

**Quality of Life: Conceptual Framework, Theoretical Approaches, Dimensions,
Indicators, Determinants, and Obstacles**

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Abstract:

Quality of life is considered one of the most widely used contemporary concepts in human and social sciences, particularly in psychology and health studies. Despite its extensive use, defining it precisely remains complex due to its recent scientific emergence and its multidisciplinary nature. It encompasses individuals' evaluations of their daily lives in relation to cultural, social, and value systems, as well as their personal goals and expectations. This study aims to present a comprehensive overview of the concept of quality of life by addressing its definition, theoretical approaches, dimensions, indicators, components, and the main obstacles that affect it. Understanding these aspects contributes to a clearer perception of how individuals assess their well-being and life satisfaction across different domains such as health, work, and social relations.

Keywords: Quality of life; well-being; psychological evaluation; life satisfaction; dimensions of life; indicators of well-being

Introduction:

The concept of quality of life has become one of the central concepts in contemporary psychological and social research due to its relevance to human well-being and overall life satisfaction. It reflects the individual's perception and evaluation of various aspects of life, including psychological, social, economic, and health-related dimensions. However, despite its widespread use, quality of life remains a concept that is difficult to define precisely, mainly due to its relatively recent emergence in scientific literature and its application across multiple disciplines and fields of study, which makes it not confined to a single academic domain or specific life area (Bouaicha, 2014, p. 70).

The difficulty in defining quality of life also stems from its subjective nature, as it varies from one individual to another depending on personal experiences, cultural background, and value systems. Nevertheless, researchers have made significant efforts to develop clear and comprehensive definitions, particularly in psychology, where the concept is closely linked to life satisfaction and subjective well-being.

From a linguistic perspective, the term "quality" derives from the Arabic root *j-w-d*, meaning goodness, excellence, and the opposite of poor quality. To "improve something" means to enhance it and make it better (Nancy Kamal Saleh Eid, 2018, p. 62).

From an operational perspective, Abdel Moaty defines quality of life as individuals' evaluations of different aspects of their daily lives, along with their perception of their position in life within the cultural and value system in which they live. It is also linked to their personal goals, expectations, beliefs, and interests. This evaluative process leads to feelings of life satisfaction

across various domains, including professional activity, physical and psychological health, social relations, and financial status (Gawwan Ismail Bakr, 2013, p. 39).

Accordingly, quality of life can be understood as a multidimensional construct that reflects how individuals perceive and evaluate their existence in relation to both subjective experiences and objective living conditions. This makes it a dynamic concept influenced by psychological states, social environments, and material circumstances, all of which interact to determine the overall level of human well-being.

1. Concept and Definitions of Quality of Life:

The concept of quality of life is widely used; however, providing a precise definition remains somewhat difficult. This difficulty is due to several reasons:

- The recent emergence of the concept in scientific research.
- The diversity of fields and disciplines in which it is used, which prevents it from being restricted to a single domain or specific scientific specialization (Bouaicha, 2014, p. 70).

Despite this, scholars have attempted to provide comprehensive definitions, especially in psychology, as follows:

1.1 Linguistic Definition:

The origin of the word goes back to the Arabic verb *jāda* (to be good), *jawda* (quality), meaning goodness and the opposite of poor quality. To improve something means to enhance it and make it good (Nancy Kamal Saleh Eid, 2018, p. 62).

1.2 Terminological Definitions:

Abdel Moaty defines quality of life as individuals' evaluations of different aspects of their daily lives and their awareness of their position within the cultural and value system in which they live. It is also linked to their goals, expectations, beliefs, and interests. This evaluation process leads to life satisfaction across various domains such as work, physical and psychological health, social relations, and financial status (Gawwan Ismail Bakr, 2013, p. 39).

World Health Organization definition:

The World Health Organization defines quality of life as an individual's subjective evaluations of their life circumstances, meaning the way the individual perceives his current situation within the context of culture and the prevailing value system, and the extent of its conformity or non-conformity with his goals, aspirations, values, and interests related to aspects of his physical health, psychological state, level of independence, personal beliefs, social relationships, and relationships with the external environment in general. (Nadia, Belabbas, 2016, pp. 53–54)

Quality of life is also defined as the degree to which an individual feels positivity, optimism, and satisfaction with his life as a whole. (Nancy, Kamal Saleh Eid, 2018, p. 63)

2-Theoretical approaches explaining quality of life

2-1-The psychological approach:

The concept of quality of life in psychology is related to a set of concepts connected to this field, including values, self-perception, needs, attitudes, ambition, expectations, satisfaction, adjustment, and mental health.

Values have great importance in shaping quality of life indicators, due to the following reasons:

- The importance of values in interpreting individuals' ambitions and expectations.
- Values contribute to determining the relative importance of different life domains.

• The role of values in the individual's evaluation of the value of life in its various aspects. Regarding the importance of values and their role in quality of life, self-perception is reflected in the fact that life in general is a reflection of what the individual perceives in its various aspects. These objective aspects, generally represented in education, housing, work, and income, are translated through the individual's perception and evaluation, representing a level of quality of life. This level is determined by the importance of each of these life domains for the individual. Therefore, psychological factors intervene in social and economic evaluations. It should also be noted that the satisfaction of needs at different levels, according to Maslow's classification of human needs, is a fundamental path toward achieving quality of life.

There are a set of subjective indicators related to quality of life in society, represented as follows:

- Social relations
- Education
- Happiness and satisfaction
- Family belonging
- Social adjustment
- Managing free time well
- Participation in cooperative work
- Emotional regulation
- General health
- Mental health (Jouan, Ismail Bakr, 2013, pp. 51–52)

Speaking about subjective indicators in the psychological approach and focusing on how the individual perceives different objective indicators he experiences daily leads us to another approach that extends the psychological approach and explains quality of life, namely:

2-2-The cognitive approach:

The cognitive approach states that quality of life depends on the individual's perception of various surrounding objective factors. The feeling of quality of life is linked to two main ideas: first, the nature of the individual's perception determines the degree of his feeling of quality of life; second, subjective factors are more influential than objective factors in the feeling of quality of life. Thus, differences in people's feelings of quality of life are due to differences in their perceptions of surrounding objective factors. (Bushra, Anaad Mubarak, no year, p. 723)

Under this approach fall two modern theories explaining quality of life:

-Lawton theory (1996):

The individual's perception of quality of life is affected by two factors: spatial and temporal. The spatial factor refers to the influence of the nature of the environment in which the individual lives and external factors on his quality of life. The temporal factor refers to the impact of aging on quality of life, as aging makes the individual more capable of controlling environmental conditions. Thus, aging has a positive role on quality of life. (Amal, Bouaicha, 2014, p. 91)

-Schalock theory (2002):

According to Schalock, quality of life is a concept composed of eight domains, each of which is measured by three indicators. He emphasized the importance of subjective factors in feeling quality of life, primarily the individual's perception of his quality of life.

Domains:

- Emotional well-being
- Relationships
- Material well-being
- Personal development
- Physical well-being
- Self-determination
- Social inclusion
- Human and legal rights

Indicators:

- Satisfaction, self-concept, low stress
- Interactions, relationships, support
- Material status, work, housing
- Learning, personal competence, performance
- Health, daily activities, leisure time
- Independence, goals, choices
- Integration, social cohesion, social roles
- Individual rights, group rights, law and due process

(Bushra, Anaad Mubarak, no year, pp. 724–725)

2-3-The social approach:

According to the social approach, the concept of quality of life revolves around the family and society in general, and the individual's relationships and material, cultural, and social requirements.

The operational definition of quality of life in the social approach is: "a comprehensive total structure composed of a set of diverse variables aimed at satisfying the basic needs of individuals living within this life context, where this satisfaction can be measured objectively through value indicators and subjectively through indicators measuring the degree of achieved satisfaction." (Nancy, Saleh Eid, 2018, p. 65)

2-4-The philosophical approach:

The philosophical approach brings the concepts of quality of life and happiness closer together. Happiness cannot be achieved unless humans distance themselves from life's disturbances and problems and allow space for imagination and creativity.

2-5-The medical approach:

The medical approach focuses on studying various aspects of life that may affect a patient's health, linking quality to the availability of psychological support and social and economic care for the patient. (Nadia, Belabbas, 2016, p. 60)

2-6-The humanistic approach:

According to the humanistic approach, quality of life is linked to two main elements:

- 1- The presence of a suitable living organism.
- 2- The existence of a good environment in which this organism lives. Life is based on interaction between the organism and its environment.

The environment includes natural and social environments, where the social environment regulates individuals' behavior according to prevailing social norms. The more an individual complies with these norms, the better his social life quality. There is also the cultural environment, whose quality is evaluated through the individual's ability to create a material or moral civilizational environment.

Among the theories included in this approach:

-Ryff theory (1999):

Ryff's theory revolves around psychological well-being. Individuals' sense of quality of life reflects their happiness, defined through six dimensions, each containing six characteristics:

1- Autonomy:

- 1- Self-determination
- 2- Independence
- 3- Facing social pressures
- 4- Appropriate behavior
- 5- Organized behavior
- 6- Self-evaluation according to abilities

2- Environmental mastery:

- 1- Self-efficacy
- 2- Ability to control environment and activities
- 3- Ability to seize opportunities
- 4- Making suitable choices
- 5- Valuing oneself
- 6- Acting according to social norms

3- Personal growth:

- 1- Continuous growth
- 2- Awareness of self-expansion
- 3- Openness to new experiences
- 4- Realistic perception of life
- 5- Continuous self-improvement
- 6- Behavioral change enhancing self-effectiveness

4- Positive relations with others:

- 1- Satisfaction with social relations
- 2- Trust in others
- 3- Concern for others' well-being
- 4- Empathy and affection
- 5- Social exchange
- 6- Communication behavior

5- Self-acceptance:

- 1- Positive attitude toward self
- 2- Acceptance of positive and negative traits
- 3- Positive feelings about past life

- 4- Positive future self-perception
- 5- Awareness of personal characteristics
- 6- Positive self-criticism

6- Purpose in life:

- 1- Beliefs that give meaning to past and present life
 - 2- Setting meaningful goals
 - 3- Striving to achieve life goals
 - 4- Ability to direct life goals
 - 5- Clear awareness of life goals
 - 6- Realization that psychological health lies in meaning in life
- (Bushra, Anaad Mubarak, no year, pp. 725–727)

2-7-The integrative approach:

Anderson (2003), one of the proponents of this approach, indicated that the individual's perception of life enables him to evaluate his surroundings and form ideas leading to life satisfaction. According to this approach, three traits lead to a sense of quality of life:

- 1- The idea related to personal goals the individual seeks to achieve.
- 2- The existential meaning that links idea and goal.
- 3- Personality and internal depth. (Amal, Bouaicha, 2014, p. 93)

From these traits, we can infer indicators of quality of life:

- Satisfaction depends on:
 - setting realistic achievable goals
 - striving to change surroundings to match goals
- Need satisfaction is relative and varies between individuals due to cultural and personal factors
- Investing abilities in creative activities, good social relations, meaningful goals, and supportive family enhances quality of life (Bushra, Anaad Mubarak, no year, p. 728)

3-Dimensions of quality of life:

According to Ventegodt et al. (2013), quality of life has two dimensions:

3-1-The subjective dimension:

It includes personal well-being, feeling, income, life satisfaction, and happiness.

3-2-The objective dimension:

It includes physical safety (bodily health), cultural standards, and need satisfaction.

Based on these two dimensions, Gutay (1992) stated that quality of life is the ability to perform daily activities reflecting physical, psychological, and social life, as well as individual satisfaction with behaviors performed to meet needs. From this, we can infer sub-dimensions:

- Physical safety
- Feeling of safety and security
- Sense of value
- Organized life
- Sense of belonging
- Social participation

- Meaningful daily activities
- Internal satisfaction and happiness (Nadia, Belabbas, 2016, pp. 59–60)

There is no fixed hierarchical order among these dimensions, as priorities differ from one person to another due to cultural and social factors. Similarities may appear among individuals belonging to the same social and cultural group. (Amal Bouaicha, 2014, p. 88)

Robert Costanza et al. (2017) proposed a theoretical framework reconciling subjective and objective dimensions, based on integrating opportunities and conditions for satisfying needs, and describing needs and satisfaction levels.

According to this framework, quality of life is measured by the gap between expectations of potential satisfaction and actual achieved satisfaction, where subjective factors intervene.

The satisfaction of human needs does not always guarantee quality of life, as two main factors intervene:

- The ability to adapt, confront, and positively interact with life conditions and events, both positive and negative.

As “Lawton” views, the concept of quality of life includes several dimensions that correspond to the description of “Carrie Jackson,” which was formulated under the term (the 3 Bs), as shown in the following table:

Existential Being (Being)

Physical existence

- a) Physical ability to move and perform physical activities.
- b) Nutrition methods and types of food available.

Psychological existence

- a) Freedom from anxiety and stress.
- b) The individual’s general mood state (comfort/discomfort).

Spiritual existence

- a) Presence of hope for the future (optimism).
- b) The individual’s personal thoughts about right and wrong.

Belonging

Spatial belonging

- a) The house or apartment in which I live.
- b) The neighborhood surrounding the individual.

Social belonging

- a) Closeness to family members with whom I live.
- b) Presence of close people or friends (strong social network).

Community belonging

- a) Availability of access to specialized professional services (medical, social, etc.).
- b) Financial security.

Becoming (Process/Development)

Functional becoming

- a) Doing things around my home.
- b) Working in a job or attending school.

Recreational becoming

- a) Outdoor recreational activities (walking, exercising, etc.).
- b) Indoor recreational activities (media and entertainment).

Developmental (evolutionary) becoming

- a) Improving physical and psychological efficiency.
- b) Ability to adapt to life changes and challenges.

(Salah, Hamdan Al-Haj Ahmed, 2017, p. 118)

Other researchers consider it necessary to include the dimension of **family quality of life** within overall quality of life, due to its impact on the child’s psychological life. This concept can even be addressed independently from general quality of life. Family quality of life is divided into two aspects: the first related to the family, and the second related to quality of life; therefore, the concept of family must be addressed before family quality of life.

3-3-The family dimension

3-3-1-Concept of family:

The family has been defined as “a group of individuals who can be considered family members, whether or not they are related by blood or marriage, and who provide protection and support to one another.”

A child’s family consists of a nuclear unit made up of parents, brothers, and sisters, in addition to an extended unit formed by adults and children from the surrounding environment.

This definition allows us to distinguish two types of families:

- **Nuclear family:** includes parents, brothers, and sisters.
- **Extended family:** includes grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and relatives.

Regardless of the varying definitions of the family, it always retains its importance as a protective framework for children and as an emotional foundation based on mutual protection among its members. (ACHACHRA, Asma, 2015, p. 25)

The family is also defined as the first unit of society and its primary institution, within which the individual is socially raised, acquiring knowledge, skills, tendencies, emotions, and attitudes toward life, and finding security and stability. (Fawzia Mohammedi, Amal Bouaicha, 2013, “Obstacles to Family Quality of Life,” <https://manifest.univ-ouargla.dz>)

3-3-2-Family quality of life:

Research on family quality of life is an extension of research on individual quality of life. The term has existed for more than 100 years, but it has significantly developed in recent years through international studies on families of children with disabilities.

Family quality of life is considered a dynamic concept of family well-being, defined as “the level of satisfaction with the needs of family members, and the way they spend time together and do things that are important to them.” (ACHACHRA, Asma, 2015, p. 25)

3-3-4-Factors affecting family quality of life:

The following figure illustrates the various factors influencing family quality of life: (figure)

From the above figure, it can be inferred that the child’s psychological quality of life can be divided into two main categories of influencing factors:

Direct factors:

Include the achievements of parents, personal and temperamental traits, and the context in which the child lives.

Indirect factors:

Include the parental support network (especially the mother), marital relationship, as well as other influences such as the parents' social class, level of education, and satisfaction with their jobs.

(Salah, Hamdan Al-Haj Ahmed, 2017, p. 120)

4-Indicators of quality of life:

Fallowfield (1990) identified a set of indicators through which quality of life can be inferred:

- **Feeling of quality of life:** a subjective state in which the individual feels capable of satisfying his needs and enjoying surrounding conditions.
- **Psychological indicators:** appear through feelings of anxiety or depression, or conversely comfort, adjustment, and satisfaction.
- **Social indicators:** reflected in the individual's social relationships and various social and recreational activities.
- **Occupational indicators:** reflect the individual's acceptance of his profession, his love for it, and his ability to perform job duties.
- **Physical and bodily indicators:** appear in satisfaction with health status, coping with pain and sleep, appetite, and sexual capacity.

(Raghda Ali Naaissa, 2012, p. 149)

5-Components of quality of life:

According to the World Health Organization, the components of quality of life are:

- **Physical health:** ability to perform bodily functions and level of physical fitness.
- **Psychological health:** ability to recognize and express emotions, and feeling happiness, comfort, and psychological stability.
- **Spiritual health:** religious practices, belief system, and self-satisfaction.
- **Mental health:** ability to think clearly and coherently, assume responsibility, and make decisions.
- **Social health:** ability to build successful relationships and maintain communication and respect for others.
- **Community health:** ability to build relationships not only with individuals but also with the surrounding material environment, laws, and systems.

(Amal Bouaicha, 2014, pp. 96–97)

6-Barriers to quality of life:

Barriers to quality of life refer to all factors that negatively affect quality of life, whether internal or external, and that may disturb the individual's sense of well-being.

Conclusion

Quality of life emerges as a complex and multidimensional concept that cannot be reduced to a single definition or confined to one disciplinary perspective. Rather, it is a dynamic construct shaped by the interaction between subjective experiences and objective living conditions, and influenced by psychological, social, cultural, medical, and philosophical dimensions.

From the psychological perspective, quality of life is closely linked to individual perception, values, needs, and mental health. It is not merely the presence of favorable living conditions, but the way these conditions are interpreted and evaluated by the individual. In this sense, subjective evaluation plays a central role in determining whether life is experienced as satisfying or distressing. Cognitive approaches further reinforce this idea by emphasizing that differences in perceived quality of life are primarily rooted in differences in individual perception rather than objective reality itself.

On the social level, quality of life is strongly connected to family structure, social relationships, and integration within the community. The family, as the first social institution, plays a fundamental role in shaping emotional stability, social development, and psychological well-being, particularly in childhood. Consequently, the concept of **family quality of life** extends the understanding of well-being beyond the individual to include collective satisfaction, shared experiences, and mutual support within the family unit.

The philosophical approach adds another dimension by linking quality of life to happiness and meaning, suggesting that a fulfilling life is achieved not only through material satisfaction but also through intellectual freedom, imagination, and the absence of persistent life disturbances. Meanwhile, the medical approach highlights the importance of health and healthcare support systems, emphasizing that physical, psychological, and social care are essential determinants of life quality, especially for individuals suffering from illness or disability.

Humanistic and integrative perspectives further enrich this understanding by emphasizing the interaction between the individual and the environment. They highlight the importance of personal growth, autonomy, self-acceptance, and meaningful life goals, as well as the role of supportive environments that allow individuals to develop their potential and achieve psychological balance.

Across all theoretical approaches, a consistent idea emerges: quality of life is not static. It is a continuous process influenced by internal factors such as personality, emotions, and coping abilities, as well as external factors such as social support, economic conditions, cultural context, and environmental stability. This dual structure is also reflected in the distinction between subjective and objective dimensions, where satisfaction depends on both actual living conditions and individual expectations.

Furthermore, the presence of barriers such as illness, disability, social deprivation, and poor living conditions demonstrates that quality of life is vulnerable to disruption. However, the existence of compensatory capacities—such as resilience, social support networks, psychological adaptability, and positive coping strategies—shows that individuals and families can actively improve their well-being despite challenges.

In conclusion, quality of life should be understood as an integrated and evolving concept that reflects the totality of human experience. It is shaped by the balance between needs and their satisfaction, between expectations and reality, and between individual perception and external conditions. Achieving a high quality of life therefore requires not only improving material and social conditions, but also strengthening psychological resilience, enhancing social support systems, and promoting environments that foster dignity, autonomy, and well-being.

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