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A RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION EXAMINATION IN THE MICRO REGION OF
GYÖNGYÖS

Lakóhelyi elégedettség vizsgálat a Gyöngyösi kistérségben

SZÚCS Antónia

Összefoglalás

Jelen tanulmány a lakossági elégedettség vizsgálatára terjed ki a Gyöngyösi kistérség 25 településén. A lakossági kérdőívvezetés célja az eltérő jellemzőkkel (életkor, jövedelem, településen eltöltött idő) bíró emberek véleménykülönbség vizsgálata 18 általános, életminőséggel összefüggő elégedettségi változó alapján. A kérdések a környezet, oktatás, közbiztonság, munkalehetőségek, átlagos jövedelmek és alapvető szolgáltatások megítélésére szolgáltak.

A felmérés 2013. július- december hónapjaiban történt. A lekérdezett 1682 db kérdőív feldolgozása során nem igazolódott azon feltevés, miszerint a fiatalok elégedettebbek életkörülményeikkel, mint az idősebb korosztály. Az életkor szerinti különbség megállapítható, azonban annak iránya ellentétes hipotézissel. A lakóhelyi elégedettség a jövedelemmel nem emelkedik, szignifikáns különbség figyelhető meg a településen eltöltött idő alapján is, az öslakosok fejezték ki leginkább elégedetlenségüket.

Általánosságban konstataálható, hogy a kistérségben leginkább problémamentes az oktatás a nyolc évvel korábbi felmérés eredményeihez hasonlóan. Legkiemelkedőbb a munkalehetőségek hiányával és az alacsony jövedelemmel

szembeni elégedetlenség. Kutatásom eredményei egyfajta irányt adhatnak a települések önkormányzatai számára a különböző fejlesztési programok meghatározása során.

Kulcsszavak: *elégedettség, életminőség, Gyöngyösi kistérség*

JEL: R10

Abstract

This study is about a residential satisfaction examination of 25 municipalities in the micro region of Gyöngyös. The aim of the residential questionnaires is the analysis of differences in people's opinions having different characteristics (age, income, time spent in the locality) on the basis of 18 general satisfaction variables related to quality of life. The questions were intended to assess the opinions of issues related to the environment, education, public safety, job opportunities, average income and basic services. The survey was conducted between July and December 2013. The hypothesis that young people are more satisfied with living conditions than elderly people was not confirmed during the processing of the 1,682 pieces of questionnaires filled out. The difference according to age can be observed, however, its direction is opposite to my

hypothesis. Residential satisfaction does not increase with income, but a significant difference was observed on the basis of time spent at the municipality, people living there since their birth expressed the most dissatisfaction.

In general, education is the most trouble free area in the micro regionsimilarly to the results of the survey conducted 8 years

ago. Most people are discontent with employment opportunities and low income. The result of my research may provide a sense of direction for the local governments in defining various development programs.

Keywords: *residential satisfaction, quality of life, micro region of Gyöngyös*

Introduction

A number of professionals have dealt with the examination of the geographical area of my research, the comfort of its municipalities and their development. SZÚCS et al. (2008) analyzed the comfort of the municipalities of the micro region of Gyöngyös by dividing respondents according to their sex, age and social sector based on the results of a questionnaire survey. Taking age aspects into account it was concluded that the 18-30 and the 30-50 age group consider education, health care, the quality of services, and social service to be the most problematic areas. The oldest respondents (over 50 years) complemented these with the problem of workplaces. On the basis of a research carried out in North-East Hungary KIRÁLY (2009) concludes that the investigated region is significantly lagged behind. This negative process is justified by the relatively low value of the indicators that characterize the micro region (regional employment, earnings, GDP, investment, etc.), as well as by the results of the questionnaire survey he carried out. Based on the survey he states that the micro region of Gyöngyös can be classified into the category of emerging micro region, however none of the micro regions was considered to be dynamically emerging.

The present study is based on the examination of the opinions of the inhabitants of Gyöngyös micro region, and the measurement of satisfaction with factors specific to the place of residence. In my opinion, in addition to the examination of the development of the area based on statistical data, the results of the survey also have an important role, as they complement the socio-economic processes behind the objective factors. The results of the quantitative method can be quantified, and the data obtained can be analyzed using different statistical methods (LEHOTA, 2001).

The starting point of my research is the fact that people are born with their needs. MASLOW (1970) ranked human needs into a pyramid. If our needs are not being met, we will be dissatisfied. However, this dissatisfaction is the greatest driving force for people, because if you are satisfied, you may give up your intention to improve and change, your life may become pointless (LENGYEL - JANKY, 2002). Satisfaction is an elusive and subjective concept, the main cause of which is that different people have different needs and goals. Professionals of different disciplines have tried to make a list of basic human assets. The lists contain various, diverse factors such as material goods (income, drinking water, food, health), psychological aspects (satisfaction, happiness, self-realization), complex concepts (security, education, human rights) and abstract factors (opportunities, freedom) (ALKIRE, 2002). Here satisfaction stands as a psychological factor, which is closely associated with the notion of happiness. In social research satisfaction is a complex concept, just like wealth and poverty, health, happiness and deviance.

There is an extensive literature on the definition of welfare, and on the measurement of its change, as all the different disciplines approach this issue in different ways. Parallely, studies into subjective well-being have considerably expanded in the last decade. However, a distinction must be made between the terms well-being and welfare (GÉBERT, 2012). The former is a much broader concept, the latter is the subject of welfare economics, and it can be described for example by income, wealth, basic goods and skills, etc.. According to BERGER – NOLL (2000) the aim of development is not economic growth at all costs, but the improvement of the well-being and the quality of life of people. ARGYLE (1996) distinguished three components of subjective well-being: satisfaction, positive emotions and the lack of negative emotions.

According to THÜRER (2011) residential satisfaction and preferences are inter-related, having a significant impact on the intention to change the place of residence. During their investigations ZENKER et al. (2009) got to the conclusion that satisfaction with local characteristics is positively associated with overall satisfaction. The existence of a linear relationship was also demonstrated by INSCH – FLOREK (2010).

At the millennium the fact came to the fore that economic development is not synchronized with social processes and the improvement of the quality of life, so many studies have promoted the review of the traditional concepts of life conditions and well-being, and have emphasized the importance of subjective indicators capturing the satisfaction and the well-being of people (STATISZTIKAI TÜKÖR, 2014). In my opinion, the key aspect of the success of a municipality or a region is the awareness of leaders of what people who live there want, what specific problems they face every day. One of the basic requirements of the increase of satisfaction and quality of life is strong, competitive local economy, which should be based on the utilization of local natural and environmental values at a significant degree.

Material and methods

The circumstances of the questionnaire survey

Compiling the questionnaire I tried to formulate questions the answers for which can help getting aware of the residents' opinions, the degree of their satisfaction and their attitude to everyday problems. The survey was conducted between July and December 2013 using personal interviews at the 25 settlements of the micro region of Gyöngyös. The reason for using personal interviews was mainly to avoid possible misunderstandings, as this method allows the interviewer to clarify questions (SZÚCS, 2008). During the survey the local government employees were helping me, as they are the most familiar with the composition of the settlement's population, maintaining daily contact with the people living there. In addition, I would like to emphasize the role of the students of Károly Róbert College who, after having consultations about the purpose and the course of the survey, undertook the role of the interviewer, which they managed to solve successfully.

The target respondents of the investigation were the residents of the 25 municipalities of the micro region who are over 18 years old. The survey was preceded by test interviews, during which the proper questioning mode, the types of questions, the different answers and the correct order of the questions were verified. As a result, the final questionnaire was put together. The number of evaluable questionnaires was 1,682. The high number of responses was due to the continuous contact with the people who were responsible for returning the questionnaires, the helpfulness of the inhabitants of the investigated region and their interest in the topic.

The survey of residential satisfaction covered the evaluation of 18 variables on the basis of a 1-5 Likert scale. I carried out a correlation test in the context of age, income and time spent at the municipality, with the following assumptions:

- I assumed that young respondents are more optimistic than elderly ones.
- Residential satisfaction does not increase with income. A description of the differences between higher income and satisfaction can be that higher income assumes higher-skilled people, who are characterized by higher levels of aspiration, they always compare their circumstances to a higher level.
- The time spent at the municipality is inversely proportional to the level of satisfaction, as the intention of new residents to move in demonstrates that they have hopeful expectations with their new home.

I applied non-parametric methods for the examination of the relationship and the differences because the data were not normally distributed. Normal distribution is not a condition of the method used (Kruskal-Wallis test) (HUZSVAI, 2004).

The definition of the studied area

The spatial unit of my research is the Statistical Micro Region of Gyöngyös (Figure 1). It was created by the merger of Mátraaljai Micro Regional Development Association of Local Governments and Gyöngyös District Regional Development Association on 1 January 2004. From 2007 Pálosvörösmart became separated from Abasár, so today the investigated micro region consists of 25 municipalities. Its territory is 750.78 km², and the number of inhabitants was 74,199 in 2012 according to data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office.

On 1 January, 2013 the micro region of Gyöngyös was transformed into Gyöngyös District, and Gyöngyös became the administrative center of the constituent municipalities. However, district government offices did not replace multi-purpose regional associations, the change did not have an effect on the settlements themselves.

The territory of the micro region is 20% of that of Heves County. Its population is around 24% of the county's population. Gyöngyös is not the only town in the micro region any more, as Gyöngyöspata got the title of a town from János Áder, the President of the Hungarian Republic on 15 July, 2013.

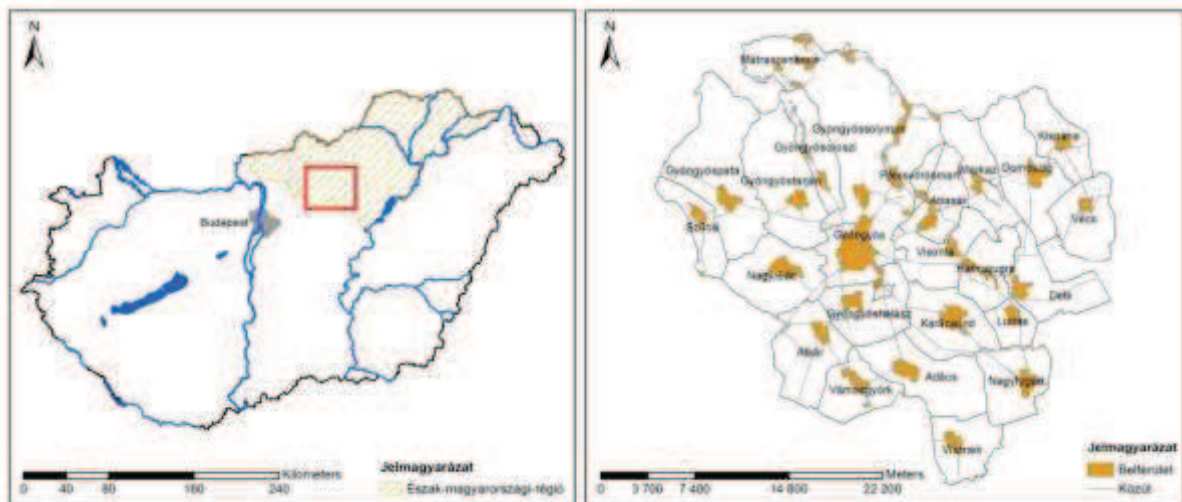


Figure 1: The location of the micro region of Gyöngyös

Source: own compilation, 2014.

Results

The introduction of the participants of the questionnaire survey

Aging population is a serious problem in the investigated area, there are fewer and fewer young people. 23% of the respondents are between 18 and 30 years old, aging population is also obvious here, since the proportion of people over 51 years old is 29.4%. The largest group is that of 31-50 year olds, their proportion is 47.6%.

A significant part of respondents (41.9%) live at the municipality since their births, which means that their answers regarding the perception of the comfort of the municipality is relevant, their opinions must be taken seriously. About half of the respondents (51%) stay at the municipality because of family ties, and a quarter of them because of their jobs.

Income conditions in the micro region of Gyöngyös are significantly worse than in the more developed areas of the country, despite the fact that Budapest is accessible within one hour on the motorway. Local salaries are considerably below the ones in Budapest, not to mention German or Austrian salaries. The responses are spread according to income situation, respondents who have daily living problems see the situation differently from those who have a good income. I have set up five categories for income situation, their distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The distribution of respondents by net monthly income, %

Categories	The distribution of net monthly income, %
Under 50.000 HUF	18,2
50.001 – 100.000 HUF	38,5
100.001 – 150.000 HUF	27,2
150.001 – 200.000 HUF	10,0
Over 200.001 HUF	6,1

Source: own research, n=1680, 2013.

Most of the respondents have some income. The income of 83.9% of the respondents was less than a monthly net income of 150,000 HUF, and the proportion of those who have a net income over 200,001 HUF is only 6.1% (Table 1).

There were both men and women among the respondents, and in many cases, they gave different responses due to their different situation. The proportion of women was higher, 62.9% of the respondents were women, while 37.1% were men.

I also classified the respondents according to their highest level of education. I set up three categories of respondents, ones with primary, secondary and tertiary education. People with secondary education make up the largest group (54.9%), the proportion of people with primary education is 11.0%, while the proportion of people with a college or a university degree is surprisingly high, 34.1%.

In terms of sectorial classification the largest group of respondents is formed by the people who work in the public sector. The business sphere is represented by 383 people, while the NGO sector is represented by only 193 people. At the time of the survey, 118 respondents were unemployed, and 183 respondents were retired. The 11 child care aid recipient mothers were classified into the „other” category.

Satisfaction survey by age

Based on the survey conducted in 2013 I received varying responses for the investigated group of questions depending greatly on the age of the respondents. The data in Table 2 show residential satisfaction according to the age of the respondents. The survey conducted in the micro region in 2005 shows that the age group between 18 and 30 thinks that the most important problems are income level, unemployment and social care. Respondents between 31 and 50 consider health care, the quality of services and cultural opportunities problematic areas. Respondents over 51 think that education, health care, the quality of services and cultural opportunities are the most problematic areas (Szucs et al., 2008).

Table 2: The analysis of residential satisfaction according to the age of the respondents

Test Statistics ^{a,b}																		
How much are you satisfied at your place of residence with... ?																		
Denomination	job opportunities	average income	the proportion of green space at the municipality	cleanliness of the settlement	local public safety	local medical care	hospital care in Gyöngyös	adequate supply of local day nurseries	adequate supply of local nursery schools	adequate supply of local primary schools	adequate supply of secondary schools in Gyöngyös	local cultural and leisure opportunities	communal infrastructure	basic services	transportation	financial services (banking)	postal and telecommunications services	touristic services
Chi-Square	2,69	,91	2,64	4,40	5,48	10,15	23,82	,51	22,26	6,70	9,21	7,80	4,15	,83	1,27	11,37	17,19	6,19
df	7	9	0	7	1	6	6	9	2	5	1	3	0	5	9	1	1	9
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asym p. Sig.	,260	,63	,267	,110	,065	,006	,000	,77	,000	,035	,010	,020	,126	,65	,528	,003	,000	,045
	1							1					9					

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
 b. Grouping Variable: the age of the respondent

Source: own research, 2014.

The responses were made on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 in 2013 as well. According to the Kruskal Wallis Test there is a significant difference in 9 cases from the 18 investigated questions at a 5 percent error rate. Hospital care in Gyöngyös, the adequate supply of local nursery schools and postal and telecommunication services differ significantly even at the 1% error rate. In case of local medical care, the adequate supply of local primary schools, the adequate supply of secondary schools in Gyöngyös, local cultural and leisure opportunities, financial and touristic services the differences are statistically justified at the 5% error rate.

Examining overall satisfaction it can be concluded that the respondents are most satisfied with the following factors affecting the population's quality of life: the adequate supply of local nursery schools (3.96), primary schools (3.78) and secondary schools (3.72), and postal services (3.60). The major problems for them were job opportunities (2.39), income (2.44) and hospital care (2.96).

Satisfaction with local medical care and hospital care in Gyöngyös increases with respect to age, the reason for which can be explained by age peculiarities: young people use health

services less, so in many cases, their evaluation is only based on assumptions. People over 51 years of age are more satisfied, the opinions of people under 30 and ones over 51 years of age are significantly different.

The adequate supply of local day nurseries is also relatively undervalued on average (3.18), but it is particularly problematic for people under the age of 30. However, the age groups above 31 years are also relatively dissatisfied with the adequacy of local day nurseries - it may be based on their past experiences. It implies that there is no demonstrable difference of opinions between the age groups.

The respondents are satisfied with the adequacy of nursery, primary and secondary schools. The average scores are 3.96, 3.78 and 3.72. Satisfaction increases monotonically with age.

In case of services the respondents over 51 years are the most satisfied, while the scores given by younger people are considerably lower. Transportation and basic services received an average score of 3.3-3.4 from each responding age group.

Satisfaction survey by income

I analyzed this group of questions based on the difference of opinions between the respondents belonging to different income groups. There were significant differences between the opinions of the five income groups created in four cases out of the 18 questions (Table 3).

Table 3: The analysis of residential satisfaction according to monthly net income

Test Statistics ^{a,b}																		
Denomination	How much are you satisfied at your place of residence with...?																	
	job opportunities	average income	the proportion of green space at the municipality	cleanliness of the settlement	local public safety	local medical care	hospital care in Gyöngyös	adequate supply of local day nurseries	adequate supply of local nursery schools	adequate supply of local primary schools	adequate supply of secondary schools in Gyöngyös	local cultural and leisure opportunities	communal infrastructure	basic services	transportation	financial services (banking)	postal and telecommunications services	touristic services
Chi-Square	7,97	20,17	3,03	9,92	6,94	1,32	5,49	6,85	2,78	10,12	10,66	6,42	5,58	5,90	4,58	6,10	4,08	5,01
df	1	3	1	2	5	0	1	7	4	3	9	1	4	0	0	0	5	7
Asymp. Sig.	,093	,000	,553	,042	,139	,858	,240	,144	,595	,038	,031	,170	,232	,207	,333	,192	,395	,286

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
 b. Grouping Variable: The net monthly income of the respondent

Source: own research, 2014.

Dissatisfaction with monthly net income and the demand for higher income is characteristic in the lower income categories. This is justified by the monotonic increase in average rankings. The difference between the lowest and higher income categories is significant. Subsequently, there is a difference of opinion about the adequacy of primary and secondary schools, but the

average of satisfaction with them is over 3.7 on a five grade scale. It is mainly higher-income respondents who express their demand for the cleanliness of the settlement. All income groups complain about the relatively poor local medical care. The trends based on the average ranks show that the groups of higher-income respondents are more demanding about the quality of hospital care in Gyöngyös.

There is no statistically verifiable difference of opinions between income categories regarding services and the adequate supply of local education. In the investigation satisfaction with services increases monotonously until the 200 thousand HUF net monthly income limit, but over this limit satisfaction decreases in each case.

Respondents are generally dissatisfied with job opportunities and average income in each income category. According to statistical data unemployment has decreased since 2005, however, respondents are the most critical about job opportunities. Obviously, job opportunities and income are equally important. It can be concluded that there is a very close relationship between job opportunities and incomes. It is not enough to create workplaces, the adequate income level must also be ensured. All income groups gave high scores to the adequate supply of local nursery and primary schools. Respondents are also generally satisfied with financial, postal and telecommunications services (Table 4), which is due to the appropriate level of these services.

Table 4: The local satisfaction of respondents based on the average values of a 5 grade scale given by the different income groups

The local satisfaction of respondents based on the average values of a 5 grade scale of income groups					
How much are you satisfied with...?	Average net monthly income (1000 HUF)				
	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-	
- job opportunities	2,26	2,41	2,43	2,46	2,32
- average income	2,38	2,36	2,54	2,65	2,41
- the proportion of green space at the municipality	3,63	3,54	3,60	3,56	3,52
- cleanliness of the settlement	3,37	3,42	3,28	3,31	3,23
- local public safety	3,40	3,32	3,27	3,20	3,36
- local medical care	3,47	3,45	3,48	3,50	3,40
- hospital care in Gyöngyös	3,03	2,96	2,94	3,00	2,72
- adequate supply of local day nurseries	3,16	3,28	3,19	3,07	2,85
- adequate supply of local nursery schools	3,88	3,99	3,99	3,99	3,80
- adequate supply of local primary schools	3,67	3,81	3,85	3,84	3,52
- adequate supply of secondary schools in Gyöngyös	3,56	3,78	3,73	3,80	3,68
- local cultural and leisure opportunities	3,04	3,14	3,14	3,10	2,87
- communal infrastructure	3,29	3,31	3,34	3,36	3,11
- basic services	3,32	3,37	3,40	3,46	3,19
- transportation	3,27	3,35	3,32	3,38	3,17
- financial services (banking)	3,18	3,33	3,37	3,32	3,17
- postal and telecommunications services	3,62	3,61	3,61	3,59	3,45
- touristic services	3,05	3,08	3,02	2,95	2,84

Source: own research, 2014.

Most of the groups evaluated hospital care in Gyöngyös negatively. 38.74% of the respondents evaluated this question with a moderate (3) grade.

People who belong to the highest salary class (over 200,000 HUF) were the least satisfied, they expect high quality service, which, according to the survey, is not available in the hospital in Gyöngyös. The average values in the other groups vary between 2.94 to 3.03, which indicates moderate satisfaction (Figure 2). An explanation for the differences in the opinions of the different income categories can be that people who are in a better income situation have higher levels of demand, in other words higher income is the fundamental reason for the increase of expectations.

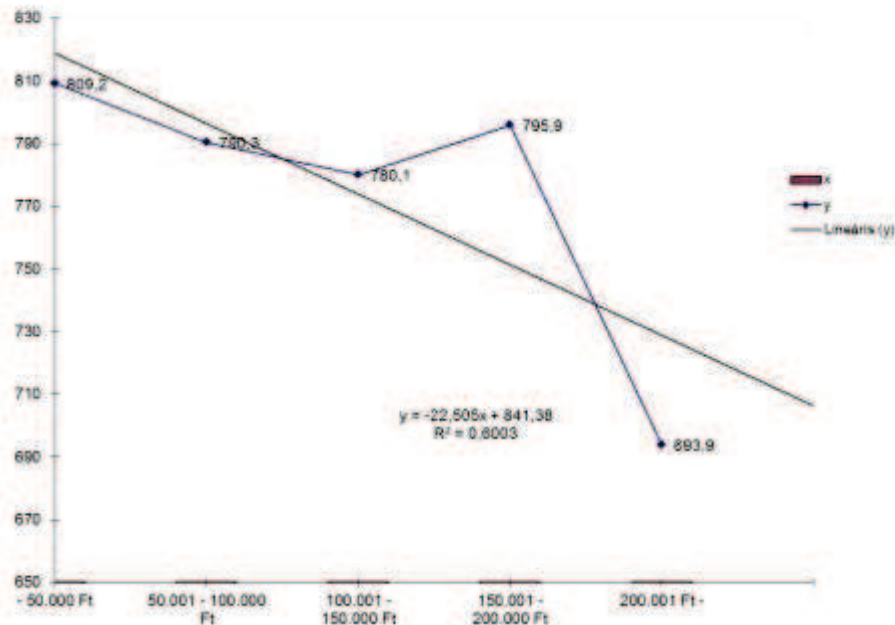


Figure 2: Average rankings of hospital care in Gyöngyös as a function of monthly net income (empirical and linear trend)

Source: own research, 2014.

The responses to the 18 investigated questions are spread from 2.5 to 4.0 on a five grade scale, and differences can also be observed according to income categories. In general, the answers of the category over an income of net 200 000 HUF differ, mainly in the negative direction. All in all, it can be stated that the answers to the questions are pretty similar to each other regardless of income category.

Satisfaction survey by the time spent at the municipality

I analyzed the answers given to this group of questions based on the time spent at the municipality. There were significant differences between the groups of respondents in the opinions about the cleanliness of the settlement, local public safety, the adequate supply of local nursery schools, the adequate supply of secondary schools in Gyöngyös, and postal and telecommunications services (Table 5). Respondents who live at the municipality for a short time are more satisfied with the cleanliness of the settlement and local public safety. People who live at the municipality since their birth are the least satisfied with local medical care. It is the respondents who have recently moved into the micro region who are not satisfied with

the adequacy of secondary schools in Gyöngyös. People who live at the municipality for a longer period are satisfied with postal and telecommunications services.

Respondents who live at the municipality for a longer time are the least satisfied with the investigated issues, almost without exception. New settlers, who have probably selected their new place of residence because of the former relatively poorer environment are more satisfied. Local grassroots' opinions show a significant difference. They are the least satisfied with public safety, cleanliness, medical care and other factors. Probably a kind of negative time trend explains their case, which was already confirmed in the 2005 survey.

Table 5: Satisfaction survey by the time spent at the municipality

Test Statistics ^{a,b}																		
Denomination	How much are you satisfied at your place of residence with...?																	
	job opportunities	average income	the proportion of green space at the municipality	cleanliness of the settlement	local public safety	local medical care	hospital care in Gyöngyös	adequate supply of local day nurseries	adequate supply of local nursery schools	adequate supply of local primary schools	adequate supply of secondary schools in Gyöngyös	local cultural and leisure opportunities	communal infrastructure	basic services	transportation	financial services (banking)	postal and telecommunications services	touristic services
Chi-Square	1,040	5,389	7,496	16,184	15,835	12,738	6,209	5,595	8,346	9,393	22,735	9,344	10,890	9,004	9,530	7,470	18,261	11,078
df	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Asymp. Sig.	,984	,495	,277	,013	,015	,047	,400	,470	,214	,153	,001	,155	,092	,173	,146	,280	,006	,086

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
 b. Grouping Variable: How long have you been living at the municipality?

Source: own research, 2014.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study I came to the conclusion that age affects overall satisfaction with the place of residence. It can be stated that respondents of different ages have different opinions about the investigated topics. My first hypothesis, that people belonging to the youngest age group are more satisfied than respondents in the oldest age group, was not confirmed. The reverse result can be explained by the fact that successive generations have grown up in better and better living conditions. Thus, they take more and more factors affecting their quality of life for granted, they have higher levels of expectations. Accordingly, it is an important aspect to maintain the appropriate level of the basic services of the municipality and improve them in order to stop the migration of young people and to curb the aging process.

My second and third hypotheses were confirmed. The difference between the lowest and the higher income categories is significant. In the investigation, satisfaction with services increases monotonously until the net monthly income limit of 200 thousand HUF, over this

limit satisfaction decreases in each case. The results of the investigation clearly show that there is a relationship between satisfaction and the time spent at the settlement. People who live at the municipality since their birth are the least satisfied. The satisfaction of settlers is directly proportional to the time spent at the municipality, as the desire for favorable environment and a better quality of life motivates the choice of a new place of residence.

The overall conclusion, similarly to the results of the previous survey (Szűcs et al., 2008), is that the lack of decent job opportunities is a pressing problem, as there is a very strong relationship between job opportunities and incomes. In my opinion the problem could primarily be solved by the support of small and medium-sized enterprises. Poor income level and substandard health services have an extremely negative long-term impact on demographic indicators.

Fixed and other infrastructure systems that contribute to municipal comfort, as well as available services and their quality are the bases of municipal quality of life. They ensure the basic operating conditions of the municipality on the one hand, and its development on the other hand.

In addition to physical comfort, the unconscious, mental well-being of people also determines quality of life. Some of these factors are quality characteristics, the other part is a group of "soft" factors, which are mainly based on the human feeling of freedom, and are difficult to measure.

The results of the study may serve as a guideline for policy makers of the municipalities in the micro region during the formulation of development programs. It is recommended that community leaders should take into account not only the economic aspects but also the mental needs of the people living at the municipality when determining the directions of development.

When preparing the strategic plan of a municipality a problem tree can be determined based on the satisfaction and the dissatisfaction of the residents. The termination of the biggest problems contributes to the increase of their comfort feeling.

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