

# Monitoring Perceived Quality of Life in Korea\*

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**Abstract:** *This paper reports results of two studies attempted in Korea as "experiments" in conceptualizing, operationalizing, and analyzing the subjectively perceived quality of life in relation to other personal and socioeconomic variables of individuals. Subjective quality of life, viewed as a multi-dimensional concept, is found to be closely associated with objective conditions of people's life. To monitor and to improve the quality of people's lives, it is argued, both objective and subjective indicators are to be employed.*

## I. Introduction

Two main objectives are pursued in this presentation. First, we attempt to demonstrate that the concept of subjectively perceived quality of life is multi-dimensional in nature. And second, we present relevant data to show that subjective quality of life is closely associated with major objective conditions of individuals' lives. We report on two separate national surveys conducted in Korea back to back in one year's interval. On the basis of the data, we argue that in order to effectively monitor and to implement policies to improve the quality of people's lives, it is essential to use both

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objective and subjective quality of life indicators.

While there has been a growing recognition in industrialized countries that both objective and subjective indicators should be developed to help measure and plan life quality of the people, little has been produced in this regard from the academic or government circles of currently industrializing societies.<sup>(1)</sup> No doubt, the very concept of quality of life has its own peculiar history in the relatively more industrialized societies of the West where it has been conceived as representing one of the major issues arising from the consequences of industrialization itself. Thus, even though the concept is an item of importation from the standpoint of newly industrializing countries, due to the extraordinary rapidity of the process of industrialization, the issue of life quality even in these countries is no longer "a fire on the other side of the shore," so to speak (Kim, 1980). It is in this spirit that we have embarked on studies of subjectively perceived quality of life in Korea.

Indicators of subjective nature, one may argue, are of little use because they are so nebulous and dependent on the whims of the people's minds, and it would be difficult to operationalize it, to begin with. But when we deal with a term like "quality of life", we are inherently involving ourselves in some sort of subjective elements in human life, above all. To take an extreme position, one could even argue the attempt to measure quality of life using objective indicators may already be a futile task because such indicators may not really represent whatever is to be measured by the concept of life quality. They, after all, are merely indirect indicators. It is not our intention to make philosophical argument on this subject.

Rather, we might be better off if we concentrated on the more down-to-earth approach to the objective and subjective aspects of human quality of life. Objective indicators that have been actively gathered and compiled mostly by economic planners and their academic counterparts do indeed

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(1) This has been pointed out in our earlier work, Lee *et al* (1982). Also see Andrews (1973), Milbrath (1979), and Strumpel (1974).

provide information about the extent to which certain resources and facilities are available in a society. Some indicators may show how much access to these resources and facilities people enjoy. Nevertheless, they do not necessarily tell us whether or not, or how much people are happy or satisfied with the existing life conditions and situations. We also lack any information as to what kinds of goods and services people need, consider important, or prefer for the enrichment of their life quality.

Moreover, planners and even academicians may develop all sorts of objective indicators on the premise that certain things in life are important and they implement policies with certain notions of priorities in life. While their preconceptions and priorities may in fact reflect the sentiments of the general populace, they surely have little empirical ground for such judgments. It is in this respect of policy relevance, too, that some ways to develop indicators of subjectively perceived quality of life are urgently needed.

The two studies reported here represent only initial efforts to develop an on-going research program to help monitor the nature and level of quality of life in Korea by means of a set of subjective indicators.<sup>(2)</sup> As such, the conceptualizations and analyses presented here are still exploratory in nature, and need to be further elaborated and enriched.

## II. The Conceptual Framework

Obviously, the most difficult part in doing research on quality of life is to conceptualize and operationalize the concept itself. No wonder there is much confusion and less agreement on the concept in the current literature. Thus, it has almost become necessary to start with a rather arbitrary approach to its conceptualization, and to back it up through the application

(2) These two studies are, *Diagnosis and Prognosis of Education in Korea* (1980), to be referred to as Study A, 1980 here, and *Social Development and Public Opinion* (1981), or Study B, 1981. These were surveys of national samples conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences of Seoul National University.

of such a conceptualization to actual research. Essentially, this is what we have done, and in the process we have come to modify our own conceptualization.

Initially, we have started with the line of reasoning that welfare and pleasure are the two most important requisites of meaningful human existence (Allardt, 1972; Campbell et al., 1976; Lee et al., 1982; Rescher, 1972; Scitovsky, 1976; von Wright, 1972). Thus, quality of life was conceived as a multi-dimensional evaluative concept, involving the welfare and pleasure experienced by people themselves. For operationalization purposes, we have employed measures such as levels of happiness and extent of life enjoyment for the pleasure (hedonic goodness) aspect, and levels of satisfaction with a dozen domains of life for the welfare aspect (See Figure 1).

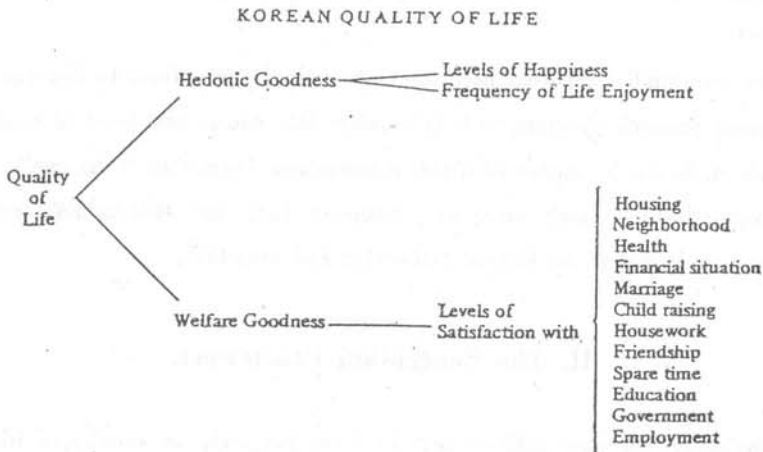


Fig. 1. A Strategy for Measuring Quality of Life.

Later, as we have further explored the avenues of conceptual refinement, we have modified the scheme to include negative life experiences. This decision came from two considerations. First, almost all of the existing studies have focused on the life experiences that are positively toned, by defining life quality in terms of satisfaction, happiness, pleasure, achievement of life goals, and the like (Atkinson, 1976; Blishen and Atkinson, 1980;

Campbell *et al.*, 1976; Hankiss, 1980; Milbrath, 1980; Shin and Johnson, 1978). Therefore, they tend to neglect the negative side of life experiences. Second, by being so positively toned, they have not only dealt with the one-sided picture of life quality. Such an approach necessarily is limited in its use when applied to the situation in the less industrialized or newly industrializing countries. In these societies, reduction of pain and suffering, and avoidance of misery is often of more immediate and urgent concern. To provide a balanced perspective, it is useful to include the negative aspect to the conceptualization (Doh C. Shin *et al.*, 1983). What we have come up with in this effort is a modified scheme shown in Figure 2. In addition, we have tapped the perceptions of important things in life because of the evaluative nature of the concept of life quality.

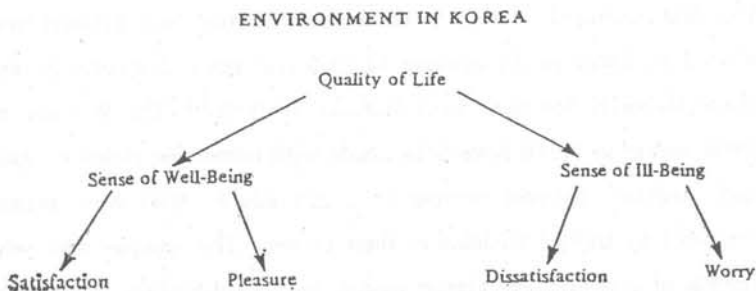


Fig. 2. A Strategy for Measuring Quality of Life, modified

Although, in our previous reports, we have used more refined indices, we will analyze the data in this work in a more straightforward manner. In other words, previously, we have tried to convert the raw data into various indices, but here we will dwell on the raw data without much manipulation.

For the welfare aspect, which may represent the cognitive judgment of the current life situation, we have used the level of satisfaction with respect to twelve domains of life rated on a scale running from 0 to 10, in the case of one survey and from 1 to 7, in the case of the other survey. To measure the pleasure or the affective aspect, two single item scales are used, dealing

with the extent of feeling happy in life and the other that of enjoying life, Sixteen items have been provided to ask whether or not people have worries about them, and 9 items to identify how many people consider each important. The scores on these were assigned either 1 for "worry" or "important", or 0 for "not worry" or "not important." In addition, we have asked a set of questions to tap the people's perception of their life situation in general and their perception of the nation's quality as a whole, comparing five year earlier, present, and five years later. This was rated on an 11-point self-anchoring scale, presented figuratively as the ladder of life.

### III. Data and Findings

The data analyzed in this work are drawn from two national surveys conducted in Korea in the summer of 1980 and 1981, respectively, by the Institute of Social Sciences, Seoul National University. The first one was a national survey of 1,500 household heads with unmarried children, and the second, another national sample of 1,220 adults, who were personally interviewed by trained students at their homes. The sample was selected by means of a multi-stage cluster design with stratification, probability to size, and equal probability of each household in the target populations. On the whole, it was determined that the samples were generally representative of the survey populations, with a few exceptions, such as underrepresentation of female, farmers and older people.

Table 1 summarizes correlation coefficients among the various component indicators of perceived quality of life. Personal QOL stands for the overall rating of personal life situation on the 11-point self-anchored scale and National QOL, for the national condition in general, rated on the same scale. The same questions were asked for three time frames. It is evident from these findings that all the component elements we have used to measure subjective quality of life show some association with each other,

Table 1. Correlations among Component Indicators of Perceived Quality of Life

	Personal QOL present	Personal QOL past	Personal QOL future	Life Satis- faction	Happiness	Enjoyment	Worry	National QOL present	National QOL past	National QOL future
(Study A, 1980)										
Personal QOL-present	—	.449***	.509***	.476***	.393***	.288***	—	.184***	.170***	.129***
Personal QOL-past		—	.290***	.283***	.188***	.158***	—	.114***	.192***	.078***
Personal QOL-future			—	.359***	.328***	.264***	—	.109***	.061*	.219***
Life Satisfaction				—	.427***	.360***	—	—	—	—
Happiness					—	.423***	—	—	—	—
Enjoyment						—	—	—	—	—
(Study B, 1981)										
Personal QOL-present	—	.558***	.673***	.228***	.413***	.325***	-.281***	.118***	.055*	.085**
Personal QOL-past		—	.404***	NS	.260***	.092**	-.114***	NS	.179***	NS
Personal QOL-future			—	NS	.375***	.254***	-.191***	.112***	NS	.242***
Life Satisfaction				—	.366***	.480***	-.383***	—	—	—
Happiness					—	.520***	-.255***	—	—	—
Enjoyment						—	—	—	—	—
Worry							—	—	—	—

Levels of statistical significance: \*\*\* $<.001$ , \*\* $<.01$ , \* $<.05$ ; NS=not significant.

at a statistically significant level, but none of the correlation coefficients is large enough to lead us to the conclusion that they are not measuring independent dimensions of the same phenomenon. In other words, although each indicator measures the same general phenomenon of perceived quality of life, each is independent enough to render support to our conception of life quality being a multi-dimensional concept.

On the basis of the data presented in Table 1, however, we are not in a position to determine which of the two dimensions, pleasure or welfare, do contribute more to the overall perception of quality of life. In other words, the size of correlation coefficients between Personal QOL and life satisfaction, happiness, and enjoyment varies across the two studies, leaving room for uncertainty as to the stability of these relations over time or across different samples. Future studies should be able to help determine this, hopefully. Nor is clear the significance of separating the pleasure and welfare dimensions, at least looking at the correlation figures.

Table 2 is inserted here to show how the Koreans perceive their life quality in a time framework. Interestingly, one clear tendency emerges from these findings. That is, Koreans must be rather optimistic people. Their rating of life situation, on the personal or national level, improves steadily over the 10-year time frame, the score rising very high in their future prospects. Also interesting is the national condition than for personal life. These indications hold consistently for the both studies.

**Table 2. Global Perceptions of Quality of Life**

	Study A 1980	Study B 1981
Personal QOL-past	4.72	3.68
Personal QOL-present	5.29	4.27
Personal QOL-future	6.95	6.11
National QOL-past	4.81	4.15
National QOL-present	5.67	5.47
National QOL-future	7.28	7.14

Note: Score range is 0~10.



In our earlier works, we have pointed out that most studies undertaken in industrialized societies have found little variation in the people's perception of their life qualities by their socioeconomic characteristics. Subsequently, we have reported some very significant differences among different categories of people found in our studies in Korea (Lee *et al.*, 1982; Shin *et al.*, 1983). Obviously, the amount of resources people control or their status level tend to affect their level of subjective perception of life quality. Income has been found to have the most effect, followed by occupation and education, which are closely related to one another. Such demographic factors as sex and age are less influential in this regard. Table 3 contains the detailed figures indicating the difference according to personal characteristics.

Now, in order to determine the relative influence of each of the characteristics variables, we have run a simple multiple regression analysis for both sets of data. With the exception of National QOL, income seems to retain the relative influence even after controlling for all other independent variables, upon all of the quality of life perception measures we analyzed. Next to income come urban-rural residence, education, and occupation. Demographic factors like sex and age have relatively weaker influence. These findings are presented in Table 4.

Thus far, we have touched upon the global sense of quality of life experienced by the individuals, in terms of their levels of life satisfaction (averaged over 12 domains of life), of happiness, of enjoyment, of worry, or overall life quality. What about their subjective feelings about different domains in life? To improve our understanding of the people's subjective quality of life, and to reflect upon policies and plans for enhancing their life quality, it would be extremely useful to look into their sense of quality in various life domain. For this purpose, we have made some comparisons involving importance, satisfaction, and worry ratings of different domains.

As shown in Table 5, we have tried to examine if there is any significant correspondence between importance ratings and level of satisfaction, across

Table 3. Perceived Quality of Life by Personal Characteristics

	Personal QOL present		Life Satisfaction		Happiness		Enjoyment		Worry		National QOL present	
	(Study A) 1980	(Study B) 1981	A 1980	B 1981	A 1980	B 1981	A 1980	B 1981	A 1980	B 1981	A 1980	B 1981
Total	5.29	4.27	5.73	4.39	2.19	2.40	2.86	2.54	—	.410	5.67	5.47
Sex: Male	5.13	—	—	—	2.22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Female	5.47	—	—	—	2.15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
F-test	**				*							
Age: Below 20 years	—	5.10	—	4.00	2.43	—	—	—	—	.802	—	—
20~29 years	—	4.79	—	4.16	2.06	—	—	—	—	.690	—	—
30~39 years	—	4.14	—	4.43	2.13	—	—	—	—	.273	—	—
40~49 years	—	4.03	—	4.50	2.24	—	—	—	—	.251	—	—
50~59 years	—	3.86	—	4.56	2.26	—	—	—	—	.285	—	—
60 years & over	—	3.69	—	4.72	2.21	—	—	—	—	.250	—	—
F-test	***			***	**					***		
Residence: Rural village	5.14	4.07	—	—	2.24	—	—	—	—	—	6.02	6.02
Rural town	5.07	4.11	—	—	2.23	—	—	—	—	—	5.93	5.49
Medium city	} 5.24	4.20	—	—	2.20	—	—	—	—	—	5.67	5.28
Metropolitan city		4.39	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5.06	5.06
Seoul	5.56	4.53	—	—	2.10	—	—	—	—	—	5.23	5.46
F-test	*	**			**						***	***
Education: No schooling	4.22	2.92	5.33	4.28	2.45	2.56	3.25	2.79	—	.355	6.27	5.90
Some primary	} 4.90	3.03	5.50	3.93	2.35	2.64	2.98	2.93	—	.306	6.07	5.53
Completed primary		3.61	—	4.43	—	2.41	—	2.52	—	.300	—	5.88
Some middle	} 5.05	4.05	5.62	4.31	2.25	2.48	2.92	2.47	—	.370	5.96	5.79
Completed middle		4.28	—	4.44	—	2.43	—	2.51	—	.384	—	5.56

Some high	4.33	5.68	4.44	2.15	2.35	2.83	2.45	—	.366	5.76	5.35
Completed high	4.59	5.85	4.34	2.09	2.40	2.96	2.57	—	.504	5.28	5.23
2-year college	5.14	6.12	4.35	2.04	2.30	2.65	2.49	—	.500	5.00	4.99
Completed college	5.64	6.59	4.60	1.84	2.22	2.68	2.35	—	.474	4.95	5.04
Graduate school	6.67	***	4.51	***	2.00	***	2.00	—	.594	***	5.67
F-test	***	***	*	***	***	***	***	—	***	***	***
Occupation: Unemployed	4.42	5.18	4.13	2.45	2.58	2.42	—	—	.453	5.55	5.68
Miscellaneous	4.48	5.66	4.41	2.28	2.32	2.78	—	—	.293	6.06	5.39
Fisher	3.43	5.66	5.20	2.28	2.50	2.78	—	—	.479	5.53	4.50
Farmer	4.00	5.47	4.38	2.28	2.42	2.79	—	—	.400	5.71	5.85
Sales & Service	3.84	5.35	4.32	2.24	2.49	2.88	—	—	.476	5.51	5.48
Production	4.11	5.63	4.42	2.12	2.41	2.95	—	—	.379	4.98	5.29
Clerical	4.42	5.69	4.44	2.02	2.45	3.03	—	—	.332	5.42	5.24
Technical	4.85	6.34	4.64	2.05	2.32	2.88	—	—	.148	5.62	5.32
Managerial	4.88	6.67	4.65	1.94	2.33	2.82	—	—	.411	5.62	5.00
Professional	4.88	***	***	***	2.23	***	—	—	.653	***	5.65
F-test	***	***	**	***	**	***	***	—	***	***	**
Income: Below 100,000 Won	4.46	5.50	4.28	2.40	2.55	3.08	2.77	—	.365	6.19	5.77
100,000~200,000 Won	4.92	5.48	4.25	2.30	2.45	2.98	2.58	—	.396	5.54	5.56
200,000~300,000 Won	5.27	5.57	4.45	2.12	2.38	2.86	2.50	—	.379	5.25	5.50
300,000~400,000 Won	5.77	5.97	4.47	2.08	2.32	2.75	2.40	—	.415	5.28	5.25
400,000~500,000 Won	5.90	6.00	4.64	2.02	2.20	2.61	2.29	—	.367	5.14	5.31
500,000~700,000 Won	6.31	6.51	4.60	1.92	2.26	2.57	2.42	—	.447	5.66	5.07
700,000~1,000,000 Won	6.73	6.76	4.48	2.04	2.28	2.48	2.33	—	.633	5.08	4.82
1 million & over	***	***	4.56	***	2.13	***	2.32	—	.467	***	5.08
F-test	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	—	***	***	***

Levels of significance: \*\*\* &lt; .001, \*\* &lt; .01, \* &lt; .05

**Table 4. Summary of Multivariate Analysis of Component QOL Indicators (Beta values)**

Predictors	Personal QOL-present		Life Satisfaction	
	(Study A)	(Study B)	(Study A)	(Study B)
Sex	.063**	.045	-.061**	-.012
Age	-.004	-.004	.048	.098***
Residence	.097***	.121***	.091***	.140***
Education	.043	.225***	.052	.187***
Occupation	-.119***	.020	-.108***	.020
Income	.265***	.376***	.215***	.194***
% Variance explained	11.5	23.6	8.4	9.3

Predictors	Happiness		Worry		National QOL-present	
	(Study A)	(Study B)	(Study A)	(Study B)	(Study A)	(Study B)
Sex	-.036	-.030	—	.092**	.027	-.062
Age	.017	.083***	—	.011	.094***	-.021
Residence	-.077**	-.193***	—	-.097***	.101***	.054
Education	-.061	-.119***	—	-.082**	-.094**	-.120***
Occupation	.096***	-.029	—	-.060	-.042	.034
Income	-.168***	-.238***	—	-.204***	-.040	-.022
% Variance explained	6.2	9.2		5.5	4.2	3.1

Levels of significance: \*\*\* $<.001$ , \*\* $<.01$ , \* $<.05$ , otherwise not significant.

the two studies. When we selected domain items common across studies and common between importance and satisfaction questions, there were nine such items left in for analysis. There were of course, twelve domains rated for the level of satisfaction, originally. They were first rank-ordered by the mean satisfaction score (range 1~10 for Study A, and 0~7 for Study B), as appearing in Column B of Table 5. Then, other rankings were added.

We have computed Spearman's  $\rho$  (or  $s$ ), or rank-order correlations for various pairs, importance and satisfaction for Study A ( $A \times B'$ ), for Study B ( $C \times D'$ ), importance and importance across the two studies ( $A \times C$ ), and satisfaction and satisfaction ( $B \times D$ ). For the importance and satisfaction pairs, however, we had to use the adjusted rank orders for satisfaction.

Table 5. Mean Values and Satisfaction with Domains of Life.

Domain	Study A, 1980			Study B, 1981			Difference of Studies (A-C) (B-D)
	Importance Mean Rank (A)	Satisfaction Mean Rank (B) (B')	Rank Order Difference (A-B')	Importance Mean Rank (C)	Satisfaction Mean Rank (D) (D')	Rank Order Difference (C-D')	
Child rearing (education)		7.84 1			4.48 6		-5
The Nation (Korea)		7.09 2			5.50 1		1
Marriage	.379 3	6.99 3 (1)	2	.102 5	5.05 3 (2)	3	-2 0
Health	.689 1	6.67 4 (2)	-1	.807 1	4.54 5 (4)	-3	0 -1
Friendship	.130 9	6.03 5 (3)	6	.086 7	5.21 2 (1)	6	2 3
Neighborhood	.180 7	5.88 6 (4)	3	.089 6	4.46 7 (5)	1	1 -1
Housing	.325 4	5.30 7 (5)	-1	.071 8	4.12 9 (7)	1	-4 -2
Job (work, employment)	.180 7	5.21 8 (6)	1	.177 4	4.24 8 (6)	-2	3 0
Financial situation (income)	.180 7	4.61 9 (7)	0	.279 2	3.51 12 (9)	-7	5 -3
Education		4.48 10			4.00 10		0
Government	.385 2	4.44 11 (8)	-6	.188 3	4.71 4 (3)	0	-1 8
Spare time (leisure)	.196 5	4.30 12 (9)	-4	.062 9	3.99 11 (8)	1	-4 1
Spearman's Rank Order Correlations ( $\rho$ )	A $\times$ B' = .133 <sup>NS</sup>			C $\times$ D' = .038 <sup>NS</sup>			A $\times$ C = .367 <sup>NS</sup> B $\times$ D = .033 <sup>NS</sup>

Notes: B' and D' are adjusted rank-orders for a domains appearing in Importance Scale.

Level of significance for Spearman's  $\rho$ : NS is not significant.

In short, we have found none of these rank-order correlations large enough to stand the statistical significance test. Put in other words, rank-orders of different domains, whether rated on the importance scale or the satisfaction scale, do not seem to stay stable over time across two different samples.

More importantly from a more substantive purview, the rank-order correlations between importance and satisfaction are very low and insignificant for both studies. This may mean that people do not necessarily feel satisfied with those domains they consider important. If this is the case, we might want to look into this matter more closely and carefully because this may be an indication of discrepancy between values and satisfactions, or needs and gratifications. It may also stand for what is called cognitive dissonance where cognition of satisfaction does not jibe with cognition of importance. In our data, the most notable domain in this respect is "Government". In the case of Study A conducted in the year of turmoil (1980), Government was seen as one of the most important domains of life, but the level of satisfaction with Government was one of the lowest. Of course, this has changed in 1981. On the other hand, take Friendship which is considered as one of the less important items in life, but they seem to be relatively well satisfied with it.

The underlying assumption of this line of analysis is that the more people can be satisfied with things they consider more important, the better is their quality of life. It is in this sense that the notion of quality of life requires a more multi-dimensional and refined approach.

Had we had similar domain items for the "Worry" question, we would have certainly made some comparison with importance and satisfaction ratings. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that income, work, housing, lack of spare time, and dependents are the most worrisome items and they all point to same aspect of socioeconomic life of individuals (Table 6). This almost corresponds with the lower satisfaction rankings of such domains as housing, job, income, and leisure, as shown in Table 5. Although not very

Table 6. Items of Worry and Related Variables (Study B, 1981 only) : A Summary

Rank Order	Domains	% Worry	Variables					
			Sex	Age	Residence	Education	Occupation	Income
1	Income shortage	71.4	•	+	•	—	—	—
2	Too much work to do	44.5	•	±	•	•	•	•
3	Housing	34.0	F	+	U	—	—	—
4	Spare time shortage	31.9	•	±	U	•	—	•
5	Too many people to look after	31.1	•	+	•	•	+	•
6	Lack of trustworthy people	26.1	•	+	•	•	—	•
7	Too much family troubles	20.4	•	•	•	—	•	•
8	No one recognizes my ability	19.5	•	•	•	•	•	•
9	Too much social discrimination	17.2	•	—	•	—	—	—
10	Too much debt	15.9	•	+	•	—	—	—
11	Sick family members	14.0	•	+	R	—	—	—
12	Lack of love	13.4	•	•	R	•	•	•
13	Too many people to consider	13.1	•	•	•	•	•	•
14	Problem children	9.7	•	•	•	•	•	—
15	Lack of political participation	9.4	•	•	•	•	•	•
16	Childlessness	1.4	•	•	•	•	•	•

Notes: + = positive association; — = negative association; F = female; U = urban; R = rural.

many worry items show variation according to independent variables, a general pattern seems to be that whatever items worry people, they tend to do so more for the lower socioeconomic status.

Socioeconomic, ecological, and demographic variables of individuals are also closely related to most of the life domains for satisfaction, as summarized in Table 7. Level of satisfaction with the nation and government is negatively related to type of residence area, education, occupational status, and/or income level. Otherwise, the association is positive in direction. In

**Table 7. Variables Related to Satisfaction with Life Domains : A Summary**

Domain / Study		Variables					
		Sex	Age	Residence	Education	Occupation	Income
Child rearing	Study A	•	+	•	•	•	•
	Study B	•	•	U	+	+	+
The nation	Study A	•	•	R	—	—	—
	Study B	•	+	R	—	•	—
Marriage	Study A	M	•	•	+	+	+
	Study B	M	•	•	+	•	+
Health	Study A	•	—	•	•	•	•
	Study B	M	—	•	+	•	+
Friends	Study A	M	+	•	•	+	•
	Study B	M	•	•	+	•	+
Neighbor	Study A	F	•	R	±	±	+
	Study B	M	+	•	—	•	+
Housing	Study A	•	+	U	+	+	+
	Study B	M	±	•	+	+	+
Job	Study A	•	•	U	+	+	+
	Study B	•	—	•	+	+	+
Income	Study A	F	•	U	+	+	+
	Study B	•	—	•	+	+	+
Education	Study A	M	—	U	+	+	+
	Study B	•	—	U	+	+	+
Government	Study A	•	•	R	•	+	•
	Study B	M	+	R	—	—	—
Spare time	Study A	•	•	U	+	+	+
	Study B	M	±	•	+	•	+

Notes: +=positive association; —=negative association; U=urban; M=male; F=female.



most domains, male respondents seem to feel better satisfied than females. Age seems to have rather mixed associations.

#### IV. Discussion

In this work, we have presented some preliminary survey findings from Korea, indicating that the subjective quality of life as perceived by individuals is a multidimensional concept of cognitive-affective evaluation of life conditions, and that such subjective experiences of life quality do indeed reflect the objective circumstances or accomplishments in the life of individuals. We have demonstrated that the concept of subjectively perceived quality of life entails both types of experience of welfare or satisfaction and pleasure or happiness-enjoyment in life, and it should be measured in both positive and negative directions, especially for the purpose of tapping the level of life quality in societies where efforts still are needed to overcome the negative experiences of misery, pain, or suffering.

People's sense of life quality subjectively perceived and felt in all of these closely related yet independent dimensions seems to be affected by their demographic, ecological and socioeconomic characteristics. But the relatively greater influence appears to be exerted by the level of income they earn in the family. They also are found to be much less satisfied with their economic domains of life, including financial situation or income, housing, and work, employment or job. While they do not necessarily consider these economic or material things in life the most important, their concern seems to be overwhelmingly economic or material in nature.

These observations lead us to believe that people in a rapidly industrializing country like Korea must be predominantly occupied with overcoming economic and material ill-being and improving their economic and material well-being. In their value system, however, such a materialistic orientation does not figure too prominently. Such things as good health, good government and sound marriage are highly regarded value items. This apparently

inconsistent dispositions may merely represent the transitory nature of life in a society in tremendous flux. Perhaps, the non-materialist values may gradually overtake the materialist concerns of this period of change in the next stage of relative development. In fact, this may be where the notion of quality of life has its rightful place where the qualitative or non-materialistic weigh heavier than the quantitative or materialistic one.

In the meantime, however, the findings presented here also suggest that there are certain areas or domains in which the planners may well have to work harder than others because it is these domains where people are the least satisfied or most worried, or which people consider important. The fact that the more immediate areas of concern are concentrated in the materialistic categories may necessitate the policy-makers to try to improve life conditions in these domains. As planners, however, it would be essential to look to the future. And if our tentative assessment is correct, they may now have to make a headstart in forming and implementing plans to improve the quality of people's lives in the more qualitative domains which are not necessarily the currently urgent concerns on the part of the people.

In short, we would like to reiterate the need to incorporate the subjective aspect into the quality of life concept. What has been suggested in the above discussion based on our empirical findings is intended to stress this need. Of course, the state of conceptualization, operationalization, and analysis at present may not be completely satisfactory. Further research is no doubt required to refine the concept and data. Nonetheless, these preliminary findings do illuminate certain important points to be seriously taken into account. We, at the Institute of Social Sciences, Seoul National University, are making continuous effort to improve our measures and methods. What we would like to see more of is the willingness and enthusiasm on the part of the government and its planners to seek advice from this type of empirical research works and make use of their findings.

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