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INVESTIGATING RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE IN TOUL KORK, PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the issue of quality of life and its correlation with social environment. This study utilized subjective approach as the direct effects of objective social dimensions on subjective assessments of social environment have been found to be weak. The study utilized seven life domains that contribute to the residents' quality of life (QOL). Sixteen hypotheses have been tested to investigate which life domains contribute the most and the least to residents' satisfactions with their quality of urban life (QOUL), and which domains and indicators are significantly related to one another. The assessment was collected via questionnaire survey with a sample of 200 respondents living in TK. The secondary data were obtained from desktop research, book, and Phnom Penh City Hall (PPCH). The frequency analysis found that the mean for overall QOUL in the neighborhood is "slightly good." The mean for all life domains is "slightly satisfactory." Spiritual life has the highest mean, while economic ability has the lowest mean. However, when the analysis distinguishes QOL from conventional QOUL domains, i.e. health and spiritual life are excluded; domain with the highest mean is home features, while the lowest mean is still economic ability. Similarly, correlation analysis found that spiritual life contributes the most to their overall QOUL while the least is economic ability. However, when spiritual life and health are excluded from correlation analysis, domain that contributes the most to overall QOUL is social involvement and community participation. Multiple regression analysis found that all domains contribute significantly to the neighborhood. Recommendations were made based on the findings – to improve safety through CPTED measures, to solve insufficient home parking by improving public transport system; and improving residents' home privacy through quality soundproof wall. Suggestions for further research have been made to improve similar type of study in the future.

مُلَخَّصُ الْبَحْثِ

حيث نعيش تؤثر على حياتنا، وبالتالي، نوعية حياتنا. ولذلك، ينبغي أن تصمم البيئات الحضرية كأماكن ذات نوعية حياة أفضل - تلك التي لديها أقل العوائق اليومية التي يمكن الوقاية منها. واستخدمت هذه الدراسة نهجا ذاتيا حيث تبين أن الآثار المباشرة للأبعاد الاجتماعية الموضوعية على التقييمات الذاتية للبيئة الاجتماعية ضعيفة. واستخدمت الدراسة سبعة مجالات حياة تسهم في نوعية حياة السكان (كول). وقد تم اختبار ستة عشر فرضية للتحقيق في مجالات الحياة التي تساهم أكثر وأقلها في الارتياح للمقيمين مع نوعية الحياة الحضرية (كول)، والمجالات والمؤشرات ترتبط ارتباطا وثيقا ببعضها البعض. وقد تم جمع هذا التقييم من خلال استبيان استبيان شمل عينة من 200 من المشاركين في المعارف التقليدية. تم الحصول على البيانات الثانوية من أبحاث سطح المكتب، وكتاب، و بش. ووجد تحليل الترددات أن المتوسط الكلي لل كول في الحي هو "جيد نوعا ما". والمتوسط لجميع مجالات الحياة "مرض إلى حد ما". الحياة الروحية لها أعلى متوسط، في حين أن القدرة الاقتصادية لديها أدنى متوسط. ومع ذلك، عندما يميز التحليل كول من المجالات التقليدية كول، أي يتم استبعاد الصحة والحياة الروحية؛ المجال مع أعلى متوسط هو ميزات المنزل، في حين أن أدنى متوسط لا يزال القدرة الاقتصادية. وبالمثل، وجد تحليل الارتباط أن الحياة الروحية تساهم أكثر من غيرها في كول الكلي في حين أن أقل قدرة اقتصادية. ومع ذلك، عندما يتم استبعاد الحياة الروحية والصحة من تحليل الارتباط، والمجال الذي يساهم أكثر من قول الشاملة هو المشاركة الاجتماعية والمشاركة المجتمعية. ووجد تحليل الانحدار المتعدد أن جميع المجالات تساهم بشكل كبير في الحي. وقدمت توصيات بناء على النتائج - لتحسين السلامة من خلال التدابير المتخذة في إطار البرنامج المذكور، من أجل حل مواقف السيارات غير الكافية عن طريق تحسين نظام النقل العام؛ وتحسين خصوصية المنزل المقيمين من خلال جدار جودة الصوت. وقدمت اقتراحات لإجراء مزيد من البحوث لتحسين نوع مماثل من الدراسة في المستقبل.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning

……..
Lukman Hakim Mohammed
Supervisor

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Dean, Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii
Abstract in Arabic iii
Approval Page iv
Declaration v
Copyright Page vi
Dedication vii
Acknowledgements viii
List of Tables xi
List of Figures xiii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Background of the Study **1**
1.2 Statement of the Problem 2
1.3 Research Questions 3
1.4 Research Objectives 3
1.5 Scope of the Study 3
1.6 Stignificance of the Study 4
1.7 Organization of Study 5
1.8 Research Flow 5
1.9 Conclusion 7

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW **8**
2.1 Introduction 8
2.2 Quality of Life (QOL) 8
2.3 Quality of Urban Life (QOUL) 10
2.4 Theoretical Framework 11
2.5 QOL Studies in Cambodia 17
2.6 Conceptual Framework 21
2.7 Conclusion 25

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY **26**
3.1 Introduction 26
3.2 Research Design 26
3.3 Sampling Design 27
3.4 Method of Data Collection 28
3.5 Method of Data Analysis 37
3.6 Conclusion 37

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY AREA: TOUL KORK **39**
4.1 Overview 39
4.2 Background of the Study Area 39
4.3 The Importance of Selected Site 44
4.4 TK Population Data 48
4.5 Conclusion 49

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS.....50
5.1 lntroduction.....50
5.2 Reliability Analysis 50
5.3 Descriptive Analysis……....52
5.3.1 Number of Vehicles 59
5.3.2 Subscription and Ownership 60
5.4 Analysis of Respondents' Satisfactions.....61
5.4.1 Satisfactions with Economic Ability.....61
5.4.2 Satisfactions with Home Features.....64
5.4.3 Satisfaction with Functional Environment.....68
5.4.4 Satisfactions with Safety in the Neighbourhood……...70
5.4.5 Satisfactions with Social Involvement and Community Participation……..71
5.4.6 Satisfactions with Home Features……73
5.4.7 Satisfactions with Spiritual Life……76
5.4.8 Comparisons of Overall Satisfactions with All Domains……..79
5.4.9 Assessment on Overall QOUL in the Neighbourhood……..80
5.5 Correlation 81
5.5.1 Correlation Analysis……...82
5.6 Analysis of Suggestions to Improve QOUL in TK 87
5.7 Conclusion 88

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 89
6.1 Introduction.....89
6.2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents 89
6.3 Respondents' Satisfactions on the Quality of Life 90

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 93
7.1 Introduction.....93
7.2 Conclusion of the Findings.....94
7.2.1 Conclusion from Reliability Analysis.....94
7.2.2 Conclusion from Descriptive Analysis 94
7.2.3 Conclusion from Correlation Analysis……..95
7.2.3.1 Conclusion from Hypothesis……95
7.3 Recommendations.....96
7.3.1 Recommendations to Improve Safety in the Neighbourhood.....96
7.3.2 Recommendations to Improve Home Features……..98
7.3.2.1 Parking at Home 98
7.3.2.2 Soundproof Wall.....99
7.3.3 Other Recommendations.....100
7.3.3.1 Increase Public Parking in TK.....100
7.3.3.2 Authority Intervention in Addressing Increasing Home Price and Rent.....100
7.3.3.3 Parking Allocation and Public Transport……...101
7.3.3.4 Quality Day-care at Workplaces……102
7.4 Suggestions for Further Research 103
7.5 Conclusion 103

REFERENCES.....106

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH AND KHMER.....113

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Dimensions of objective and Subjective Well-being	15
Table 2.2	Objective and subjective Indicators of the QOUL and QOL Measurements Discussed in the Literature Review	23
Table 2.3	Hypotheses for the Study	24
Table 3.1	Model Framework of QOUL in TK	36
Table 5.1	Reliability of Overall Satisfaction for All Domains	51
Table 5.2	Reliability of All Variables	51
Table 5.3	Demographic Profile of the Respondents	52
Table 5.4	Demographic Profile of the Respondents Continues	55
Table 5.5	Type and Number of Vehicles Owned by Respondents	59
Table 5.6	Percentage of Monthly Expenditure	60
Table 5.7	Subscription and ownership of services	60
Table 5.8	Satisfaction with basic Economic Aspects	61
Table 5.9	Impact of Current Economic Situation	62
Table 5.10	Overall Satisfaction with Economic Ability	62
Table 5.11	Satisfaction with Home Features	64
Table 5.12	Crosstab between Satisfaction with Home Features and Housing Type	65
Table 5.13	Crosstab between Satisfaction with Number of vehicle parking and Housing Type	66
Table 5.14	Crosstab between Satisfaction with Soundproof Wall and Housing Type	67
Table 5.15	Levels of Satisfaction with Functional Environment	68
Table 5.16	Levels of Satisfaction with Safety in the Neighbourhood	70
Table 5.17	Levels of Satisfaction with Social Involvement and Community Participation	71

Table 5.18	Respondents' Opinions on Foreigners as Neighbours	71
Table 5.19	Levels of Involvement in Community Activities	72
Table 5.20	Distribution of Respondents Who Have Long-standing Health Problems	73
Table 5.21	Distribution of Respondents Whose Daily Activities Affected by Long-standing Health Problems	74
Table 5.22	Regularity of Exercising and Spending Time for Leisure Activities	74
Table 5.23	Frequency of Respondents Feeling and Experiencing Certain Emotions and Activities	75
Table 5.24	Regularity of Experiencing Attributions of Spiritual Life	76
Table 5.25	Comparison of Overall Satisfaction with All Domains	79
Table 5.26	Guidelines to Interpret Pearson Correlation Value	81
Table 5.27	Correlation Analysis on Overall Satisfaction with All Domains	83
Table 5.28	Results of All Tested Hypotheses	84
Table 5.29	Analysis of Respondents' Opinions on Suggestions to Improve QOUL in TK	87

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Chart of Research Flow	6
Figure 2.1	Model Showing Relationships between Domain Satisfactions and Life Satisfaction (QOL)	15
Figure 4.1	Neighbouring Area in 2010	40
Figure 4.2	Development Strategy Plan	41
Figure 4.3	Projections of Population and Employment by 2020	45
Figure 4.4	Public Transport Systems in PP Strategic Zone	47
Figure 4.5	Distribution of TK Population by age group	49
Figure 5.1	Percentage of Respondents Who Are Unsatisfied with their Monthly Household Income	63
Figure 5.2	Overall Satisfaction with Physical and Emotional Health	73
Figure 5.3	Overall Satisfaction with Spiritual Life	77
Figure 5.4	Crosstab between Satisfaction with Social Interaction in the Neighbourhood and Seeing a Friendly World	78
Figure 5.5	Assessment on Participants' Opinions on Overall QOUL in the Neighbourhood	80

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPTED	Crime Prevention through Environmental Design
EIQ	Educational Institution Quarters
EUI	European University Institute
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
ILO	International Labor Organization
PP	Phnom Penh
PPCH	Phnom Penh City Hall
PPSP	Phnom Penh Structure Plan
PPBS	Phnom Penh Bus System
CQLI	Cambodian Quality of Life Index
QOL	Quality of Life
QOUL	Quality of Urban Life
RA	Resident Association
SD	Standard Deviation
TK	Toul Kork
UNDP	United Nations development Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Where we live influence our live and, thus, our quality of lives. On this basis, a fundamental nation that should underlie planning approaches is that urban environment should be designed as places with the best quality of life – those with the least preventable daily obstruction. This study investigates residents' perceptions of their quality of urban life in Toul Kork (TK), Phnom Penh.

Quality of life is a holistic concept that comprises not only the material aspects such as housing and amenities but also the intangible aspects of life such as good health and the time to have leisure. There is a distinction between the terms quality of life (QOL) and quality of urban life (QOUL). Quality of urban life is derived from the urban environment, i.e., satisfaction is "derived from" urban domains, such as housing, neighborhood, community and region. On the other hand, quality of life is understood as satisfaction that typically includes experiences across all life domains.

This study includes the discussions on both qualities of life and quality of urban life domains. Quality of urban life domains included in this study are housing, functional environment, safety and security, as well as social involvement and community participation. On the other hand, the quality of life domains are economic ability, health, and spiritual life. However, since this study is about the residents' perceptions of their quality of life in an urban neighborhood, the term quality of urban life instead of quality of life will be used when referring specifically to the study.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 2015, Phnom Penh is ranked 126 out of 140 cities by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Live Ability Index (The Economic, 2015). In 2016, EIU hosted a competition offering users the opportunity to combine data from the Worldwide Cost of Living and Live ability surveys with other sources to provide a ranking of their own. In the new ranking, Phnom Penh ranks 127 out of 140 cities. The similarly, in 2016, Phnom Penh is ranked in 118 out of 230 cities from all over the world by Mercer's Quality of living. The purpose of the assessment is to help multinational companies and other employers to compensate their employees fairly when sending them to work in different countries.

It is not unusual for rating agencies to have different results because they usually use different indicators. The ranking also usually lack transparency in measures that are used and how the rankings are derived. Besides that, the studies above only utilized objective approach. Attempts to rank cities or particular neighborhoods within a city according to the agencies' objective QOUL are rather pointless if residents are attracted to the place according to what is important to them. Something that is considered significant to one person may not be significant to another. Hence, subjective approach is chosen for this study because the approach reveals how people are different in terms of their values, experiences, perceptions, and evaluations on their urban living.

In Cambodia, QOL studies at local or city level are very limited. There are not studies before, which very important subjective, and neither was conducted in Phnom Penh. Thus, it is very pressing for more local QUL studies to be conducted in Phnom Penh, in order to better understand QOL issues and learn what can be improved for the betterment of residents' lives.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1- What are the residents' perceptions of their quality of urban life in Toul Kork (TK)?

2- Which life domains contribute the most and the least to residents' satisfactions with their quality of urban life?

3- How do the residents and the authority can improve the quality of urban life in Toul Kork (TK)?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are stated as follows:

1- To investigate residents' perceptions of their quality of urban life in Toul Kork.

2- To analyze the residents' perception on quality of life in Toul Kork (TK).

3- To propose appropriate recommendations based on the findings towards improving overall quality of urban life in Toul Kork.

1.5 SCOPE OF STUDY

The study is conducted at all housing types in TK. Currently, there are total of eight housing types available namely: detached, semi-detached, terrace, town house, condominium, government quarters, flat house, and rent houses for staffs. The researcher has been assigned to find at least 20 respondents from each housing type. The total number of respondents who participated in the survey is 200.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Places where we live can be viewed at various levels from housing to neighborhood, city, region, state or even nation. Where we live influences our lives and, consequently, our quality of lives, on this basis, a fundamental notion underlying many planning approaches is that urban environments should be designed to increase residents' satisfaction level with their lives. Satisfactions in different urban domains influence both overall life satisfactions and intentions of people to move, where eventually, it affects regional implications for economic growth, population growth, environmental sustainability and migration patterns (Glaeser, Kolko and Saiz, 2000; Keeble, 1990; Ley, 1996; Liaw, Frey and Lin, 2002, cited in Marans and Stimson, 2011).

Therefore, studying QOL is important because it enables us to know what motivate people behavior, and what contribute to their life satisfaction and happiness (Marans and Stimson, 2011). QOL study is significant for urban policy specifically because they directly shape the live ability of cities and provide a set of metrics that enable planners and policy makers to measure the effectiveness of their efforts (Marans, 2002); affect residential location decisions and choices (Campbell, Converse, Rodgers and Marans, 1976b; Golledge and Stimson, 1987; Zehner, 1977, cited in Marans and Stimson, 2011) and motivate the demand for public action (Dahmann, 1985; Lu, 1999, cited in Marans and Stimson, 2011).

Since population in Phnom Penh is rapidly increasing, and the city is expected to continue growing over the next few decades, it is necessary to examine the relationships between the characteristics of urban environments and the residents' perceptions of their quality of lives.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

The study has been organized into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study background, statement of problems, provides the objectives, raises the research questions, and states the significance and scope of the study. Chapter two discusses various theoretical and empirical studies related to the topic, that lead to the formulation of the hypotheses. Chapter three is about the research design, and method of data collection and analysis. Chapter four covers the background and importance of the study area. Chapter five provides data analysis and findings. Chapter six concludes the study by providing conclusions from the analyses, and recommendations are then proposed, as well as suggestions for further research to improve similar type of study in the future.

1.8 RESEARCH FLOW

The flow of the study is planned as the following phases (Figure 1.1):

Phase 1: Background and literature review

At the first phase of the study, extensive literature on QOUL and QOL are reviewed to provide a solid background in developing suitable framework for the study of QOUL in TK. Thus, the questionnaire was designed based on the domains and indicators found to be the most important to Cambodians.

Phase 2: Sampling and data collection

At the second phase, the sampling design is determined before data collection starts. The primary data is collected at all housing types in TK via survey. The secondary data is obtained from PPCH.

Phase 3: Data analysis

At this phase, different types of data analysis were conducted via SPSS. The reliability tests have proven that the data are reliable. Frequency analysis, correlation analysis, crosstab analysis, and regression analysis are run to test the hypotheses and then, the results are analyzed.

Phase 4: Recommendations and conclusion

At the final phase, the findings will be evaluated and recommendations and suggestions for further research are proposed. The study is then concluded.

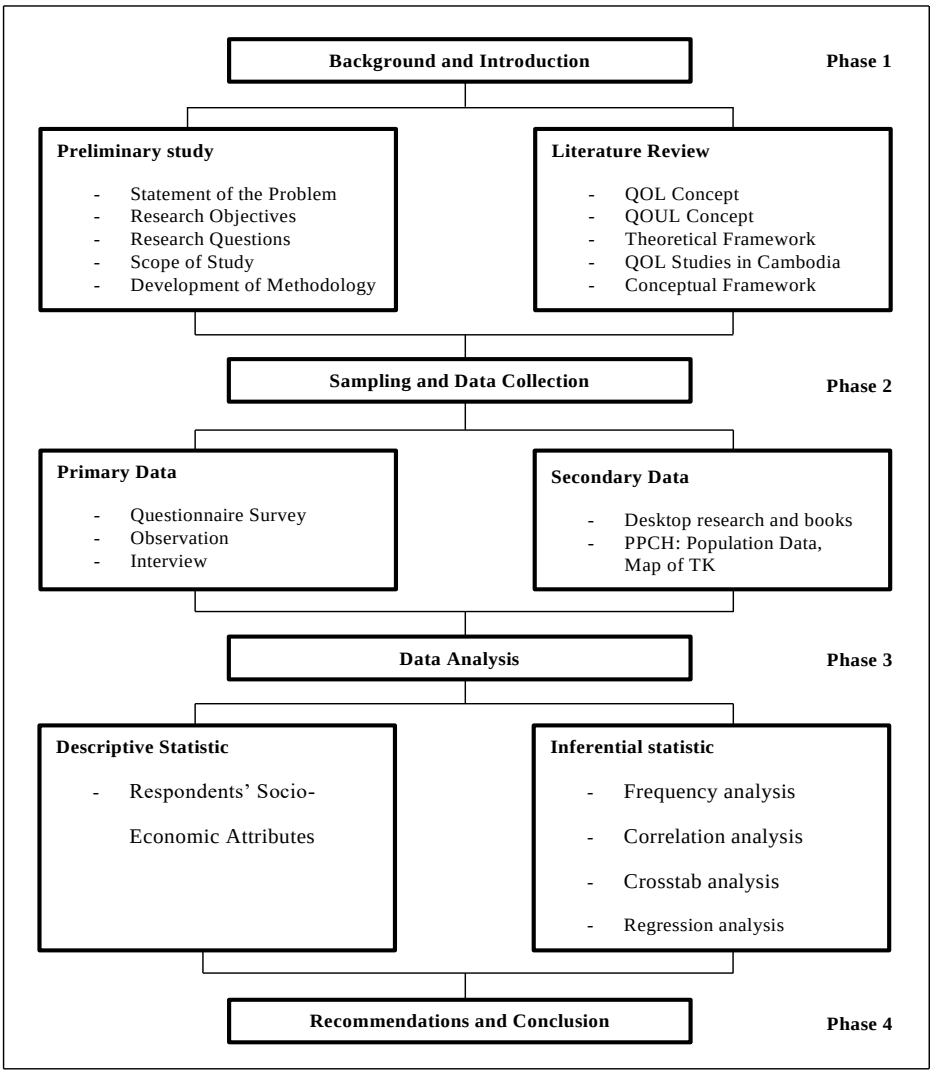

Figure 1.1 Chart of Research Flow

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduces the study background. The statement of problem is to discuss why the research is worth studying and the research contribution to social theories. The research objectives are stated to provide the focus of the study. The research questions are raised to investigate the unexplored yet crucial aspects of QOUL in TK as the study is unprecedented in the study area. The scope of work is explained and followed by how the study is organized. The next chapter discusses the theoretical and empirical studies related to the study in creating the basis for the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between quality of life and urban environment is complex. Residents' satisfactions of living in urban environment vary to what they believe as important. Satisfactions are influenced by their personal characteristics, such as values, expectations, perceptions and evaluations, as well as their demographic and socioeconomic attributes (Hsieh, 2003).

Scholars in both the social sciences and environmental design fields have been arguing that in additional to having an objective reality, "quality" of any entity also has a subjective dimension that is perceptual. Fundamental to that assertion is the notion that "the environment may be defined as having built, natural, and sociocultural dimensions".

And different environmental setting will have specific attributes in terms of those dimensions. Research finding have proven that those three dimensions form important components of QOL and the subjective well-being of people (Marans, 2005, cited in Marans and Stimon, 2011).

2.2 QUALITY OF LIFE (QOL)

There is still no general accepted definition of QOL and no consensus on the best way to measure QOL (Evans and Huxley, 2002). So far, WHOQOL's definition on QOL is the most referred definition. WHO created an international cross-cultural comparable QOL assessment instrument called WHOQOL-BREF. The assessment is based on the

individual's perception in the context of their culture and value system and their personal goals, standards, and concerns (WHOQOL Group, 1995):

> "An individual's perception of his/her position in life in the context of culture value systems in which they live in and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad-ranging concept incorporating, in a complex way, the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal, beliefs and relationships to salient features of the environment".

In recent years, there is a growing consensus that nations and governments need to develop a more holistic view of progress, rather than focusing mostly on economic indicators. In other words, there is a growing public interest in the interrelationships between economic, social and environment aspects of life. The need to improve data and indicators to complement GDP has been increasingly acknowledged (Hoegen, 2009).

This has directed to numerous initiative and adjustments. The UNDP has created Human Development Index (HDI) to provide a standard to countries based on combined measurements of GDP / capital, health and education. The World Bank with its calculation of saving has initiated to include social and environmental features when evaluating the wealth of nations. Several countries have taken national efforts to measure their development and progress in a more extensive way (Hoegen, 2009).

UNDP created HDI to highlight that people and their skills should be the ultimate criteria for evaluating the development of a nation, instead of economic growth alone. The HDI can also be utilized to question national policy choices, if two nations with similar level of GNI per capita end up with different results of human development. These differences can raise debate about government policy priorities (UNDP, 2015).

In brief, the HDI is a measurement of average achievement of human development: along and healthy life, knowledgeable, and a decent standard of living. The health dimension is measured by life expectancy at birth. The education dimension is evaluated by mean of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and above; and expected years of schooling for children. The standard of living dimension is assessed by gross national income per capita (UNDP, 2015).

On the other hand, World Development Indicators evaluates social progress and quality of life, in addition to government role, development, environment, and physical infrastructure. The indicators are gathered by the World Bank and international associates, providing more than 900 variables for 208 economies since 1960 to 2015 (EUI, 2016).

2.3 QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE (QOUL)

QOUL is the satisfaction that a person receives from surrounding human and physical condition, which are scale-dependent and can influence the behavior of individuals and groups of individuals (Mulligan et al., 2004). There is significant evidence that proves “place” matters in QOL concerns, and studies focusing on QOUL allow us to better understand the meaning of QOL and how to measure QOL (Marans, 2002, cited in Marans and Stimson 2011).

People live their live-in places, which have particular environmental characteristics. Those places can be viewed at various levels – from housing to neighborhood, city, region, state or even nation. Most people at the present time live in urban environments, and mostly in large urban environments i.e. cities or metropolitan areas (Marans and Stimson, 2011).