PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF STANDARD OF LIVING INDICATORS - AN URBAN INDIAN INSIGHT

Yuvakshi Dam

Delhi Public School, Sushant Lok

ABSTRACT

Standard of living, although a complicated multi-factorial concept, comprises of social, economic, and environmental well-being of communities as a whole. While various universal indicators have been established and researched to measure the standard of living but no single method is efficient enough to take into consideration all facets necessary to determine the exact living standards of countries and communities around the world.It becomes extremely essential for us to come up with a robust and encompassing system that takes into account all of the essential indicators so that accurate judgments can be made and SDG goals can be achieved by society as a whole. This research, based on data analysis of an online survey conducted, seeks to unfold the people's perspective on the different factors which measure the standard of living in the urban Indian population along with a critical analysis of the universally recognized methods to measure the same by international organizations globally. The survey results highlight the importance and significance of economic well-being in our country; employment opportunities and inflation topping the critical factors to determine the standard of living (SOL). The change in mindset and recognition of environmental significance in the urban Indian masses is extremely promising and encouraging as the youth of the nation can certainly take progressive steps against environmental issues. Overall, the results of this survey can guide the policymakers of the country to achieve sustainable growth and enhance the quality of life of the citizens of our country.

Keywords: Standard of Living (SOL), Socio-economic Indicators, Quality of Life, Well-being, Socio-economic groups

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Standard of Living Concept

Standard of living is a concept that helps people analyze their current living conditions. It is a topic of great interest in the present-day world as it is an extremely helpful tool to compare and contrast people's living conditions across nations and different communities as well as set priorities for policymakers and understand the population's satisfaction levels and behavior. In economics, the standard of living is usually used to determine the relative prosperity of the population of an entire country and is often used as a relative tool to compare the standard of living of countries across the world. It is also used to compare and contrast the economic growth of the same geographical area over different timelines. It is generally concerned with objective metrics outside an individual's control, such as economic, societal, political, and environmental matters — such things that an individual might consider when evaluating where to live in the world or when assessing the success of the economic policy. It is difficult to imagine anything of more interest than the standard of living - a matter that is the subject of people's everyday thoughts. The existing definitions and indicators of living standards globally are, however, full of contrasts, conflicts, and even contradictions. We have often heard or read about the increasing standards of living among the economically stable groups of society. But even developed countries do face the problem of disparities in standard of living across a wide range of socio-economic groups. However, there is no current fully accepted definition of standard of living. According to Faith M. Williams (1935), "...it refers to the quality and quantity of consumption of goods and services..." which is a widely accepted definition. Elizabeth Hoyt depicted the standard of living as "is a total, not of things but satisfaction...". Cottam and Magnus (1942) agreed with the idea of the complexity of the subject. One may be wealthy but not content. One may be satisfied but not able to lead the idealistic life one wants. Although there is no universal definition of standard of living, it was primarily based on the use of national measures such as GDP. In the 1940s and 50s - the standard of living was conceptualized in purely material ways of goods and services available. The 1960s & 70s - brought a more inclusive definition that encompassed aspects of human development such as average life span and education. To develop a system providing an equitable distribution of income and resources, we need to understand the meaning of some basic terms and acknowledge a few measurement parameters with the help of which we can define a decent standard of living and which might help in formulating regulatory policies.

1.2 Conceptual interdependence - Quality of Life and Standard of Living

Standard of living and **quality of life** are terms that have been perceived as the same thing for years but differentiating them becomes essential to review the status of the country from all aspects. Standard of living tells us about the distribution of goods and services among the population. It requires a macro perspective and is measured by factors like real income per person and poverty rate. Quality of life is more of a subjective term and it looks into physical,

material, emotional, social, and personal development activities. It is a micro perspective where conditions and perceptions of individuals play a key role. WHO's definition of quality of life is the most widely encompassed –an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of culture and value systems in which they live and concerning their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. Standard of living is sometimes called material or economic well-being (Felce 1997) and quality of life is considered a more global type of well-being, referred to as Global, general, subjective, and overall well-being (Felce 1997, Sirgy 2012). Hallerod & Selden (2013) concluded that quality of life cannot be segregated from its constituent parts' standard of living and health.

1.3 Global measurement criteria of the standard of living and their limitations

International organizations like IMF, UNDP, and World Bank use different mainstream methods to evaluate the standard of living of various countries. While no method is completely free of flaws but surely one method can be seen as better than another if we compare.

"Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is composed of goods and services produced for sale in the market and also includes some nonmarket production, such as defence or education services provided by the government",(Callen, 2020). GDP in a country is usually calculated by the national statistical agency, which compiles information from a large number of sources. However, modern economies have lost sight of the fact that the standard metric of economic growth, gross domestic product (GDP), merely measures the size of a nation's economy and doesn't reflect a nation's welfare. Environmental degradation is a significant externality that the measure of GDP has failed to reflect. The production of more goods adds to an economy's GDP irrespective of the environmental damage suffered because of it. GDP also fails to capture the distribution of income across society — something that is becoming more pertinent in today's world with rising inequality levels in developed and developing countries alike.

In research from Birčiaková et al. (2015), "Environmental indicators in their indices comprise four main areas. They include population, total damage inflicted on the environment, damage caused in the area of the environment, and the effects of such damage on the quality of human life. Any such economic factors are less important and apply only to the consumption or the influence of export or import on the environment. Quality of life is expressed here as the influence of the environment. Examples might include access to safe drinking water, water quality, the impact of air pollution on human health, the impact of environmental damage on the rise and spread of diseases, the use of pesticides in agriculture, and more. The **Environmental Performance Index** evaluates countries based on their ability to achieve environmental objectives, so it is a kind of competitiveness in the field of the environment. The EPI consists of two parts, namely environmental health and ecosystem vitality."

When comparing indicators dealing with living standards from the perspective of society, we can observe four main dimensions which are also the contents of these indicators. They include long and healthy life, education, economic level, and a personal dimension. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has devised a composite index called the **Human Development Index (HDI)** to measure the quality of life by using three indicators i.e. life expectancy, literacy, and income (Thakur & Jaglan, 2006). Although the Human Development Index does not include economic fundamentals, it has a strong relationship with GDP. The Human Development Index is criticized for the lack of any variable referring to the environment.

Gross National Happiness measures the quality of a country more holistically [than GNP] and believes that the beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occurs side by side to complement and reinforce each other. The analysis explores the happiness people enjoy already, then focuses on how policies can increase happiness and sufficiency among unhappy and narrowly happy people (Ura, 2015).

This paper is focused on evaluating people's perspectives to have a holistic and inclusive concept of standard of living indicators which includes economic, social, and environmental dimensions of human life. We have tried to understand the precedence of these indicators under the different dimensions from the perspective of an urban Indian population with varied demographic groups (age, gender, and city of residence). It brings forth a multidimensional model and is influenced by an array of interrelated variables.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Naďa Birčiaková et al (2015) dealt with the evaluation of selected available indicators of living standards, divided into three groups, economic, environmental, and social in selected six countries of the European Union for analysis (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, France, and Great Britain) and concluded on the whole that the factors that affect the standard of living and which should be included in the indicators are population size and density, expenditure on health and education and the emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Another study by Steward Edwin Graham (2015) concluded that Quality of Life is a multi-dimensional concept that is related to the standard of living, mental health, and physical health. This was based on 2012 data on New Zealand's aging population exploring the relationship between standard of living, quality of life, and health-related and demographical variables.

Stávková et al. (2013); Gotowska and Jakubczak (2013); Shumakova et al. (2014) stated that knowledge of the factors that should make up the standard of living is significant not only for its measurement and subsequent comparison of a state's level of socio-economic development but

also for the priorities of policymakers as well as understanding population satisfaction and its behavior. The authors of another study (Naďa Birčiaková et.al, 2015) named the 8 established factors - the technical quality of life, educational quality of life, quality of public life, public services, health factor, commercial factor, a factor of the above-standard, and spiritual extension. All these factors were specified based on the various people's opinions, which is, in fact, the most significant point as they know the best what does and what does not influence their living standards.

An Indian publication by Sriram Balasubramanian, Rishabh Kumar, and Prakash Loungani (2021) uses 2011-12 consumption micro-data, and we find that nearly one-third of the variation in living standards in India can be explained by location alone. Consumption levels and locational inequality are positively related. In effect, from an individual's perspective, living standards are higher in richer, but more unequal, locations in India.

Authors of a recent publication Dr. Sandeep Kumar et al. (2022) measured quality of life in 5 dimensions and concluded a visible north-south divide in quality of living among Indian households. The southern half of India especially the majority of the districts of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat have witnessed a very high and high quality of living at the household level. By comparison, the northern, eastern, and northeastern states of the country have witnessed a very poor quality of living in terms of housing quality, electrification, health, sanitation and cleanliness, information, communication, banking, and asset ownership. This was based on secondary data obtained from Registrar General Census Operations, Government of India.

Table 1. Change in Quality of Living in India at State Level (2001 and 2011)

States/UTs	2001	Rank	States/UTs	2011	Rank	Change (2001-2011)
Chandigarh*	2.25	1	Chandigarh*	1.75	1	-0.50
Delhi*	1.74	2	Delhi*	1.50	2	-0.23
Goa	1.35	3	Goa	1.40	3	0.05
Puducherry*	0.94	4	Puducherry*	1.00	4	0.06
Daman & Diu*	0.87	5	Daman & Diu*	0.81	5	-0.05
Punjab	0.71	6	Punjab	0.68	6	-0.03
Himachal Pradesh	0.29	7	Himachal Pradesh	0.67	7	0.37
Kerala	0.32	8	Kerala	0.62	8	0.30
Lakshadweep*	0.71	9	Lakshadweep*	0.60	9	-0.12
Andaman & Nicobar Islands*	0.34	10	Andaman & Nicobar Islands*	0.49	10	0.15
Haryana	0.25	11	Haryana	0.44	11	0.19
Uttarakhand	0.21	12	Uttarakhand	0.42	12	0.20
Gujarat	0.35	13	Gujarat	0.37	13	0.02
Tamil Nadu	0.25	14	Tamil Nadu	0.35	14	0.10
Sikkim	0.01	15	Sikkim	0.25	15	0.24
Maharashtra	0.28	16	Maharashtra	0.22	16	-0.06
Karnataka	0.04	17	Karnataka	0.21	17	0.17
Dadra &Nagar Haveli	-0.25	18	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.09	18	0.35
Mizoram	-0.11	19	Mizoram	0.08	19	0.18
Jammu & Kashmir	-0.14	20	Jammu & Kashmir	-0.06	20	0.08
Andhra Pradesh	-0.21	21	Andhra Pradesh	-0.09	21	0.12
Rajasthan	-0.46	22	Rajasthan	-0.41	22	0.05
Nagaland	-0.57	23	Nagaland	-0.56	23	0.02
Arunachal Pradesh	-0.39	24	Arunachal Pradesh	-0.56	24	-0.17
Tripura	-0.74	25	Tripura	-0.60	25	0.13
Manipur	-0.61	26	Manipur	-0.62	26	-0.01
Uttar Pradesh	-0.62	27	Uttar Pradesh	-0.69	27	-0.07
West Bengal	-0.59	28	West Bengal	-0.82	28	-0.23
Madhya Pradesh	-0.54	29	Madhya Pradesh	-0.86	29	-0.32
Meghalaya	-0.71	30	Meghalaya	-0.86	30	-0.15
Jharkhand	-0.87	31	Jharkhand	-1.03	31	-0.16
Chhattisgarh	-0.84	32	Chhattisgarh	-1.08	32	-0.24
Assam	-0.98	33	Assam	-1.13	33	-0.15
Odisha	-1.09	34	Odisha	-1.24	34	-0.14
Bihar	-1.22	35	Bihar	-1.36	35	-0.14

Source: *Computed by authors from Census Data, Govt. of India 2001 and 2011*
*Union Territories of India

The synoptic view portrays that states namely Goa, Kerala, Punjab, Haryana, and Tamil Nadu have a very good or good quality of living. In contrast, the states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and northeast Indian states have a very poor quality of living during both Census years. In 2001, a very high standard of living at the household level has been observed in Chandigarh (2.25) followed by the national capital Delhi (1.74) and Goa (1.35) however a decline has been seen in 2011 in the leading two regions of 2001.

The analysis and review of the literature show that there is a lot of scope of research work done in defining the standard of living indicators in the Indian population to improvise the choice of indicators from the Indian perspective. This paper is a small attempt to understand the urban Indian perspective in defining and prioritizing these factors.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this paper, primary data was collected through an online survey questionnaire carried out with a cohort size of 214 in the urban Indian population in June 2022. The questionnaire is created with the intent of capturing respondent's demographic details (age, gender, city of residence metro/non-metro, pointers to gather inputs on prioritization of significance of various Standard of Living indicators factors – economic, social, and environmental factors and the questionnaire comprised to capture priority thought process of respondents for various sub-factors targeted in each of the above groups. The target population of the survey was the urban Indian population of varied age groups.

We have divided individual indicators for the assessment of perspective amongst urban Indian population according to indicators of living standards into three groups, namely economic, environmental and social indicators.

Economic indicators are represented by

1) Employment opportunities

2) Inflation

3) Long-term unemployment rate

4) Equitable distribution of opportunities.

Environmental indicators include

1) Access to quality food items and nutrition obtained

2) Availability of safe portable drinking water

3) Air quality and environment

4) Environmental burden of disease

5) Access to green spaces.

Social indicators include:

1) Freedom of expressing thoughts and speech

2) Freedom to practice and propagate any religion

3) Gender equality

4) Safe housing facility and locality

5) Quality education for all

6) Happiness and mental well-being

7) Right to contest in elections

8) Legislature right to vote

9) Right to avail justice in court

10) Crime rate

11) Population density

12) Work-life balance.

For result, electronic data collation and result analysis by excel count function computations and bar graph statistical depictions were used in the process. Cluster analysis was done based on various demographic groups in the cohort results. Our cohort sample size was 214 comprising an equal number of men and women (49.52%), 36.45% were of age interval of 45-54 years with 81.78% living in metro cities.

4. RESULT ANALYSIS AND INFERENCES

An online survey was carried out with a cohort size of 214 in the urban Indian population in June 2022. This was with the intent of capturing respondent's demographic details (age, gender, city of residence metro/nonmetro, pointers to gather inputs on prioritization of significance of various Standard of Living indicators factors – economic, social, and environmental factors and the questionnaire comprised to capture priority thought process of respondents for various sub-factors targeted in each of the above groups.

Table 2. List of various factors in the groups defining Standard of Living

ECONOMIC FACTORS	SOCIAL FACTORS	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS
Inflation	Freedom of expressing thoughts & speech	Access to quality food & nutrition
Employment opportunities	Freedom to practice and propagate any religion	Access to safe drinking water
Long term unemployment rate	Gender equality	Air quality & environment
Equitable distribution of opportunities	Safe and secure housing & locality	Environmental burden of disease
	Quality education for all	Access to green spaces
	Happiness & mental wellness	
	Right to contest election	
	Legislature right to vote	
	Right to avail justice in court	
	Crime rate	
	Population Density	
	Work Life balance	

4.1 Demographic data distribution of survey data

The demographic data distributions of the 214 respondents are presented here.
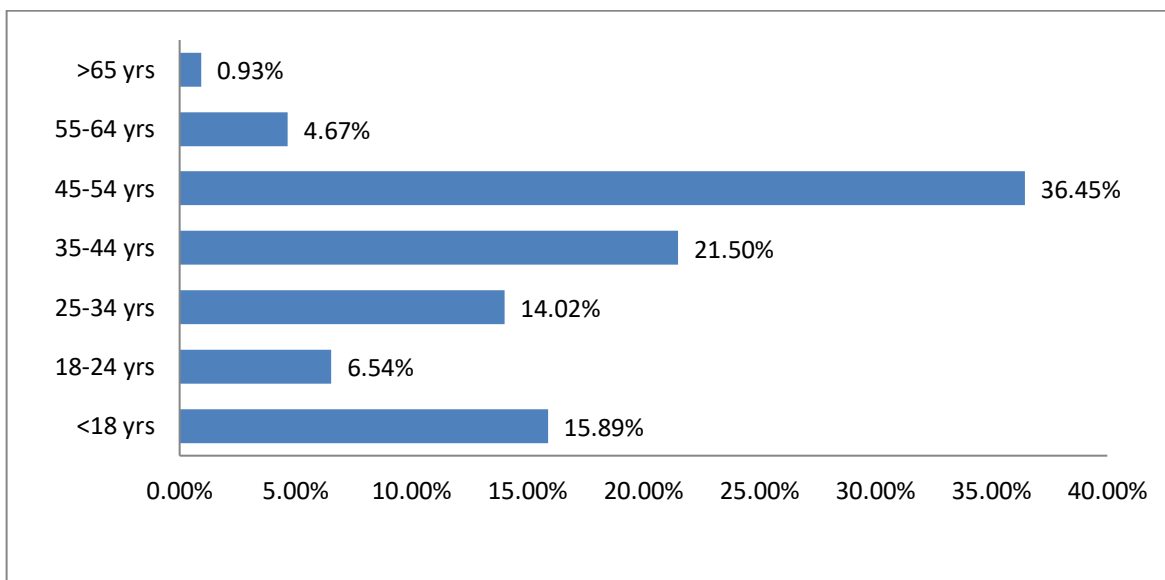
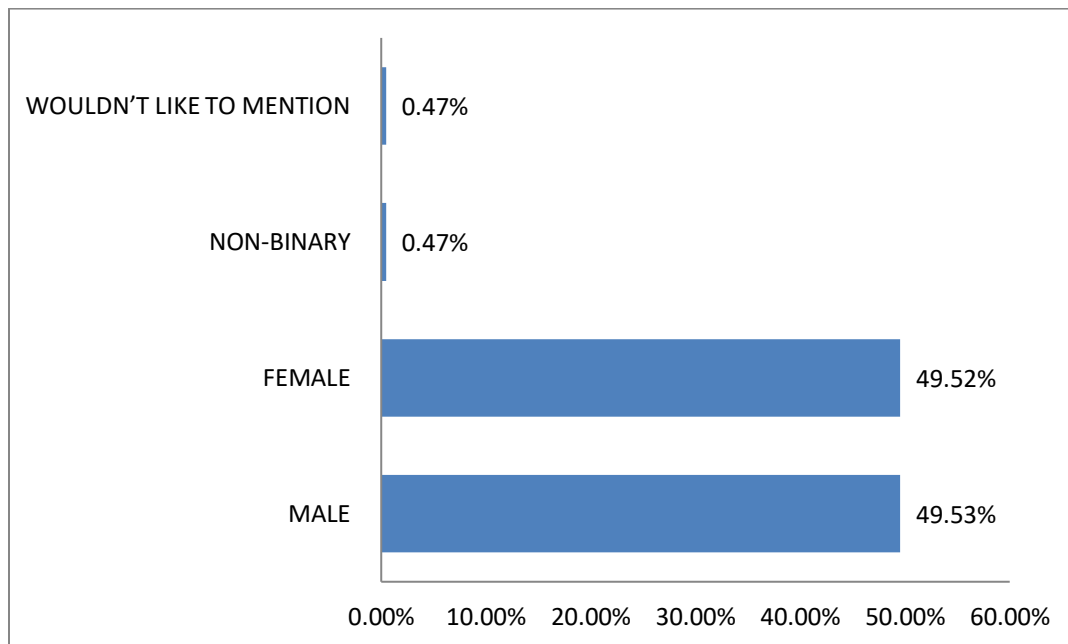**Fig 1. Age group distribution respondents (%) (n-214)**

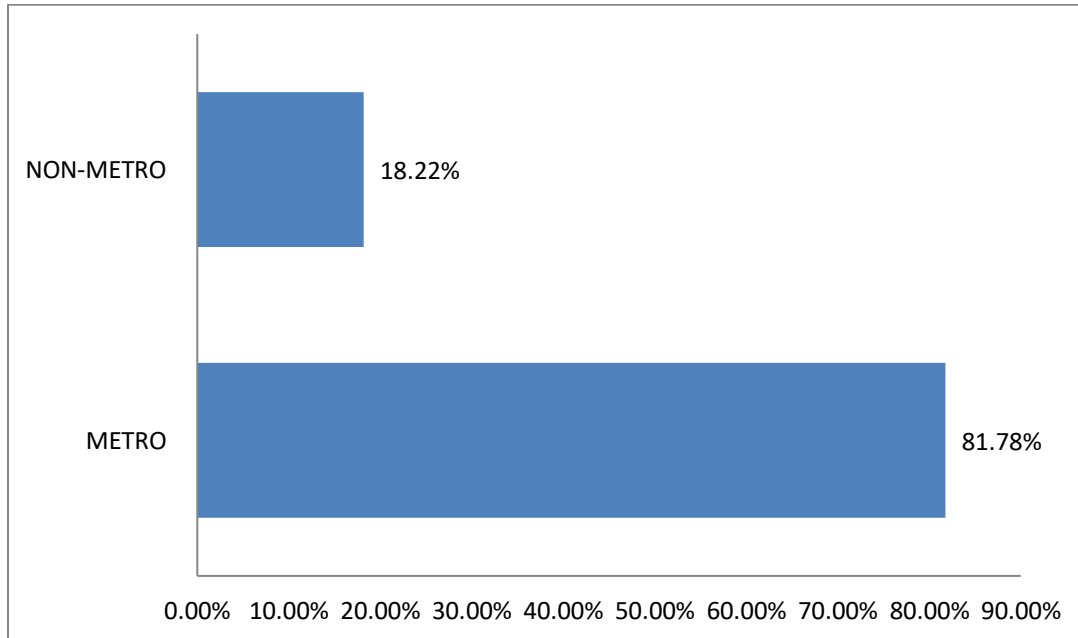**Fig. 2. Gender distribution respondents (%) (n-214)**

Fig. 3. City of residence (Metro/non-metro in %;n=214)

Inferences - Out of 214 respondents, maximum numbers comprises of 45-54yrs group (78/214; 36.45%) followed by 35-44yrs (46/214; 21.5%).>65 yrs group is minimally represented by the

least number of respondents (only 2/214;0.93%). Male: Female ratio is balanced with 49.52% males and females (106 each). The survey participation is heavily predominated by residents of Metro cities (175/214; 81.78%) as compared to non-metro (39/214; 18.22%).

4.2 Survey result data of primary SOL indicators
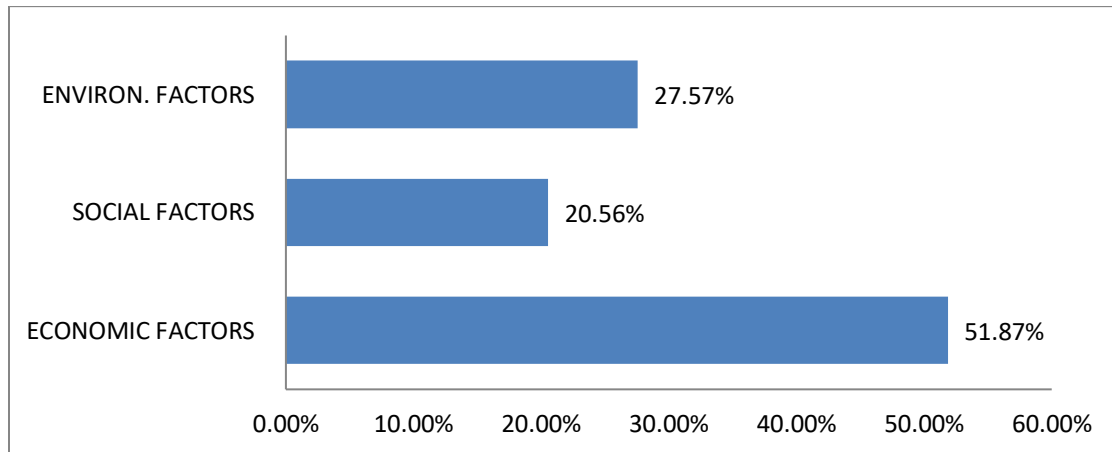
Fig.4. Data analysis of responses for priority of factors affecting Standard of Living

Table 3. Data analysis of factor prioritization (n-214)

ANSWER CHOICES	POSITION 1 (MOST SIGNIFICANT) % / Nos.	POSITION 2 % / Nos.	POSITION 3 (LEAST SIGNIFICANT) % / Nos.	TOTAL
ECONOMIC FACTORS	51.87 / 111	27.10 / 58	21.03/ 45	214
SOCIAL FACTORS	20.56 / 44	35.05 /75	44.39 / 95	214
ENVIRON. FACTORS	27.57 / 59	37.85 / 81	34.58 / 74	214

Inferences - Economic factors were chosen as the top priority by the respondents (111/214; 51.87%) followed by environmental factors (59/214; 27.57%) and lastly social factors (44/214; 20.56%). This highlights the importance and significance of economic well-being in our country; a critical factor to calculate its standard of living (SOL).
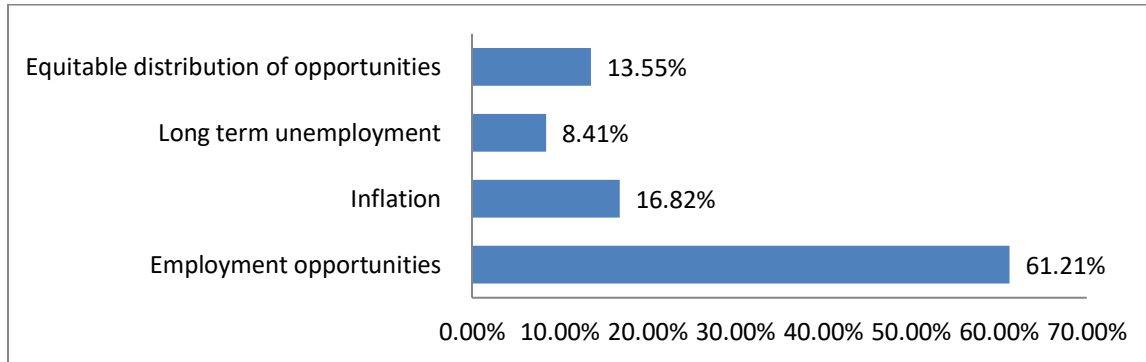
4.3 RESULT ANALYSIS (ECONOMIC FACTORS)

Fig.5. Data distribution of Economic factors responses

Table 4. Quantitative data analysis of economic factors subgroups

ANSWER CHOICES	POSITION 1 (MOST SIGNIFICANT) % / Nos.	POSITION 2 % / Nos.	POSITION 3 % / Nos.	POSITION 4 (LEAST SIGNIFICANT) % / Nos.
Employment opportunities	61.21 / 131	26.17 /56	9.81 / 21	2.8 / 6
Inflation	16.82 / 36	27.10 / 58	34.58 / 74	21.50 / 46
Long term unemployment	8.41 / 18	21.96 / 47	33.18 /71	36.45 / 78
Equitable distribution of opportunities	13.55 / 29	24.77 / 53	22.43 / 48	39.25 / 84

Inferences - Respondents belonging to the 45-54 yrs (48/78;61.5%) followed by 35-44(19/46;41.3%) age group gave economic factors the top priority in contrast to minimal respondents from the 55-64 yr(2/10;20%) and >65 yrs (0%) age brackets. This signifies the obvious mindset variance of the people in the actively employable age groups in contrast to population groups still pursuing higher studies and the senior citizens who are almost at the end of their careers.

Employment Opportunities

131/ 214(61.2%) respondents found Employment Opportunities as the most critical standard of living defining factors amongst economic measurable. Out of these 131 respondents, those belonging to the 45-54 yrs (49/131;37.4%) followed by 35-44(26/131;19.8%) age group comprise the most frequent age intervals in contrast to minimal respondents from the 55-64

yr(5/131;3.8%) and >65 yrs(0%) age brackets. This signifies the obvious mindset variance of the people in the actively employable age groups in contrast to population groups who are retired / senior citizens and almost at the end of their careers. More female respondents (72/131;55%) in contrast to males(58/131;44.2%) considered employment opportunities as the most significant SOL defining factor among economic determinants. Reiterating the lack of opportunities that exist for females even in the present scenario and how women find it hard to get the right opportunities. Significantly large proportions of metro city residents (78.6%) prioritized employment opportunities over other economic factors as compared to non-metro residents 21.4%.

Inflation

Inflation took second place with 36/214 (16.8%) people choosing it as the top economic factor. Inflation again saw similar age group distribution with 58.3% of these 36 respondents falling in the age groups of 45-54 and 35-44 yrs. More males(66.7%) in contrast to females(33.3%) prioritized this as the number one economic factor defining SOL. Metro(88.9%) / non-metro demarcation in this factor showed a stark difference in this parameter.

Long-term unemployment and equitable distribution of income followed for the 3rd and 4th positions.

4.4 RESULT ANALYSIS (ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS)

Environmental factors were selected as the second most important which is a positive sign showcasing that people's mindsets have appropriately considered the significance of an overall clean environment to be an absolute necessity for decent living standards.
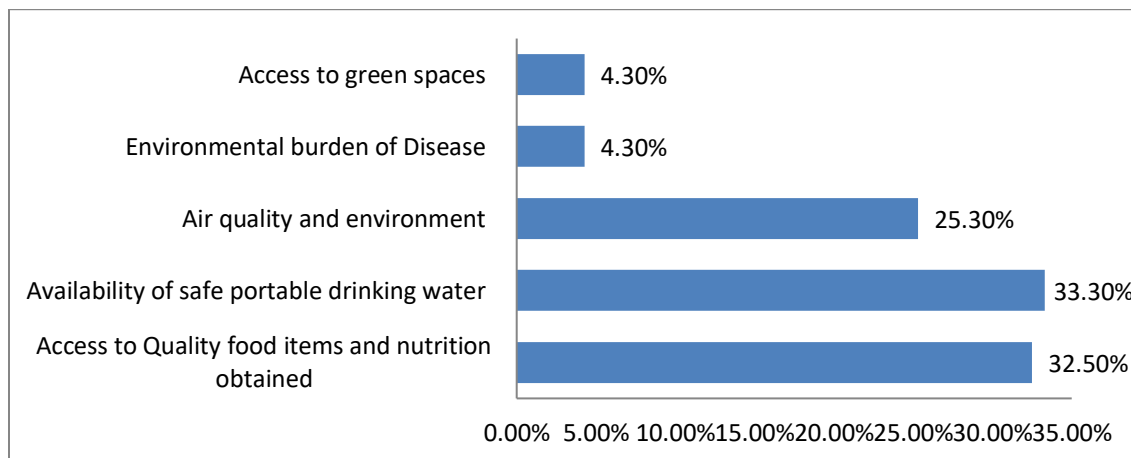
Fig 6. Data distribution of Environmental factors response

**Table 5. Quantitative data analysis of environmental factors groups**

ANSWER CHOICE	POSITION 1 (MOST SIGNIFICANT) % / Nos.	POSITION 2 % / Nos.	POSITION 3 % / Nos.	POSITION 4 % / Nos.	POSITION 5 (LEAST SIGNIFICANT) % / Nos.
Access to Quality food items and nutrition obtained	32.54 / 68	30.14 / 63	22.97 / 48	9.09 / 19	5.26 / 11
Availability of safe portable drinking water	33.33 / 70	40.95 / 86	18.10 / 38	4.76 / 10	2.86 / 6
Air quality and environment	25.36 / 53	20.57 / 43	36.84 / 77	13.40 / 28	3.83 / 8
Environmental burden of Disease	4.31 / 9	2.87 / 6	11.96 / 25	47.37 / 99	33.49 / 70
Access to green spaces	4.33 / 9	5.77 / 12	10.10 / 21	25.48 / 53	54.33 / 113

Inferences - The youth (18-24 yrs; 8/14,57.1%) along with age groups (35-44 yrs;32.6%) followed by the 45-54yrs(23.1%) yrs age brackets have given environmental factors the highest priority as a defining factor of SOL. The change in mindset and recognition of environmental significance in the middle age population is extremely promising. Also, it is quite refreshing and encouraging to see as the youth can certainly take action against environmental issues and use their creative means to advocate for a safe, secure, and healthy environment to be each human's basic right.

Availing drinking water (70/214; 32.7%) followed by access to quality food (68/214;31.8%) were given utmost priority followed by air quality(52/214;24.8%), access to green spaces and environmental burden of diseases (9/214;4.31% each). Again food and water being basic needs of every individual have been given clear-cut priority. The worsening pollution levels have been taken into consideration by the respondents as they chose air quality. Also, susceptibility to diseases has been chosen by both the senior citizens (>65 yrs; 100%) who took the survey.

4.5 RESULT ANALYSIS (SOCIAL FACTORS)

Social factors stood as the third priority as per the survey results. These findings are an area of concern since social factor includes a lot of important pointers like the freedom to practice any religion, quality education, happiness, mental well-being, etc.
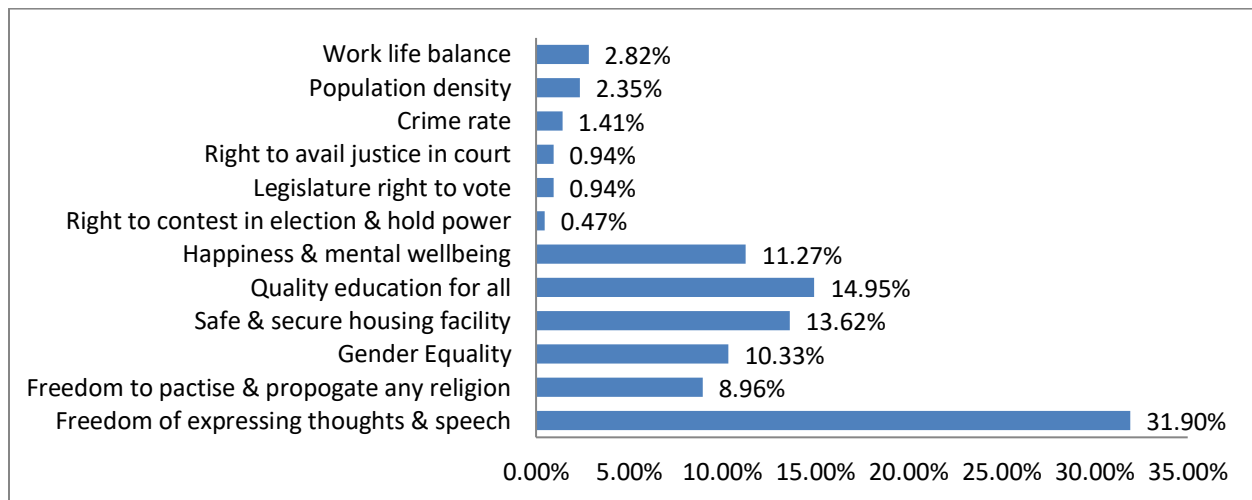
Fig 7. Data distribution of Social factors responses

Inferences - The 55-64 yrs and >65yrs age groups were the ones giving social factors utmost priority. These factors allow people peaceful co-existence and are essential for individual sustenance. Freedom to express one's thoughts with freedom of speech and "quality education for all" practices were ranked the top two priority indicators amongst the 12 social factors chosen. Gender equality, adequate housing, and mental wellness followed right after. While factors like the right to contest in elections and give a vote, availing justice, crime rate, and population density were ranked lower by the majority.

5. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH WORK

Numerous publications indicate that the standard of living of a population is mainly influenced by economic, environmental, and social factors. In the present study, we have attempted to understand the urban Indian mindset and priority rankings of a few selected indicators under each of these factors – economic, social, and environmental, as defining goals of the standard of living. We have noted that the majority of the respondents (51.87%; 111/214) have put economic factors on top priority followed by environmental factors (27.57%; 59/214) followed by social factors (20.56%; 44/214). The actively employed and earning age group ((35-54 yrs) constituted the significant population considering economic factors on top priority in contrast to retired or senior citizen groups. For the present contribution to the expression of the influence of economic factors, the indicators chosen are – employment opportunities, inflation, equitable distribution of opportunities, and long-term unemployment. The results of our analysis indicate the prioritization of economic factors in the same sequence as mentioned above – employment opportunities being the top priority and long-term unemployment being the least significant. Females (55%) in contrast to males (44.2%) held employment opportunities as top-notch

significant –depicting a change in the mindset of our females who are more engaged in work arenas and understand the significance of their finances.16.8% of respondents considered inflation on top priority amongst the economic factors – especially significant in the subjects staying in metro cities in contrast to the non-metro. This result shows that the majority of the population see factors that concern their bread and butter to be the ones having top priority followed by the ones affecting their cost of living and finally the factors affecting the masses have been least prioritized in their definition of Standard of Living Indicators.

To reveal the impact of environmental factors, the survey results show five indicators considered in the order of priority ranking as – access to quality food and nutrition, availability of safe drinking water, air quality & environment, the environmental burden of disease, and access to greens. The change in mindset and recognition of environmental significance in the urban youth and middle age population is extremely promising and encouraging to be targeted towards maintaining a balance of sustainable development.

We have recognized and analyzed twelve social factors as defining milestones of the standard of living in a population. As expected, we found the senior age group populations (>55 yrs) as putting social factors on the highest priority. This shows the significance of social factors getting more important as one ages and gains experience in life as a whole. The youth and active bread earners age brackets however didn't consider it as important in this cohort sample - which is a distressing and worrisome feature arising out of this study. The most important ones are Freedom of Speech and Quality education for all followed by gender equality, and quality of housing the other few significant ones are illuminated in the data. These findings of dwelling social factors at least priority for measuring standard of living in urban Indian mindset, even today, is an area of concern since social factors include a lot of important pointers like the freedom to practice any religion, quality education, happiness, and mental well being, etc.

This study also had some limitations and cohort bias. The first one being the sample size of the cohort was relatively small. Also,o there is an extremely large representation of respondents residing in metro cities as compared to very minimal numbers of non-metro. In addition, very less representation of > 65 yrs senior citizen group was part of the cohort. Thus, further research is suggested on bigger cohorts representing broader geographical belts, including urban and rural areas, of our country to help policymakers make informed plans and strategies for different geographical and socio-economic segments of our population targeted at identifying and improving the standard of living.

6. CONCLUSION

In the research paper, we have argued that economic, social, and environmental indicators are needed in unison to understand the human standard of living, and to make informed policy decisions. Although the various measures individually have several strengths and weaknesses, they are methodologically and conceptually complementary. The study data, depicting the perspective of the urban Indian population, indicates the overall prioritization of economic indicators over environmental and social factors in defining the standard of living. Amongst the economic factors, employment opportunities and inflation are of topmost precedence on peoples' minds in defining the standard of living for them. Similarly, access to quality food and nutrition, and availability of safe drinking water are the most relevant indicators among the environmental factors considered in this study. These results may provide working goals for better governance and achievable targets for improving the standard of living across varied geographies for Indian policymakers. The perspective and priorities of the masses in developing economies are very varied from people's mindsets in developed countries. Also, in a vast and diverse country like India, the peoples' perspectives and yardstick of policymakers are bound to be varied across different geographical and socio-economic groups of the population. Standard of living is a complex, multifaceted construct that requires multiple approaches from different theoretical angles. The UN SDG goals align with the standard of living indicators and provide a path to improve the living standards of different walks of people around the world. Goal 2- Zero hunger and Goal 6-Clean water and sanitization would help in achieving access to quality food and nutrition and access to clean water. Goal 1-No poverty and Goal 10-Reduced inequality would help in creating an equitable distribution of opportunities and providing employment opportunities.

This research work is just a small attempt to gain insight into people's perspectives on the standard of living factors in India and there is a lot of ground that needs further extensive exploring by researchers. We encourage scientists from the various disciplines of social science to exploit the strengths of others' contributions in a collaborative effort. Instead of discussions over the best indicator, each discipline needs to borrow insights about the quality of life from the other fields. Similarly, a complete understanding of objective indicators and how to select them requires that we understand people's values, and have knowledge about how objective indicators influence people's experience of well-being. Finding an index that would comprehensively deal with this topic seems problematic. Despite all the new, emerging, alternative ways, there is still none that would satisfy the demands of professionals from various fields. Needless to say, we have much research ahead of us.

REFERENCES

Balasubramanian, S., Kumar, R., & Loungani, M. P. (2021). *Inequality and locational determinants of the distribution of living standards in India*. International Monetary Fund.

Birciaková, N., Stávková, J., & Antosová, V. (2015). Evaluating Living Standard Indicators. *DANUBE: Law and Economics Review*, *6*(3), 175-188.https://doi.org/10.1515/danb-2015-0011

Birčiaková, N., Stávková, J., & Straka, J. (2015). Factors Influencing Living Standards in the EU. *Economic science for rural development*, 170.https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Olga-Leontjeva/publication/281111854_Human_Development_under_Knowledge_Economy_Circumstances_Case_of_the_Baltic_States'_Rural_Areas/links/55d63c1308aeb38e8a83ee6f/Human-Development-under-Knowledge-Economy-Circumstances-Case-of-the-Baltic-States-Rural-Areas.pdf#page=170

Callen, T. (2020, February 24). *Finance & Development*. Finance & Development | F&D. https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/basics/gdp.htm#:%7E:text=Measuring%20GDP&text=GDP%20is%20composed%20of%20goods,the%20residents%20of%20a%20country

Cottam, H. R., & Mangus, A. R. (1942). A Proposed Definition of Standard of Living. *Social Forces*, 21(2), 177-179.https://doi.org/10.2307/2570553

Easterlin, R. A. (2000). The Worldwide Standard of Living Since 1800. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *14*(1), 7-26.https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.14.1.7

Felce, D. (1997). Defining and Applying the Concept of Quality of Life. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, *41*(2), 126-135.https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.1997.tb00689.x

Gotowska, M., Jakubczak, A., & Kufel, M. (2013). *The Assessing the Quality of Life and the Standard of Living: The Proposal of a Quantitative Measure*. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320133830_The_assessing_the_quality_of_life_and_the_standard_of_living_The_proposal_of_a_quantitative_measure

Graham, S. E. (2015). *The Relationship between Standard of Living and Quality of Life for Older New Zealanders: a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Psychology at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand* (Doctoral dissertation, Massey University).http://hdl.handle.net/10179/7338

Halleröd, B., & Seldén, D. (2013). The Multi-dimensional Characteristics of Wellbeing: How Different Aspects of Wellbeing interact and do not interact with each other. *Social indicators research*, *113*(3), 807-825. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-012-0115-8

Hoyt, E. E. (2012). *The Consumption of Wealth*. Literary Licensing, LLC.

Hoyt, E. E. (2021). *Consumption in Our Society*. Hassell Street Press.

Inglehart, R., Foa, R., Peterson, C., & Welzel, C. (2008). Development, freedom, and rising happiness: A global perspective (1981–2007). *Perspectives on psychological science*, *3*(4), 264-285.https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fj.1745-6924.2008.00078.x

Jaglan, M. S. (2006). Quality of Life of Gaddi Tribal Community in Bharmaur Region of Himachal Pradesh. *Indian Journal of Social Research*, *47*(1), 7–25. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256088141_7_Quality_of_Life_of_Gaddi_Tribal_Community_in_Bharmaur_Region_of_Himachal_Pradesh

Kumar, D. S., Thakur, D. B., & Kumar, D. M. Quality of Living in India: a household level analysis. *International Journal of Development Research*, *12*(01), 53347-53354. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/BrThakur/publication/358411775_QUALITY_OF_LIVING_IN_INDIA_A_HOUSEHOLD_LEVEL_ANALYSIS/links/620128e715ebcb296c76f5ec/QUALITY-OF-LIVING-IN-INDIA-A-HOUSEHOLD-LEVEL-ANALYSIS.pdf

Pacek, A. C., & Radcliff, B. (2008). Welfare Policy and Subjective Well-being across Nations: An Individual-level Assessment. *Social Indicators Research*, *89*(1), 179-191. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-007-9232-1

Rao, N. D., & Min, J. (2018). Decent Living Standards: Material Prerequisites for Human Wellbeing. *Social Indicators Research*, 138(1), 225-244. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1650-0

Stávková, J., Souček, M., & Birčiaková, N. (2013). Income Situation of Households as a Social Status Indicator. *Acta Universitatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis*, *61*(4), 1121-1128. http://dx.doi.org/10.11118/actaun201361041121

Ura, K. (2015). The Experience of Gross National Happiness As Development Framework. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2941860

Williams, F. M., & Zimmerman, C. C. (1935). *Studies of family living in the United States and other countries: an analysis of material and method* (No. 223). US Department of agriculture.

World Health Organization. Division of Mental Health and Prevention of Substance Abuse. (1997). WHOQOL: measuring quality of life. World Health Organization. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/63482