
QUALITY OF LIFE AS SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

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Abstract

Quality of life is a peculiar concept, owing to both its social perception and the economic one. An extremely large number of ideas related to the quality of life have been issued, debated upon, and put into practice in the course of time, but none of the established definitions are satisfactory. That situation prompts us to attain another approach to this most discussed and extremely controversial concept.

Keywords: quality, life, happiness

1. Introduction

Human life can be interpreted as the ultimate form of nature's 'conscience' on Earth, presuming the fight for adaptation, during two unique moments: birth and death [1-3].

The human individuals who get born live a unique and irreversible life with a cosmic time interval specific to each of them and eventually die, pass out of existence, when their 'transition energy' has got exhausted.

As far as the human individual is concerned, the life being lived, work, and love are considered by physician Alfred Adler to be the imperatives of one's transition through life, to whose attaining we dedicate parts of the human energy available for the transition that we go through from our birth and up to our death. [1-3].

Between these two unique and irreversible moments, the life of human individuals is a living human whole, whose sense functionality presumes specific entries, transformations (as internal real processes), and exits (in the form of either wanted or unwanted concrete results).

The balancing of each individual's existence and that of the human community as a whole features, on the one hand, what that human individual and the community gives and, on the other hand, what they get in their process of

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transition through life. Thus, in analyzing that balance, an essential condition is that each generation gives at least as much as it gets, as well as, upon progress being fundamental, each generation increasingly contributes to mankind's material and spiritual values. Life shows that, if generations do not make contributions to mankind's values and even destroy those future-dedicated assets, the transition through life is crisis-prone, leading to the worsening of humans' work conditions, impeding on the stability of human community.

Quality of life is an evaluative concept. As a result, it has a dual structure, based on the following two distinct components:

- state – the state of an individual's or a community's life, as a whole or as its various components, at a certain moment;
- a set of evaluative criteria (values) by which life is appreciated as good or bad.

As a concept, quality of life is a synthesis of these two elements. It is the result of evaluating well-being in view of human necessities, demands, aspirations, ideals.

Life comprises all human activities, from the basic, biological ones related to food, shelter, resting, to activities that pertain to family life, work, cultural life, knowledge, etc., as well as the conditions for these activities to take place – natural, economic, socio-political, cultural conditions.

Life is also the result of one's actions under certain, given circumstances. The quality of life depends, therefore, both on the individual's values, aspirations, orientations, skills, capabilities, as well as on the conditions under which that person lives.

2. Quality of life – source of happiness?

One cannot appraise the quality of life without finding an answer to a crucial question: 'What is life?' While it is highly probably that every human being would differently answers this question, the respondents can be divided into two main groups: those engaged in a pursuit of 'happiness' and those who seek their 'self-becoming'. If we consider happiness as the goal of one's life, then suffering is life's greatest enemy.

This situation compels us to permanently redefine the term 'happiness' throughout our life, in tracing the continuous evolution of our needs. The quests for prosperity, for wealth or social recognition are only variants of the same aspiration toward 'happiness'.

In Osho's opinion, "happiness has nothing to do with success, happiness has nothing to do with ambition, happiness has nothing to do with money, power, prestige. It is a totally different dimension. Happiness has something to do with your consciousness, not with your character". [4]

In fact, as a concept, quality of life re-addresses, from another perspective, the concept of happiness, which in the ancient times has been a major concern for Philosophy. Most surely, if we ask ourselves about the most important aspect of our life, the answer will be our happiness or well-being, which has eventually

got conceptualized as quality of life. The two concepts differ from each other, in as far as their content is concerned; whereas happiness refers to the subjective, inner state of the human being, which results from one's living his own life, quality of life refers to what triggers that happiness state, i.e., to the multiple real characteristics of one's life that account for both its objective underpinning, as well as for the subjective way in which each human being evaluates his or her own life in terms of satisfaction with it, happiness, and fulfilment [1, 3, 5].

Sociologists consider that happiness depends on one's emotional state and on the quality of that person's life.

One needs to keep positive, with individuals wanting to assert themselves, to attain inner peace, to aspire toward balance, harmony, while not allowing certain circumstances to affect the efforts to transgress crises, by trying to find real solutions and act accordingly. Thus, happiness represents something dynamic, in a continuous movement, something that we can obtain being active people and not meditating.

One can talk that quality of life depends on the individual happiness, is related to resources (social status, income, etc.) and the environment (one's society, friends, family), as well as to technological progress. Each individual focuses on a certain significance of happiness (granted by the degree of quality of life that has attained), which that person, consciously or not, searches for.

Kant considers happiness to be an ideal. However, he did not mean that is an unattainable ideal, but that we are rather not able to judge what each human being should do in order to be happy [1, 3].

Each person has his or her own recipe for happiness. There are people who are happy with the wealth that they accumulated in the course of time; others consider that happiness is to have friends, being healthy, being appreciated and honoured. Some other humans are happy when they know that they are loved by someone; they are made happy by the mere thought that their loved one exists somewhere in the world and breathes the same air. There are also people who 'fabricate' their own personal paradise, in which they feel happy.

Honoré de Balzac deemed that happiness may unfortunately appear absolute. Some other people believe that it is within reach and can be touched. These people are able to believe that because there are approaches to happiness as the emotional state of unbounded joy, exaltation, coming to terms with oneself, and beatitude [1, 3]. In some people's opinion, to be happy means to love. Indeed, to love is the first and foremost of all forms of happiness, with being loved coming second place.

Can we associate love with happiness? Yes, we can! As long as the one who loves make not the mistake to love in a devastating delirium of possession, which, ultimately, leads to some of the most atrocious, unbearable sufferings.

Another approach to happiness states that happiness tells us that being happy means to obtain what we desire [1, 3]. That might be the very case, but it might as well not be at all! So, what does happiness reside in? It consists of the effort to obtain what we have desired.

There are many moments of happiness in a human's life. One can compare happiness to some soap bubbles, each of these accounting for a moment of happiness. Our life is, nevertheless, full of such soap bubbles. All we need to do is to carefully store them in the hidden drawer of our subconscious and to think that, even after a moment of deep suffering, comes a moment of great happiness. There is a permanent balance between these two aspects. Some people say that misfortune is immense and gratuitous, and that happiness only is short and costly.

There are individuals who claim that happiness is a rare bird, and so it is, not only because it is unique in the world, but also because it is up to each of us to know how to grasp it.

Approaches to happiness vary by the role that we allot to others in our getting happy.

No one can turn happy without fighting. There does not exist any solitary happiness.

If we attempt to define the quality of life, its simplest and clearest definition might be that of "quality of life as referential of how valuable our life is to us" [5]. The concept has a dual structure, grounded in the life conditions and in a set of assessing criteria (values). In this respect, one must take into account not only the simple improving of life conditions, but also the correlation of that improving with the dynamics of the aspirations horizon.

Quality of life is a most complex phenomenon, especially because its problematics are tightly knit to society's level of development at a given moment, as well as to the way each individual appraises well-being, according to his or her level of aspirations and personal values. Quality of life is fairly objective, as it cannot be attained but within certain parameters. As Science and technique have advanced, the parameters taken into account (the natural environment, the social framework, education, health services, the political and the economic contexts, etc.) have changed too, which granted to life's quality a social-historical character. One can consider, therefore, the quality of life as being made of all of the environment characteristics and circumstances which care satisfy human needs on four distinct levels: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual

Quality of life may be defined in various ways and may hold various significances for each individual. These definitions range from vague phrasings, such as 'what everybody desires to be' or 'the ability to live a normal life' to complex and sophisticated pronouncements that illuminate one aspect or another, such as [1-8]:

1. The reaching of one's individual goals: "individuals' perceptions of their social situations in the context of cultural value systems and depending on their needs, standards and aspirations" (World Health Organization).
2. The attaining of 'happiness' or of 'satisfaction': increasing the social utility, reflected as a specific preference for the health status, allow improvements of the morbidity and mortality levels, which are expressed through a single weighted index – standardized years of life, according to quality of life; or

the setting of a general context, as in the following definition: the degree to which a person may benefit from the important opportunities of his or her life [1].

These possibilities are the result of the opportunities and limitations that each individual faces and they reflect the interaction between that person and natural and social environment factors. We need to consider the existence of limitations, in the sense that certain categories of individuals may feel the content of the opportunities granted to them, in the case of a lower-quality environment. This is the example of people admitted to care institutes, who may consider their quality of life satisfactory because they have never had the experience of another environment or are not able to make any changes in their life. Therefore, the quality of life needs to include by all means the quality of the environment in which the individual lives.

A quality environment is the one that meets the following conditions [1, 3, 6-9]:

- offers opportunities for the basic needs to be met (food, shelter, security, social contacts);
- offers a number of opportunities that accommodate an individual's potential;
- gives to an individual the opportunity to control and chose the environment.

The quality of life may be assessed in various socio-economic, historic and political contexts, whereas it differs from one age to another, and from one country to another. For example, in the socialist societies, the individual aspirations were limited by a series of socio-political reasons, ruled by the principle of social equality, stifling the individual's motivation to make progress and score performance [1, 3]

Conversely, the capitalist society has efficiently promoted and stimulated the individualist economic motivation, showing that the economic resources are related to individual performance, gradually leading to an increase of individuals' life quality and, implicitly, of society as a whole. So, the quality of life suggests that it is an evolutionary concept and that it comprises the assessment of conditions that may be better or worse or that may be considered satisfactory enough for an individual attaining normal well-being.

In order to develop under optimal conditions, life necessitates resources, which are the totality of items used in the production of material and spiritual goods, to be found by the individual in his or her life environment and used in the building up of one's own life. There exist economic, natural, socio-cultural, and personal resources:

- The economic resources comprise the financial means available to the individual, as well as the goods and services that he can apply to.
- The natural resources comprise all the components of the natural background that we may enjoy and benefit from, in order to relax and restore our work force.
- The socio-cultural resources consist of society's capacity to create new jobs, establish new schools and universities, provide proper social security

for all of the citizens; they also consist of society's capability to stimulate the cultural activities of the youth, by diversifying the cultural institutions: museums, concert halls, theatre and cinema halls, radio and television programs, media, Internet access, etc.

- The personal resources comprise each individual's physical, psychic, intellectual abilities, at a given moment, which are instrumental in building our own life. These resources may be hereditary, as well as acquired ones, courtesy of our native capabilities and the effort that we make to control the environment and challenge ourselves. These resources can be pursued and put to good use or they may keep undiscovered and unused.

In this context, it is very important to identify the aspects that negatively affect our life, eliminate them and favour those natural and social environment characteristics that may propitiously influence our life.

3. Conclusions

Our life is influenced by our aspirations, desires, and the direction in which we channel them, as well as by the effort that we make in order to attain that – in a nutshell, by our wisdom. Each individual's wisdom, in choosing the course of his or her life, as well as that person's skills in following that course, under existing conditions, while using the existing resources, represents an essential factor of quality of life. Happiness, as well as unhappiness, depends on the attitude of each of us, the way we build our life, regardless the domains of life (family, spare time, education, involvement in social life, etc.).

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