



AN INQUIRY INTO EASE OF LIVING 2024, THROUGH CITIZEN PERCEPTION SURVEY- A CASE STUDY OF ITANAGAR URBAN SPACE- ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract: Ease of Living Index 2024 is aimed at providing a holistic view of Itanagar township, Arunachal Pradesh India. The key objectives of the Ease of Living Index are four-folds, (a) Generate information to guide evidence-based policy making; (b) Catalyze action to achieve broader developmental outcomes including the SDG; (c) Assess and compare the outcomes achieved from various urban policies and schemes; and (d) Obtain the perception of citizens about their view of the services provided by the city administration. In order to get grasp of ease of living in cities, certain relevant parameters must be taken into consideration. In its present form, the Ease of Living Index 2024, which tethers around three pillars, viz. quality of life, economic ability, and sustainability, consists of 13 categories (including education, health, housing and shelter etc.).

Keywords: Township, Ease of living, Quality of life, Economic ability, Sustainability.

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Introduction

India is said to be on the brink of an urban revolution with its urban population expected to reach 600 million by 2031. This rapid urbanization offers an incredible window for transformation & growth, but it also brings with it challenges such as stress on civic infrastructure, overcrowding and urban sprawl, deteriorating air and water quality, inequality, waste management, etc. In order to tackle these challenges, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India has launched several initiatives such as the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT, PMAY, DAY-NULM,

HRIDAY and Urban Transport. These missions collectively seek to improve the quality of life for India's urban citizens through improving urban governance, city planning, and availability and quality of urban infrastructure.

Several models have been recently developed in urban studies to evaluate urban QOL from objective and subjective perspectives to capture disparities among regions within cities and between individuals. Objective evaluations can reveal spatial disparities within cities using various observational and statistical data and geographic information system (GIS) tools but do not capture individual disparities. On the other hand, subjective evaluations focus more on individual disparities. Additionally, objective and subjective measures of QOL tend to conflict. This is likely because, even within the same place, individuals can perceive its setting attributes differently based on their sense of value and lifestyle. In this study, we propose subjective approaches to evaluate urban QOL more comprehensively.

Review of Literature

Quality of Life assessments of cities and/or urban citizens lack a unified definition and the assessment methods, tools, and indicators different from other target regions (Al-Qawasmi, 2021; Marans, 2015; Mittal et al., 2020; Serag El Din et al., 2013; van Kamp et al., 2003). Nevertheless, many studies concur that exogenous (objective) and endogenous (subjective) aspects of QOL must be considered (Diener & Suh, 1997; Lesley & Young, 1994; McCall, 1975; Myers, 1987; O'Brien & Ayidiya, 1991; Türksever & Atalik, 2001; Davidson & Cotter, 1991).

QOL indicators can be classified into objective and subjective measures. International organizations have developed their own objective indicators of QOLs in countries and cities. Such indicators include the Human Development Index (UNDP, 1990, UNDP, 2021), Better Life Index (OECD, 2011, OECD, 2020), City Prosperity Index (UN-Habitat, 2016), and Urban Health Index (WHO Kobe Centre et al., 2014; WHO & UN-Habitat, 2016). Although these country- or city-level assessments are useful for understanding the vitality and overall strength of an entire city, they cannot adapt to the diversity of citizens' preferences and lifestyles because their spatial resolution is rough and the indicators are overly simplistic. Moreover, ignoring the internal heterogeneity of a city also hides the local situation where real human-scale problems are embedded (Pacione, 2003).

Several models for measuring QOL in cities have been developed based on subjective or objective aspects. Subjective studies mainly focus on

individuals' perceptions and investigate the satisfaction, well-being of citizens and their determinants through questionnaires. According to these studies, the important elements for improving QOL depend on individual attributes, such as age and household composition (Mccrea et al., 2005; Mouratidis, 2020; Zhan et al., 2018). However, obtaining detailed, area-specific subjective indicators through questionnaires may not be feasible, and subjective indicators cannot represent the urban space and infrastructure condition in which people live.

On the other hand, objective studies mainly focus on spatial differences within urban areas and investigate data derived from external sources, such as demographic data, socioeconomic indicators, and urban space and infrastructure conditions. These studies show that QOL is very heterogeneous across regions (Aroca et al., 2017; Martín & Mendoza, 2013; Murgaš & Klobučník, 2016). Unfortunately, many objective indicators are weighted by ad hoc processes (Ülengin et al., 2001), which prevents them from capturing the varying QOL by different individuals.

Study Area- Itanagar City

Itanagar is the capital city of India's North-Easternmost state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is also the administrative headquarters of Papum Pare district. Arunachal Pradesh is called the 'Land of Dawn-lit Mountains' as it is situated in the lap of the majestic Himalayas, and soaked in stupendous natural grandeur with blissful weather all through the year. Itanagar is located at an altitude of 530 meters above mean sea level between 27° North latitude and 93 ° East longitudes. The extent of Planning Area is approximately 271 sq. km.

Source of Data, Research method and Data Analysis

This survey sought to directly capture perception of citizens with respect to quality of life in Itanagar. This survey, which was administered face to face, had commenced on the 15th of September 2024. A total of 70 citizens residing in Itanagar in various pockets that participated in the survey gave their considered feedback. Finally, individual respondents were chosen through a quota-based sampling to represent citizens from all walks of life. The face-to-face citizen interviews were conducted to the respondents. Cutting across gender, age groups, and different walks of life respondents were covered in the survey.

All the questions asked in the survey had a 5 point ordinal rating scale (A1 to A5). In 20 out of the 21 questions, A1 was the best case scenario while A5 was the worst case scenario while for one question, it was the reverse). In order to convert the responses by individual participants into scores, responses A1 to A5 were converted to 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 (except for the one question where the sequence was reversed). This was done to ensure a higher mark in given for higher levels of satisfaction.

Once all responses were converted to numbers, and aggregate of scores against each of the 21 questions divided by 21 gave the final score of every participant. The average of scores of all participants within a city gave the average score of that city. Since this score was out of 5, the same was scaled up to represent a score out of 100.

Citizen Perception Profile of Quality of Life

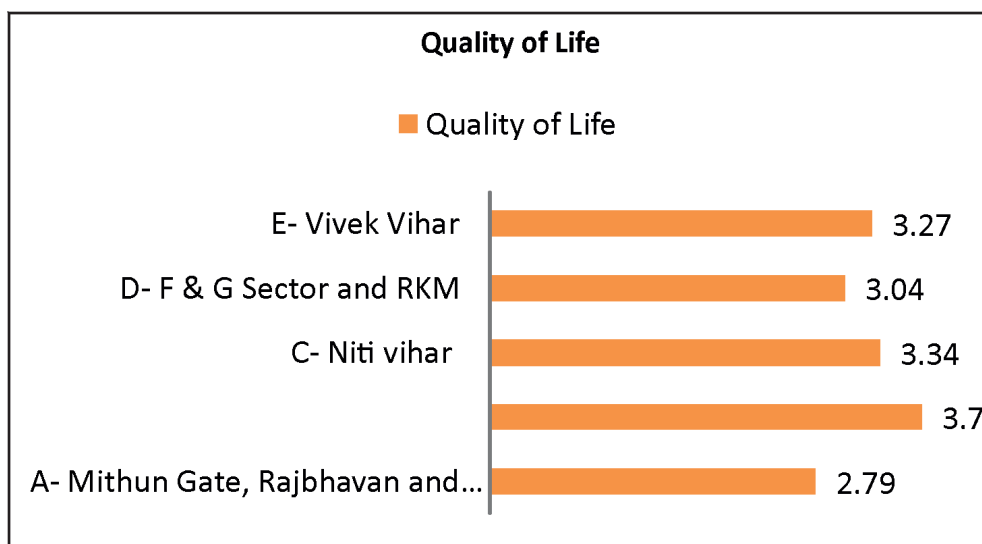
To understand, the citizens' perception about quality of life at Itanagar city. Total 14 questions were designed in the survey instrument or questionnaire. To represent the study area (Itanagar city), an attempt was made to collect data from across the region. Hence, five pockets were purposively selected for collection of primary data. The selected pockets with their local names and the calculated scores representing quality of life are presented in Table No.1. Further, pocket B registered the highest score 3.7, followed by pocket C (3.34), pocket E (3.27), whereas the lowest score is found in pocket A (2.79), followed by pocket D (3.04), respectively. Interestingly, the figures show that the quality of life in all the surveyed pockets is relatively above the mean, indicating better ease of living.

Table 1: Citizens Perception on Ease of Living in respect of Quality of Life at Itanagar City 2024

<i>Name of the Surveyed Area</i>	<i>Score of Quality of Life</i>
A- Mithun Gate, Rajbhavan and Nyokum Lapang	2.79
B- Bank Tinali and Police Station colony	3.7
C- Niti vihar	3.34
D- F & G Sector and RKM	3.04
E- Vivek Vihar	3.27

Source: Primary Survey, 15 September, 2024

The primary reason behind better quality of life in pockets B, C, and E could be because these pockets are surrounded by service centers including hospitals, government offices, and simultaneously inhabited by government employees.



Citizens Perception Profile of Economic Ability

The previous chapter dealt in length about the citizen perception on quality of life whereas the present chapter focuses on the citizen's perception on economic ability of the Itanagar city. Three questions were asked in the instrument of survey especially, opportunities for livelihood, cost of living and access to various services in order to know the economic ability of the city.

Table 2: Citizens Perception on Ease of Living in respect of Economic Ability at Itanagar City 2024

Area	Scores of Economic Ability
A-Mithun Gate, Rajbhavan and Nyokum Lapang	3.22
B-Bank Tinali and Police Station colony	3.13
C-Niti vihar	3.71
D-F & G Sector and RKM	2.69
E-Vivek Vihar	3.16

Source: Primary Survey, 15 September, 2024

Table 2 shows the scores obtained by the various identified pockets. The overall average score of the city is 3.18 in a 5 point ordinal rating scale (A1-A5). This average score is above the middle point of scale that indicates about the city's perception in respect of economic ability above the medium level. The pocket wise analysis shows that out of 5 pockets 2 pockets namely C and A recorded the score above the City average and rest 3 pockets namely B, D and E obtained below the City average score. Pocket C has registered the highest score 3.71 followed by A that is 3.22. Pocket D has recorded the lowest score 2.69 followed by pocket B 3.13 and pocket E 3.16. This pattern of scoring suggests the economic ability of the Itanagar city and town planners have to come forward with policies to enhance the economic ability of comparatively poor pockets.

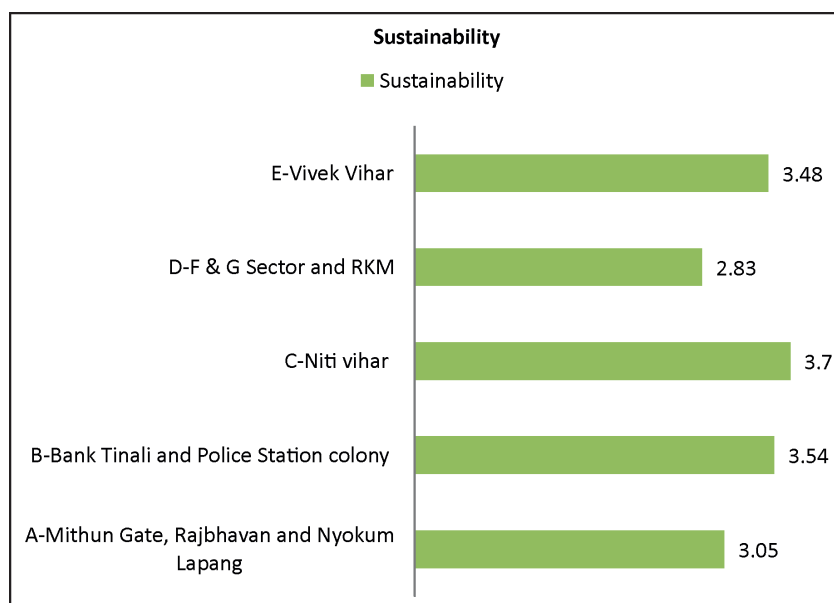
Citizens Perception Profile of Sustainability

The previous chapter emphasis on the patterns of economic ability through the citizen's perception survey and the present chapter reveals the state of art of sustainability of Itanagar City. Altogether 4 questions such as quality of air, green cover, electricity supply and affordable electricity were asked to the respondents in order to trace out their perception in this regard. Interestingly, the analysis reveals that the overall average score of the City is 3.32 which is above the middle point the 5 point ordinal rating scale (A1-A5). Therefore, it can be safely argued that sustainability is in better position in the perception of its residents. But the Pocket wise patterns reveals that 3 pockets namely C, E and B recorded the scores above the City's average and pockets A and D obtained the score below the City's average. Further, pocket C has recorded the highest score 3.70 followed by pocket B 3.54 and pocket E that is 3.48. The lowest scores were registered by pocket D 2.83 followed by pocket A that is 3.05.

Table 3: Citizens' Perception on Ease of Living in respect of Sustainability of Itanagar City- 2024

Area	Score of Sustainability
A-Mithun Gate, Rajbhavan and Nyokum Lapang	3.05
B-Bank Tinali and Police Station colony	3.54
C-Niti vihar	3.7
D-F & G Sector and RKM	2.83
E-Vivek Vihar	3.48

Source: Primary Survey, 15 September, 2024



Topography and layout of the city is responsible for such distribution pattern of the City's sustainability

Results and Conclusion

The present chapter is aliened in order to trace out the results of the analysis and simultaneously to record the inferences so that the researcher could reach on few conclusions. The background of the study is as follows:

Itanagar City, the Capital of State of Arunachal Pradesh is selected as a case study to understand the Ease of Living 2024 through the Citizens Perception Survey. Instrument of survey is selected which contained 21 questions on 3 criteria such as Quality of Life (14 Questions), Economic Ability (3 Questions) and Sustainability (4 questions). Further, the Study area is divided in to 5 pockets and 14 household members from each pocket were surveyed randomly.

The names of theses 5 pockets are as follows:

A-Mithun Gate, Rajbhavan and Nyokum Lapang Area
B-Bank Tinali and Police Station colony Area
C-Niti vihar Area
D-F & G Sector and R K Mission Area
E-Vivek Vihar Area

All the questions asked in the survey had a 5 point ordinal rating scale (A1 to A5). In 20 out of the 21 questions, A1 was the best case scenario while A5 was the worst case scenario while for one question, it was the reverse). In order to convert the responses by individual participants into scores, responses A1 to A5 were converted to 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 (except for the one question where the sequence was reversed). This was done to ensure a higher mark in given for higher levels of satisfaction.

This scheme of scoring also has been applied in calculation of average scores against each three criteria namely quality of life, economic stability and sustainability. These A1 to A5, 5 point ordinal rating scale has also been visualized as follows .

Table 4

<i>Sl. No</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Index Score</i>
1	Very Poor Perception	0-0.99
2	Poor Perception	1.00-1.99
3	Medium Perception	2.00-2.99
4	Rich Perception	3.00-3.99
5	Very rich Perception	4.00-4.99

In term of Quality of Life the City's average score is 3.22, Economic Stability 3.18 and Sustainability 3.32. It shows that overall citizen's perception about ease of living 2024 in Itanagar City is on the lower side of Rich Perception. Such rich perception may be due to its status as Capital of the state. All urban amenities and facilities (services) are available to the residents. Majority of residents belongs to the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy.

The pocket wise patterns of citizen's perception about Quality of life, Economic ability and Sustainability is rather complex. The table below shows the overall average score registered against the pockets are as follows:

Table 5

Pocket A- Mithun Gate, Rajbhavan and Nyokum Lapang	3.02
Pocket B- Bank Tinali and Police Station colony	3.45
Pocket C- Niti vihar	3.58
Pocket D- F & G Sector and RKM	2.85
Pocket D- F & G Sector and RKM	3.30

The analysis reveals the fact that Pocket C registered the above side of rich perception. Pocket B, D and A recorded lower side of rich perception and whereas the Pocket D which is located in the close proximity of the CBD of the city falls under medium perception. Factors such as socio-economic and political are responsible for such results.

Table 6.0 depicts the Criteria wise analysis of the scores recorded by various pockets. Interesting inferences may arrive at this analysis such as:

Pocket-A recorded lower side rich citizen's perception in terms of Economic Ability and Sustainability where as medium perception in terms of Quality of life.

Pocket-B recorded upper side rich perception in terms of Quality of Life and Sustainability where as lower side rich perception in terms of Economic Ability.

Pocket-C registered upper side rich perception in terms of Economic Ability and Sustainability where as lower side rich perception in respect to Quality Life.

Pocket-D recorded comparatively medium perception in terms of all 3 criteria.

Pocket-E registered lower side rich perception in terms of all 3 criteria.

A large number factors are responsible for results mentioned above such as Itanagar enjoys the status of state Capital, majority of residents are engaged in secondary as well as primary activities, city provides amenities and facilities to their residents up to their rich satisfaction level. Apart from that the city also suffers from few serious challenges which were recorded by the enumerators during citizen perception survey. Challenges are as follows:

- Common space is in shrinking state.
- Footpaths for paddlers are disappearing along the main roads.
- Vehicles parking spaces are on the verge of abandoned especially near markets/ official complexes area.
- During rainy season, fear of landslides is very common.
- Congestions on the roads are increasing day by day and further expansion of roads are impossible due non availability of space as the city's terrain is highly fragile and has rugged topography.
- Encroachments of common land are also a big challenge before the concerned administrative authorities to get rid of.
- A city or town depends on its stability, safety, basic needs, and, later, its expansion on geomorphologic features: lithological and topographical

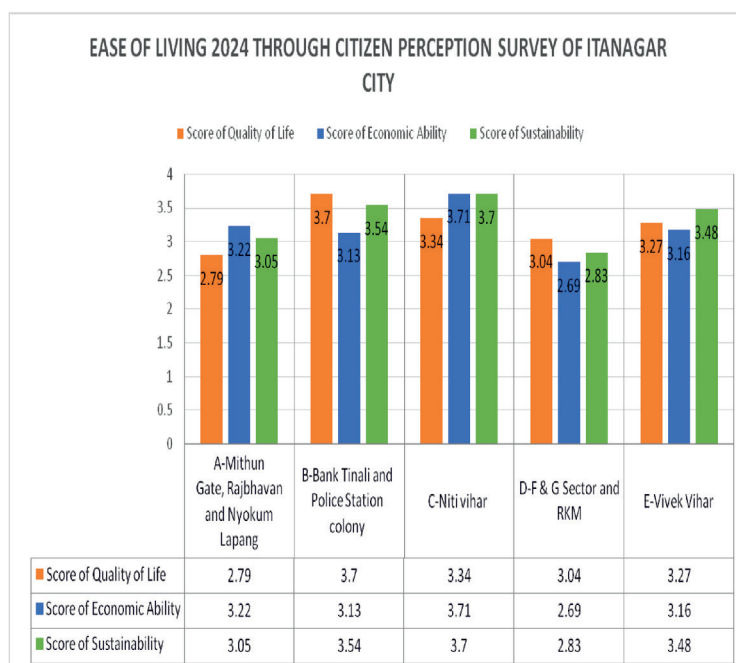
features, hydrological conditions, and geomorphic features. An urban geomorphologist begins work even before urban development through field survey, terrain classification, identification, and selection of alternative sites for settlements. During and after urban development, an urban geomorphologist has to be concerned with studying the impact of natural events on the urban community and that of urban development on the environment.

The geo-hazard report of the City must be updated from time to time in order to meet the challenges of natural hazards.

Table 6 : Ease of Living 2024 through Citizen Perception Survey of Itanagar City

Area	Score of Quality of Life	Score of Economic Ability	Score of Sustainability
A- Mithun Gate, Rajbhavan and Nyokum Lapang	2.79	3.22	3.05
B-Bank Tinali and Police Station colony	3.7	3.13	3.54
C-Niti vihar	3.34	3.71	3.7
D-F & G Sector and RKM	3.04	2.69	2.83
E-Vivek Vihar	3.27	3.16	3.48

Source: Primary Survey, 15 September, 2024



The report suggests based on the analysis to the concerned authorities that they have to look after the concerns mentioned in the above. Itanagar, undoubtedly is an incredible city with lots of hope. The city is promising and it is the responsibility of the town planners to serve it as a child.

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