

Quality of Life of Youth in Türkiye: A Regional Analysis

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Introduction

The term Quality of Life (QoL) has long been a reference of individuals/societies on how well living conditions/standards are set. The concept encompasses various dimensions, including education, health, employment opportunities, access to resources that translate into overall wellbeing (Diener, et.al,1999). Enhancing the QoL is closely linked to a country's economic development, making it a primary objective of social policy. Thus, an accurate assessment of QoL is of significant importance for policy makers. QoL is often measured on the basis of objective and subjective indicators (Noll, 2002). While the objective indicators pertain to tangible conditions of life, subjective indicators are related to individual perceptions of wellbeing. The indicators of QoL are multidimensional and reflect the satisfaction levels in various life domains (such as work, family life, health, social..). Domain specific assessment of QoL provides valuable information for designing policy interventions (Veenhoven,2000).

This paper investigates QoL among youth in Türkiye. In Türkiye, as in many developing countries, youth make up a substantial portion of the population. Thus, understanding the factors influencing their quality of life is critical for social scientists and policy makers for designing effective policies and fostering sustainable development (Sen, 1999).

Methodology

Objective and subjective indicators of QoL are employed to construct a composite QoL index (QoLI). QoL is considered to be a latent variable determined by changes in several casual variables related to distinct domains identified in Rahman, et. al. (2005). Thus, QoL is measured on eight domains: (1) relationship with family and friends, (2) emotional wellbeing, (3) health, (4) work and productivity, (5) material wellbeing, (6) feeling part of one's local community, (7) personal safety, (8) quality of environment. Each domain has its own indicators and data is obtained from World Value Survey.

A latent variable model is employed where QoL is linearly determined by a set of casual variables. First, large number of indicators are reduced to Principal Components. Then, the identified principal components are weighted and used as an estimator of the QoLI. Finally, QoLI is index is normalised. Then, the regions (NUTS 2) are ranked on the basis of constructed QoLI.

Background

In 2022, while the OECD average of 15–29-year-olds classified as inactive NEET stood at a relatively modest 8.3%, Türkiye's figure reached an alarming 19.2%, more than double the OECD benchmark. The disparity between Türkiye and the OECD average underscores a critical challenge for the country. Such a high rate reflects underlying challenges, including insufficient access to quality education and training, regional economic disparities, gender inequality, and a labour market that struggles to absorb young workers effectively. For Türkiye, with her large and youthful population, this situation poses significant risks to both individual wellbeing and national development. The economic cost of NEET is immense, as it increases the dependency rate, hinders productivity, slows economic growth, and places additional strain on social services.

Factors such as economic inequality, infrastructure gaps, and socioeconomic dynamics contribute to uneven access to opportunities and resources for young people across the regions. While metropolitan areas such as İstanbul and Ankara often offer better prospects, rural and less developed regions face substantial obstacles, including limited access to quality education and healthcare, higher unemployment rates, and lower social inclusion. Despite Türkiye's efforts to address youth-related challenges through national strategies and regional development programs, significant disparities persist across its regions.

Conclusion

Results highlight interaction of economic, education, health, and cultural factors interact at the regional level to shape the QoL for youth in Türkiye. Preliminary results show that youth in high income regions have better access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities. While better objective indicators dominate higher QoLI rankings in high income regions, subjective indicators of wellbeing are showing higher scores in low to medium income regions. In addition, males overall scores of QoLI are higher than females in all regions.

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