

ANALYSIS OF SUBJECTIVE INDICATORS OF QUALITY OF LIFE IN MAKURDI TOWN OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Quality of life measurements are an appropriate means for achieving an understanding of Human needs. This study analyses the quality of life in Makurdi town of Benue state, Nigeria using subjective indices. A sample of 400 respondents was determined based on Taro Yamane formula; and questionnaires were administered on them. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. The result of the study shows that demographically, males and people within the age group of 31-40years and educated people dominated the study area. The result of the study shows that only 1% of the respondents are currently on top of the ladder of quality of life, enjoying the best possible life in the study area. About 74% of the respondent occupied step 5 below. This implies that majority of the people in the study area are currently far from desired quality of life. The study also reveals that in the next five years, about 47% of the people hope to be between steps 6-10 on the quality of life ladder in the study area. This shows an increase of 21% when compare with the current situation in the same range. However, the best possible quality of life in the next five years will remain constant with only 1%. The study reveals that the general well-being of people in Makurdi town on the basis of their experiences of positive, good, pleasant, happiness, joyfulness and contentment is low hence majority of the people have no such experiences but rather the opposite which include negative, bad, unpleasant, sad, angry and discontent. It therefore means that majority of the residents of Makurdi town are in the lower levels on the ladder of quality of life. This study recommends deliberate effort by government and NGOs to provide the basic social amenities and social security packages that will improve people's quality of life in the town.

Keywords: subjective indicators, Quality of life, Development, Makurdi town

Introduction

Quality of life (QoL) is defined as the general well-being of people and societies (Business Dictionary.Com, 2015). It is often equated to “standard of living” but the two do not necessarily mean the same. A standard of living merely is the evaluation of the wealth and employment status of a person in a society though both are factors to determine quality of life. A person's environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation, social well-being, freedom, human rights and happiness also are significant indicators of quality of life (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts, 2009). Many social psychologists also consider quality of life to be a

major factor that influences some people's decisions to commit suicide (Qin; Agerbo; Mortensen, 2003).

Many local, national and international organizations conduct surveys and psychological tests to determine an individual or society's life quality for different purposes. Some organizations like the World Bank define quality of life in terms of neo-liberal policies targeted at reducing world poverty. *Monocles* magazine, OECD and the economist unit of CIA defines quality of life in terms of employment opportunities. In international development, quality of life is used to broaden the analysis of a society's standard of living. Different perspectives, philosophies and ideologies, or theories determine the methodologies to be used in measurement of QoL.

Whatever perspective or philosophy used, determining the level of happiness of a person is difficult to quantify. This difficulty lies in the fact that happiness is individually perceived. The aggregation of several people's level of happiness in order to generalize and make decisions is a difficult task. For this reason many organizations would rather depend on tried-and-tested quantitative instruments in assessing QoL. One popular example is the Human Development Index used by the United Nations Development Programme. Behavioral psychologists and urban planners' measure perception especially in public space based on past experience called phenomenality to links activity in a space or use of space to perception of that space (Dikshit, 2006; Proshansky, Ittelson and Rivlin, 1961; Dikshit, 2006).

Studies of quality of life establishes a link between local authorities and citizens for constructive interaction leading to interpretation of and discussion on key issues affecting people's lives (Shoeibi, Amraii, Mafakheri, Karimi, Vandi, 2015). Results of studies on quality of life can be used to assess previous events (such as political strategies or planning policies) as well as design future planning policies that are targeted to achieving the objectives of development plans (Lee, 2008: 1207; Ahmadvand et al., 2012). Thus, quality of life as a basic principle has always received attention from planner and managers of development (Ghalibaf et al., 2011: 34). Urban planners hold the view that when activity in public space can be measured, it forms a basis for evaluation and design of such places (Carmona, Heath, Oc and Tiesdall, 2003; Lynch, 1960, Alexander et al. 1977; Gehl 1998 and Appleyard 1981). Thus planning for any development of urban areas required measurement and evaluation of the residents' QoL first.

A good evaluation of basic requirements for people's QoL is a road map for development of healthy communities. For many urban areas in developing countries, the challenge posed by rapid urbanization is the provision of infrastructural facilities which are essential for high quality of life. Many urban areas in developing countries lack these basic facilities and the QoL in them have not been empirically ascertained. This study analyses the QoL of residents of Makurdi town, Benue state, Nigeria using subjective indices of happiness, joyfulness, pleasant, goodness among others. According to Ibrahim and Chung (2003), the subjective aspects of QoL are much more appropriate than objective ones for planning and policy-making since subjective aspects elicit acceptable feedback.

STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

Makurdi town is one of the cities in Nigeria and is located between latitude 7⁰44'N and 7⁰55'N and longitude 8⁰20'E and 8⁰40'E (fig. 1). Makurdi town is situated along the coast of the River Benue with a landmass covering 16km² radius. The climatic condition in Makurdi is influenced by two air masses: the warm, moist south westerly air mass, and the warm, dry northeasterly air mass. The southwesterly air mass is a rain-bearing wind that brings about rainfall from the months of May to October. The dry northeasterly air mass blows over the region from November to April, thereby bringing about seasonal dryness. The annual rainfall in Makurdi is between 1,200-1,500mm (Adamgbe and Ujoh, 2012). Temperature in the study area is generally high throughout the year, with February and March being the hottest months. Temperature in Makurdi varies from a daily of 22.5°C and a maximum of 40°C (Ologunorisa and Tersoo, 2006). The population of Makurdi is 300,377 with a density of 370 per km² (NPC, 2007). The population comprises a combination of various ethnic groups majorly the Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Igbo, and Hausa. Civil service, commerce, fishing and small scale farming are the prominent activities in the town. These activities provide employment and livelihood for many families.

This study is exploratory in nature. The sample size of 400 was determined using Taro Yamane formula. Data was gathered using questionnaires. The questionnaires was designed by the researcher using the 5-point Likert scale from very low (point 1) to very high (point 5), and comprised two main sections. The first part encompasses the personal characteristics of the participants such as age, gender, marital status, education, and occupation, and the second section incorporates various aspects of quality of life (including indices such as positive, good, happiness, joyful, pleasant and contentment among others). The data collected were processed using descriptive statistic

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The specific socio-demographic characteristic of the respondents considered in this study were gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnicity, educational attainment, occupation, employment status and income. Gender determines the sex type of an individual while age determines to some extent how mature an individual is to be able to effectively take care of his/her life. It plays an important role most especially in quality of life studies. The result of the study shows that 63% of the respondents in the study area were males while 37% were females. Those within the age bracket of 30years below were found to be 36%, those within 31-40years were 41.5%, and those within 41-50years were 17%. The least were 50-60 (14%); 61-70 and above 70years (2% each). It therefore, means that the people sampled were mature enough to have diverse experiences on indices that define quality of life. The educational status of the people gives an insight into their standard of living. The result of the study shows that only 27% had no formal education. The 73% that had formal education is shared as follows; primary education 20%, secondary 26%, and tertiary 27%. The level of educational attainment has some implication for quality life hence educated people are generally believed to be more exposed and aware of issues that affects quality of life both positively and negatively than the uneducated. The higher the level of educational attainment, the higher the quality of life and service expected from the person. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study area.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents in the Study Area

Socio-Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	252	63%
Female	148	37%
<i>Total</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>100%</i>
Age		
Under 30 years	144	36%
31-40 years	116	41.5%
41-50 years	68	17%
51-60 years	56	14%
61-70 years	8	2%
71 years and above	8	2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>100%</i>
Marital Status		
Single	148	37%
Married	188	47%
Divorce	64	16%
<i>Total</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>100%</i>
Religion		
Christianity	264	66%
Islam	112	28%
Pagan	24	6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>100%</i>
Ethnicity		
Yoruba	68	17%
Igbo	80	20%
Hausa	120	30%
Tiv	132	33%
<i>Total</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>100%</i>
Educational Status		
No Formal Education	108	27%
Primary Education	80	20%
Secondary Education	104	26%
Tertiary Education	108	27%
<i>Total</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>100%</i>
Occupation		
Farming	68	17%
Carpentry	56	14%
Trading	248	62%
Civil servant	120	30%
Others	8	2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>100%</i>
Employment Status		
Government	136	34%
Private	264	66%

<i>Total</i>	400	100%
Average Annual Income Level		
N0-10,000	48	12%
N10,001-N100,000	216	54%
N100,001-500,000	112	28%
Above N500,001	24	6%
<i>Total</i>	400	100%

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2014

The study also gave respondents the opportunity to assess themselves using a ten steps ladder numbered in ascending order from 0-10 (with 0 signifying the bottom) with the view to knowing their current position on the ladder of quality of life and where they think they will be in the next five years from now. The top of the ladder (10) represents the best possible quality of life whereas; the bottom of the ladder (0) represents the worst possible life. The result of the field survey is presented in table 2.

Table 2: The Overall Quality of Life in the Study Area

Current Quality of Life			Quality of Life in Five (5) Years from Now		
Scale Steps	or Frequency	Percentages (%)	Scale Steps	or Frequency	Percentages (%)
0	4	1%	0	0	0%
1	24	6%	1	28	7%
2	64	16%	2	24	6%
3	88	22%	3	68	17%
4	60	15%	4	28	7%
5	56	14%	5	64	16%
6	56	14%	6	60	15%
7	16	4%	7	20	5%
8	8	2%	8	36	9%
9	20	5%	9	68	17%
10	4	1%	10	4	1%
Total	400	100%	Total	400	100%

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2014

The information in table 2 reveals the various levels or steps that residents of Makurdi town currently occupied on the ladder of quality of life. The result of the study shows that only 1% of the respondents are on top of the ladder currently enjoying the best possible life in the study area. About 74% of the respondent occupied step 5 below while only 26% occupied step 6-10. This implies that majority of the people in the study area are currently far from desired quality of life. The study also reveals that in the next five years, about 47% of the people hope to be between steps 6-10 on the quality of life ladder in the study area. This shows an increase of 21% when compare with the current situation in the same range. However, the best possible quality of life in the next five years will remain constant with only 1%.

The study also sought to determine the level of peoples experience on different feelings in the study area. The result of the field survey is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Scale of Personal Experience of Respondents in the Study Area

Variables of Quality of life	Frequency						Total
	Very rarely or never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often or always		
Positive	240	60	48	12	40	400	
%	60%	15%	12%	3%	10%	100%	
Good	88	136	112	52	12	400	
%	22%	34%	28%	13%	3%	100%	
Pleasant	84	108	132	72	4	400	
%	21%	27%	33%	18%	1%	100%	
Happy	64	132	58	80	12	400	
%	16%	33%	14.5%	20%	3%	100%	
Joyful	92	136	108	60	4	400	
%	23%	34%	27%	15%	1%	100%	
Contented	160	64	56	56	56	400	
%	40%	16%	14%	14%	14%	100%	

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2014

The information in table 3 shows that 60% of the respondents never experienced positive feeling, 15% rarely experienced it while 10% experienced it very often, 3% experiences it often. This implies that majority of the people in the study area do not have positive experiences that will help them live the best possible quality of life. This explained why it is only 1% of the residents of the study area are currently on top of the quality of life ladder. The result of the study also shows that 3% of the respondents feels good very often, 13% feels good often while 28% feels good sometimes. About 22% never feels good and 34% rarely feels good. This also implies that the percentage population that feels good in the study area is in the minority. Furthermore, the result of the study reveals that only 1% of the respondents have pleasant experience very often, 18% have it often while, 21% never, and 27% rarely had pleasant experiences in the study area. The result also shows that only 1% of the respondents had joyful experiences very often, 15% has it often while 23% never had, and 34% rarely had. Using the variable of contentment, the result of the study reveals that 14% of the respondents were always, and another 14% were often contented with their experiences. However, 40% were never, and 16% were rarely contented. It can be deduced from the result of the study that the general well-being of people in Makurdi town on the basis of their experiences of positive, good, pleasant, happiness, joyfulness and contentment is low hence majority of the people have no such experiences but rather the opposite experiences which include negative, bad, unpleasant, sad, angry and discontent. It therefore means that majority of the residents of Makurdi town are in the lower levels on the ladder of quality of life.

The study also assessed the residents of Makurdi town using a flourishing scale. The result is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Flourishing Scale of Residents in the Study Area

Variables of Quality of Life	Frequency							Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
I live a purposeful and meaningful life	24	12	4	32	0	52	276	400
%	6%	3%	1%	8%	0%	13%	69%	100%
My social relationships are supportive and rewarding	16	32	4	44	8	104	192	400
%	4%	8%	1%	11%	2%	26%	48%	100%
I am engaged and interested in my daily activities	32	24	32	40	8	128	136	400
%	8%	6%	8%	10%	2%	32%	34%	100%
I actively contribute to the happiness and wellbeing of others	48	40	64	44	0	152	52	400
%	12%	10%	16%	11%	0%	38%	13%	100%
I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me	40	72	52	40	8	136	52	400
%	10%	18%	13%	10%	2%	34%	13%	100%
I am a good person and live a good life	36	72	36	56	4	124	72	400
%	9%	18%	9%	14%	1%	31%	18%	100%
I am optimistic about my future	92	84	36	40	0	88	60	400
%	23%	21%	9%	10%	0%	22%	15%	100%

People respect me	220	28	4	16	0	52	60	400
%	55%	7%	1%	4%	0%	13%	15%	100%

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2014

The information in table 4 shows that 69% of the study population strongly agreed; and 13% agreed that they live purposeful lives while 8% did not know. About 6% strongly disagreed, and 3% disagreed that they live purposeful lives in the study area. The result of the study also shows that 48% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 26% agreed that they have social relationships that are supportive and rewarding in the study area. However, 11% were undecided while 4% strongly disagreed, and 8% disagreed; which implies that their social relationships are not supportive and rewarding. The result of the study also shows that 34% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 32% agreed that they are engaged and interested in their daily activities. 10% were undecided while 8% strongly disagreed, 6% disagreed and 8% slightly disagreed that they are engaged and interested in their daily activities. This implies that majority of the residents of Makurdi town are employed and are actually interested in their work.

When the respondents were assessed based on their active contribution to the happiness and wellbeing of others, the result reveals that 13% strongly agreed, and 38% agreed that they do while 11% were undecided, 12% strongly disagreed, 10% disagreed and 13% slightly disagreed that they actively contribution to the happiness and wellbeing of others. The study also assessed the respondents on whether they are competent and capable in the activities that are important to them. The result reveals that 13% strongly agreed, 34% agreed and 2% slightly agreed that they are. On the other hand, while 10% were undecided, another 10% strongly disagreed, 18% disagreed and 13% slightly disagreed. The result of the study also shows that 18% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 31% agreed that they are good persons and live good lives. While 14% were undecided, 9% strongly disagreed, 18% disagreed and 9% slightly disagreed that they are good persons and live good lives. Furthermore, 15% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 22% agreed that they are optimistic about their future while 23% strongly disagreed, 21% disagreed and 9% slightly disagreed. When the respondents were assessed on whether people respect them, the result shows that 15% strongly agreed, and 13% agreed that people do respect them while 55% strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed to it.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The rising interest of researchers from different disciplines including medicine, sociology, urban planning, and geography in the study of QoL world over shows how important QoL is in ensuring the wellbeing and development of city residents. Development of whatever kind is people oriented. Understanding the level of QoL of people in any city will give both government, planners and other development partner the specific areas of intervention that will improve their living standard. This study recommends that government and non-governmental organisations should address the root cause of low QoL in Makurdi town which is poverty. They

should provide the basic social amenities and social security packages that will improve the people's QoL in Makurdi town.

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