Interdisciplinary Comparison of the Index of Social Well-being of the Russian Population with Economic Indicators (Based on the Example of Republic of Tatarstan)

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Abstract

Based on the monitoring of population-based surveys of representative samples of data and economic analysis, the article presents the results of a multidisciplinary comparison of socio-economic indicators with the index of social well-being of Russians based on the example of the Republic of Tatarstan. The results showed that in spite of the fact that current economic situation evaluation index in the Republic of Tatarstan for the period from November 2012 to November 2013 increased by more than a third (34.3 percent), the real economic indicators have recorded only a slight increase in selected industries and regional economic development index has decreased by 2.77 percent. Overall, according to perception surveys taken in the period from November 2012 to November 2013 concerning changes in economic situation and in personal welfare, people of Tatarstan are more optimistic than the actual economic changes. The changes in the economy are evaluated more positively than changes in personal welfare. Nevertheless, objective indicators suggest otherwise: economic growth is observed only in some sectors of the economy with negative growth in the composite index of economic development of the region (-2,77%), while growth of incomes of the population amounted to an average of +10.83%. Such dissonance between the subjective and objective assessments can be linked to many interdependent factors: first, public opinion and the subjective perception of the economic situation of the population in particular, has a catch-up character – it usually lags behind the real economic situation; secondly, the positive perception of the economic situation can be fabricated by the media in the interests of the ruling elite and private corporations; thirdly, the positive perception of micro-situation in the economy can be imposed by a high assessment of the current personal situation (growth of incomes and well-being of the population).

Keywords: Index of social well-being, Economic analysis, Interdisciplinary analysis, Russia, Republic of Tatarstan, Comparative study.

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Introduction

In sociology, social well-being signifies a complex form of a rather stable socio-psychological state that arises in social actors influenced by objective conditions (Cummins et al., 2003; Lepeshkin, 2004; Lau et al. 2005; Murias et al., 2006). This condition is a subtle indicator of the daily life of people, it shows satisfaction with their lives, their situation, prospects of its development and reflects their confidence or uncertainty of today and tomorrow. In practical terms, the social well-being act as an indicator of people's reactions to their living conditions and the way an entire complex of social, political and economic factors influence it (Ermolaeva, 2014).

Index of social well-being as an integrated approach to study of the social reality has its advantages. First, public participation in the comprehensive assessment of various aspects of society allows to develop an effective social policy and to analyze the public social consequences of decisions taken by the political elite. Second, the simplicity of the method of constructing such indexes allows different target groups (authorities, business community, academic sector, etc.) to access the results of such studies in order to obtain relevant information about the state of affairs in the country. Thirdly, indexes of social attitudes have prognostic potential, i.e. the dynamics of these indexes allow to forecast economic and socio-political behavior of people in the short term (2-4 months) (Sharpe, 1999; Safiullin et al., 2012; Nagimova et al., 2014; Bhatti, 2017).

This article presents the results of an interdisciplinary comparison of socio-economic indicators with the index of social well-being of Russians based on the example of the Republic of Tatarstan – one of the most economically developed regions of Russia, located in the center of the European part of the country. More specific objectives of the study were: 1) sociological monitoring of social well-being of the people of Tatarstan with the use of integral (index) approach 2) economic analysis of the main statistical indicators characterizing the personal well-being and economic development of the region, 3) social well-being index dynamics analysis through the prism of socio-economic indicators.

Research Methods

The method of social well-being index calculation that was used for sociological measurements of social well-being of Russians was developed by the associates of Levada Center (2008). We used this method as the most comprehensive and reliable, based on many years of experience in conducting similar studies for Russian society.

To build this index one typically uses 10-12 questions that focus on emphasizing positive or negative assessments of the current and future situation on personal and social levels. In the first stage of calculation, individual indexes that distribute answers to each question are built. They reflect the difference of positive and negative answers (in percentage) to individual indicator questions taken into account in the calculation of the composite index. Afterwards, 100 is added to the difference to avoid negative answers. The combined SMI index is calculated as the arithmetic mean of the individual. Thus, SMI varies in the range from 0 to 200, where index values less than 100 indicate the prevalence of negative assessments.

When building the SMI, it is customary to single out its components - private indexes, which combine a group of individual indexes. In this study we have allocated 4 private indexes:

1) public sphere evaluation index; 2) personal sphere evaluation index; 3) republic economy evaluation index; 4) republic politics evaluation index (Table 1).

The method of research was mass poll of the population of the Republic of Tatarstan on multistage stratified quota sampling. The study was implemented in three waves: 1) in November 2012 (n=1201); 2) in May-June 2013 (n=3401); 3) in November 2013 (n=1801).

In this study, the results of measurements of the index on social population in the Republic of Tatarstan are compared with the real situation in the economy of the region for the respective survey periods. In order to asses the economic condition in the region, we used the growth rates of selected indicators taking into account the specifics of the sectoral development of the region. It is necessary for the possibility of undertaking a comparative analysis of the dynamics of economic development of the inhabitants of the Republic and its evaluation on the personal and public levels.

In order to assess the dynamics of changes of economic indicators, we analyzed the following statistics on **personal well-being of the citizens** in the following aspects: 1) income (average salary, average pensions, subsistence minimum, the value of the minimum consumer budget); 2) housing conditions (budget expenditures for housing and communal services, commissioning of housing); 3) the level of development of social and cultural sector (budget expenditure on education, health, sports, social policy, culture, film and media); 4) effective demand of the population (the intensification of retail trade turnover and the volume of paid services to the population).

Economic growth is represented through several statistical categories: the amount of work performed by "construction" activity; agricultural products; the consumer price index; producer price index of industrial products; the proportion of profitable organizations in their total number; profitability of sold goods, products, works, services; oil production; manufacture of plastics; production of trucks; the freight turnover of motor transport; electric power generation, transmission and distribution; foreign trade turnover; investments in fixed capital.

Research methodology is based on comparing baseline and reporting periods. To characterize the intensity of the development in time we used statistics, obtained by comparing the levels, resulting in a system of absolute and relative indicators of the dynamics: absolute growth, growth coefficient, growth pace, growth rate. To characterize the intensity of development over a long period, average performance indicators were calculated: the average number, the average absolute growth, average growth coefficient, average growth pace, average growth rate, average of absolute value of 1% growth.

Results

According to three waves of monitoring (Table 1), the personal sphere evaluation had the maximum value (in the period from November 2012 to November 2013, the figure increased from 114.6 to 136.6, total growth was +22); republic economy evaluation index had the minimum value (in the period from November 2012 to November 2013, the figure increased from 91,1 to 117.8, total growth of 26.7). The value of the integral index growth during the period from November 2012 to May 2013, nearly doubled the corresponding value in the period from May to November 2013 2013 (16.7 and 8.8 respectively).

Table 1. Value and growth of private indexes and the composite index of social well-being

No.	Indexes	November, 2012 index values	May, 2013 index values	May, 2013 index gains in comparison with November, 2012	November, 2013 index values	November, 2013 index gains in comparison with May, 2013	November, 2013 index gains compared to November, 2012.	November, 2013 index gains compared to November, 2012, %
1	Public Sphere Evaluation Index	103.5	116.1	+12.6	130.1	+14	+26.6	+25.7
2	Personal Sphere Evaluation Index	114.6	128.2	+13.6	136.6	+8.4	+22	+19.2
2.1	*evaluation of the present*	116.8	129.3	+12.5	135.8	+6.5	+19	+16.3
2.2	*future forecast*	110.2	126	+15.8	138.2	+12.2	+28	+25.4
3	RT Economics Evaluation Index	91.1	108.6	+17.5	117.8	+9.2	+26.7	+29.3
3.1	*evaluation of the present*	89.7	107.3	+17.6	120.5	+13.2	+30.8	+34.3
3.2	*future forecast*	92.5	109.8	+17.3	115	+5.2	+22.5	+24.3
4	RT Politics Evaluation Index	98.2	115.6	+17.4	126	+10.4	+27.8	+28.3
5	CISM (composite index of social well-being)	102.8	119.5	+16.7	128.3	+8.8	+25.5	+24.8
		Maximum values of the indexes and their growth are indicated in red, minimal ones are in blue						

According to the economic analysis for the periods from January-October 2012 and January-October 2013 there was a major increase in the objective economic indicators of personal well-being of residents of the Republic of Tatarstan (Table 2). The average salary increased by 11.86%, the average size of pensions increased by 9.82%. The minimum subsistence level (the minimum level of income deemed necessary to ensure a certain standard of living in the country) increased by 16.2%. The cost of the minimum consumer budget (the cost of a set of food and nonfood goods and services, which ensures the satisfaction of basic physiological and socio-cultural needs of a person) increased by 7,18%.

We now turn to the analysis of economic index of growth in the economy (Table 2). The amount of work performed under "construction" activity increased by 6.9% during the periods from January-October 2012 and from January-October 2013; "agricultural products" increased by 10.99%. The consumer price index increased by 2.7%; producer price index of industrial products fell by 4.6%. There is also a positive trend in the dynamics of most indicators of economic development for 1-3 quarters 2013 compared with same period in 2012. However, the indicators characterizing the efficiency of the economic system declined slightly. The share of profitable organizations in the total number has decreased by 1.28%, and the profitability of sold goods, products, works, services decreased by 9.01%.

Combined indicators demonstrated sustained economic growth, which had an impact on the personal welfare of the population.

Table 2. Indicators of personal well-being and economic growth

	2012 (January-October)	2013 (January-October)	2013 Growth Pace (January - October) compared with 2012 (Jan-Oct), %	Growth rate, %
Personal well-being index:				
Average salary	22295.8	24941.0	111.8641	11.86412
Average Pension	8747.5	9606.6	109.8211	9.821092
Subsistence minimum	5393	6269	116.2433	16.24328
The cost of the minimum consumer budget	10128	10856	107.188	7.187994
Budget expenditures	139003.2	138136.5	99.37649	-0.62351
Out of which:				
National economy	42286.4	31511.6	74.51947	-25.4805
Housing and communal services	8066.0	9440.1	117.0357	17.03571
Environmental protection	195.6	271.1	138.5992	38.59918
Education	31213.4	38677.3	123.9125	23.91249
Health care and sport	20656.6	25847.9	125.1314	25.13143
Social policy	15075.4	14751.4	97.8508	-2.1492
Culture, cinematography and media	4245.0	6866.4	161.7527	61.75265
Commissioning of housing, thousand sq. m of total area	1852,2	1948.2	105.183	5.183026
Retail trade turnover, mln. RUB.	523896.9	573877.9	109,5402	9.540236
The volume of paid services to the population, mln. RUB.	154854.4	177442.7	114.5868	14.5868
Economy growth index:				

The amount of work performed in "construction" activity, mln. RUB.	187328.9	200378.7	106.9663	6.96625
Agricultural products, mln. RUB.	126977.7	140941.2	110.9968	10.99681
Consumer price index	104.1	107.0	102.7	2.7
Industrial products producer price index	107.6	102.6	95.4	-4.6
The share of profitable organizations in the total number of organizations, %	77.6	76.6	98.71134	-1.28866
Profitability of sold goods, products, works, services, %	12.2	11.1	90.98361	-9.01639

This article has been the first attempt to correlate socio-economic indicators of quality of life and social attitudes, objective (based on statistics) economic data and the subjective (based on public opinion) data of mass surveys of the population. Further, let us study how the obtained indexes relate to the data of economic analysis.

1. **Personal sphere self evaluation** of people of Tatarstan generally corresponds to economic analysis. So, during the study period, there was an increase of the following objective indicators: minimum subsistence level (+16.2%), average wage (+11.86%), pensions (+9.82%), minimum consumer budget (+7.18%) (Table 2).

At the same time, current personal sphere evaluation index increased by 16.3%. The obtained data correlate with the results of other sociological surveys conducted by the authors team. The positive dynamics for 2008-2013 is observed on parameters such as evaluation of the size of salaries, pensions and allowances; prices and tariffs; the level of social support of the population; personal culture, morals.

2. **Republic of Tatarstan economy evaluation**. Here, it cannot be said that the opinion of the population regarding the development of the regional economy mirrors the current trend in the real economic sector. The composite index of economic development of the region in 2012 (1st-3rd quarters of the year) was slightly above the level of this indicator in 2013 over the same period. Significant growth in the construction industry had a particular influence on the integral indicator. In 2012, there were active preparations for the Universiade, huge investments were directed in the field of construction. However, in November 2012 the population did not assess the economic activity in the region at the highest level: current economy situation evaluation index stood at 89.7 (the lowest of the personal indexes for 2012-2013). This can be explained by the fact that at that time, the population felt increasing inconvenience from the active preparation for the Universiade, including the construction of new roads.

After the Universiade, some economic indicators are showing a downward trend, for example, the profitability of sold goods, products, works, services decreased by 9.01%, the share of profitable organizations decreased by 1.28% (Table 2). On the contrary, current economic situation evaluation rates increased. Moreover, the increase in the assessment of the current situation in RT economy was the most significant among other of the partial indexes: by November 2013, compared to November 2012 it increased by more than a third (+34.3 percent). This may be due to the popularization of the opinions about the stabilization of the socioeconomic situation in the Republic, increasing its investment attractiveness, growth of welfare of population, etc. in the mass consciousness through the media. In addition, all the daily difficulties associated with the construction and improvement of the city in anticipation of the Universiade were over, and Tatarstan had the opportunity to fully enjoy the results of economic investments in the urban environment.

Thus, there is some lag of public opinion from the real situation in the economic sphere. We can conclude that personal self-awareness imposes a considerable imprint on the opinion of the respondents assessing the economic development of the region during the analyzed period.

Conclusion and Discussions

This article presents the results of interdisciplinary research of socio-economic indicators with the index of social well-beings of Russians on the example of Republic of Tatarstan.

The results showed that in spite of the fact that current economic situation index of the Republic of Tatarstan for the period from November 2012 to November 2013 increased by more than a third (34.3 percent), the real economic indicators have recorded only a slight increase in selected industries and regional economic development index has decreased by 2.77 percent. The index of current personal sphere evaluation has increased by 16.3% over this period, which was more correlated with objective economic indicators of their personal wealth (average revenue growth rate of +10.83%).

Public sphere evaluation index increased by one quarter (25.7%), however, a more detailed examination of Tatarstan people's evaluation of social problems gives no such optimistic results. The population of the republic was concerned about the deteriorating environmental situation, it showed dissatisfaction with many aspects of the housing-and-municipal organizations and public transport, high levels of corruption, etc. However, the evaluation of the level of public security slightly increased, as expressed in the opinions about the possibility of the development of terrorism and extremism in the republic (an average of 18% reduction in the number of Tatarstan citizens, evaluating the extent of the threat as medium and high).

Political sphere evaluation index in the framework of SMI measurements increased by 28.3%. Sociological research data also showed an increase of public confidence in the state authorities, but it is not particularly significant. For example, in 2013, Tatarstan began to evaluate the activity of authorities 6-7% higher than in 2012.

Overall, according to perception surveys taken in the period from November 2012 to November 2013 concerning changes in economic situation and in personal welfare, citizens of Tatarstan are more optimistic than the actual economic changes. The changes in the economy are evaluated more positively than changes in personal welfare. Nevertheless, objective indicators suggest otherwise: economic growth is observed only in some sectors of the economy with negative growth in the composite index of economic development of the region (-2,77%), while growth of incomes of the population amounted to an average of +10.83%.

Such dissonance between the subjective and objective assessments can be linked to many interdependent factors: first, public opinion and the subjective perception of the economic situation of the population in particular usually lags behind the real economic situation; secondly, the positive perception of the economic situation can be fabricated by the media in the interests of the ruling elite and private corporations; third, the positive perception of macroeconomic situation can be imposed by a high assessment of the current personal situation (growth of incomes and well-being of the population).

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