

THE LIFE QUALITY IN UKRAINE: FACTORS AND PROBLEMS OF ENSURING ITS RESILIENCE THROUGH THE EMPLOYMENT

Larysa Bogush¹

Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to summarise the conditions, factors and potential problems involved in ensuring and improving the quality of life and resilience of the population in Ukraine, with a focus on the employment sphere and the national economy as a whole. The present study is concerned with the assessment of the employment sphere's impact on the reproduction and dynamics of parameters, indicators, and benchmarks of the population's quality of life. This is to be achieved in the context of a coordinated policy for the establishment and improvement of the socio-economic development resilience potential in the near and long term. Furthermore, the methodology of systemic interactions and relationships between the aforementioned significant categories of well-being, sustainability, and growth is to be substantiated. The research *methodology* is based on the concepts and theories of socio-humanitarian potential, social capital, sustainable development, and the resilience of the economy and society. It also considers the social state and the welfare state, as well as the inclusion of groups identified according to a spectrum of social vulnerability criteria. The methodology of identifying problems, features, criteria, and prospects for ensuring acceptable parameters and enhancing the resilience of the population life quality through optimising the processes of capitalising individual, community, and nationwide socio-humanitarian potential in the functioning of the employment sphere and the economy as a whole combines empirical and theoretical methods (in particular, analysis, induction, extrapolation, synthesis). *Results.* The following concepts are defined: economic and social resilience, and quality of life. The relationships between these concepts are also delineated. The main priorities and strategies for ensuring sustainable quality of life through employment are: diversification, innovative development, modernisation of the national economy across its territorial subsystems; supporting and lobbying for the interests of national economic entities in domestic and foreign markets for goods and services; developing effective national demand and the consumer market; promoting social protection and the social and labour integration of vulnerable population groups; preserving and restoring labour potential, increasing the effectiveness of capitalisation and improving its professional and qualification component. The key factors influencing the reproduction and enhancement of population life quality resilience, which are disseminated through the employment sector and function within it, encompass the institutional, socio-economic, socio-labour, and cultural and educational domains. *Practical implications.* The potential for enhancing Ukrainian socio-economic policy with respect to enhancing life quality resilience is predominantly contingent upon the systematisation of structural changes, with the primary objectives being the mitigation of threats and the attainment of public acceptability of results. The systematisation of structural changes must encompass the following: the assurance of the population's productive employment; the optimisation of the working environment and occupational safety; educational and household support for employment and labour mobility; the improvement of the economy, the law, and everyday household culture, including in the direction of legal labour promotion. *Value / Originality.* The primary objective of the policy for maintaining national security and economic competitiveness in the globalised world is the optimisation of the employment sphere's systemic influences on the socium's level and quality of life and reproduction. This process involves the assessment of the satisfaction of territorial and functional communities, social groups with their living activities, as well as the state institutional grounds.

Keywords: the population life quality, the employment sphere, strategies for the labour potential capitalising, the working life quality, organisational and economic mechanism, the resilience of the economy and society.

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¹ Mykhailo Ptoukha Institute for Demography and Life Quality Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine

E-mail: bogush_lg@ukr.net

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6196-3781>

ResearcherID: <http://www.researcherid.com/rid/D-9935-2017>



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1. Introduction

The employment sector is the fundamental and influential originator of a multifaceted system of factors and indicators of the population's quality of life, as well as the conditions and parameters of its resilience (stability, resistance to a combination of internal and external negative influences) at the national, community, and individual levels.

One of the key tasks of effective socio-economic policy for maintaining national security and the competitiveness of national economic entities in the context of globalisation remains the optimisation of the systemic impact of the employment sector on the standard of living and quality of life and the reproduction of society (in particular, in terms of ensuring productive employment, improving mechanisms and parameters for the reproduction and realisation of the psychophysiological, intellectual and creative potential of the working-age population and labour force, as well as consumer demand), which leads to: the investment attractiveness of economic entities and payment systems; the effectiveness of long-term "hidden" policies regulating cross-border migration of the economically active population; the range of assessments of the satisfaction of communities and social groups with their livelihoods; the processes of functioning and development of the state institutional system.

2. The Life Quality Research: Methodological Foundations

The issues of ensuring the life quality as a whole and, in particular, the working life quality (based on the socio-economic development achieved parameters, the employment scale, structure and specifics) has received wide coverage in scientific and popularized studies in countries all over the world and in Ukraine.

In the realm of pertinent publications, it is noteworthy to acknowledge those that delve into the definition, specification, and methodology of these concepts and processes. These publications encompass research that seeks to justify and classify the factors contributing to their formation and evaluation (Ryndzak, 2021; Halaiko et al., 2020; Stavytskyy, Molokanova, 2020; Palchuk, 2018). These factors are complemented by studies of a set of criteria and approaches to ensuring and modelling the quality of life in Ukraine and other countries worldwide. The importance of these factors for the effective and balanced social reproduction of the population is outlined in the works of Andreitseva and Sikora (2021, 2024), Poliakova et al. (2021), Stavytskyy, Molokanova (2020) and Rybalova et al. (2020). A significant research segment consists of papers that carry out both the comprehensive analysis of the population life quality in Ukraine, taking into account

retrospective trends and expectations (Kyryliuk et al., 2024; Halaiko et al., 2020), and the life quality assessment of communities and groups identified by place of residence and social vulnerability (Poplavskaya, Shevchuk, 2020; Shtuler, 2020; Melnychuk et al., 2020). The period of martial law in Ukraine has been characterised by an increase in the number of papers that evaluate the factors, quality, and features of the population's life in conditions of active military operations and their consequences (Gukalova, 2023; Bielikova et al., 2022).

The aforementioned studies demonstrate the diversity of approaches to systematising factors and criteria for ensuring, reproducing, and improving the population life quality in the system of indicators and benchmarks for socio-economic development sustaining, the principles and practice of balancing long-term socio-economic and investment policies. In order to proceed with this study, it is necessary to provide further substantiation of the methodology for the formation of systemic interactions and relationships in the development processes of the employment sphere and the economy as a whole. This is to be achieved in the context of reproducing and ensuring positive dynamics of the parameters of quality of life (including working life quality), which are to be made accessible and desirable for individuals, a range of social groups, territorial and functional communities (hromadas).

The primary objective of the present research endeavour is to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the employment sphere on the reproduction and dynamics of parameters, indicators, and benchmarks of population quality of life. This will be achieved by establishing a coordinated policy for the establishment and improvement of the socio-economic development resilience potential in the near and long term perspective. A secondary objective is to substantiate the methodology of systemic interactions and relationships in the functioning of the employment sphere and the economy as a whole. This will be accomplished by conducting assessments and gathering expectations of a range of social groups regarding the possibilities of ensuring, preserving, and improving the quality of life.

The research methodological foundations comprise concepts and theories of the socio-humanitarian potential and social capital, sustainable development and resilience of the economy and society, the social state, the welfare state, as well as the inclusion of groups identified according to a spectrum of social vulnerability criteria. The methodology for identifying problems, features, criteria, and prospects for ensuring acceptable parameters and enhancing the resilience of the population life quality through optimising the processes of capitalising individual, community, and nationwide socio-humanitarian potential in the functioning of employment sphere and economy

as a whole combines empirical and theoretical methods.

The scientific papers' analysis is supplemented by substantiating the factors of quality of life and working life, in particular at the collective and individual levels, extrapolating them to organisational and economic mechanisms and dominants for reproducing, increasing the life quality resilience, which are implemented in the employment sphere and transmitted by it, and generalising the main negative trends in ensuring the population life quality resilience in Ukraine under the influence of a number of internal and external threats to the employment sphere functioning. Consequently, the potential for enhancement of Ukrainian socio-economic policy with respect to enhancing life quality resilience (primarily within the context of mitigating threats and ensuring public acceptability of outcomes) is predominantly contingent upon the systematisation of structural alterations. These encompass the facilitation of productive employment for the population, the optimisation of working environments and occupational safety, educational and household support for employment and labour mobility, and the advancement of economic, legal and domestic household culture, including in the direction of legal labour promotion.

3. The Impact of Employment on the Population Life Quality and its Resilience

Under the resilience of the economy and society (including in terms of the population life quality as a whole and, in particular, the working life quality), it is appropriate to understand formal and informal mechanisms of their subjects' (the population, the labour force, business entities, territorial settlement and business subsystems, territorial and functional communities) viability, resistance, ability to restoring and developing in unstable environmental, socio-economic, geopolitical conditions that are forming and maintaining functionality due to the set of the specified subjects' properties, embodied in the natural and socio-humanitarian potential, as well as in systemic characteristics of institutional, economic and social interactions. Consequently, the resources, potential, and mechanisms for ensuring resilience are significant features and characteristics of countries' national security and competitiveness in the globalised world.

As labour and human capital have become central factors of production and social reproduction in neo- and post-industrial economies, the sphere of employment has increasingly assumed the role of an accumulator and regulator of societal potential and resilience mechanisms. Employment dynamics reflect broader patterns of economic development – growth, stagnation, or recession – while exerting a substantial

influence on living standards, life strategies, and economic behaviour. In this context, employment conditions shape consumption patterns, living environments, and the distribution of wealth across various social groups, including wage earners, entrepreneurs, final beneficiaries and rentiers deriving income from corporate ownership and property rentals, as well as individuals of pre-working age and pensioners. Consequently, the employment sphere constitutes a key determinant of both objective and subjective assessments of quality of life, operating across levels ranging from the community to the individual (Andreitseva & Sikora, 2024; Stavytskyy & Molokanova, 2020; Rybalova et al., 2020).

In this context, the population life quality should be interpreted as a set of objective and subjective assessments of the conditions, factors, and prospects for comfortable and safe living. It should also include full (including socially acceptable) realization of the psychophysical, intellectual, and creative potential of individuals and communities of various functionality and scale. Furthermore, it should create opportunities for achieving desired self-development and consumption benchmarks, preserving and reproducing health, prolonging life expectancy, and productive economic activity (within the framework of its individual and collective strategies).

In consideration of the prevailing economic development and salient macroeconomic indicators, the employment structure within the nation is instrumental in facilitating the reproduction of the workforce, thereby influencing the economic well-being and quality of life of both employed individuals and their respective families, in addition to the broader population. This economic framework is further influenced by legitimate and informal social mechanisms, which serve as conduits for the following: the distribution and redistribution of produced values (goods, services) and income from them; satisfaction of general social and socially necessary needs, in particular, regarding the reproduction and improvement of certain labour, professional and qualification potential, economic, technological and everyday culture; social protection of vulnerable categories of the population, stimulation of socially useful productive activity).

Accordingly, the economic specialisation of a country and the structure of employment exert direct effects on a wide range of socio-economic outcomes. These include income levels and the scale, structure, and dynamics of consumption and accumulation across different social groups; patterns of property ownership and social stratification (Andreitseva, 2021; Stavytskyy & Molokanova, 2020); and the level and sustainability of revenues of state and local budgets, as well as the financing of compulsory social insurance funds and other public and extra-budgetary social

protection programmes. Furthermore, employment structures shape socially acceptable – both formal and informal – mechanisms and strategies for capitalising labour, professional and qualification potential, as well as broader social capital. They also influence individual and collective perceptions of a decent standard of living and quality of life, including lifestyles, the content and scope of socially necessary and private needs and the extent to which they are satisfied, patterns of economic activity, and demands for education, self-education, lifelong learning, and advanced training (Ryndzak, 2021; Halaiko et al., 2020; Palchuk, 2018). Finally, economic specialisation and employment structures affect the parameters and dynamics of labour supply and demand in the national labour market and its territorial subsystems, as well as the scale, drivers, and trends of labour migration, including shuttle, interregional, and cross-border movements.

Concurrently, the employment parameters determined by the territorial organisation of the spectrum of resources (human, material and technical, financial) and production itself affect the anthropogenic and technogenic quality of communities' (hromadas') living environment, outlining: topical and potential threats to the environment, living conditions, as well as predicted nearest and distant trends of their realisation; the crime level of economic activities and living environment.

4. Main Concepts, Mechanisms, and Dominants of Ensuring the life Quality Resilience

The identified areas of influence of employment on social, collective and individual perceptions of quality of life, as well as on the level of profitability of various types of economic activity and the financing of state and territorial social security guarantees, allow one to distinguish the following concepts in the category of quality of life:

- Quality of working life at the collective and individual levels (among the main factors are employment guarantees and conditions, a set of incentives, including the level of remuneration in relation to perceptions of a decent income level, and a range of subjective assessments of desired professional and personal fulfilment).

- Collective and individual strategies for economic activity as part of a dignified life for local communities (hromadas), social groups and individuals (key factors include the level of education, competitiveness of the professional and qualification potential of the community/individual, opinions on acceptable mechanisms for capitalising on labour and socio-humanitarian potential, parameters of economic culture, participation in targeted measures to stimulate productive employment) (Ryndzak, 2021; Rybalova

et al., 2020; Poplavská, Shevchuk, 2020; Shtuler, 2020; Melnychuk et al., 2020).

The following strategies must be implemented in order to ensure the resilience of the national economy and, by extension, the quality of life of the population: firstly, the diversification, innovative development and modernisation of the national economy across the spectrum of its territorial subsystems; secondly, the support and lobbying of the national business entities' interests in the internal and foreign markets of goods and services; thirdly, the development of national effective demand and consumer market; fourthly, the stimulation of social protection, social and labour inclusion of a range of vulnerable categories; fifthly, the preservation and reproduction of labour potential, increasing the efficiency of its professional and qualification component capitalization and improvement.

The mechanisms for implementing these priorities, developed by institutions of the state, the economy, the market, and civil society, encompass a set of coordinated regulatory, managerial, and communicative instruments. These mechanisms include the standardisation of relevant guarantees and benchmarks; the programming, monitoring, control, and adjustment of implementation parameters, levels, and rates; and the stimulation of socio-economic processes in response to discrepancies between their actual and expected economic and social effectiveness. Such stimulation is achieved through a combination of budgetary, administrative, fiscal, and marketing instruments, as well as formal and informal forms of public influence. In addition, these mechanisms involve the foreign policy and foreign economic justification, promotion, and support of objectives and priorities aimed at strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of the national economy and business entities. An equally important component is the dissemination and popularisation of goals, guidelines, approaches, strategies, and practices – at the societal, collective, and individual levels – focused on establishing and improving decent parameters of quality-of-life reproduction. This is carried out within the framework of social dialogue, trade union activity, partnerships between the state and business, social advertising, and diverse forms of comprehensive and professional education of the population.

The main dominants of reproducing and growing up the population life quality resilience, which are transmitted through the employment sphere and function in it, can be divided into:

- The institutional ones (legislative and normative principles of labour and employment, as well as access to competitive professional education; practice of their implementation);
- the socio-economic ones (the structure of employment in the context of expanding and

reproducing modern production technologies, the comprehensive formation and integration of territorial subsystems of the national economy, the development of production clusters and closed production cycles; policies and mechanisms to overcome a number of processes of shadow employment and illegal labour; the functionality of territorial labour markets, in particular through indicators of job search duration and employment incentive programmes; the dynamics of unemployment rates, especially in comparison with trends in crime and cross-border labour migration) (Kyryliuk et al., 2024; Poliakova et al., 2021; Halaiko et al., 2020);

- the socio-labour ones, including income levels of social strata and wage levels across types of economic activity and categories of employees, assessed in relation to the physiological and social components of the subsistence minimum; dynamics of the cost of so-called mandatory services; the effectiveness of oversight of working conditions and occupational safety; and the spectrum of subjective – corporate, community-based (by place of residence), and individual – assessments of labour conditions and remuneration, as well as the accessibility and prospects of labour and professional self-realisation and career advancement (Andreitseva & Sikora, 2021, 2024; Rybalova et al., 2020);
- cultural and educational ones (level of general and vocational education, professional and qualification structure of the economically active population and employed persons, trends in its reproduction and optimisation; compliance of the structure of vocational education with state and local orders and, within the framework of personal initiatives, with the complex of needs for stimulating economic growth, balancing the parameters of regional development related to the quality of life of territorial communities (hromadas); subjective assessments of the competitiveness of education and the acceptability of employment).

5. Urgent Threats and Negative Trends of Providing the Life Quality in Ukraine

Both in the pre-war period and under martial law, the resilience of the population's quality of life in Ukraine has been challenged by a set of adverse socio-economic trends generated by internal and external factors. The principal threats include a contraction of the national economy and the destruction of its material and technical base; increasing difficulties in resource provision across certain industries and types of economic activity; systemic and large-scale disruptions of logistics chains; the narrowing of both external and domestic markets; the outflow of economically active and able-bodied individuals, along with their family members of pre-working age, abroad; the deepening of gender and age imbalances

within the workforce; and the growing mismatch between the Ukrainian economy's actual labour needs and the educational orientations of the population (Kyryliuk et al., 2024; Gukalova, 2023; Bielikova et al., 2022; Poliakova et al., 2021; Palchuk, 2018).

In the near term, these threats are expected to exacerbate long-standing negative trends in the functioning of the employment sphere. In particular, they are likely to reinforce the consequences of the national economy's predominant specialisation in resource- and raw-material-based activities under conditions of heightened vulnerability of production infrastructure and sales markets, especially external ones. Further risks stem from the high degree of informality within the economy and unjustified labour income stratification among the employed, occurring alongside relatively low wage standards and declining living standards of vulnerable population groups, which are highly dependent on the effectiveness of social redistribution mechanisms. Additionally, the erosion of community-level and individual benchmarks of lawful and productive employment is intensified by the unsatisfactory dynamics of standardised wage regulation. Finally, the expansion of multiple forms of non-standard employment creates an environment conducive to the constrained reproduction and gradual obsolescence of workers' professional and qualification potential, while simultaneously fostering socially risky shifts in educational and labour orientations among the employed and their family members.

According to an analysis of Ukrainian statistics from the pre-war period, the proportion of employed individuals aged 15–70 who were employed as hired workers reached 84%. Furthermore, their labour income remained comparatively low, even in relation to the official subsistence minimum, the content and value of which continue to be the subject of objective criticism (Interfax – Ukraine, 2025). Concurrently, there was a precipitous decline in the number of employed and full-time workers per the resident population.

The acute imbalance in the structure of the national economy, which threatens its competitiveness as well as the formation of potential for improving quality of life in the medium and long term and ensuring sufficient resilience for all social and income groups, was evidenced by: the ranking of economic activities by gross domestic product and gross value added per contingent of employed and full-time workers, in which real estate transactions, mining and quarrying, information and telecommunications, financial and insurance activities, and public administration and compulsory social insurance dominated; and the growth of the income from rent supplied by the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning, mining and quarrying, temporary accommodation and catering, and information and telecommunications sectors.

6. Conclusions

The dynamics of the employment sphere's functioning processes reflect both the retrospective and current level of substantiation and effectiveness of the state policy for establishing socio-economic development. This ensures the investment attractiveness and competitiveness of territorial economic systems and national business entities. Consequently, this dynamic is characterised by the potential for enhancing the quality of life and reproduction of the population, extending from the individual to the collective and nationwide levels.

The generalisation of methodological and practical principles, features, and issues of formation and dynamics of resilience characteristics of Ukrainian population life quality allows to outline the main threats to its provision, related to:

- Functioning, reproduction, transfer of legislative and economic foundations of labour potential and working life, productive employment (primarily in the following areas: guaranteeing and standardising employment and remuneration; current conditions and prospects for development/stagnation/degradation of the national employment sector and its territorial subsystems);

- destabilisation of organisational and resource mechanisms of society for optimising the qualitative parameters of labour potential and working life, productive employment of the population (primarily in the following areas: stimulating productive employment and the quality of working life (including through the State Employment Service, a network of employment agencies, occupational health and safety institutions at various levels, specialised territorial and sectoral programmes on employment and occupational health and safety, a multifaceted system of socio-economic support for the quality of working life, labour and professional mobility); inconsistency of policies and strategic priorities regarding the optimisation

of the quality parameters of the labour potential and working life of the population);

- destruction of social, public and individual motivations for productive legal employment (primarily in terms of the parameters and dynamics of: shadow employment and illegal labour; excessive market orientation in vocational education, outdated educational standards and programmes; crisis of civic and consumer expectations, among the main factors of which are the loss and limitation of public and individual resources for the reproduction and improvement of standards and practices of comprehensive and vocational education, career guidance, professional development, labour and professional mobility);
- unfavourable global and geopolitical trends (due to the destabilisation of settlement systems, the economy and employment as a result of military actions and their reversible and irreversible consequences for the economy, living conditions and labour potential; the absence of a systematic and balanced policy to prevent cross-border labour migration; chaotic strategic priorities and directions for diversification, modernisation, and specialisation of the national economy and its territorial subsystems; rapid uncontrolled changes in the geoclimatic and sanitary-epidemiological situation).

Therefore, the strategic priorities for mitigating and preventing the set of interacting internal and external threats to quality of life and resilience in Ukraine are: improving the regulatory framework and organisational and economic mechanisms to ensure quality of labour potential and working life, and productive employment of the population; optimising the working environment and occupational safety, as well as providing educational and household support for employment, career guidance, advanced training and labour and professional mobility; and developing the economic, legal and everyday household culture of territorial communities, with a focus on improving working life quality and promoting productive legal employment.

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