroad. Mercer states that

"quality of life" is subject to personal circumstances (e.g., health). The index is categorized into 10 where top 5 represents ¾ of total weight – political and social environment, medical and health considerations, public services and transport, consumer goods, recreation, socio-cultural environment, natural environment, housing, economic environment and schools and education.

The report evaluates just short of 450 cities worldwide based on 39 criteria, on a scale of 0 to 10 (low to high). The latest edition of Mercer's Quality of Living Rankings, published in 2023, ranks Vienna, Austria as the city with the highest quality of living globally, followed by Zurich, Switzerland and Auckland, New Zealand. Places with lower quality of living include several African cities- N'Djamena (Chad), Bangui (Central African Republic) and Khartoum (Sudan). The highest-ranked city in India is Mumbai, which was placed at 143rd globally. While other cities like Delhi (162nd), Kolkata at 163rd, Hyderabad at 140th are worth noting that the ranking in India are generally lower compared to cities in other countries, reflecting the ongoing challenges facing the country in terms of air pollution, traffic congestion, safety, and other factors that can impact the quality of life. However, it is worth noting that India has made significant progress in recent years in improving the quality of life in its cities, particularly in areas such as healthcare, education, and access to technology and communications.

4. The Economist Intelligence Unit's Livability Ranking: This is an annual study that provides a ranking of the most livable cities in the world. The study evaluates cities based on five categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure. Each category is further divided into several sub-indicators, and the cities are ranked based on the overall score they receive across these categories.

The study uses data from a variety of sources, including government agencies, international organizations, and in-house research, to evaluate the living conditions in each city. The study is intended to help individuals, companies, and organizations make informed decisions about where to live, work, or invest.
In the latest editions of the study, published in 2023, Vienna, Austria was ranked as the city with the highest quality if living globally, followed by Auckland, New Zealand, Melbourne Australia and Vancouver, Canada. The Highest ranked city in India was Hyderabad, which was placed at 116th globally.

REVIEW OF EVIDENCES
A study by the International Institute for Population Studies (IIPS) found that the overall quality of life in India has improved since 1990, with health, education and economic outcomes showing significant improvements. The study found that overall, India is making progress towards improving quality of life. It reported that access to health care and education had improved, poverty had decreased, and life expectancy was on the rise. However, it also highlighted areas where more effort is needed such as reducing inequality and tackling environment degradation.
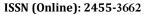
The World Banks also conducted studies on impact of public services on poverty and inequality in India. One of the most recent studies found that economic growth can reduce poverty levels in rural areas across all Indian states. Additionally, improved access to public services like health care, education and infrastructure can help reduce inequalities between urban and rural populations in India. The World Bank recommends targeting interventions like agriculture productivity, access to finance, and improved public services such as healthcare and education. Additionally, many states have implemented programs that provide social assistance or support for vulnerable populations such as the elderly and disabled. Finally, some states have implemented economic strategies that focus on reducing income disparities between urban and rural populations.

One research paper that examines the QoL index in India is titled, 'Quality of Life: A study on Rural India' by Dr. Shikha Gupta and published in the International Journal of Population, Environment and Sustainable Development in 2017. The study uses primary data from field surveys conducted in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh to analyze various components such as Housing conditions, sanitation facilities, access to resources and other aspects that impact quality of life. The study found that access to healthcare, education and employment had improved in recent years. Despite this progress, there were still areas where improvement is needed such as reducing poverty and inequality, promoting gender equality and tackling environmental degradation. The study also highlighted the need for better infrastructure development, increased access to renewable energy sources and improved wildlife habitats. The study concludes that the overall quality of life for rural population has improved over time but still remains low compared to urban populations.

Also, a study by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, titled 'Quality of Life in Urban India: A Perceptual Study' found that economic indicators such as per capita income, employment rate and inflation have significant impact on quality of life in India. The study aimed to assess the quality of life of people living in urban areas of India, with a focus on the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Bangalore.

The study was conducted through survey of 4000 individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds. The study found that overall, the quality of life in urban India is perceived to be moderate. However, there were significant variations in quality of life across different socio-economic groups. Some key findings of the study were:
- Basic amenities such as water supply, sanitation and waste management were found to be inadequate in many urban areas.
- Pollution, traffic congestion and noise were major concerns for people living in cities.
- There were significant variations in the quality of life across socio-economic groups, with people from lower

socio-economic backgrounds facing more challenges in accessing basic services and amenities.

- The study highlighted the need for better governance and planning to improve the quality of life in urban India.

Another study by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) examined various factors such as health care expenditure, education spending and access to resources which significantly influence quality of life. While CMIE has conducted research on a wide range of economic issues, including poverty, employment and income distribution, it does not typically focus specifically on the quality of life in India. However, CMIE does regularly collect and analyze data on variety of socio-economic indicators that are relevant to assessing the quality of life in India. One such indicator is the Consumer Pyramids Household Survey, which is conducted by the CMIE and is one of the largest household surveys in India. The survey covers a wide range of topics, including household income, consumption, assets and liabilities as well as health, education and employment. The survey data can be used to generate insights into the quality of life of households in India. For example, the data can be used to assess the extent to which households, have access to basic services and amenities such as electricity, clean water and sanitation. It can also analyze household expenditure patterns and to identify areas where households may be facing financial constraints that could impact their quality of life.

A study by the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015-2016 found that health indicators such as nutrition, child mortality rate and access to healthcare have a positive impact to healthcare have positive impact on quality of life in India. While the NFHS primarily focuses on health-related indicators, it also provides valuable data on socio-economic and demographic factors that are relevant to assessing the quality of life of people in India. For example, the survey includes information on household assets, including housing, vehicles and household appliances. The survey also includes information on education, employment and income which are important indicators of socio-economic well-being and can impact the quality of life of individuals and households. In addition, the survey includes information on health-related quality of life indicators such as prevalence of chronic diseases, nutritional status, and access to healthcare services. Overall, the NFHS provides a comprehensive picture of the health and socio-economic conditions of households in India and can serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders who are interested in improving the quality of life of people in the country.

'A Comparative Study of Quality of Life in Kerela and Tamil Nadu' was conducted by researchers from the Department of Economics at St. Thomas College, Thrissur, Kerela. The study used data from National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) and the Human Development Report (HDR) to compare various indicators of quality of life in the two states. The study found that overall, Kerala performed better than Tamil Nadu in terms of most indicators of quality of life, such as life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy rates, access to safe drinking water and access to healthcare. Kerala also had a higher Human Development Index (HDI) compared to Tamil Nadu. However, Tamil Nadu performed better in some areas such as access to electricity, sanitation facilities and gender equality, as measured by the Gender Development Index (GDI). Overall, while there might be variations in the specific indicators used in measuring quality of life indicators used, the available evidence suggests that Kerala generally performs better than Tamil Nadu in terms of most Indicators of quality of life. However, both states are known for their relatively high levels of human development compared to other states in India.

CONCLUSION

The concept of QoL index encompasses physical and economic improvements as well as social, cultural, spiritual and political ideas. The review of evidences provides valuable insights into the quality of life and can serve as useful resource for policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders

REFERENCES

1. Mukherjee, S (2022). Physical Quality of Life: Analysing State Wise Level of Development in India. Indian Journal of Applied Research, Vol-10.
2. Gopa Kumar, R. (2020),'Quality of life: Comparative Study of Kerela and Tamil Nadu, Population Dynamics in Contemporary South Asia, Springer, 978-981-15-1667-2
3. Morris, D. (1976), 'A physical quality of life index' In The United States and world development agenda (pp. 147–171). Washington: Overseas Development Council.
4. United Nations Development Report (UNDP) (2022-23). Human Development Report.Human Development Report Office, UNDP, New York.
5. United Nations , The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) World Happiness Report 2024
6. Gallup. (2024) . World Happiness Report. Retrieved from https://www.gallup.com.
7. Mercer's Quality of Living City Ranking 2023. Retrieved from https://www.mercer.com.
8. The Economist Intelligence Units(EIU) (2023). The Global Liveability Index Report 2023
9. National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015-2016 Government of India