

Quality of Life: Interface between Cultural Specificities and Social Progress

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Abstract Quality of life is considered one of the factors that indicates country's wellbeing. Because of that, the quality of life is the scope scientist from different countries are concentrated on. Hence, different studies suggest different indexes to assess the quality of life. One of the newest indexes is the social progress index that provides comprehensive, objective and transparent measure of a country's quality of life that is independent of economic indicators. The importance of this index is that one can identify particular strengths and weaknesses of the countries. The authors of the paper focus their attention on analysing similarities of the countries within the social progress index. Therefore, aim of the research is to divide countries into the groups according to similarities in non-economic parameters of country's welfare. Going forward, those groups are analysed with the view of finding connection between quality of life and specificities of national culture. As the result, methodology for dividing countries into groups is suggested and relation between national culture and quality of life is presented. The current study contributes to scientific literature on social progress index relationship with Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Index Terms: – trust, social capital of financial institutions, evaluation of confidence

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I. INTRODUCTION

Quality is one of the vital factors of people's life. Therefore, scientists researching different fields are trying to find an appropriate life quality's expression. Quality of life index is a tool designed to compare life facilities in different countries (Lepage, 2009) and, hence, quality of life is an instrument designed to determine similarities between different cultures. In other words, cultural dimensions could be treated as one of the quality of life indicators. Therefore, in order to examine culture's role in the quality of life measurement it is necessary to divide countries into groups according to citizens' perception on the quality of life's dimensions. In the present research social progress index was used as an indicator of the quality of life and its relationship with cultural dimensions was investigated. In other words, social progress index was the measurement of the quality of life used in this research.

Selection was based on the fact, that this analysis is not directly dependant on any economic indicator, while being comprehensive, objective and transparent.

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There are three dimensions of social progress index. They are as follows: basic human needs, foundation of wellbeing and opportunity. Therefore, the aim of the research is to divide countries into the groups according to similarities in non-economic parameters of country's welfare and to examine the relationship between social progress index's indicators and cultural dimensions within each group.

II. INTERFACE BETWEEN CULTURAL SPECIFICITIES AND SOCIAL PROGRESS

Life quality differs from one country to another, therefore, it is important to compare levels of life quality in different countries in order to understand how life quality could be improved in each country. Representatives of social sciences are trying to find the factors affecting the quality of life and leading to its increase. Kanellopoulos (2011) mentions material and social resources as the ones that are necessary for the quality of life. Material resources are as follows: food, safe drinking water, shelter (Kanellopoulos, 2011). In fact, uplift of the living standards could lead to an increase of life quality's level (Natarajan & Angur, 2014). Actually, water sanitation, proper nutrition and shelter are indicators of basic human needs that, in turn, are one of the social progress index's determinants (Social Progress Index, 2015). Social resources include such aspects as "access to information, education, health care, social status, political power, or the opportunity to develop meaningful connections with other people in society" (Kanellopoulos, 2011). Ukachi (2015) states that better information literacy skills are the higher the quality of life is. According to Jeong and Seo (2014) satisfaction with food has a positive direct impact on the quality of life. In fact, there are similar factors that are indicators of social progress index: access to information and communication, access to basic knowledge, access to advanced education, health and wellness (Social Progress Index, 2015). Actually, access to information, communication and basic knowledge is investigated as a determinant of foundation of wellbeing; access to advanced education and health and wellness are determinants of opportunity. According to the young people perception of quality of life survey, it is associated with material wealth and health (Constantinescu, 2013). In fact, the mentioned elements are similar to the social progress index's indicator – foundation of wellbeing. Hajduova et al. (2014) agree that quality of environment influences the quality of life. For instance, Keles (2012), while researching the relationship between quality of life

and environment, mentioned water as one of the key factors of improving the quality of life. In fact, water and sanitation is a determinant of basic human needs under the SPI.

Social Progress Index is the measurement of quality of life used in this research. Selection was based on the fact that this analysis is not directly dependant on any economic indicator, while being comprehensive, objective and transparent. There are three dimensions of SPI: Basic Human Needs, Foundation of Wellbeing and Opportunity. Every dimension consists of four components that are explained as follows:

- Basic human needs correlate with the first level (physiological needs) and the second level (safety) of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943), in the later's short-term meaning and direct form that is necessary for survival. This dimension consists of four elements: Nutrition and Basic Medical Care; Water and Sanitation; Shelter; Personal Safety.

- According to the interpretation of the authors, Foundation of Wellbeing stands for the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs second level (Safety), but in its long-term perception and more indirect form, that rather creates good habitat and existence conditions. Four components of Foundation of Wellbeing are Access to Basic Knowledge; Access to Information and Communications; Health and Wellness; Ecosystem Sustainability.

- Dimension of opportunity represents the capability of society to limit or empower individual's autonomy and ability to progress. If compared with Maslow's pyramid of needs (Maslow, 1943) this dimension covers two top levels – Esteem and Self-actualization. Elements of Opportunity are: personal rights; personal freedom and choice; tolerance and inclusion; access to advanced education.

As one of the quality of life dimension researchers mention culture as, according to Woodside et al. (2016) culture “represents a complex whole of attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviour”. Professor Geert Hofstede defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede, n.d.). His research has defined six dimensions of national culture, which are as follows: power distance, individualism / collectivism, masculinity / femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term / short-term oriented, indulgence. Power distance could be understood as “the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept the fact that power is distributed unequally” (Mooij & Hofstede, 2002). Individualism could be understood “as a dimension of both national culture and personal values” (Frank, Enkawa, & Schvaneveldt, 2015). Masculinity / Femininity is “the extent to which highly assertive values predominate versus showing sensitivity and concern for others' welfare” (Oudenhoven, 2001). Uncertainty avoidance is associated with prediction, intentionality, capability and transference (Hwang & Chang Lee, 2012). Long-term oriented societies *foster pragmatic virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular saving, persistence, and adapting to changing*

circumstances, and short-term oriented societies foster virtues related to the past and present such as national pride, respect for tradition, preservation of "face", and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede & Hofstede, Dimensions of National Cultures, n.d.). Indulgence *stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun.* (Hofstede, 2011).

III. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objective social progress index's indicators are analysed. They are as follows: basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing and opportunity. Research period covers 2015. For the survey the data provided by Social Progress Imperative was used.

To analyse countries in the context of social progress it is crucial to divide countries into groups based on similarities. For the division the cluster analysis was used. It was held in two stages: 1) hierarchical cluster analysis; 2) k-mean cluster analysis. Hierarchical cluster analysis was used to determine the number of clusters according to the “elbow” rule; k-mean analysis was held to distribute the countries into groups. During the k-mean analysis, the Euclidean method was used. The method is based on distance between cluster centres calculation using the following formula:

$$d = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^d (x_i - y_i)^2} \quad (1)$$

where

d – distance;

$x_i = [x_1, x_2, \dots, x_d]$ is random point;

$y_i = [y_1, y_2, \dots, y_d]$ is random point;

In order to examine relationships between social progress index and cultural dimensions' within the clusters correlation analysis was performed. As a relationship measure, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. The data from Social Progress Imperative (2015) was used for the research. In fact, full statistics for all countries was not provided; therefore, seventy-two countries were examined in present study.

IV. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between social progress index's indicators and cultural dimensions. First of all, the countries were divided into four groups (Table 1).

According to Table 1 there are seven countries on the first cluster, eighteen countries in the second cluster, twenty two countries in the third cluster and twenty three countries in the fourth cluster. The correlation analysis is conducted within all the clusters. The first clusters' results are presented in Table 2.

TABLE I. CLUSTER Membership (Source: authors' compilation)

Clusters	Countries
1	Angola, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania, Zambia.
2	Bangladesh, China, Dominic Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine, Venezuela.
3	Albania, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Uruguay.
4	Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.

TABLE II. CORRELATION ANALYSIS WITHIN FIRST CLUSTER (Source: authors' compilation)

	Basic Human Needs	Foundation of Wellbeing	Opportunity
Power Distance	-0,730	-0,150	-0,236
Individualism	-0,515	0,829	0,264
Masculinity	0,223	0,356	0,055
Uncertainty Avoidance	0,679	-0,484	-0,703
Long term orientation	0,804	-0,145	0,087
Indulgence	-0,816	0,097	-0,259

It can be seen in the table above (see Table 2) that there is a strong negative correlation between basic human needs and Power Distance, Individualism and Indulgence. In countries with lower basic human needs score the income distribution is more uneven, which is sign of high power distance and can be result of the absences of middle class. Collectivistic society can be result of low basic human needs, because strong and cohesive integrated groups as clans and extended families take care of members in needs. In countries from first cluster importance of the having fun and enjoying life is not the primary concern as long as physiological needs are not covered. Strong positive correlation is noticed between basic human needs, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. Low tolerance towards ambiguity in a societies with poorly covered basic needs can be explained by desire for stability in that perspective. Shared tasks in family life is a remarkable characteristic of long-term orientation and overlaps with collectivistic society specifics over covering physiological needs. Overall, first cluster countries are culturally very similar towards basic human needs and this fact can be explained by Maslow's hierarchy of needs – as long as primary needs are not met, societies cannot concentrate on a further levels, which gives us lower correlations in foundation of wellbeing and opportunity. The first clusters' results are presented in Table 3.

TABLE III. CORRELATION ANALYSIS WITHIN SECOND CLUSTER (Source: authors' compilation)

	Basic Human Needs	Foundation of Wellbeing	Opportunity
Power Distance	0,02	-0,315	-0,123
Individualism	0,183	-0,327	0,017
Masculinity	-0,201	0,028	-0,196
Uncertainty Avoidance	0,124	0,031	0,089
Long term orientation	0,120	-0,189	0,022
Indulgence	0,533	0,607	0,528

As it can be seen from Table 1, there are strong correlations between SPI ratios and indulgence. It means that if the need of basic human needs are not satisfied, the citizens of the country are not interested in leisure, freedom of speech and other additional human needs. However, there is a positive relationship between foundation of wellbeing and opportunity with indulgence. In fact, this is a logical outcome, which means that more opportunities people have more space to use them they need; and the better is the level of wellbeing (health, opportunity to knowledge, etc.) the higher demand of indulgence components is. The third clusters' results are presented in Table 4.

TABLE IV. CORRELATION ANALYSIS WITHIN THIRD CLUSTER (Source: authors' compilation)

	Basic Human Needs	Foundation of Wellbeing	Opportunity
Power Distance	-0,197	-0,188	-0,622
Individualism	0,379	0,158	0,394
Masculinity	0,019	-0,097	-0,093
Uncertainty Avoidance	0,125	0,018	0,439
Long term orientation	0,420	0,188	0,152
Indulgence	-0,367	0,042	0,055

The correlation coefficient between opportunity and power distance is -0,622 (see Table 4). It means that there is a negative strong relationship between these factors. This is to say, the more opportunities people in third cluster countries have, the lower the power distance is. This could be linked to the feeling of safety the countries provide to the citizens. The fourth clusters' results are presented in Table 5.

TABLE V. CORRELATION ANALYSIS WITHIN FOURTH CLUSTER (Source: authors' compilation)

	Basic Human Needs	Foundation of Wellbeing	Opportunity
Power Distance	-0,412	-0,543	-0,727
Individualism	0,064	0,108	0,632
Masculinity	-0,100	-0,446	-0,291
Uncertainty Avoidance	-0,230	-0,484	-0,515
Long term orientation	-0,103	-0,093	-0,584
Indulgence	-0,412	-0,543	-0,727

In the fourth cluster there are countries with the highest level of economic development. It means that the basic human needs are satisfied in these countries and people do not need to concentrate on this aspect. Hence, the basic human needs do not affect cultural dimensions. It can be proved by the result of correlation analysis (see Table 5). On the other hand, people living in countries with high living standards have many opportunities, such as access to advanced education, personal rights, personal freedom and choice, tolerance and inclusion, and it have an impact on the level of culture. According to the research results the more opportunities people have, the lower levels of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence are. In other words, citizens of the developed countries feel safe, feel comfortable and demanded at work, not afraid of tomorrow and have access to self-esteem and self-actualisation needs, such as leisure, freedom of speech, remembering positive emotions.

V. CONCLUSION

In this research relationship between social progress index, which is one of the life's quality indicators, and cultural dimensions is investigated. The research results confirmed that in countries with low living standards people are not as keen on culture as citizens in developed countries. In the first and second clusters' countries people are concentrated on satisfaction of their basic needs, such as personal safety, shelter, nutrition and basic medical care, water and sanitation. In other word, citizen of these countries need to satisfy their basic needs and only then could take an interest in cultural life. Whereas basic human needs are satisfied for citizens from the third and the fourth clusters' countries and, therefore, they have opportunities to satisfy additional needs what helps to improve the quality of life. In fact, all the clusters could be linked to Maslow's hierarchical needs. The first and the second clusters' countries could be associated with the first two levels of Maslow's pyramid – psychological and safety level. While, third and fourth clusters' countries are concentrated on esteem and self-actualization levels.

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