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Present Trends and Future Directions of Quality-Of-Life

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Abstract

Quality-of-life (QOL) is a multifaceted concept and it has attracted the attention of researchers from a wide range of academic disciplines as well as interest among policy makers, planners and others in the environmental design field. Being a rich concept, QOL studies can be construed in different perspectives like health approach, needs approach, happiness versus life satisfaction and the resource management approach. Although QOL research in Malaysia started in 1987, progress is slow. This paper provides an overview of the present trends of QOL research by highlighting the disciplinary and spatial bias and finally, suggests future directions of QOL research in Malaysia.

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Keywords: Quality of life; interdisciplinary; happiness; life satisfaction

1. Introduction

The term Quality-of-life (QOL) is used and understood by most people as ‘goodness of life’ and being able to live successfully and happily within the environment (Brown and Brown, 2005). QOL concept should not be confused with the income based concept of standard of living. It refers to the physical, psychological, and sociological state of being of people. It is broader than happiness because it entails factors such as enjoyment and achievement. Quality of life is also broader than satisfaction because it entails variables such as aspiration and recollection. It is also broader than the wellbeing because the quality of life is neutral. It is broader than health because it entails being in the context of one or several

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factors (Inoguchi and Fujii, 2013, p.3). Standard indicators of the QOL include not only wealth and employment, but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social belonging (Gregory et al., 2009).

Quality of life (QOL) is a multifaceted concept which has been used by a variety of disciplines in the research works of both developed and developing countries. Sirgy (2001) argues that QOL is a rich concept and can be construed in different perspectives such as health approach, needs approach, QOL as happiness versus life satisfaction and the resource management approach. Over the years, the study of QOL has attracted the attention of researchers from a wide range of academic disciplines as well as interest among policy makers, planners and others in the environmental design fields. The concept is certainly interdisciplinary, and it is recognized as warranting interdisciplinary study (Marans, 2012, p. 10). Table 1 documents the disciplines which have embedded QOL for research and development policy purposes.

Table 1. Discipline Related to the QOL Studies.

Disciplines	Major concern	Measurement	Nomenclature
Economics, Political Science	Income, poverty	Objective	QOL
Sociology, Psychology	Individual/ Community well-being	Subjective	QOL/ QOWL
Health studies	Individual well-being	Subjective	HR-QOL
Housing	Housing satisfaction	Subjective well-being	QOL-Housing
Marketing	Product satisfaction	Subjective well-being	QOL-Marketing
City level analysis	Livability	Objective	QOL-livability
Urban analysis	Urban living condition	Objective/ subjective	QOUL
Tourism	Tangible, intangible benefits and costs	Objective/ subjective	QOL-Tourism

Source: Authors adaptation based on various studies.

Table 2. QOL Studies done at Various Spatial Levels.

Spatial Level	Approach	Measurement	Domains/ Components
International	Indexing	Objective/subjective	Multidimensional
National	Indexing	Objective/subjective	Multidimensional
Regional	Indexing	Objective/subjective	Multidimensional
City / Urban	Multiple communities	Objective/subjective	Multidimensional
Community	Multiple neighborhood	Objective/subjective	Multidimensional
Neighborhood	Multiple groups	Objective/subjective	Multidimensional
Building/ Group	Households/families	Subjective	Multidimensional

Source: Authors adaptation based on various studies.

QOL is a pervasive concept and can be applied at different spatial levels for research, and policy purposes. Table 2 presents the spatial levels at which QOL studies are embedded in the fields of the built environment for policy pursuits. Both disciplinary and spatial context provide a framework for examining the QOL research status of a country. Although QOL research in Malaysia started in 1987, progress has been very slow. QOL-related research in Malaysia is still in its infancy. Moreover, the QOL studies in

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