

A Study of the Quality of Family Life for Business Executives

Kris Moore¹, Jonathan Trower¹, and Charles Goldwaite¹
¹Baylor University, One Bear Place #98005, Waco, TX 76798-8005

Abstract

This survey of 2000 business executives in the United States yielded a 17.7% response rate. The questionnaire sought answers to questions about quality of life versus education, work experience, number of children, age, gender and marital status. The data produced several significant differences for the above demographics of business executives. Executives with lower education levels feel their work interferes less with family responsibility than their more educated counterparts. Older executives manage their family responsibilities better than executives younger than fifty-one. Married and widowed executives have better quality of home life than single or divorced executives. Executives that are single are the least satisfied with their careers.

1. Introduction

This survey of business executives listed in 2004 Standard & Poors Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives and the 2005 Dun & Bradstreet Reference Book of Corporate management sought answers to questions of quality of life versus education, work experience, number of children, age, and marital status. There were no significant differences for the responses of men and those of women for the questions included in this article.

2. Methodology

A survey of 2000 questionnaires was equally distributed to business executives systematically selected from an alphabetical list of 2004 Standard & Poors Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives and the 2005 Dun & Bradstreet Reference Book of Corporate Management. Of the 2000 individuals selected, 153 packets were returned due to an incomplete address or the person was no longer at the address. In addition 197 “not participating” forms were completed and returned. A total of 292 individuals that responded for an overall response rate of 17.7%, with 100 (11.7%) of the males responding and 192 (22.5%) of the females responding to the questionnaire.

Tests for non-response bias were performed to identify potential bias between respondents and non-respondents. Since non-respondents resemble late respondents, each respondent was categorized by response time. Early responders were those responding to the first mail-out, while late responders were those responding to the second mail-out. A comparison between the two groups using one-way ANOVA resulted in insignificant differences indicative of non-response bias.

The questionnaire contained 88 items including 13 demographic questions.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

	Average Age	Work Experience	Percent Married	Percent Divorced	Percent Single/Widowed	Number of Children
Males	55.7	32.4	92%	3%	5%	2.4
Females	51.0	26.7	73%	12%	15%	1.9

Table 2: Education Level

	High School	Some College	College Graduate	Masters Degree	Terminal Degree (PhD, JD, etc)
Males	2%	4%	48%	34%	12%
Females	2%	10%	43.3%	33%	14%

Table 3: Salary

	Under \$50,000	\$50,001-\$100,000	\$100,001-\$150,000	\$150,001-\$200,000	Over 200,000
Males	0	9%	23%	16%	52%
Females	4%	27%	15%	18%	36%

A chi-square contingency table was used to determine if the distribution of responses were significantly different for the demographic categories. Then a one factor ANOVA was implemented to determine which mean responses were significantly different for the demographic categories.

For the questionnaires an interval data scale of 1 to 5 was used where 1 represents “strongly disagree,” 2 represents “disagree,” 3 represents “neutral,” 4 represents “agree,” and 5 represents “strongly agree.”

3. Results

3.1 Education versus Quality of Life

Question one illustrates that executives with an education of high school and some college report that work causes less interference with family responsibilities than the more educated executives. *Business Week* (2003) states that the largest group of business executives have a Harvard education and the next largest group consists of executives with a high school education. Executives that are talented enough to achieve with self education are perhaps able to manage their work and family responsibilities in an effective manner. Also, higher levels of education may allow executives to achieve jobs that require more time away from the family. In question two, the high school/some college group also strongly disagrees that home responsibility makes them tired at work. This same pattern of managing work and non-work responsibilities by the high school/some college educated group again is shown in question 3.

Table 4: Education vs Quality of Life

Question	Mean for High School/Some College	Mean for College Graduates	Mean for Masters/Terminal Degree	P-value
1. My work often interferes with my family responsibilities	* 2.34	3.09	2.88	.053
2. I'm often too tired at work because of things I have to do at home.	* 1.39	2.22	2.21	.00024
3. I feel it is difficult to manage work and non-work responsibilities well at my level.	* 2.75	3.41	3.37	.0034
Number in each category	29	122	139	

*represents a significant difference from the other means.

3.2 Age versus Quality of Life

Question 5 and 6 supports the concept that older executives feel work does not interfere with family and non-work demands. The cut off is age 51 or older, a group that typically has fewer children at home. Question 7 shows that executives under 40 years of age are more optimistic about promotions than their older counterparts.

Table 5: Age vs Quality of Life

Questions	Age <40	Age 41-50	Age 51-60	Age >60	P-value
5. My work often interferes with my family responsibilities	3.32	3.29	* 2.83	* 2.19	.00003
6. At my current level, I believe I juggle my work and non-work demands well.	* 3.32	3.78	4.00	4.12	.0055
7. I am confident I will be at a higher level within three years.	* 3.68	3.08	2.84	2.55	.0013
Number in each category	25	98	115	47	

*indicates a significant difference

3.3 Work Experience versus Quality of Life

Questions 8 and 9 provide us with information that older workers with experience feel support from home gives them confidence at work and they feel they have learned to achieve work-life balance. Executives with 23 to 44 years experience feel their work allows them to develop their skills more than those executives with 22 years of experience or less and also those executives with 45 or more years' experience.

Table 6: Work Experience vs Quality of Life

Question	0-22 years work experience	23-44 years work experience	45 to 66 years work experience	P-value
8. The love and respect I get at home makes me feel confident about myself at work	3.61	3.87	* 4.235	.0047
9. My current work schedule does not allow me to achieve work-life balance.	2.9	2.63	* 1.93	.000026
11. My job offers me opportunities and skill development I otherwise would not have.	3.81	* 4.05	3.76	.00316
Number in each category	70	193	17	

*indicates a significant difference

3.4 Number of Children versus Quality of Life

Executives with children feel work-life policies at their company have helped them personally. Executives with 1 to 3 children are more satisfied with their success than executives with no children or more than 3 children.

Table 7: Number of Children vs Quality of Life

Question	No children	1 to 3	More than 3	P-value
13. My company's work-life policies and practices have helped me personally.	* 2.39	3.05	2.97	.0463
14. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.	3.92	* 4.24	3.75	.0188
Number in each category	41	200	36	

*means a significant difference

3.5 Marital Status versus Quality of Life

Table 8: Marital Status vs Quality of Life

Questions	Single/Living with Significant other	Married	Divorced	Widower	P-value
15. After work I come home too tired to do some of the things I like to do.	* 3.78	3.34	* 3.64	2.75	.0109
16. I believe my family is supportive of my work life issues.	3.85	* 4.15	3.57	* 4.42	.0000004
17. Overall I am satisfied with my family life.	3.35	* 4.17	3.34	* 4.25	.0294
18. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.	* 3.75	4.18	4.11	4	.0000042

Single and divorced executives are more likely to come home too tired to do the things they would like to do. Married executives are not as tired when they come home and widowed are the least tired when they come home. Also married and widowed executives believe their family is supportive of their work life while single and divorced obviously believe they have less family support. Finally married and widowed executives are much more satisfied with their family life than the single and divorced executives. Married, divorced, and widowed executives are significantly more satisfied with their careers than those business executives that are single.

4. Conclusions

Executives with high school or some college education feel their work interferes less with family responsibility than their more educated counterparts. Older executives manage their family responsibilities better than those younger than 51 and executives under 40 years of age are more confident of future promotions. Executives with 1 to 3 children are more satisfied with their success than executives with no children or more than 3 children. Married and widowed executives have better quality of home life than single or divorced executives. Executives that are single are the least satisfied with their careers.

Older executives with 45 or more years experience feel support from home helps them at work and they are comfortable with their work-life balance. Executives with 23 to 44 years experience feel their work allows them the opportunity to improve their skills.

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