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**LEVEL AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL**  
**SPACE OF MEGAPOLIS MOSCOW**

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*Abstract*

The article gives an empirical description of the standards and quality of living as categories and factors of the megapolis Moscow population way of living. The concern of the distribution of social wealth, production resources, and income of the megapolis Moscow population is brought up. It is argued that the main goal of the country's economic development is to create conditions for the satisfaction of the growing material and spiritual needs of the population; therefore, the satisfaction of these needs is considered a characteristic of the population standard of living. The quality of living is defined as satisfaction of the material and spiritual needs. The instability and unpredictability of the economic situation are emphasized to be one of the most characteristic features of the present stage of historical development of both the state in general and of Moscow region in particular. It focuses on the need to understand and prevent the reasons for the national economic stagnation, which may be further aggravated by regional crises. The confidence of citizens in government institutions is discussed. The main components and factors of the way and quality of living of Muscovites are being analysed. The main social problems of Muscovites have been noted to be difficulties and contradictions, threats and risks to the normal people existence, generated by objective negative processes as well as social and natural extremes: unemployment, inflation, diseases, disability, and accidents.

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**Keywords:** Way, living quality, Muscovites, confidence, justice.



## 1. Introduction

The main goal of the country development is the creation of conditions for complete satisfaction of the growing material and spiritual needs of the population. The level of these needs satisfaction is considered a characteristic of the population living standard.

The living quality can be defined as the satisfaction of the human material and spiritual needs. The living quality is not only a characteristic of the achievement terms and satisfaction with achievement, it considers the ability to keep the achieved results. The implementation of the culture regulatory function provides for a certain living quality, the standards of which are approved by society; examples of behaviour, social norms, and values are an important component of the individual's self-identity, as they are the basis of a human behaviour regulation (Shchetkina, 2017).

Economic situation instability and unpredictability can be called one of the most characteristic features of the modern stage of historical development. The overall national economic stagnation may be further aggravated due to a number of regional crises.

Now experts cannot accurately calculate all the consequences of the "war of sanctions" for the Russian economy; however, even now there is a possibility that the current situation will turn negative results in the short and medium term. At that, the dependence of the population confidence in the power institutions on the living standards and quality increases. That is why now the issues of developing a system for assessing the population living habits and quality are of current concern, implying a system of indicators for comprehensive reflection of these concepts objective and subjective characteristics.

It should be noted that the living habits concept includes all the essential features of people's activities. The living habits can be defined as the aggregate (system) of essential features characterizing the activity of people, social groups, and communities in historically defined social conditions. This concept covers all areas of social activity.

First, it reflects the nature of the prizes of life material production, certain historical production relations that underlie the society life activity, the way of being.

Second, the living habits depend heavily on a certain specific historical character of social relations prevailing at a given time.

Third, the living habits depend on subjective factors, such as preschool education, school and university education, occupational attainment of educators, teachers, the availability of good libraries, etc. All this is important for improvement of the living habits in a specific society.

Fourth, the living habits certainly depend on persons who control the society, develop constitutional laws, and the legal norms, citizens are forced to use.

Fifth, an important component of improvement of the living habits and quality is the formation of value orientations and attitudes, as they create conditions for an individual harmonious development. This should also be added to the overall organization of the population leisure, which should meet socially significant goals and objectives (Voz'mitel' & Osadchaya 2009).

## 2. Problem Statement

At the present stage of research, the domestic and foreign practice identifies the main approaches of conceptual nature, which can be defined as the basic concept of researching the population living habits:

- the first concept considers the living standard as the population material condition. The emphasis is upon the definition of rational consumption norms and the correspondence of real consumption to them, the income level and purchasing power, the substantiation for their differentiation in society, the establishment of social standards. The individual wealth is viewed through the prism of the nationwide wealth. The strategic goal of the state is to increase production and to ensure a high level of needs satisfaction through redistribution of income in society;
- the second concept is based on the need to meet human needs not only in material goods but also in conditions for development and life activity, it means a partial transition from the macroeconomic to the microeconomic understanding.

## 3. Research Questions

Considering the fact that values are the key to understanding many trends in changing social norms, attitudes, and strategies of the population behaviour, let us dwell on their role in the formation of a particular living way. The social values, where the significance of real phenomena and objects is considered from the point of view of their conformity or inconsistency to the needs of society, social group, personality, take a special place in the system of values. They, being the goals of life and the main means of achieving thereof, are the most important factor for individual and behaviour motivation, the personal value orientations.

Durkheim (2009) analysed the relationship of value and regulatory systems of an individual and society and indicated that the system of social values is a set of value representations of certain individuals, it is objective, being "free from subjective and variable assessments of individuals" that "find an already well-established classification, to which they are forced to adopt.

The Muscovites living habits are largely influenced by the existing power, and the people's confidence in the authorities is important. We would agree with Luhmann (1988) that the confidence becomes an indispensable condition for social development in modern societies due to the growing sense of insecurity of the future due to increasing complexity and opacity of modern societies.

## 4. Purpose of the Study

For monitoring of this sphere under the auspices of the government in the Russian Federation, the Centre for Population Living Standards has been created and is functioning. The scientists thereof generalized the world experience and developed their own approach to studying and assessing the population living quality and standard. This approach says that the living quality is a variety of abilities and satisfaction of the needs of an individual, social groups and society as a whole, which determines their development and wealth." As of the "living standard" concept, it is "an assessment of the monetary

resources needed to ensure the living quality of an individual, social groups and society as a whole” (Bobkov, 2012).

## 5. Research Methods

Before empirical research, we focus on work of Butcher M. and Maclean K.: “whilst not rejecting the need for theories that allow comparative perspectives on cities, our conclusions underscore the importance of recognising the multiple logics that generate city space and urban cultures, and the consequent need to parochialise the empirical basis of theories that claim to be global in outreach” (Butcher & Maclean 2018). An analytical sociological research was conducted to study the Moscow population living habits using the questionnaire survey method. The representativeness of the sample was provided by applying a random multistage approach using the quota method by sex, age, and education. The total sample included 640 people. 55.4% of respondents had higher education, 30.4% - advanced education, 11.4% - secondary general education, and 2.8% - incomplete secondary and lower. The Muscovites participating in the survey were representatives of top management - 16.9%, middle managers - 19.1%, lower-level managers - 14%, and non-executive employees - 49.9%.

As of January 1, 2016, the population of Moscow was 12'330'126 persons according to the Federal State Statistics Service dated March 9, 2016 by Russia population estimate by the region as of 01.01.2016. The constant growth of the Moscow population is mainly due to the influx of people from other regions. Some migrants make up the so-called "marriage migration" where residents of other cities or states, after marrying Muscovites, move to the city for permanent residence (Phelan & Kinsella, 2011).

Moscow region in the Russian Federation is one of the greatest fiscal capacities, the highest living cost, and the lowest sensitivity of pension provision, which is regulated by federal legislation. Moscow budget income per capita is over the average one among the other regions of the country, but the cost of a fixed set of consumer goods in Moscow is 1.4-1.5 times over the average Russian level. Moscow pensioners are at increased risk of poverty. The capital is leading in terms of financing social programs among all subjects of the Russian Federation. This is a poly-ethnic, poly-confessional city with a mosaic social structure.

## 6. Findings

The main components that affect the characteristics of the population living standards and quality include employment and work. Labour is an important element of the state social policy, as well as the main goal of the socio-economic process development and of the decent lifestyle provision. Labour is rightly considered the main production factor and a type of human activity.

Registered unemployment in Moscow, in general, remains low. "The unemployment index was only 0.62 percent as of February 1, 2016, which is more than twice lower than the national index” (Sergunina, 2016).

In Moscow, wage inequality decreased more than in Russia as a whole from 2013 to 2015: The Gini coefficient fell from 0.4326 to 0.4038, and R/P 10% ratio fell from 17.5 to 14.8 (Polygaeva, 2015).

Due to the Western sanctions, modern economic realities have contributed to the process of changing the workplace and nature for a large proportion of the population. 9.6% of Muscovites assessed

these changes, as "I have to work more in the same conditions." Approximately every 14th got a new job; 5-10% worked in several places or took additional work in the main place. That is, the labour intensity has increased significantly for every fifth respondent.

An important indicator of the people living quality is the dominant strategy of our respondents in solving everyday problems, which is mostly articulated as "self-orientation." So the question: "What can people like you do to make better and more worthy your life and the lives of people around you,?" brought such answers as: 26.7% - the ones like me can barely change their lives, not to mention the lives of others, 28.4% - to change the living for the better, we all need to work more and better, 31.6% - we have to take personal responsibility for ensuring a decent life, 23.3% - we need to unite in the new, effective labour unions.

Over the half of the respondents are focused on enhancing their personal position as of improvement of their living quality. At that, most people believe that the authorities are unlikely to support them in resolving their problems: 57.2% believe that a common person cannot even defend the legitimate rights before a local official, 21.4% consider it to be possible.

It is obvious that in this situation, the united area of life, the same conditions, and similarity of social wealth are factors affecting the judgments and attitudes revealed. We should remember that the population living quality and the social activity depends mostly on the city social policy, therefore forming the values and orientations of the territorial community members, which promote the development of their civic position, is of fundamental importance. In connection with this, we studied the "generalized" or "final" and instrumental values of the Moscow population. As the analysis has shown, there is almost no difference in the population value orientations hierarchy in various regions. Our respondents demonstrate the similarity of them: "strong family, good children", "confidence in the future, availability of favourable prospects", "an interesting job allowing demonstrating the abilities and talents." These values can be called "neoconservative," or "Soviet" ones. They form the basis of the Russian regions' consolidation. From the point of view of the of Russian society stability, the people "confidence", "calmness" are important, as they reflect the success of political and economic changes in the country.

Orientation to material wealth was important for 39.2% of respondents. 35.5% of respondents noted "Confidence in the future, favourable prospects." Respectively 29.4% and 28% of respondents noted values: "to earn the others' respect" and "to have an interesting job allowing demonstrating the abilities and talents." The other values go depending on their significance as follows: 20.3% - "live in safety without feeling threat of violence"; 20.2% - "Try to live according to the truth of conscience and justice"; 15% - "To become rich"; 14.4% - "To live in an environmentally friendly area"; 13.1% - "To make a career and achieve power"; 6.6% - "To strive for God, following his commandments. Our survey highlighted two types of problems that are of citizens' concern: problems of the future development of the country as a whole and as of all residents of Russia and the problems associated with the development of their region, concerning their living standards and quality in a particular settlement.

Ranking of the problems important for Russia development and the guarantee of its national security has shown that inflation, due to the ruble fall and the prices development, is on the first place. The second place, according to respondents, is the problem of alcoholism and drug addiction, which

directly affects both the future of our country and successful development of the native city. The third, fourth and sixth places in the rating of problems belong to the crisis in Ukraine, the resulting problems with refugees, and sanctions against Russia.

The townspeople are also concerned about the problems caused by the increase of social inequality, as well as corruption and bureaucracy in authorities of different levels, affecting the ongoing reforms in housing, education, health, and pensions.

The generalised trust is an important category for understanding the population living standards and quality. It is always an object of direct state influence and purposeful ideological construction "from above." Therefore, the position that the state and public policy plays an important role in trust earning has heuristic potential. At that, we should note that the main expectations of state bodies support are connected with free medical care, help in job search, maintaining order and legality in the region. From our point of view, these problems form the core of city authorities' social actions on the generalised trust formation in the near future, and measures for their solution must be immanently present in all programs and documents of regions and federal authorities.

The deterioration of citizens' respect and confidence in the state and its institutions is actually the most serious obstacle in the implementation of certain social and economic reform concepts. The question "What the state should do for its citizens", was answered by 0.7% of respondents as "all the problems should be resolved by citizens themselves and at their own expense"; 83.7% of respondents believe that the state should provide decent wages, quality education and medicine for all citizens who want to use such benefits; 2.6% of respondents believe that the state should provide all citizens only with the necessary minimum of social benefits in wages, education, medicine; 3% of respondents consider the state's task is to target only the most vulnerable citizens and those who are in a difficult life situation. An evaluation of the social policy implemented in the city can be used as an integral indicator of the effectiveness of the population wealth construction by the authorities. We must say that many respondents were undecided as to that question, primarily due to ignorance as of the authorities' activities. The balance of effective/ineffective assessments in the answers of those who formulated their position was negative: 8.7% of respondents considered the social policy to be effective, 58.6% - not effective, 32.1% were undecided.

Most of the interviewed respondents believe that the authorities rarely care about the needs of common persons; a common person cannot defend own rights before a local official. 39.8% of the surveyed Muscovites consider all problems to be solved only for the rich good.

According to Article 7 of the Constitution, Russia is a social state which policy is aimed at creating conditions that ensure a decent life and free personal development. Here such civil rights as the right to work and fair wages, the right to education, the right to health protection, etc. are emphasized, regardless of the qualities of a citizen and his level of wealth (Leskova, 2016).

Meanwhile, the current, real poverty in Russia does not meet the proclaimed fundamental constitutional provisions on the social state. In our study, the question "What should the state do for its citizens?", was answered by 69.8% of surveyed Muscovites as "The state should provide decent wages, quality education and medicine for all citizens who want to use such benefits, 19.6% - that the state should provide all citizens only with the necessary minimum of social benefits, 8.3% - believe that the

state's task is to target only the most vulnerable citizens and those who are in a difficult life situation, and 2.3% of respondents believe that all the problems should be resolved by citizens themselves and at their own expense.

The great income inequality side-lines the most important market economy regulation methods, for example, optimizing prices for certain goods and services, as in the context of acute income inequality such measures can cause an unacceptable deterioration in the poorest population living. Too uneven income distribution affects the moral standards of economic processes participants' behaviour, prevents the trust relationship and the obligations fulfilment significantly complicates business activity.

The population ability to restore and raise human capital to pay for goods and services, leisure, enhancing comfort, meeting the needs for education, maintaining health is determined by the employed population wages as the main source of income. As of material security, 36.5% of respondents believe that they are well-financed, 53.4% - satisfactorily, and 10% - poorly. 22% of Muscovites have good vacation opportunities, 54% - satisfactory, and 24% - poor. For 52.5% of respondents, there are good opportunities for spending free time, satisfactory - for 39.1%, bad - for 8.4%. Good opportunities for putting children (grandchildren) to a nursery, a kindergarten are determined by 37.9% of Muscovites, satisfactory - 49.2%, and 12.9% - bad. An opportunity for education of children (grandchildren) was assessed as good by 35.7% of respondents, as satisfactory - by 51.8%, and as poor - by 12.4%.

The problem of the social wealth, production resources, and income of the population distribution optimization is acute in our country. This problem correlates to political and legal problems. A huge imbalance in the social wealth and income distribution in favour of a narrow group of people, which has nothing in common with a social state, emerged during the ongoing reforms in the country.

The question "What measures should be taken to ensure more equal distribution of the national wealth for the common good?" was answered by the 33.8% of Muscovites surveyed as "some money from the rich need to be taken through the progressive taxation scale and put for development of public education, culture, and to help people who cannot provide themselves, 30.2% believe that the state must return to its property the high-profit enterprises for the extraction of oil, gas, precious stones and metals, air and railway transport, etc., 24.4% believe that a complete change in the socio-economic system of modern Russia is necessary.

## 7. Conclusion

The main components that affect the characteristics of the population living standards and quality include employment and work. Labour is an important element of the state social policy, as well as the main goal of the socio-economic process development and of the decent lifestyle provision. Labour is rightly considered the main production factor and a type of human activity.

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