

Review of dissertation

Dissertation title: Quality of Life as an Useful Indicator for Decision-Making Processes of Public Administration at the Regional Level

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Tetiana Korovchenko selected a meaningful and challenging goal for her dissertation thesis. Indeed, currently many scientists are putting a lot of effort into this field. Her literature review is well structure providing the reader with a lot of important results from previous studies.

On the other hand, when the author comes to her methodology, the thesis starts to be rather confusing. Firstly, her statistical method of conducting research is based on correlations. Although correlation analysis may prove useful for various reason, to use this to reach the goal of the study is unsuitable. Mere correlations cannot justify selection of various factors in order to be classified as factors contributing to the quality of life.

Firstly, there is the causality problem: correlations show relations, not causality (influence). For example, the fact that GDP per capita correlates with life satisfaction can mean that either GDP p.c. influences life satisfaction or that LS influences GDP p.c. or there can be an unobserved factor which is related to both LS and GDP p.c. Also, the sample for determining correlations coefficients (a couple of years) is not enough to rule out the possibility that the resulting corr. coefficients are simply a statistical coincidence.

Further, correlation does not take into account other variables but the two it is based on. For this reason, regression analysis is more fitting and would be a better choice to conduct research of this study. The author then uses so called Fuller method. I admit that its use may enhance the study results, but comparing to regression analysis, its results lack sufficient power.

The study lacks proper discussion of the terms which are being used: quality of life, life satisfaction, happiness, well-being, etc. What is strikingly inappropriate is the fact that the author studies correlations quality of life with life satisfaction (which is based on the results of World Happiness Report). In economics of happiness the life satisfaction is rather associated with „happiness“. Quality of life, on the other hand, is classified as something entirely different

that life satisfaction or happiness. Thus, the author is trying to reach a specific goal by implementing methodology which is fitting for a different research. Thus, the question arises: the factors found determine life satisfaction (see, WHR) or quality of life? I would for example recommend the dissertation of Petr Kladivo (from Masaryk University in Brno) as one of possible sources for quality of life studies and selection of indicators for research.

What is the reason for selecting specific indicators as possible determinants of quality of life? Is it only intuition or is it based on some other studies? One might ask: why is the number of beavers on local rivers not included into the correlation analysis? Analogically, the author includes military expenditure into her potential factors. The recommendation based on the results would be that in order to improve quality of life, the country should destroy or sell her arsenals?

As for the methodological section, some steps are described in too much detail (for example the description of correlation coefficient which is well known at this stage of professional work and a small citation would be sufficient enough), while some (e.g. Fuller method) lack sufficient explanation and reason to use them. The reader must then rely on the author that the methods are correct.

Possibly the most important deficiency is that the author does not set up a unbiased algorithm for selecting important factors which have to do with quality of life. When the results of the correlation analysis are being interpreted, there is no rule which should tell us whether it is a significant factor or not. The fact that the author choses verdict based on her intuitive decisions, is not scientifically correct. This way the results are almost certainly biased and not consistent. The concluding sections brings little new insight.

Nevertheless, the student has proved relatively good writing skills. Also, here study provides good base for classifying potential components of quality of life. Her literature review is useful in this respect. Although the data should be dealt with in different way, I appreciate the author's audacity to select such challenging and up-to-date area of research.

I recommend the dissertation to the defend and ask the committee for discussing above-mentioned arguments.

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Jaroslav Koutský