

# **QUALITY OF LIFE OF SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS**

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## **Introduction and Theoretical Framework**

Each year colleges, universities, corporations, and private organizations award scholarships recognizing students who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement, leadership ability, a commitment of service to others, exceptional talents, and involvement in extracurricular activities. Some scholarships provide important incentives for young people to pursue their careers and interests while others encourage student enrollment in particular majors or specific career fields.

In 1957, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (HLS&R) presented its first educational scholarship. Now, more than 40 years later, the mission of the HLS&R is still defined by the hundreds of youngsters who annually receive financial support from the organization (Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, 1997). In September 1998, HLS&R officials announced an increase of \$2.25 million in their annual commitment to Texas youth and education, reaching a total of \$7,725,000 for 1999 scholarship recipients (Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, 1998).

The Agricultural Consortium of Texas (thirteen universities that award bachelor's degrees in agriculture) proposed to the HLS&R to conduct an evaluation of the HLS&R Scholarship Program by studying the effect of scholarships on recipient's careers, communities, and quality of life (QOL), thus resulting in this research.

The guiding theoretical framework for "quality of life" in the context of this research was defined as an overall general well-being comprised of both objective and subjective evaluations of physical, material, social, and emotional well-being, together with the degree to which individuals enjoy the important possibilities of their lives, or how good is your life for you? (Renwick & Brown, 1996). Significant to these evaluations is the relative importance an individual places on each area (Felce & Perry, 1996). Two seminal studies conducted during the 1970s, which are often quoted in QOL literature are Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) and Andrews and Withey (1976). Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) disclosed that a sense of well-being is more dependent on an individual's satisfaction with resources than on the quality of these

resources. Andrews and Withey (1976) concluded that QOL is determined by an individual's perceptions of well-being based on evaluation of life domains such as family, residence, job, friends, neighbors, and health, and evaluations of criteria such as standards, aspirations, values, and goals.

The framework for this research focuses on an individual's possibilities in three fundamental areas of life common to all human beings, which are essential dimensions of human experience. These three life domains are being, belonging, and becoming (Figure 1) (Raphael, Renwick, Brown, & Rootman, 1994). Being reflects who one is as an individual. Belonging refers to the ties individuals have with their physical environment. The third domain, becoming, focuses on purposeful activity in which individuals engage in an attempt to accomplish goals, aspirations, and hopes (Raphael, et al., 1994).

Literature on QOL issues indicates that level of educational attainment, level of income, and level of involvement in voluntary associations and church-related associations are positively related to QOL. A positive correlation with QOL implies that a factor measures or indicates happiness and satisfaction (Heylighten & Bernheim, 1998). Also, indications are gender has little or no correlation to QOL. In addition, a review of literature indicates that residence in large communities (quantified as size) is negatively related to overall QOL. Finally, some evidence suggests that individuals who are employed in the area in which they were educated are happier than those who are subsequently employed outside of their area of study.

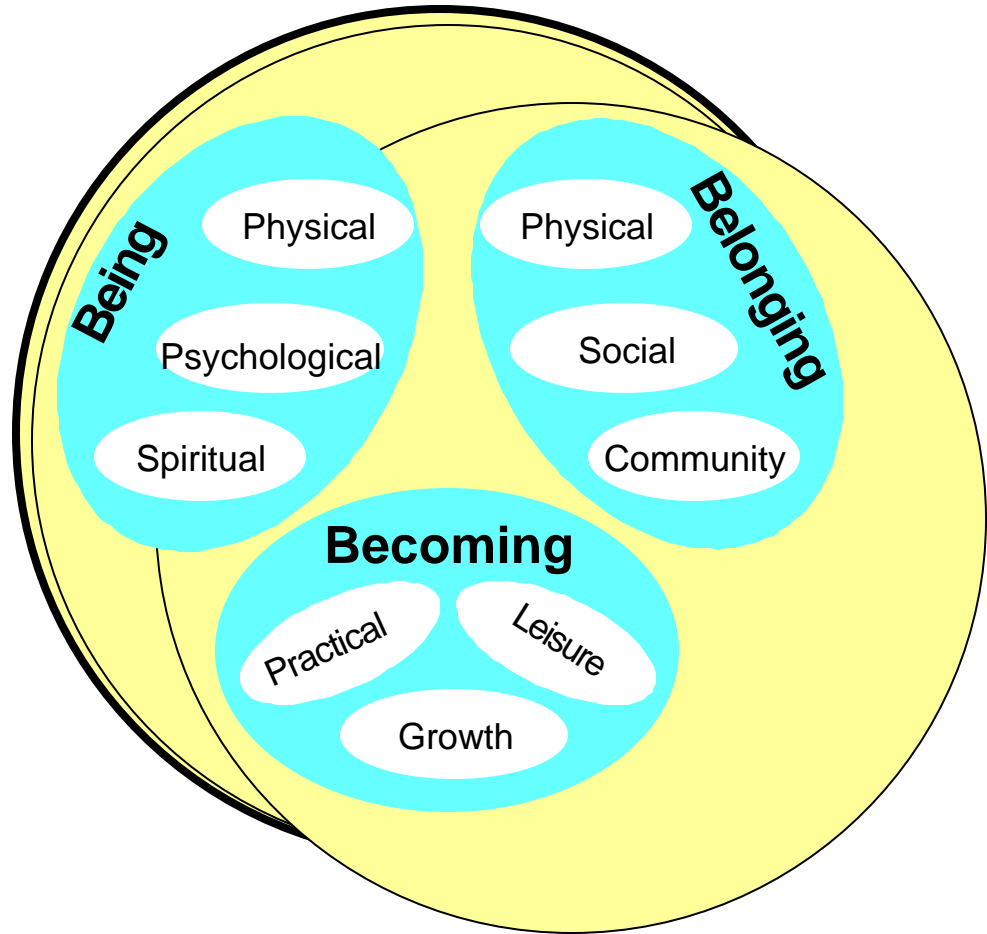


Figure 1. Fundamental life domains and subdomains common to all human beings (Raphael, Renwick, Brown, & Rootman, 1994).

### **Guiding Principles**

The following assumptions were used as guiding principles for this study:

1. The concept of quality of life applies to all human beings.
2. The quality of life of an individual is subject to change.
3. Quality of life is holistic, therefore considering all aspects of an individual's life--physical, psychological, social, and spiritual.
4. Components of quality of life, those things constituting our human condition, are common for all individuals.
5. Quality of life considers the interaction between the individual and the environment of the individual.
6. Quality of life is a product of both objective conditions and subjective evaluations persons impose on their current circumstances.

7. The perspective of the individual is emphasized as a measure of studying quality of life.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether significant relationships existed between proposed variables and QOL as perceived by scholarship recipients. Proposed variables selected, based on preponderance of the review of literature, included education, income, involvement in voluntary organizations and religious associations, gender, and residence. Another purpose was to describe the overall QOL of individuals as perceived by the survey participants. This study further investigated whether significant differences existed in the QOL between graduates of an area of study subsequently employed in their area of study versus graduates employed in areas outside their area of study.

### **Method and Procedures**

A correlation design was used in this study. The instrument used to collect data for this study consisted of two sections. The first section provides descriptive personal, education, employment, and scholarship data. The second section consisted of the Quality of Life Profile, (QOLP), a generic measure of health and well-being developed by a multidisciplinary research team from the Quality of Life Research Unit at the Centre for Health Promotion (CHP), University of Toronto, (Renwick & Brown, 1996).

Development and validation of the QOLP was done by the Quality of Life Research Unit at the University of Toronto over a five-year period. The QOLP consists of 54 items, six in each of the nine sub-domains. Respondents provide Importance ratings along a five-point Likert response scale for each of the 54 items. This process is repeated for Satisfaction ratings for each of the 54 items. QOL scores were computed using importance and satisfaction scores for each of the 54 aspects of life. QOL scores are computed as follows:  $[QOL = (\text{importance score} / 3) * (\text{satisfaction score} - 3)]$  with QOL scores ranging from -3.33 (not at all satisfied with extremely important issues) to 3.33 (extremely satisfied with very important issues) (Raphael, D'Amico et al., 1996).

QOL scores above 0 reflect a positive QOL, while those below 0 reflect a negative QOL. Overall QOL scores greater than 1.50 are considered excellent scores. Scores from .51 to 1.50 indicate a very acceptable QOL situation. Scores from -.50 to .50 indicate an adequate QOL situation. Scores of -.51 to -1.50 indicate problematic QOL, while scores less than -1.50 are very problematic (Quality of Life Research Unit, 1998).

Psychometric evaluation of the QOLP was conducted by the Quality of Life Research Unit as well. Cronbach's internal consistency coefficients were calculated for Importance, Satisfaction, and QOL scores within each domain and sub-domain. For Importance, all domain and sub-domain scores exceeded .70, except for Spiritual Being (.68) and Community Belonging (.62). For Satisfaction, all coefficients exceeded .70

with all but two being  $>.80$  (Raphael, D'Amico, Brown, & Renwick, 1996).

The population frame for this study was assembled from names and addresses of all scholarship recipients who were awarded direct scholarships by the HLS&R beginning in 1957 and continuing through 1997. The researcher received from the HLS&R a database of names and addresses of 4,283 scholarship recipients. The restriction imposed by addresses identified over a forty-year period resulted in an accessible population of 3,839 scholarship recipients. The total number of surveys received was 1,512, representing 39.4% of the accessible population. Research has indicated that late respondents are similar to non-respondents (Miller & Smith, 1983). So, to determine if the responding sample was likely to have been representative of the total population, "days to respond" was correlated with primary variables of interest in this study. "Days to respond" was positively correlated with age ( $r = .15$ ), salary ( $r = .12$ ), and educational level ( $r = .09$ ). However, the length of time one took to respond was not correlated with gender, community involvement, size of community, or quality of life. Thus, the responding sample may be biased in terms of age (younger recipients over-sampled), salary (lower salaries over-sampled), and education level (lower education levels over-sampled). It was assumed, however, that the sample was representative of the population with respect to quality of life, the major dependent variable in this study.

Loss of research participants can be a problem over a long period of time. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) found that the response rate of individuals agreeing to participate in a longitudinal panel study declined significantly over time. "The response rate was 61.9% for a one-year follow-up, 37.9% after 5 years, and 27.9% after 11 years." (p. 379).

Spearman rho correlation coefficient, point biserial correlation, and multiple correlations were used to describe associations between variables. T-test procedures were used to compare the QOL of graduates of an area of study who were subsequently employed in that area to those who were employed outside their area of study.

## Results and Findings

Mean QOL scores for domains, sub-domains, and total scale indicated that being and belonging domains scores ranked equally high with each reporting QOL scores of 1.45 (Table 1). Sub-domains that rated especially high ( $>1.50$ ) were spiritual being (1.80), physical belonging (1.55), and social belonging (1.50). Domain, sub-domain, and total scale mean QOL scores indicate a vast majority of survey participants have a very acceptable to excellent QOL.

Table 1

Quality of Life Scores for Domains, Subdomains, and Total Scale of the Quality of Life Profile of Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo Survey Participants, 1998

QOL Domain	n	Mean	SD
<b>Being</b>	<b>1482</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>.75</b>
Physical	1498	1.23	.83

Overall QOL scores were recoded into descriptive categories using the following distribution: excellent (score >1.50), very acceptable (score of .51 to 1.50), adequate (score of -.50 to .50), problematic, (score of -.51 to -1.50), and very problematic (score <-1.50) (Quality of Life Research Unit, 1998). Overall, 37.9% of survey participants had an excellent QOL while 52.3% have a very acceptable QOL (Figure 2). There were only .3% of survey participants found to have a problematic QOL while no respondents had a very problematic QOL.

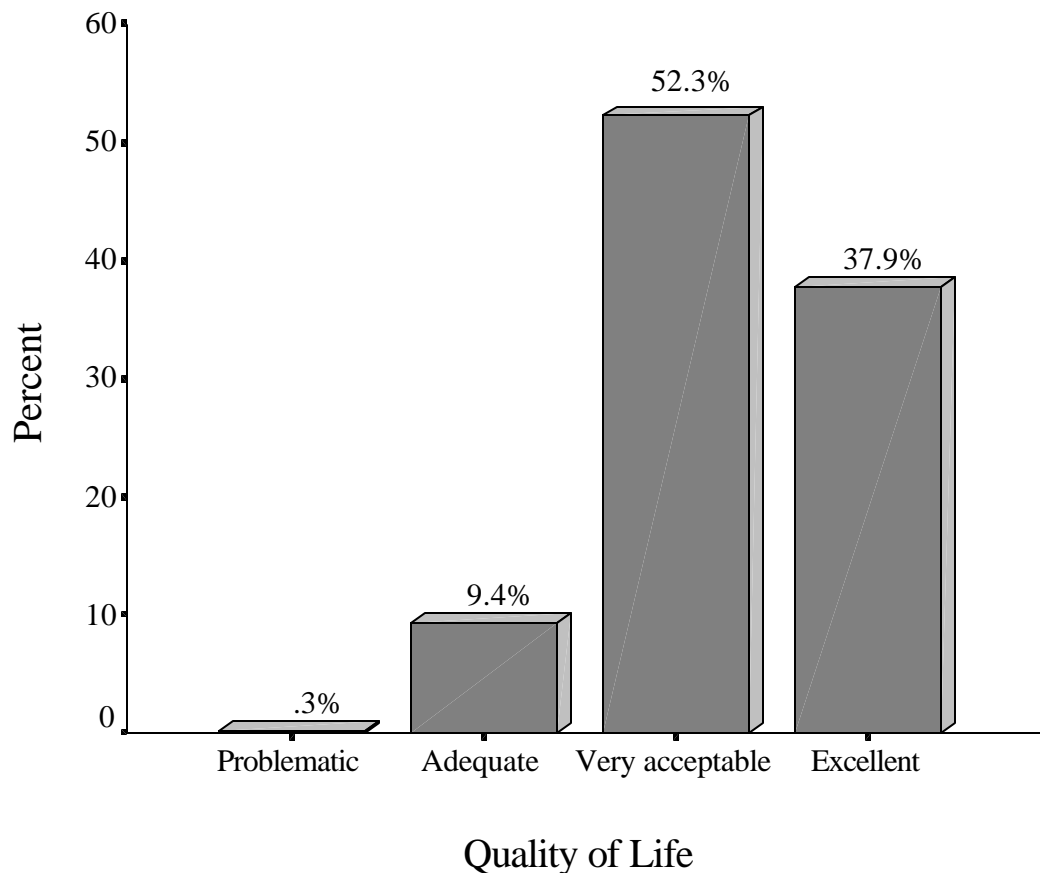


Figure 2. Quality of life of Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo survey participants, 1998.

Reliability of the QOLP was determined by examining internal consistency. Internal consistency coefficients, Cronbach's alpha for importance, satisfaction, and QOL for each sub-domain, the three broad domains, and for the overall scale (Table 2). For importance, all domain and sub-domain scores exceeded .70, except for social belonging

(.70). Overall importance had an internal consistency coefficient of .94. For satisfaction, social belonging had the lowest coefficient, .73, with overall satisfaction having a value of .96. QOL coefficients were consistent with satisfaction coefficients with the instrument having an overall QOL coefficient of .96.

Table 2

Internal Consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for Domains, Subdomains, and Total Scale for the Quality of Life Profile of Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo Survey Participants, 1998

QOL Domain	Importance	Satisfaction	QOL
<b>Being</b>	<b>.86</b>	<b>.90</b>	<b>.91</b>
Physical	.75	.80	.81
Psychological	.81	.85	.86
Spiritual	.78	.83	.84
<b>Belonging</b>	<b>.87</b>	<b>.88</b>	<b>.89</b>
Physical	.81	.84	.85
Social	.70	.73	.73
Community	.76	.78	.78
<b>Becoming</b>	<b>.88</b>	<b>.91</b>	<b>.92</b>
Practical	.75	.78	.79
Leisure	.76	.85	.86
Growth	.83	.86	.87
<b>Total Scale</b>	<b>.94</b>	<b>.96</b>	<b>.96</b>

### Conclusions/Implications/Recommendations

Before any conclusions are made, remember that the population for this study has previously demonstrated above average academic and leadership abilities by their selection as a recipient of a HLS&R scholarship award. All participants have or are attending college and may be significantly different from the general public.

On the basis of the evidence from this study, two variables--involvement in voluntary organizations and religious associations, and gender--were significantly related to QOL. Females and those who had higher levels of community involvement tended to have higher QOL scores. Involvement was the strongest correlate of overall QOL. This conclusion supports the findings by Brinkerhoff and Jacob (1985), Edwards and Klemmack (1973), Palmore and Luikart (1972), and Graney (1975) who found that the more individuals are involved in voluntary organizations and/or religious associations the more likely they were to report a higher QOL.

No evidence indicated that education, income, and place of residence were related to QOL, nor that graduates employed in their area of study have a higher QOL.

Overall, QOL for individuals in this population was high with over 90%, indicating very acceptable or excellent QOL. While there are no comparable studies using the QOLP to measure QOL, Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) did report findings about "overall life satisfaction" (p.46) on a nationwide probability sample of 2,147 adults. They found 82% of this sample to be satisfied with QOL compared to more than 90% of the sample of HLS&R scholarship recipients who rate their QOL as very acceptable or excellent. On the other hand, the Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers sample included almost 7% who reported dissatisfaction with their QOL. The sample for this study had less than 1% with a problematic QOL. So, based on this comparison, HLS&R scholarship recipients may perceive that they have a higher QOL overall than do members of the general population. An interesting finding of this study was that no individuals indicated a very problematic QOL.

Evidence from this study indicates that the more individuals are involved in organizations the higher their QOL. This implies that the HLS&R Scholarship Committee emphasize involvement in extracurricular activities and voluntary clubs and youth organizations as part of the criteria for selection of scholarship recipients.

The value of the HLS&R scholarships is indicated by the 95% rate of persistence in completing an undergraduate program of study, compared with 52% nationally. This implies that the HLS&R Scholarship Program has provided extraordinary assistance to Texas youth by encouraging and/or facilitating these students to graduate from college.

All participants in this study were recipients of HLS&R scholarships. Additional research using the QOLP should be conducted comparing non-scholarship recipients with those receiving scholarships.

The QOLP, based on internal consistency coefficients, proved to be a reliable instrument and should be used for further research. Further research on community involvement, religious association, and leadership and their relationship to QOL should be conducted. Research should be conducted to see if the selection process that is used to award scholarships is an indicator of individuals expected to have high QOL.

QOL scores can provide standards against which individual or program success, within specific domains or overall, can be measured. Research focusing on life conditions of individuals who have high QOL scores will provide valuable information to individuals and programs about those conditions that seem to promote QOL.

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