

Assessing Quality of Life in the City of Amman, Jordan

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ABSTRACT

Assessing quality of life can be used as a foundation for drafting future urban planning policies. This paper first reviews the literature on quality of life and then examines the causal relationships between the quality of life and other related variables. Such variables can include neighborhood satisfaction, social services, environmental assessment and demographic attributes. The study adopts quantitative method employing a cross-sectional survey to achieve its objectives. Findings reveal that neighborhood satisfaction, social services and environmental assessment have a significant impact on quality of life. Income and education levels are correlated significantly with quality of life. This study recommends planning organizations to build programs for quality of life to reach suitable strategies for better quality of life.

Keywords: *Quality of life; Urban policies; Satisfaction; Amman; Jordan.*

INTRODUCTION

Quality of life does not fall into one discipline only. Planners (e.g. Kaklauskas et al. 2018; Aroca et al. 2017; Alnsour, 2016; Zagha, 2003), geographers (Darkey & Visagie, 2013) and management scholars (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017) have all argued the issue of quality of life. Therefore, the concept of quality of life can relatively vary from one author to another. Some authors employ it in its subjective aspect of well-being happiness, life satisfaction, which depends basically on personal perception. Others have focused on the objective aspect of measurable living conditions. Others dealt with personal characteristics in evaluating environmental attributes for exploring patterns of quality of life among people with different attributes. In the same vein, Jeffres and Dobos (1995) suggested that quality of life involves two distinct concepts. The first concept, perceived quality of life, is the extent to which individuals satisfied with life in terms of family life, friends, health, partner and oneself (Lee, 2008). The second concept refers to quality of life in the context of social environment, which is the extent to which individuals satisfied with life in terms of housing, education services, health services, safety and security, roads and transport (Lee, 2008). Kaklauskas et al. (2018) propose that quality of life can be seen in terms of the degree to which the necessary conditions for happiness in a given

society or region have been obtained. It can be concluded that quality of life consists of health, personal development, physical environment, natural resources, and security.

According to Zagha (2003) quality of life, as a complex topic, consists of different dimensions. Therefore, this paper does not focus on perceived quality of life including family life, friends, health, partner and oneself, since subjective quality of life concerns with the psychological state of life satisfaction rather than by objective conditions of physical, social, and economic settings. The paper focuses on quality of life in the context of social environment in terms of housing standards, education services, health services, safety and security, roads and transport. Evaluation of broad domain of social environment of quality of life illustrates the ability of planning authorities in managing the urban development process (Alnsour, 2016). Planning organizations are concerned with using planning standards to ensure proper quality of life. Despite the importance of people's satisfaction with social environment of quality of life, this topic has been relatively less developed or investigated in Jordan. This has been criticized in the works of Alnsour and Meaton (2014).

At present, Jordan meets huge challenges in terms of global markets, economic changes, technology boom, political conditions in the Middle East and lack of natural resources,

leading to greatly reshaping quality of life of people. These challenges are also associated with rapid urban growth and increase demand for public services, rising living costs, housing and job opportunities. All of these challenges require alleviating poverty, providing adequate public services, enhancing partnership between the public sector and the private sector, improving infrastructure and increasing job opportunities in order to improve quality of life.

Due to the concentration of services, businesses and job opportunities in Amman, as the capital city of Jordan, about 43% of Jordan population live in the city (Department of Statistics, 2016), causing so many pressures and great demand for services. Despite Jordanian government had prepared development plans to meet such challenges, economic and financial conditions reduce governmental capabilities. Therefore, there is a need to assess quality of life in the city of Amman. According to Ali et al. (2009) many research on quality of life in Amman, which implemented by universities, greater municipalities and research centers or by single researchers about quality of life, does not pay attention the actual existing. This leads government to design strategies on information that do not express reality (Ali et al. 2009).

The importance of this study comes from presenting a new perception of quality of life in Amman, which may enhance the process of decision making in relation to quality of life. It analyzes the process of measurement of quality of life and provides opportunities for further research to take place in Jordan. Assessing quality of life based on empirical research can help to determine development priorities and appropriate strategies to improve quality of life in the city.

ASSESSING QUALITY OF LIFE

As discussed earlier, quality of life measurement can be divided into objective and subjective perspectives. Objective measurement tends to use quantitative statistics rather than subjective perceptions of individuals (Zagha, 2003). While objective indicators have higher reliability and lower validity, subjective indicators tend to have lower reliability and higher validity (Lee, 2008).

Lee (2008) classifies quality of life into six broad areas including physical domain, psychological domain, level of independence, social relationships, environment, and spiritual domain. Zagha (2003) divided quality of life into four areas including accessibility to facilities, accessibility to open

spaces, accessibility to public transport and affordability. In 1999, the World Health Organization (WHO) designed a set of measurement instruments. WHO tends to use personal subjective perception to measure quality of life, which relates to health issues and enables organizations to mirror their own cultural values. Such measurement includes physical health, psychological state, independence level, system of social relations, individuals' beliefs and the correlation of these to salient environmental features (WHO, 1999). It can be argued that these different criteria can enable WHO to do the necessary comparisons among people and cultures. However, the way in which WHO evaluates quality of life is mainly concentrates on health issues more than living environmental quality. This is also justified tending to focus on assessing social environment of quality of life.

“There is no single correct approach to measure quality of life” (Ali et al. 2009, p.430). Many research tends to measure quality of life based on satisfaction (Marans, 2003; Bonaiuto et al. 2003; Seik, 2000). Dekker et al. (2011) argue that satisfaction is the phase in which a person's needs are encountered. Dwelling satisfaction is a key element when evaluating quality of life and a source of stability in both urban and rural areas (Alnsour & Hyasat, 2016). Kaklauskas et al. (2018) discuss that the term quality of life is concerned with the cultural and social structure. Kaklauskas et al. (2018) suggested that social attributes such as unemployment, poverty and crime rates are greatly influence people judgments concerning their lives.

Satisfaction can be considered a more realistic for decision makers, and the researchers attempted to create implications to improve managing quality of life (Alnsour, 2016). Therefore, satisfaction is a more suitable instrument to improve the performance of public policy that deals with quality of life.

Alnsour & Hyasat (2016) argue that the characteristics of individuals should be taken into account when assessing quality of environment. Understanding people's characteristics offers a clear domain of a level of variation among people who live in the same place. Studies have proved that place has an impact on individuals' satisfaction with their built environment. Alnsour & Meaton (2014) considered life satisfaction as the overall satisfaction with different spatial dimensions. Modelling such satisfaction requires evaluating the perception and behavior of people who live in specific place, based on a hierarchical

system and a clear division between objective and subjective indicators. Marans and Couper (2000) evaluated the residential satisfaction using this model which distinguishes between four levels including house, district, city and community. They found that satisfaction level can vary from one level to another. It can be concluded that assessing quality of life of any place cannot be captured through a single measure. While the subjective measures mirror the lives of people in the place, the objective conditions of the place do not convey the true place quality.

Literature reveals that a number of studies which examined objective-subjective relationships at levels of dwelling or community are limited. Research concentrating on quality of life in urban areas provide an opportunity to examine such relationships. Such studies contribute to knowledge by comprehensive understanding of quality of life in urban areas and the way in

which it can be assessed. However, individuals' perspective reflects their views and evaluations of place attributes that could be influenced by their needs, desires, characteristics and experiences. Therefore, individuals' assessment of environmental attributes are accompanied by their attributes themselves.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

It was argued extensively the elements of quality of life in the previous section. Fig. 1 shows that quality of life is influenced by several variables including neighborhood satisfaction, social services, environmental assessment, and demographic attributes. In this context, urban researchers often use a five point scale to assess the variables of quality of life. The scale consists of five categories, whereby 1 means very dissatisfied, 2: dissatisfied, 3: neutral, 4: satisfied and 5: very satisfied.

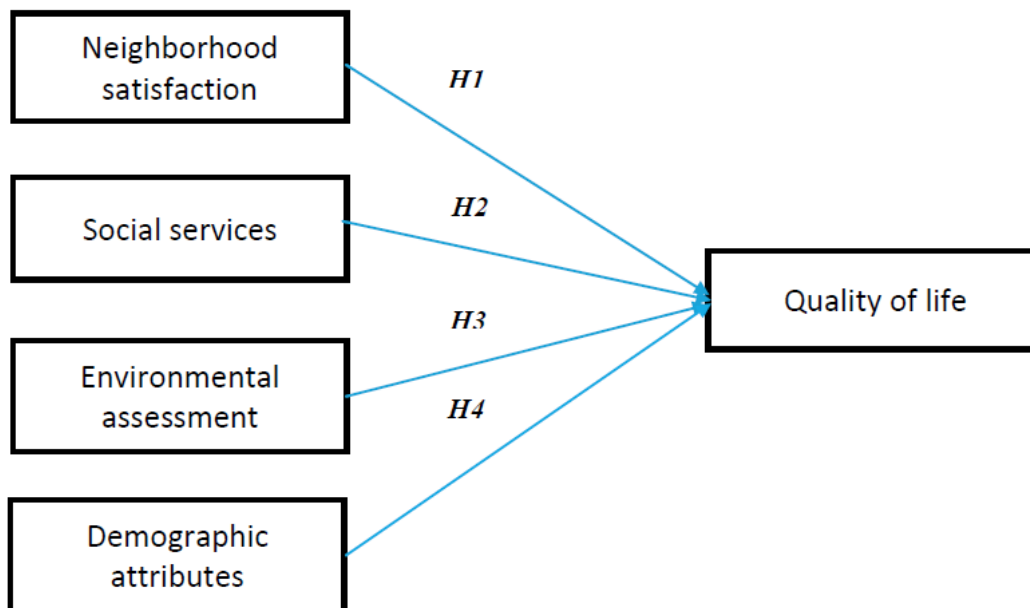


Fig1. Conceptual model

According to Kahneman et al. [1999, p. x] assessment of people of their quality of life is greatly influenced by satisfaction with neighborhood. Satisfaction with neighborhood refers to degree of individuals' satisfaction with existence social services (Alnsour & Hyasat, 2016). Social services involve waste removal services, hospitals and health centers, crime rates, poverty, education facilities, shopping centers, transport services, children's playgrounds, parking, and worship centers (Alnsour, 2014). Therefore, the first hypothesis, in this study, is that social services has a direct impact on quality of life.

According to Spain (1988) neighborhood condition refers to physical services which comprise of

transport network, electricity, water supply, drainage and sewerage networks (Alnsour, 2014). Therefore, the second hypothesis, in this study, is that satisfaction with neighborhood condition has a direct impact on quality of life.

Spain (1988) argues that quality of life is by influenced by feelings of dwellers concerning noise, pollution, green areas, maintenance of environment. These variables can labelled as environmental assessment. Therefore, the third hypothesis, in this study, is that environmental assessment has a direct impact on quality of life.

Fernandez and Kulik (1981) argued the importance of consideration of the demographic characteristics

for people when assessing quality of life. Demographic factors include, gender of household, marriage status, age, education level, type of job and income level. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is that demographic attributes have a direct relationship with quality of life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative (positivistic) paradigm to achieve its objectives. A quantitative method generally leads to utilize the deductive approach with specific research methodologies such as longitudinal studies, cross-sectional studies and surveys. There are several justifications to use this approach, which can be summarized as follows:

- The nature of research questions and objectives.
- The research topic.
- Time available to the researcher.

A questionnaire survey was used to collect data. Research population consists of residents of Amman. According to Department of Statistics (2016) the number of population who live in Amman city is accounted for 4.119.500. Amman was targeted as the biggest city in Jordan in terms of a number of population and housing units. According to Sekaran & Bougie (2016, p. 241) the appropriate sample size of population consists of one million or more is 384 observations. As it is difficult to investigate whole areas and population in Amman in terms of time, cost and effort, this study has chosen a convenience sample approach to achieve research objectives. A questionnaire was administrated personally by distributing it, face-to-face, into the respondents. The researcher has adopted a set of students to handle the questionnaire. Using social groups in collecting data is a common in urban and business research (Alnsour & Meaton, 2014). The response rate was 63%, where about one third of respondents

apologized to fill in the questionnaire because they did not like to take part in this study.

Descriptive statistics in terms of means, standard deviations and the normal distributions were used to describe variables of the study. Inferential statistics in terms of Chi-square and multiple regression analysis were adopted to meet research hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings reveal that the percent of male and female interviewees in this research were 58.4% and 41.6% respectively. The average of respondents' age is yield 46.7 years. Concerning education, most of the respondents (90.3%) were graduated from the universities (undergraduate) and the others had obtained less than undergraduate level. Findings show that 41.6% of respondents are married and 58.4% are singles. 47% of respondents are working in the private sector and 53% in the public sector. Income level is estimated at 1127JoD per month. As a result, findings reveal that there is a considerable variation among respondents in social characteristics.

Table 1 describes the study variables including the mean as a measure of central tendency, standard deviation as a measure to assess the distribution of points into the mean, skewness and kurtosis as measures to evaluate the normal distribution of variables and Cronbach's alpha (α -value) as a measure to assess the consistency of variables items. Findings reveal that all of variables subject to normal distribution, since the values of skewness ranged between -1 and 1 and the values of kurtosis ranged between -3 and 3. This is based on Hair et al. (1998). Findings show also that all of variables have passed and out striped the minimum level of Cronbach's alpha 0.60 as recommended by Hair et al. (1998). It can be concluded that these results allow conducting advanced statistical techniques such as multiple regression.

Table1. Descriptive statistics for study variables

Variables	Mean	S.D	Skewness	Kurtosis	α -value
Quality of life	3.58	1.023	0.524	1.419	0.812
Neighborhood satisfaction	3.20	1.325	-0.793	1.681	0.761
Social services	2.56	0.981	0.458	-0.921	0.830
Environmental assessment	3.47	0.998	0.678	-0.713	0.808

Multiple regression analysis was taken place in order to test research hypotheses. The total correlation between dependent and independent variables, as shown in table 2, is significant ($R=0.436$ $P<0.05$). R^2 is 0.396, which means that the independent variables included as predictors

in the model account for 39.6% of the variation in quality of life. The adjusted R^2 is very close to the value R^2 . The F -ratios 68.925, which is significant ($P<0.05$). Multicollinearity assessed through the tolerance values and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. However, VIF

illustrated no values that out striped the generally accepted maximum level of 10 and the tolerance values illustrated no values less than the maximum level of 0.2. Thus, no evidence was found for the existence of multicollinearity.

The results of multiple regression analysis, included in table 2, point out that the three independent variables including neighborhood satisfaction, social services and environmental assessment have a significant directly impact on the dependent variable which is quality of life.

Therefore, all hypotheses of this study are fully accepted. Findings of regression confirm most previous studies results (e.g. Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017; Liu et al. 2016; Alnsour, 2016; Darkey& Visagie, 2013; Naudé, 2009;Lee, 2008; Zagha, 2003;Jeffres and Dobos, 1995). Findings show, also, that the neighborhood satisfaction has a higher impact than other variables, with Beta value of 0.116 and t-value of 5.538, at significant level of (0.000 less than 0.05). Neighborhood satisfaction is extensively used in the previous research.

Table2. Regression analysis of research variables

Independent variables	Unstandarised coefficients		Standarised coefficients	t-value	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
Constant quality of life	0.774	0.113	-	6.849	0.000	-	-
Neighborhood satisfaction	0.072	0.013	0.187	5.538	0.000	0.536	1.812
Social services	0.057	0.024	0.238	2.375	0.002	0.713	1.579
Environmental assessment	0.121	0.063	0.116	1.920	0.023	0.426	1.813
R = 0.664							
R² = 0.440							
Adjusted R² = 0.437							
F = 71.412 Sig. 0.000							

Chi-Squire Test was conducted in order to examine the relationship between quality of life and the demographic characteristics for people including gender of household, marriage status, age, education level, type of job and income level. Table 3 shows that two variables of demographic factors have a significant relationship with quality of life including education level and income level. Other variables such as gender of household, marriage status, age and type of job have no relationship with quality of life.

correlated with quality of life. These results are important for policy makers, managers and planners in adopting urban policies that improve quality of life in Amman.

Table3. Results of Chi-squire Test

Variables	χ^2	Sig.
Gender	1.250	0.847
Marriage status	1.978	0.812
Age	2.047	0.753
Education level	46.27	0.000
Type of job	2.368	0.694
Income level	71.465	0.000

This study provides a comprehensive picture of quality of life to offer better understanding through considering all aspects that influence quality of life. Based on this understanding planning organizations should build programs for quality of life to reach suitable strategies and actions for better achieving the needs of quality of life.

Chi-Squire results confirm findings of previous research in which levels of education and income are the most important personnel factors that impact on evaluators when they assessing their environment (Fernandez and Kulik,1981; Alnsour & Hyasat, 2016)

Research on quality of life in Jordan is very limited. Therefore, further research should take into account other cities in Jordan, in particular, analyzing quality of life enable to understand people’s challenges, needs and priorities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It would appear that neighborhood satisfaction, social services and environmental assessment has a significant impact on quality of life. In addition, income and education levels are

I would like to thank Al-Balqa Applied University for its financial support to accomplish this research.

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Citation: Jamal Ahmad Alnsour, "Assessing Quality of Life in the City of Amman, Jordan", *Journal of Public Administration*, 2(3), 2020, pp. 36-41.

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