

Life satisfaction of young people as a factor of the socio-economic development of the region

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Abstract — The paper substantiates the methodological approaches to the study of the problem of life satisfaction and its importance for securing young people in the region. The formulated tested hypotheses are: is life satisfaction really a significant factor influencing the choice of young people in the region and its socio-economic development? Is it possible to use indicators for assessing life satisfaction when setting social policy benchmarks for young people in the regions? A methodological approach based on the concept of subjectivism of the Austrian school of economic theory has been applied. The difference of the concepts “subjective satisfaction with life” and “happiness” are reasoned. A questionnaire was developed for interviewing and defining indicators for assessing life satisfaction and attractiveness of the region for young citizens, including both questions that give an idea of the respondents (their age, education, personality type, etc.) and questions for which answers were included in the model as control variables. The results of the study confirmed verifiable hypotheses. The results revealed significant factors that affect satisfaction (this is, above all, attitude towards life) and the choice of young people of the region of residence, and which need to pay attention to regional and municipal authorities in determining benchmarks and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of socio-economic policy towards young people: these are career growth and the level of social infrastructure development.

Keywords — *subjective life satisfaction; the quality of life; methodology; youth survey; regional policy*

I. INTRODUCTION

A modern state social policy is characterized by a set of measures aimed at supporting the social development and increasing the well-being of the population, which ultimately form the “social face” of both the country and its regions. An important element of this “social portrait”, which largely determines the choice of the area of residence, is the quality of life of the population of the region. This factor is of particular importance for the most mobile part of the population - young people, who strive today to realize their human capital in conditions that would ensure a decent position in society and maximum satisfaction with life.

In this regard, the study of issues of the impact of life satisfaction on the socio-economic attractiveness of the region for young people and the possibility of developing indicators for its assessment and integration in the social policy of the region is being updated.

The study tests two hypotheses: (1) life satisfaction is indeed a significant factor influencing the choice of young people in the region of residence and the socio-economic development of the territory, and (2) indicators for assessing satisfaction with life can be used in determining the guidelines for socio-economic policy in youth in the regions.

The problem of the quality of life of the population and its measurement acquired special importance at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries in European countries, which was associated with an increase in the standard of living and a reorientation of the social and economic policies of states towards social progress and increase in the welfare of society, which in order to increase the effectiveness of their policies subjected to not only quantitative but also qualitative assessment. The latter is reflected in the discussion at the turn of the century about the imperfection of the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita used to assess the aggregate welfare. Admittedly, there is a positive correlation between subjective well-being and GDP per capita [1], but it would be a simplification to limit welfare estimates to GDP per capita only.

In November 1985, the UN General Assembly established World Habitat Day (lat. Habitabilis - habitable; inhabited, inhabited), celebrated on the first Monday of October and dedicated to living conditions in settlements. There is also a special center in the UN structure, which is also called Habitat and provides advice and assistance to government organizations in various countries in providing their citizens with housing, adequate services and conditions for normal living, as well as infrastructure. Such attention of international organizations to the problems of the settlements speaks not only of their high relevance, but also of the similarity of problems in different countries.

In Russia, the attention has been paid to quality of life only in recent years, which is reflected in the scientific research conducted by economists, sociologists, psychologists and

political scientists [2; 3; 4; 5]. This was connected with the definition of the quality of life of the population as a strategic benchmark for the development of the country: "Ultimately, the aim of the state's social and economic policy is to increase the well-being ... France, several developing countries, and more recently, the United Kingdom are trying to incorporate life satisfaction indicators into economic policy mechanisms, a criteria for evaluating the work of the state apparatus ... " [6].

In the scientific literature, the concept of "quality of life" is defined on the basis of objectivist and subjectivist approaches. The first focuses on the real conditions of human existence and the circumstances of his life: socio-economic, natural-geographical, etc. The second one fixes a subjective assessment of the quality of life, which is formed under the influence of a number of parameters reflecting the experience of communication and professional activities, emotional experiences of achieved results, social positions, the degree of satisfaction of individual needs, etc. If the parameters for assessing the quality of life within the framework of an objectivist approach are sufficiently specified and measurable in the form of complex indicators of the quality of life, then the assessment of subjective satisfaction with life is difficult and not yet sufficiently operationalized. However, since the 2000s, Russia has been making certain efforts in this direction.

Thus, in 2003, the non-profit organization «Fund for the Support of Innovative Programs in the Social Sphere «Social Innovation» proposed a generalized indicator - the quality of life index, and conducted a study on the "Quality of Life in the Regions of Russia" (2003). Only subjective indicators, measured by a survey of the population of the regions, were used. Since 2008, the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center (APORC/VTsIOM – Rus.) has been counting a group of quality of life indices based on subjective judgments of the population, one of which is the "life satisfaction index", which shows how satisfied the Russians are with their lives [7; 8; 9]. At the same time, we should note an insufficient amount of research on the quality of life of young people and its influence on the choice of the area of residence. As a rule, the works devoted to the behavior of young people, are focused on the problems of employment and the demand for young citizens in the labor market [10]. But the problem of quality of life deserves attention due to the intensification of the processes of youth migration from the countryside to the cities, from the regions to the center, as well as abroad.

The goal of the work is to substantiate the research methodology and identify the indicators of assessing life satisfaction and attractiveness of the region for young citizens.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS (MODEL)

The subjectivism of the Austrian school of economic theory was chosen as the methodological basis of the study. It considers a person as the creative principle and the main actor of all social processes and events [11]. Basing on this approach, we can consider satisfaction with life in general as a goal that a person is trying to achieve, which is important to him and which has a particular subjective value. This

subjective value is projected on the means to achieve the goal, which the individual considers useful.

R. Vinhoven, one of the founders of the "economic theory of happiness" [12; 13; 14; 15], defines happiness as "a subjective pleasure from life in general" [16]. However, in our opinion, subjective life satisfaction and happiness are different, though interrelated, concepts. If subjective satisfaction with life is a person's perception of the quality parameters of life (and for each these parameters, their combination and assessment will be individual), then happiness is a feeling of being full, which can be considered as the highest degree of appreciation of life satisfaction. If the achievement of subjective life satisfaction requires the expenditure of various means (resources), because dissatisfaction acts as a certain "stimulus", "anxiety" that causes a person to make efforts to eliminate it, then happiness as a feeling is the result of a complex interaction of psychological characteristics and states of an individual, and it is not always associated with resource costs.

The heuristic idea of using the concept of "happiness" and its evaluation in the form of the World Index of Happiness (The Happy Planet Index, HPI) [17] has claimed the support of a certain part of the scientific community at the turn of the new century, because it corresponds to the current trend of the human-oriented economic development of society. However, in our opinion, the use of the concept of "feeling" to evaluate the economic process has certain limitations related to their high volatility, momentary. A person can be happy today and unhappy tomorrow, and this is not always associated with the economic component. Therefore, we believe that the assessment of satisfaction with life is more in line with the nature of economic processes, because it involves the expenditure of some resources and obtaining a result (satisfaction or dissatisfaction).

The characteristics of the goal of achieving satisfaction with life are: firstly, the fact that satisfaction is made up of many components, while the more time a component requires for its achievement, the higher value it has for the individual. Secondly, the law of "time preferences" (according to which, all things being equal, when one considers the two goals that are to him an equal subjective value, he always gives preference to the one that is closer in time) allows individuals to rank the components of life satisfaction and prefer to achieve those that are closer to him in time, if their value is the same.

The means of achieving the goal of "subjective satisfaction with life" are determined by a person in the process of his life activity, in the process of understanding which elements make up *his* perception of the qualitative parameters of life in certain circumstances, what is vital for him at a certain point in time and what means will be suitable for achieving the goal.

The means of achieving the goal of "subjective satisfaction with life" can be divided into two groups: (1) the means determined by the person's personality (traits of character, education, health, etc.), and (2) the means external to the person (service conditions, accessibility education, safety of life and other socio-economic conditions of the living

environment in which the individual is located). The second group of funds deserves special attention because it is amenable to monitoring and regulation within the framework of regional socio-economic policy, adequate measures of which will contribute to the consolidation of young people in the regions of the country.

The versatility of understanding of “subjective life satisfaction” and the multi-stage assessment of it determines the need to use both quantitative and qualitative research methods (in-depth interviews, focus groups) for the coordinate assessments and validation [18; 19]. Achieving the unity in describing the parameters of satisfaction with life is possible, in our opinion, primarily in small groups or relatively homogeneous communities of respondents, which makes it possible to analyze for one of these groups - young people, by examining how life satisfaction affects the socio-economic attractiveness of the region.

A structured questionnaire was developed to test the proposed hypotheses which includes both questions that give an idea about the respondents (their age, education, personality type, etc.), and questions, the answers to which were included in the model as control variables. Data processing was carried out by the method of correlation and regression analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the process of the research the study survey of 204 young people from different regions of the Russian Federation was held in May of 2018 (Moscow, Amur, Belgorod, Bryansk, Volgograd, Kaluga, Kirov, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Sakhalin, Tver, Tula and Ulyanovsk regions, the Altai, the Trans-Baikal, the Krasnodar and Stavropol regions, Republic of Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Kalmykia, the Crimea, Tatarstan, Sakha (Yakutia)).

Age of respondents – from 17 to 31 years.

To describe the studied groups, the following descriptive characteristics of sampling were used: age, gender, education, personality type (extrovert, introvert) [20], health status, individual status, etc.). Detailed summary statistics and the cross-correlation matrix are available upon request.

To assess the impact of life satisfaction on the socio-economic attractiveness of the region for young people, the survey was conducted on two groups of issues.

The first “basic” group included: 1) an assessment of the so-called “basic happiness” by ranking participants from 0 (absolutely unhappy) to 10 (absolutely happy) of their subjective assessment of how happy they are in general, based on the methodological recommendations for measuring subjective well-being (OECD, 2013) [21]; and 2) an assessment of satisfaction with life in general, also on a scale from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied) (based on recommendations of European Social Survey, Round 2013) [22; 23; 24; 25] .

TABLE I. PROBABILITY OF PLANNING TO RETURN TO HOME REGION: PROBIT MODEL REGRESSION ESTIMATES (MARGINAL EFFECTS)

Variables	All respondents	All respondents	Non-Moscow / Moscow region	Non-Moscow / Moscow region
Home region conditions	0.0601*** (0.0116)		0.0656*** (0.0109)	
Introvert	-0.143 (0.0914)	-0.144** (0.0655)	-0.252*** (0.0785)	-0.198** (0.0800)
Home Russia	-0.216*** (0.0709)	-0.199** (0.0881)	-0.228*** (0.0780)	-0.193** (0.0816)
Life satisfaction	-0.0296** (0.0128)	-0.0156 (0.0125)	-0.0311** (0.0146)	0.0158 (0.0183)
Higher education in home region		0.00645 (0.0171)		0.00645 (0.0248)
Quality of medical services in home region		0.000813 (0.0177)		0.000289 (0.0214)
Opportunity of find job in home region		0.00105 (0.0305)		-0.0190 (0.0240)
Opportunity to build a career in home region		0.0519 (0.0387)		0.0980*** (0.0314)
Social infrastructure in home region		-0.0149 (0.0370)		-0.0591* (0.0307)
Recreation opportunities in home region		-0.0200 (0.0210)		0.0132 (0.0203)
Ecology in home region		0.0232 (0.0229)		-0.0186 (0.0232)
Trade opportunities in home region		0.0230 (0.0157)		0.0269 (0.0199)
Controls included:				
Male	yes	yes	yes	yes
Age	yes	yes	yes	yes
Wight-to-height ratio	yes	yes	yes	yes
Healthselfass	yes	yes	yes	yes
Income	yes	yes	yes	yes
Education	yes	yes	yes	yes
Household type	yes	yes	yes	yes
Social status	yes	yes	yes	yes
Smoking tabaco frequency	yes	yes	yes	yes
Strong alcohol consumption frequency	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	199	199	136	136
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1				

The second group of clarifying questions for assessing life satisfaction and attractiveness of the region for young citizens included two blocks:

1) the assessment of satisfaction with life in some aspects (on a scale from 0 (absolutely unsatisfied) to 10 (absolutely satisfied)) includes answers to the questions: "Are you satisfied: with the living conditions in your native region; conditions of education (training); quality of care; opportunities to find the desired job; opportunities to build a career; social security conditions; conditions of recreation and leisure; environmental situation; terms of trade and consumer services?"

2) additional questions related to plans and possible migration are: «do you plan your life (yes/no), if yes, how many years ahead (1 year, up to 5 years, more than 5 years); Are you considering the possibility to leave your region (for education, work, change of residence) (yes/no); Do you plan to return to your native region (if you have already left or are you going to leave, for example, after receiving an education)?»

The results of calculations based on the proposed probit models showed that for the entire sample, statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) factors influencing the probability of returning to the native region can be ranked as follows in order of decreasing significance: (1) Russian origin, (2) introvert (table 1). After excluding residents of Moscow and the Moscow region from the sample, the following factors turned out to be statistically significant when assessing the probability of returning to their native region: (1) introvert, (2) Russian origin, (3) the opportunity to make a career in their native region and (4) the level of development from the social infrastructure of the native region (table 1).

A new result of the study was the establishment of the influence of personality type (extrovert, introvert) on life satisfaction and readiness to return to their native region (Table 2).

TABLE II. LIFE SATISFACTION AND READINESS TO RETURN TO NATIVE REGIONS AMONG INTROVERTS AND EXTROVERTS

Personality type	Number of respondents planning to return to their home region	The average level of life satisfaction of respondents who plan to return to their home region	Total number of respondents
Introvert	22	7.091	72
Extrovert	60	7.433	132
Total	82	7.341	204

Extroverts are on average 4.82% more satisfied with life (7.433 versus 7.091 on a scale from 0 to 10); 73.17% of extroverts and 26.83% of introverts, respectively, are ready to return to their native region.

IV. CONCLUSION

The held studies revealed important factors that influence on satisfaction (this is, above all, the perception of life) and the region young people choose to live in and which are necessary to pay attention on for the regional and municipal authorities in determining the guidelines and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of social and economic policy in relation to youth: this is a career growth and the level of development of social infrastructure.

In the era of rapid development of information technology and robotization, we believe that it is the living conditions that will acquire increasing subjective value and will be more meaningful for a person, because work can be "brought closer" to the place of residence, for example, using remote access work, "online - maintenance", work on "a rotational basis", "freelance", etc. Creating comfortable living conditions in the region will allow them to be used as a significant factor of retaining young people, improving quality of their life and achieving subjective satisfaction.

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