

EVALUATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF URBAN QUALITY OF LIFE TRANSFORMED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE SCOPE OF URBAN CONFIGURATION

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ABSTRACT

Urban quality of life is a multidimensional concept that includes the research field of the discipline of urban planning, which states the satisfaction of the people with the physical, social, cultural and economic conditions in the environment they live in, is evaluated using objective and subjective criteria. It has been revealed by literature research that the urban quality of life affects the physical and mental health of the citizens. It changes under the influence of built environment features, urban policies and breaks that occur in the city. The Covid-19 pandemic, which has affected the whole world since 2019, has also been effective in changing the expectations of city residents from cities, the perception of quality of life, urban space usage habits and lifestyles. This research aims to reveal the transformation that has occurred in academic research on the urban quality of life and the perceptions of citizens regarding this issue with the Covid-19 pandemic. For this purpose, literature researches conducted before and during the pandemic were scanned with the keywords "satisfaction, life satisfaction, quality of life, livability, urban quality of life, urban life satisfaction" and "urban planning, city planning" using the SCOPUS database. With this method, the distribution of the studies in the database by years (1977-2022), how they deal with the issue and how the urban quality of life indicators used in the researches have changed, and the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the literature has been introduced. In addition, how urban users' perceptions of urban quality of life changed during the Covid-19 period were questioned through in-depth interviews with 30 randomly selected people in the city center of Ankara. In these interviews, the change in the perceptions of the users' urban quality of life, life satisfaction and the habits of using urban spaces were examined by asking questions. According to the results of the in-depth interviews, the living environment, health and general life satisfaction of the city users decreased; neighborhood relations satisfaction did not change; social interaction with family, friends and neighbors and frequency of participation in sociocultural activities decreased; It has been observed that the daily transportation mode and urban space types preferred by people have changed. According to the literature research results, it has been determined that 42.4% of the studies in the field of urban quality of life were carried out in the last 6 years (2022-2016), and 65.3% of them were carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic period (2022-2019). It is thought that this research will add a different dimension to the urban planning literature in terms of revealing the transformation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in academic research on the quality of life and in the perceptions of urban users about the quality of their living environment.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, Urban Quality of Life, Urban Life Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019, affected the whole world in a short time and caused great losses. The pandemic, in which approximately 6 million people lost their lives in two years, also caused a radical change in people's lifestyles and habits. Due to the pandemic, living habits have changed the most in cities where more than half of the world's population lives. Mandatory isolation measures taken by governments and local governments have also made it necessary to change the places and activities where people spend time. People who could spend time in all places of the city before the pandemic spent most of their time in the houses during the pandemic. Housing is basically a place that is used extensively outside of work and social activities and its main function is accommodation. During the pandemic period, this place has gained a function where business and social activities are also carried out. In the pandemic, the characteristics of the neighbourhood where the house is located have gained importance along with the house. It is thought that some of the physical and social characteristics of neighbourhoods and all places in general affect the effects of the pandemic on human health and welfare positively or negatively.

While the Covid-19 pandemic necessarily affects people's spatial preferences and living habits, being under the risk of contagion constantly and knowing this risk increases from time to time depending on the characteristics of the places has negatively affected the quality of life in general. In this process, a larger and more spacious housing environment, neighbourhoods that offer the opportunity to participate in social activities without being exposed to the risk of contamination, and cities where the density is less, and the pandemic process is better managed have ensured that the quality of life is less affected by the pandemic. Again, in this process, people; they participated in social life by using private cars rather than public transportation, going to indoor places less and visiting natural areas more often, trying to protect themselves from the pandemic. The space structuring, which has increased in importance with the Covid-19 pandemic, has provided better quality of life and health opportunities for people who spent the process in positive spaces.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic has not yet ended, empirical studies on the relationship between the pandemic and the city and quality of life are continuing. Therefore, the effects of the pandemic on the quality of urban life have not been proven by objective methods. However, as seen in the research hypothesis model in Figure 1.1, the Covid-19 outbreak is thought to be a breaking point affecting the quality of urban life at the scale of the city, neighbourhood, and housing. For this reason, to evaluate the effects of Covid-19 on urban habits, expectations of citizens from space, the city and quality of life; It will shed light on producing more prepared urban policies against pandemics and designing healthier and more livable urban spaces that are resistant to pandemics. This research aims to reveal the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the perception of the quality of life and urban habits of the citizens with the results of the literature research and in-depth interviews conducted in the city center of Ankara.

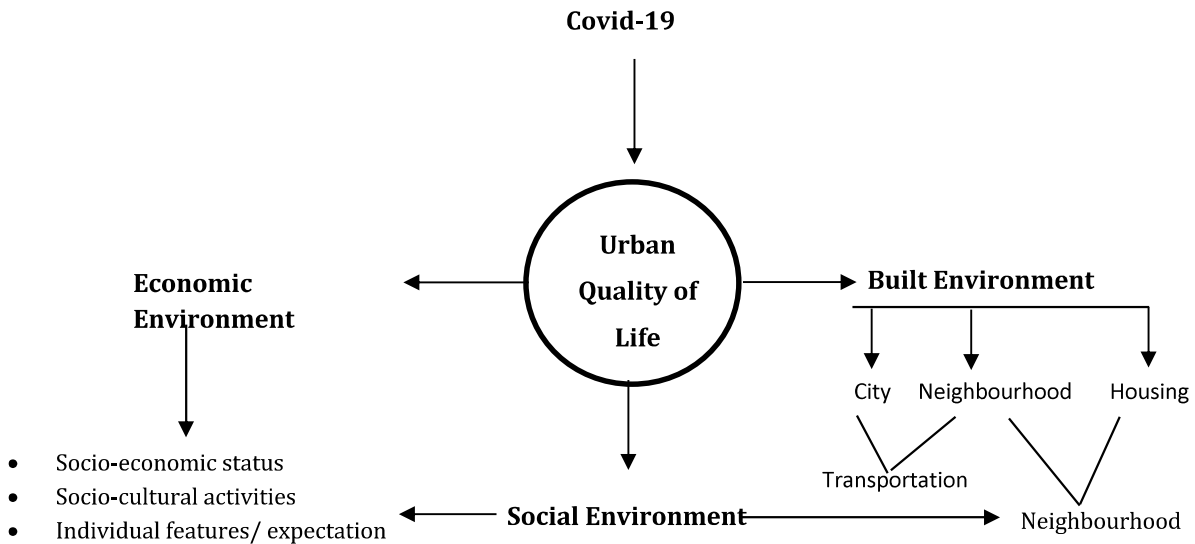


Figure 1.1. Hypothesis Model

Within the scope of the research, findings related to the Covid-19 pandemic and urban quality of life were obtained by using two main-stage methods. The first of these stages is the literature review on the subject, and the second is an in-depth interview to reveal the change in the perceptions of the quality of life and urban habits of the citizens before and during the pandemic. For the literature review, which constitutes the first stage of the method, studies examining the relationship between urban quality of life, livability and Covid-19 in the SCOPUS database were scanned in two stages. For this, an analysis was made on the keywords in the publications registered in the database. To identify the studies examining the relationship between urban quality of life and livability conducted before and during the pandemic; a literature review was conducted using the keywords “urban quality of life”, “urban satisfaction”, “livability”, “satisfaction of life”, “quality of life”, “satisfaction”, “urban planning” and “city planning”, “covid-19”, “pandemic”, “pandemic”, “covid”. For the in-depth interview, which constitutes the second stage of the method, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 randomly selected people in the city center of Ankara (Kızılay-Ulus) in August-September 2021. Questions about changing habits and expectations were asked. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the vital activities and habits in cities, restricted people's social activities and spatial preferences, and has generally negatively affected the quality of life. Housing, neighbourhoods, and cities where people spend their lives have also affected and changed people's perceptions of quality of life with the pandemic. In this study, after a short literature review, to examine the perception of the changing quality of life of people with the city, neighbourhood and residential areas during the Covid-19 period, the method description and the results of the research are given.

Literature Review

As a social being, people want to live in environments where they can realize themselves and be happier, as opposed to environments where only their basic needs are met. Every individual whose basic physiological needs are met desires to meet more needs in order to enjoy life. The higher the satisfaction of individuals in meeting their needs, the higher their quality of life will be. According to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Figure 2.1), human needs consist of five basic steps; 1. physiological needs, 2. safety, 3. belonging, 4. esteem, 5. self-actualization (Olapegba, 2020). The basic philosophy of the Hierarchy of Needs, which represents the basic steps of a good life; It relates the realization of all steps after physiological needs, the satisfaction of life and the quality of life, belonging and trust towards society and the environment in which one lives.

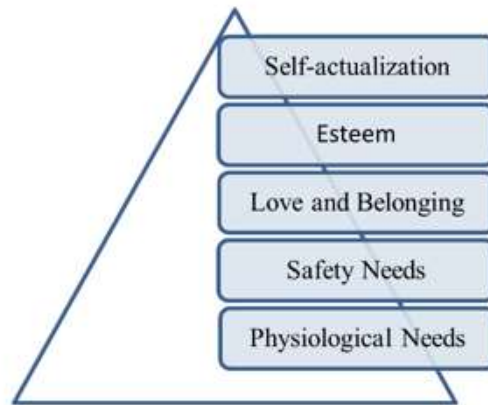


Figure 2.1. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)

Quality of life is proportional to the level of fulfilment of people's needs and the level of satisfaction for these needs. Mulligan, Carruthers and Cahill (2004) defines the quality of life as the satisfaction that a person feels from the human and physical conditions around them, social and economic events. Quality of life, which is a multidisciplinary concept and evaluated by different disciplines using various scales, changes under the influence of many objective and subjective factors. One of these factors is space. According to Harvey Perloff (1969), the first researcher to emphasize the spatial dimension of quality of life, quality of life is "an element that can be determined by the interaction of the natural and built environment" (Hatipoğlu Şahin and Tereci, 2021; Perloff, 1969). In this sense, the places where we spend our lives have a significant impact on the quality of life. Quality of life is a concept that encompasses all aspects that affect individuals and societies. The sub-component of quality of life that deals with spatial characteristics is urban quality of life. Urban quality of life; It is the situation where the level of provision of urban infrastructure, communication, transportation, housing, and similar facilities is above the predetermined criteria in places that fall under the definition of city in terms of social, economic, and spatial elements. Livable spaces with a quality above the standards directly affect human perception and life. Ahu Ceylan (2007) summarizes the relationship between quality of life and space as follows: "Designing the spaces where we spend our lives in accordance with the users and increasing the physical quality of the space increases the quality of life by positively affecting the subjective evaluations of the users." (Ceylan, 2007). People's subjective evaluations of the quality of life are positively correlated with the livability of the space. In the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, livability has been defined as "the phenomenon that refers to the spatial, social and environmental characteristics and quality that will contribute to the individual and collective well-being of a person and the satisfaction they will feel from being a resident of that settlement" (Belge, 2012; Habitat II, 1996). Accordingly, livable spaces that nourish the sense of satisfaction and satisfaction of the individual from the place people live in directly affect the quality of urban life.

The built environment unit that has the greatest impact on human life and quality of life is urban space. Today, 54% of the world's population lives in cities, and by 2050, it is estimated that 70% of this population will live in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2016). For this reason, the impact area of cities is greater than rural settlements. The scales and forms of cities inevitably result in organizational forms that affect the daily lives of residents and therefore their well-being (Brown, Z. S., Oueslati, W., & Silva, J., 2016). Cities are lively and flexible settlements that change and develop under the influence of economy, demography, cultural and social structure, politics, and historical events. Cities bearing the traces of all periods of a society are also affected by global events. In addition to historical events such as the Industrial Revolution, which affected the whole world and caused changes in urbanization habits, global pandemics are also breaking and turning points for cities. In the past, infectious diseases such as cholera, plague and SARS have deeply affected life in cities. Because the dense cluster of people in cities causes cities to become vulnerable to infectious diseases (Florida, 2020). For this reason, it is thought that the Covid-19 pandemic, which was first identified in the last months of 2019 and continues to affect the whole world, affects the livability of cities and the perception of the quality of life of the citizens.

The Covid-19 pandemic has directly affected living spaces from urban scale to residential scale. However, people's lifestyles and habits have also changed. Because one of the factors that have an important effect on the spread of the virus is seen as the lifestyles of people (Florida, 2020). In almost all the world's countries, isolation decisions have been taken by governments and local governments to prevent people from leaving their homes during the pandemic. The social space understanding of the human being, who is a social being, their social relations, the type of transportation that frequently uses, the way of working, their shopping habits, etc. changed drastically during periods of pandemic and isolation. During the pandemic, when information and communication technologies became a part of life, people started to meet almost all their basic needs at home. Housing gained functions such as workplace, shopping area, socializing place during the pandemic period, rather than being a sheltering place, which was its main function before the pandemic. Since people spend more time in their homes than before, houses have come to the forefront with their increasing social function as well as their sheltering function. In this process, people's expectations from the house they live in have also changed to a great extent. For this reason, during the pandemic period, housing features affected people's quality of life, reducing, or increasing the negative effects of the pandemic. There are studies proving that housing features directly affect the quality of life. For example, a 2016 study in Ljubljana confirmed the impact of housing quality on quality of life; here, satisfaction with housing has a significantly higher explanatory power than satisfaction with living in the neighbourhood and city (Tiran, J., 2016). According to Kostas Mouratidis (2021a), who emphasized that the importance of housing features and conditions for the quality of life increased during the Covid-19 period, high-quality and well-maintained housing of sufficient size during the pandemic period was one of the factors that reduced the negative effects of Covid-19 on the quality of urban life (Mouratidis, 2021a) and in this process, the type of housing did not affect personal health and well-being, while the presence of green spaces around the housing positively affected health and welfare (Mouratidis, 2021b).

The livability of the neighbourhood, in other words, the neighbourhood where the house is located, as well as the housing unit, also affects the quality of life. Neighbourhood: It is the basic settlement unit where social relations are developed and daily needs are met. For this reason, neighbourhood characteristics have also been one of the factors that reduced or deepened the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has necessarily changed people's spatial preferences. While before the pandemic, places with high human density and social mobility were preferred, during the pandemic period, people had to prefer places where the risk was quieter and less risky. While this situation increases the preferability of natural areas, parks and open areas, shopping malls, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, etc. This has resulted in less crowded places to visit. These areas, defined as third places, offer opportunities for residents to meet friends and relatives more often, as well as to make new friends or meet a new partner. As this will positively affect socialization, it also increases the quality of life (Mouratidis, 2018). The high density of green areas in the neighbourhood, the accessibility of health and social service units, the proximity of shopping areas and social-cultural areas to the housing unit provided an opportunity for people to move away from their homes for a short time during the pandemic and to keep their relations with the environment in this process. Brossoie and Burns (2020) stated that the residents of the neighbourhood who have easy access to green spaces and other common public spaces in the neighbourhood can maintain their social relations better and have more neighbourhood satisfaction in this process, compared to the residents of the neighbourhood with difficult access (Brossoie and Burns, 2020). At the same time, the population density of the neighbourhood was an important determinant of the increase or decrease in the risk of transmission and affected the livability level of the neighbourhood during the pandemic period. According to Mouratidis and Yiannakou (2022), proximity to major parks and local facilities and low neighbourhood density during the Covid-19 period reduced the negative effects of the pandemic and contributed to the improvement of the quality of life (Mouratidis and Yiannakou, 2022).

With its administrative, economic, social, cultural, demographic, and physical structure at the top scale, the city is the built environment unit that most affects the quality of life and livability. Cities: It has deeply affected the quality of life, social welfare and health during the Covid-19 period and continues to do so. In particular, the spatial characteristics of cities and the lifestyle of the citizens have been among the most important factors that

increase the risk of transmission in this process. Cities' characteristics; service and transportation infrastructure, housing and population density, air quality, etc.; have increased or decreased the pandemic burden. People who must use public transport and stay in traffic for a long time, especially on their way to work, have been directly affected by the pandemic. Again, in this period, people's urban habits have also changed to reduce the risk of transmission. For example, while the use of public transportation was more common before the pandemic, individual vehicle uses and automobile sales increased during the pandemic; It has been observed that natural and open spaces are visited more frequently than crowded places such as cafes, restaurants, and theatres. It has been determined that the number of pedestrians on shopping streets, especially in city centers (Ankara), has decreased by 50% (Derinci and Özüdü, 2020). In addition to these, in this process, while urban features affect health, welfare and quality of life; the Covid-19 pandemic also affected the resilience of the city due to its spatial characteristics. Some cities have become unable to bear the burden of the pandemic in terms of their characteristics, and local governments have taken isolation measures for cities.

In summary, the characteristics of cities directly affect the livability of the place and the quality of life in general. The importance of livable spaces and their contribution to the quality of life have been better understood with the Covid-19 pandemic that has been going on for more than two years. Every place with people, from the urban scale to the housing unit, directly affects our lifestyles, health, and well-being in ordinary and extraordinary times. The investigation of the effects of the Covid-19 period on the structure of cities and the quality of urban life, for which empirical studies are still ongoing and definitive evidence cannot be presented, constitutes an important basis for the preparation of new urban policies by considering the resistance to pandemics and for the urban planning discipline to act with these policies. In this context, in the next section, the effects of Covid-19 on the quality of urban life are revealed by giving place to the literature studies investigating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the city and urban life quality, and the results of the in-depth interviews randomly selected among the city residents in the city center of Ankara.

METHODOLOGY

The method of the study consists of 2 stages in order to understand people's perception of the changing quality of life with Covid-19. First of all, studies on keywords in the field of life were examined in the SCOPUS database and then associated with Covid-19. These studies were examined in terms of content, and it was examined what changes the researchers observed in the quality of urban life with Covid-19. For this, a literature review was conducted using keywords; that are; "urban quality of life" OR "urban satisfaction of life" OR "livability" OR "satisfaction of life" OR "quality of life" OR "satisfaction" AND "urban planning" OR "city planning". Secondly, in order to identify studies investigating the relationship between urban quality of life and livability and Covid-19; "urban quality of life" OR "urban satisfaction of life" OR "livability" OR "satisfaction of life" OR "quality of life" OR "satisfaction" AND "covid 19" OR "pandemic" OR "pandemic" OR "covid" AND "urban planning" OR "city planning" a second search was conducted using the keywords. The main reason for this is to be able to select the studies on the subject and to examine their distribution according to years and to emphasize that the subject is a studied and constantly developing literature.

After examining the academic aspect of the subject, interviews were conducted between August and September 2021 with users who agreed to be interviewed among randomly selected people in Ankara city center (Ulus and Kızılay) with pre-prepared questions using structured in-depth interview technique to see the reflections in the society practically. As a result of the voluntary nature of the interviews and the continuation of the pandemic conditions, a total of 30 successful meetings were held. Although there is a number that cannot represent the entire population of Ankara, the results are meaningful and overlap with the results presented in the literature at some points. Conducting the interviews in the city center of Ankara has fundamentally different characteristics, for example, student, public employee, private sector employee, unemployed etc.; and depends on whether it's hosting users. Users, mostly residing in Çankaya district, were asked to evaluate their lifestyles,

habits, and quality of life perceptions during and before the Covid-19 pandemic period. For this purpose, in the in-depth interviews, questions were asked about their socio-economic status, their satisfaction with living spaces (neighbourhood and housing) and changes in their use, transportation preferences, changes in socio-cultural habits and especially urban expectations that emerged during the pandemic period. 80% of the interviewees, 57% male and 43% female, are between the ages of 18-34. One of the main reasons for this situation is that middle and middle-aged people refuse to make interviews and they are much less in the pedestrian density on the street. 80% of the interviewees have a bachelor's degree or higher education level, 73% of these people work in private and public institutions, and 27% are retired and unemployed. Before the pandemic, 73% of the employees continued to work during the pandemic period, and 18% of these people worked remotely, 18% flexible and 64% face-to-face. In addition, 10% of the interviewees see themselves from the lower income group, 20% from the middle-lower income group, 40% from the middle-income group, 27% from the middle-upper income group and 3% from the upper income group. Data regarding the results will be explained in detail under the heading of findings.

FINDINGS

Scopus scan

The result of the literature review has been graphed in graph 4.1. by using keywords; "Urban quality of life" OR "urban satisfaction of life" OR "livability" OR "satisfaction of life" OR "quality of life" OR "satisfaction" AND "urban planning" OR "city planning". According to this, the first study including the mentioned keywords was made in 1975. With the increase in sustainability studies and the understanding that cities are not just built environments, the quality-of-life literature continued to accelerate in the 1990s. The quality-of-life literature, which has become a subject studied by many different researchers and different disciplines in the 2000s, has been the most studied time with 344 studies between 2015-2019. However, the total number of studies conducted in 2020 and after shows that the increasing trend will continue with great momentum. Because in almost a 2-year period, more work has been done than half of the previous 5-year period.

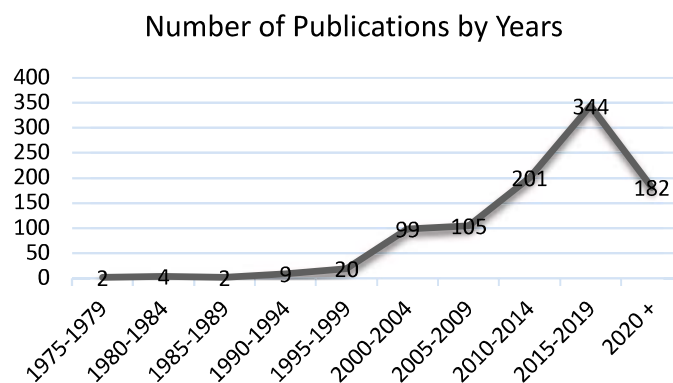


Figure 4.1. Number of publications in the Quality of Life field by years (SCOPUS)

In order to reach the studies investigating the relationship between the quality of urban life and livability and Covid-19 among all these researches; a second search was conducted using the keywords; that are; "urban quality of life" OR "urban satisfaction of life" OR "livability" OR "satisfaction of life" OR "quality of life" OR "satisfaction" AND "covid 19" OR "pandemic" OR "pandemic" OR "covid" AND "urban planning" OR "city planning". The result of this scan shows that a total of 11 studies have been conducted regarding Covid-19 and quality of life. Four of these studies are city planning as per the disciplines in which they are conducted. The details of these studies (name, author, year, keyword) are shown in Table 4.1. Current studies show that urban

life quality/livability is defined by the keyword's urban macroform, urban sprawl, built environment, resilience, well-being has been associated.

	Name of Article	Publishers	Year	Keywords
1	COVID-19 and the compact city: Implications for well-being and sustainable urban planning	Mouratidis K.	2022	Compact cities; Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; Pandemic-resilient cities; Sustainable city planning; Urban sprawl; Urban sustainability
2	COVID-19 and urban planning: Built environment, health, and well-being in Greek cities before and during the pandemic	Mouratidis K. and Yiannakou A.	2022	City planning; Compact city; Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; Quality of life; Subjective well-being; Urban built environment
3	How COVID-19 reshaped quality of life in cities: A synthesis and implications for urban planning	Mouratidis K.	2021	Built environment; Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; Literature review; Livable cities; Subjective well-being; Urban social sustainability
4	A qualitative analysis of UK wetland visitor centres as a health resource	Reeves J.P., John C.H.D., Wood K.A., Maund P.R.	2021	Attention restoration; Biodiversity; Blue space; Connection to nature; Green space; Motivation; Pro-environmental behaviours; Relaxation; Spiritual wellbeing; Wildlife tourism
5	Smart city and crisis management: Lessons for the covid-19 pandemic	Hassankhani M., Alidadi M., Sharifi A., Azhdari A.	2021	Community well-being; COVID-19; Crisis management; Smart city; Urban resilience
6	Effects of urban parks on residents' expressed happiness before and during the COVID-19 pandemic	Cheng Y., Zhang J., Wei W., Zhao B.	2021	COVID-19; Health; Quality of life; social media; Subject well-being
7	Urban Sustainability Versus the Impact of Covid-19: A Madrid Case Study	Menéndez E.P., Higuera García E.	2020	COVID-19; public health; quality of life; sustainability; urban planning; viral disease

Table 4.1. Articles about Covid-19 and Urban Quality of Life /Livability

In-Depth Interviews

Face-to-face structured in-depth interviews were conducted with randomly selected interviewees in the city center of Ankara in August-September 2021. In order to understand the interviewees' satisfaction with the environment they live in and their perceptions of quality of life, questions about the characteristics of the housing and neighbourhood were asked. 40% of the interviewees who reported housing ownership at the rate of 57% have been living in the same house for more than 10 years and 77% of them report satisfaction with the house they live in. The characteristics affecting the housing satisfaction of the interviewees are summarized in Graph 4.2. According to the data in Graph 4.2, the features that most affect the interviewees' housing satisfaction are the old and worn-out house, the size of the house/number of rooms and the problem of parking.

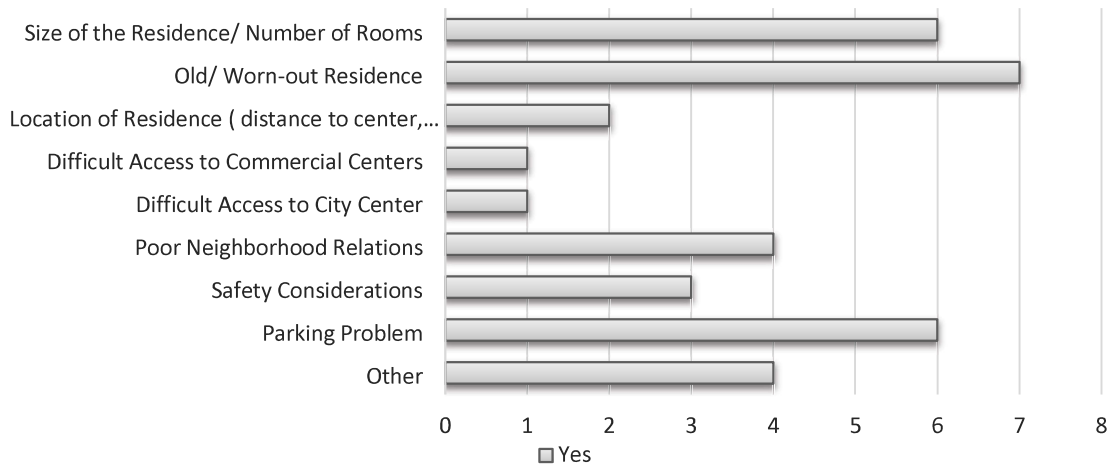


Figure 4.2. Properties that Affects Housing Satisfaction

Questions were asked to measure the satisfaction of the interviewees with the neighbourhood they lived in before and during the pandemic. According to the results in Figure 4.3, the average score of satisfaction with the neighbourhood before the pandemic was 4.1, while according to the results in Figure 4.4, the average satisfaction score was 3.9 in the pandemic. In addition, the average score of satisfaction of the interviewees with the neighbour relations in the neighbourhood was 2.6 before the pandemic, while the satisfaction with the neighbour relations after the pandemic was 2.4. It is thought that the fact that 73% of the interviewees do not know or know their neighbours very little affects the satisfaction of neighbourly relations negatively. In addition, the social relations of the interviewees with their close circles during the pandemic period and the frequency of their meetings; It is seen that it does not change for family and decreases for friends and neighbours.

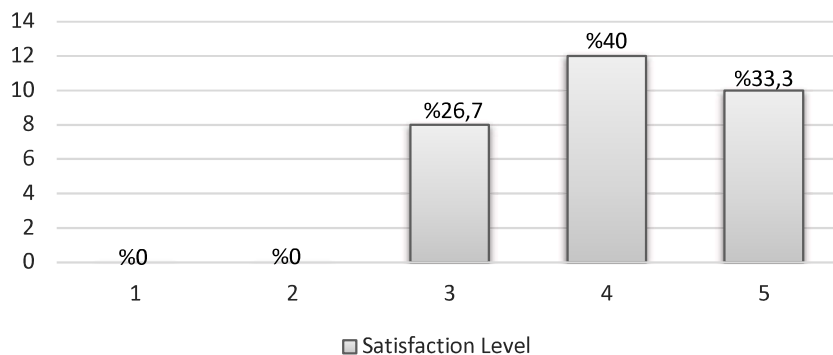


Figure 4.3. Satisfaction Level of Neighbourhood Before Pandemic

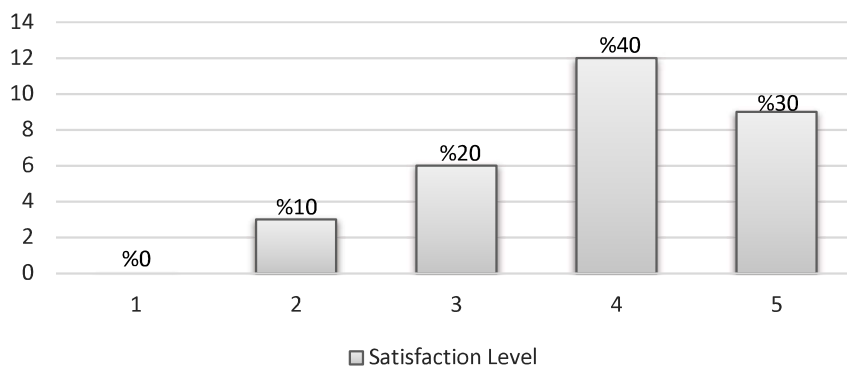


Figure 4.4 Satisfaction Level of Neighbourhood After Pandemic

To evaluate the effects of the built environment features on the perception of quality of life, the interviewees were asked questions about the physical environment characteristics of the neighbourhoods they live in, the frequency of use of the places they prefer, the mode of transportation used in daily travels, the frequency of participation in socio-cultural activities and their expectations from the city they live in. Most of the interviewees answered "I agree" to the statements "I find the neighbourhood I live in safe", "I can easily access open and green areas", "I can easily access shopping places" and "I find the public transportation types (metro, bus, minibus) sufficient"; It was revealed that most of the interviewees gave the answer "I do not agree" to the statements "There are places that provide ease of access for pedestrians, cyclists and disadvantaged groups (disabled, elderly, etc.)" and "I find the neighbourhood I live in to be of high quality and aesthetic in terms of architecture".

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think the neighbourhood is safe.					
I think there are walkable places.					
There are places that enables access to the pedestrians, bicycles, or disadvantageous people (handicapped, elderly, etc.) in the neighbourhood.					
I think there are enough open and green fields in the neighbourhood.					
I can easily access to open and green fields.					
I find the neighbourhood of good quality and aesthetical in an architectural aspect.					
I find the neighbourhood clean and well-kept.					
I think public services like; health services, education, sports complex are sufficient.					
I have an easy access to public services like, health, education etc..					
I have an easy access to shopping malls.					
I am satisfied with the air quality.					
I find the neighbourhood as too crowded and noisy.					
I think the traffic density is too high.					
I think there are sufficient types of public transportation (buses, metro, etc.).					

Table 4.2. Features of Physical Environment of Neighbourhood Results

In addition to the evaluation of the physical environment characteristics of the neighbourhood, the interviewees were also asked to indicate the physical environment characteristics that they felt lacking in the environment/city they lived in during the pandemic period. According to this, the characteristics that the

interviewees most lack are “Inaccessibility of natural areas (66.7%)”, “Insufficient open and green areas (53.3%)”, “Lack of walkable streets surrounded by trees around the housing (50%)” and “there was a lack of areas suitable for physical activity (50%)”. These results show that the desire to move away from dense urban areas and move in healthy open and clean areas during the pandemic period comes to the fore.

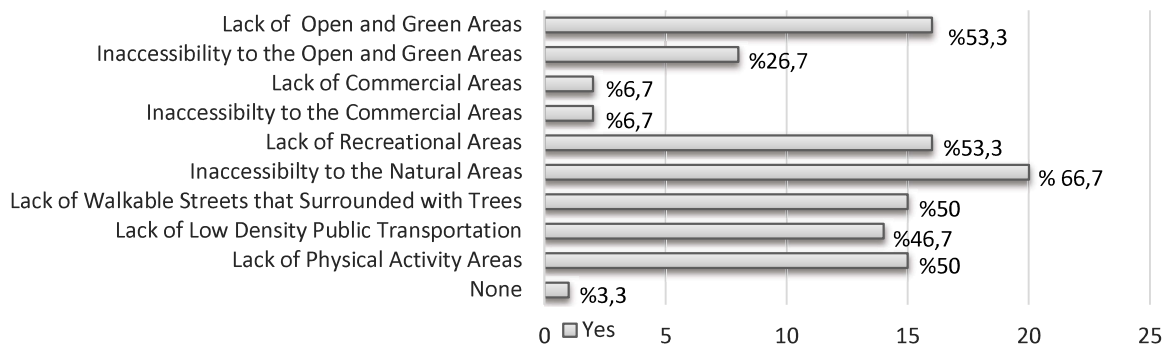


Figure 4.5. Physical environmental features that were noticed of lack during the pandemic period

The in-depth interview results show that the type of venue that the interviewees frequently visited before the pandemic changed during the pandemic period. The preference level of parks, gardens and natural areas has increased significantly during the pandemic period; the preference level of shopping malls, cafes and restaurants has decreased significantly; indoor sports hall and cinema, theatre, concert halls etc. It has been observed that the use of spaces has decreased. With the effect of the isolation measures taken during the pandemic period, the preferability of residential gardens has increased compared to the pre-pandemic period. During the pandemic period, a serious change has been observed in the frequency of participation in socio-cultural activities such as cinema, theatre, concert, and exhibition. While 66% of the interviewees stated that they frequently participated in socio-cultural activities before the pandemic, this rate was 27% during the pandemic period. In addition, while 7% of the interviewees stated that they had never participated in activities before the pandemic, this rate increased to 53% during the pandemic period.

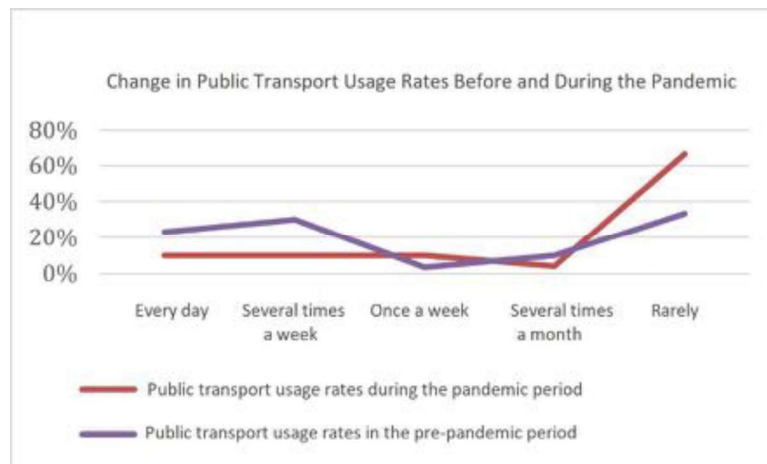


Figure 4.8. Change of the Public Transportation Usage Rate Before and During the Pandemic

Another variable that affects people's life satisfaction and urban quality of life is transportation. For this reason, questions were asked to understand the transportation decisions of the interviewees during and before the pandemic. Before the pandemic, 53% of the interviewees, of whom 70% owned a vehicle, used a private vehicle, while this rate increased to 80% during the pandemic period. While no change was observed in the rate of pedestrian trips during the pandemic period, there was a 20% decrease in the public transportation preferences of the interviewees. While the rate of those who use public transportation for daily trips was 23.3% before the pandemic, this rate was 10% during the pandemic period; While the rate of those who use it several times a week was 30% before the pandemic, this rate was 10% during the pandemic period; While the rate of those who rarely use it was 33% before the pandemic, this rate was 63% during the pandemic period. In summary, the preference rate of public transportation modes has decreased during the pandemic period, and the use of private vehicles has increased.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic, which has been in our lives for the last two years, has directly affected people's lifestyles and standards. In this process, people's leisure activities, consumption habits, use of neighbourhood and residential areas, transportation preferences, working styles, etc. has changed. The first studies in the field of the relationship between Covid-19 and quality of life, which have just begun to develop in the literature, reveal results in this direction. In addition, the results of the in-depth interviews confirm that Covid-19 negatively affects the quality of life. Accordingly, the overall life satisfaction score average of the interviewees was 4.0 out of 5, while this average decreased to 2.8 during the pandemic period. This result depends on the general health status, economic situation, social relations of the people as well as the way they use the city they live in and their use of the urban spaces around them. The interviews show that the frequency of preference of the places used during the pandemic period and before the pandemic has changed to a large extent. For example, while shopping malls, cafes and restaurants were in the top 4 before the pandemic, parks, gardens, and natural areas were the most preferred places during the pandemic period. While the residential garden was the least preferred place before the pandemic, shopping malls, indoor sports halls, cinemas, theatres, and concert halls were the least preferred places during the pandemic period. However, the fact that the total number of interviewees was limited to 30 people and that most of the interviewees were in the 18-34 age group is an important limitation for the study. The main reason for this limitation is that people hesitate to use dense public spaces such as the city center during the pandemic period and it has become difficult to make face-to-face meetings in this period. Although this situation has made it difficult to reach people of all age groups, the findings of the interview are in line with the results in the literature. In addition, it is thought that the research findings will support future studies.

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