

A Starting Point for Choosing QoL Criteria for Self-Growth

Grace Onodipe ¹, Tim Shenk ², Kathleen Burke ³

Abstract

The Bible's Ten Commandments, Buddha's eight teachings, and Ben Franklin's 13 Principles are examples of guiding tenets that people use when making decisions in their life. Whether explicitly or implicitly, individuals constantly use criteria for decision making. This study collected data from individuals involved in a self-growth initiative to gather the criteria they use to improve the quality of their lives. While these Quality of Life (QoL) criteria are based on personal preferences, certain themes within the criteria may be more common than others. This article seeks to determine these commonalities across individuals' QoL criteria. The methodology used involves examining the QoL criteria submitted by a sample of self-growers to identify common themes. These themes were then aligned with established QoL domains and dimensions. The responses were analyzed to find commonalities across respondents as well as determining if there were demographic trends by examining the impact of career stage and gender identity. By addressing these key aspects and commonalities across QoL criteria, this research contributes to a deeper and practical understanding of QoL criteria by providing valuable insights and a starting point for individuals seeking to begin their self-growth journey through the development of personalized QoL criteria.

Introduction

Along with the rise of affluence and life expectancy has come a significant expansion of research into Quality of Life (QoL). This increase in QoL research is evident in governmental (What is Quality of Life?, 2024; Quality of Life indicators - measuring quality of life, 2024), academic (Burckhardt & Anderson, 2003), and private (Luce et al., 1989; Young, 2008) institutions, all exploring the concept of the *good life* (Brown et al., 2004; Barcaccia et al., 2013; Scanlon, 1993). However, due to its subjective nature, QoL has yet to have a singular definition or focus. It is a multifaceted and multidimensional measurement of well-being that can be explored at public policy or individual levels (Rosenberg, 1995). The scope of QoL can be based on broad or general populations (Grabowska, 2021; King-Berry et al., 2021; Lawton, 1982) or specific groups (on the basis of age, disabilities, etc.) (Kane, 2001; Estoque, 2019; Schalock, 2016; Haraldstad, 2019; Lawton, 1983a). In the self-growth community, QoL is recognized as critical to an individual's pursuit of betterment (King-Berry et al., 2021) which is dependent on a framework based on various domains and dimensions that enable a person to make decisions pertaining to their growth towards their ideal self-image. This process provides individuals with guidelines for examining their purpose in life and analyzing their needs and values while simultaneously raising expectations to push themselves to make each day better than the day before. To engage in this process effectively,

one can develop criteria by which they can assess their progress.

King-Berry et al. (2021) condense the work of three meta-analysis projects and several other works to analyze QoL within 14 domains which are described by 68 dimensions. In the research represented by this article, the commonalities across QoL criteria specified by individuals are explored using the King-Berry et al. (2021) Self-Growth Framework. While QoL criteria are based on personal preferences, certain themes within the criteria may be more common than others and can be used as a starting point to simplify the process for those attempting to identify their QoL criteria.

To begin the identification of these themes, we discuss the literature that examines the pillars that researchers have identified as contributing to an individual's QoL. We then discuss and delineate the Self-Growth Framework created by King-Berry et al. (2021) that is used to measure QoL. The methodology this research used to collect and analyze the QoL criteria submitted by our sample of self-growers as well as the issues faced when coding these criteria are then discussed, followed by an analysis of the descriptive statistics of the sample and the commonalities across individual criteria are analyzed. Finally, we outline how the findings can be utilized as a starting point for creating individual QoL criteria as well as future directions for this research.

¹ Georgia Gwinnett College

² Campbell University

³ SUNY Cortland

Literature Review

Despite the growing body of literature investigating what contributes to someone's quality of life, consensus on an exact definition has not yet been reached. A commonality across the research is that QoL is constituted by a framework of core foci or pillars that contain a set of domains that provide a structure for understanding QoL (Kagawa-Singer et al., 2010; Barcaccia et al., 2013). These pillars depend on the interest of those conducting the research (Veenhoven, 2014). For example, Ashing-Giwa (2005) model QoL using a three-pillar, subjective, multidimensional approach to wellbeing focused on the individual which includes safety/security, integrity/meaning in life, and sense of belonging in social networks. Veenhoven (2000) articulates four pillars of QoL: livability of environment, life-ability of individuals, utility of life, and inner appreciation of life. Felce and Perry (1995), focusing on quantifying QoL for individuals with disabilities using a multidimensional approach, integrate objective and subjective indicators through five pillars: physical wellbeing, material wellbeing, social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, and personal development and activity. Others, such as Brooks and Winfrey (2023) articulate QoL as categorized with the four pillars of family, friendship, work, and faith. Lawton (1982, 1983a, 1983b) addresses QoL for seniors using the four pillars of behavior competence, perceived QoL, psychological well-being, and external objective/physical environment.

Within these QoL pillars, specified domains are classified by multiple dimensions consisting of specific indicators. Studies articulate their own indicators, including physical functioning and symptoms, emotional, behavioral, cognitive and intellectual functioning, social functioning, the existence of social support, life satisfaction, health perceptions, economic status, and ability to pursue interests, among others (Estoque et al., 2019; Young, 2008; Maggino, 2014, Kane 2003). These indicators can be either objective or subjective measures used to analyze and assess the different aspects of QoL. Objective measurements include education, employment, and income levels attained. Subjective indicators of QoL may include individual living experiences and values, wellbeing, happiness measurements, life satisfaction, and the like.

Yet due to the dynamic nature of life, the selection of how and which QoL indicators apply to an individual's life can be challenging to define. That which defines an individual's QoL typically changes over time and with different lived experiences (Brown et al., 2004; Barcaccia et al., 2013, Rosenberg, 1995; Bowling et al., 2003).

Self-Grower Quality of Life Framework

For self-growers within the Process Education (PE) community, QoL meaning is determined by the individual and

is enhanced through creating one's own opportunities for improvement. Jain et al., (2020) begins with defining the meaning of life for the individual in their Self-Growth Methodology. In order to generate such a definition, one must conduct a four-step process that conducts a values and needs analysis, raises expectations, determines life's quality characteristics, and develops the broad criteria for success (Jain, et al., 2020). This development comes with its own challenges. To determine life's quality characteristics, King-Berry et al. (2021) introduce a three-pillar QoL framework for a self-grower derived from a meta-analysis from Haraldstad et al. (2019) and additionally incorporating research from Sirgy et al. (2006) and Constanza et al. (2008). This framework uses the pillars of wellbeing, life satisfaction, and happiness which are broken down into 14 life domains, as outlined in Table 1. These domains are similar to those presented in other literature. For example, physical, social, and emotional well-being components are commonly incorporated into domains (e.g., Ashing Giwa, 2005; Felce and Perry, 1995). Brooks and Oprah (2023) integrate these same domains within their pillars by focusing on different relationships individuals may have within a given community.

However, King-Berry et al. (2021) take the analysis further by delineating dimensions within the domains to provide further structure. Using these three pillars as guidance, King-Berry et al. introduce a framework with 14 life domains and 68 associated dimensions to measure QoL for a Self-Grower. These domains with their accompanying dimensions are detailed in Table 1.

The framework presented in Table 1 provides a structure for selecting criteria, ordered by domain, according to which the individual can guide their own QoL decision making. Because QoL is inherently personal, as it is based on life experiences and expectations that inform the senses by which an individual gauges their QoL (Jain, 2020; King-Berry et al., 2021), no two individuals will have the same QoL criteria. Moreover, their interpretation of how the criteria apply to their values and ideals may also be different. As King-Berry et al. (2021) states,

Since "success" in self-growth is the quality of life journey toward one's ideal self, broad criteria are developed to guide this journey. ... One gets to identify their own critical rules of the game of life—those that matter the most and bring meaning and quality to one's own life; those that help guide them to be true to themselves, their vision, and their values.

A daunting challenge for self-growers thus lies in identifying the most important factors for measuring their individual QoL.

Table 1 Quality of Life Domains and Dimensions

Life Domain	Dimensions with Descriptions
<p>Domain 1: Social Well-Being</p> <p><i>Enjoy the relationships within life that add so much special meaning</i></p>	Life partner: The person you choose to share life's journey, love, experiences, and quality
	Friendships: Meaningful relationships that contribute to who you are, what you do, and help you to become the future you
	Family: All members: children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews, and very close family friends who are part of the family
	Community: Groups of people you value belonging to, such as a neighborhood, church, professional learning community, association, etc.
	Personal support system: Strength of friends, family, community members, mentors, and co-workers, especially during tough times.
	Social status: How you are perceived within the various communities you are engaged with
	Pets: Animals who bring love, warmth, and compassion
<p>Domain 2: Work Well-Being</p> <p><i>Work that adds value and quality to life</i></p>	Valued for work: Work you produce is valued by the organization, clients, supervisors and yourself
	Job/profession status: How you are recognized in your professional career by society
	Professional network: Quantity and quality of influential individuals invested in your future, want to see you succeed, build your reputation, and are willing to help you progress in your career
	Valuing your impact: Understand and enjoy the contributions you make to all stakeholders
<p>Domain 3: Spiritual Well-Being</p> <p><i>Moving beyond self to a obtain a greater meaning of life</i></p>	Volunteering/Gifting: Provide time, energy, and personal resources to help others better their lives and its quality
	Positive civic action: Through individual and collective action, help increase justice, freedom, and equity
	Being positive: Use each day to treat others with respect, kindness, and compassion to better everyone's life quality
	Practicing faith: Use of prayer, traditions, and beliefs to help make greater meaning of life regarding a greater being or spirit
	Being in nature: Enjoy bonding with nature's beauty, resources and wonder for renewal
	Being connected to something greater: Understanding, believing and experiencing significance beyond self
<p>Domain 4: Emotional Well-Being</p> <p><i>Feeling good about oneself</i></p>	Taking care of self (needs): Each day there is a fulfillment of primary needs to keep you whole
	Being productive: Use each hour effectively to produce experiences and results that exceed expectations
	Reason to live: A driving life force which encompasses purpose, passion, goals, direction, and people for relishing the experience of living
	Self-Worth: A sense that your importance to the world is as high as anyone else's
	Efficacy: Self-believe that you are capable of doing anything you set your mind and being towards doing
	Being happy: Waking up positive, constantly smiling, and bringing joy to yourself and for others
<p>Domain 5: Intellectual/ Mental Well-Being</p> <p><i>Creating meaning</i></p>	Sense of purpose: Build a philosophical meaning of life that centers you and produces a personal compass to guide your actions
	Freedom: Opportunity to make your own choices and own their consequences with minimal social constraints by others
	Learning: Construct understanding of self and the world to allow a person to process life in the ways they choose

Life Domain	Dimensions with Descriptions
Domain 6: Personal Development <i>Strengthening personal capabilities</i>	Learning to learn: Increase in ability to learn and learning performance
	Self-Improvement (assessment): Use every experience and performance to increase future situations
	Life plan: Thoughtful development of a life vision, life goals, broad criteria and strategies to direct life efforts with a productive growth mindset
	Growth (personal growth rate): Use life moments to see how to improve and move along the path towards ideal self, i.e., systematically improve oneself, situations, and performances, and their positive impact on QoL
	Self-GrowthGrowth: Spend energy and time on increasing growth capability by increasing the power of its components
Domain 7: Joyful Experiences <i>Enriching life experiences</i>	Meaningful pastime: Take in the pure joy of doing what you want to do because of the personal value it returns in its repeated activity
	Leisure: Enjoy taking time to explore aspects of life, including travel, that are outside of routine for the experiences they might provide
	Attending performances/events: Enjoy the quality produced by others in all dimensions of life performances
	Spending time with loved ones: Joy sharing holidays, events, and life happenings with people who are close and meaningful
Domain 8: Physical Well-Being <i>Being in peak condition for enjoying the body and its role in a holistic life</i>	Exercise: Workouts that keep a person feeling fit
	Sport: Enjoy the physical competition of giving it your all, trying to excel and continually improve
	Outdoor recreation: Physical activities to commune with the environment and tap into its vast resources
	Safety: Protecting yourself from obvious harm by being situationally aware and taking normal precautions
Domain 9: Good Health <i>Body feeling good</i>	Maintenance: Keep the body in functioning order by getting routine checkups
	Nutrition: Balance the body's physical needs through eating, sleeping and dietary choices, maintaining a healthy weight and alertness
	Wellness: Making sure to take care of self physically so to minimize sick days
Domain 10: Environmental Well-Being <i>Quality of surroundings in which one works, lives, and plays</i>	Local environment: The quality of the Parks, Green Space, museums commercial establishments, upkeep, transportation, etc.
	Living conditions: Quality of housing, personal living space, cleanliness, autonomy, and things to make daily living viable
	Mobility: Being able to make choices to do things because you can relocate to achieve access
	Environmental quality: The level of quality in the environment including such things as water, air, vegetation, industrial plants, restoration, repairs, and general maintenance
Domain 11: Economic Well-Being	Perceived standard of living: How you feel about the level of comfort experienced against expectations
	Cost of living: The expense of maintaining the standard of living
	Net-Worth (retirement plan): The amount of resources accumulated for the future so retirement is well-funded and future work is not a requirement
Domain 12: Self-Expression: Creating	Orating/Writing: Communicating ideas that impact other ideals and views on how to live life
	Producing art: The creation of new works
	Creating music: Producing pleasant sounds and meaning for appreciation
	Acting/Storytelling: Sharing representations of life experiences via different media
	Crafting: The production of substances and products that bring value and appreciation

Life Domain	Dimensions with Descriptions
Domain 12 (con't)	Gardening: The cultivating of new vegetation for beauty and bounty
	Cooking: Preparation of enjoyable dining experiences
Domain 13: Legacy	People impacted: Children, family, friends, mentees, associates, employees, students, and others you have helped in crafting their own futures
	Intellectual properties: Contributions that produce copyrighted to improve the conditions of others
	Arts/Crafts/Artifacts: Tangible items that represent some aspect of who you are that others value and appreciate
	Organizations/Community: Building something that continues to bring people together with common purpose and unity that increases quality to those involved
	Systems/Processes: Building new structures that are so stable they outlast those involved in their creation
	Philanthropy: Setting up a foundation that provides means for ongoing support that increase the opportunities and conditions for others to have a better quality of life
	Inheritance: Providing resources for others to have a greater QoL after you are gone
Domain 14: Life's Major Interventions	Life challenges: The number of major life crisis that has set back one's progress towards ideal self
	Illness: The long-term status of health by a continuing problem regarding health (e.g., diabetes)
	Major health issue: A serious health issue that needs to be addressed (e.g., heart operation)
	Life is not a bed of roses and has its ups and downs. Life's quality is influenced by how one addresses these negative issues in a positive manner to effectively move forward to turn negatives into positives (i.e., make lemonade from lemons)

Within the PE process for self-growth, where quality of life is self-determined, producing exceptional value is accomplished by identifying the QoL characteristics which are most important to the individual (Apple, Ellis, Leisure 2018). This identification requires the alignment of life goals with a person's sense of purpose, to direct the needed time, energy, and resources that support increasing one's QoL. To help with this process, King-Berry et al. (2021) provide a four-step guide to using their QoL framework. The first step requires self-examination to determine one's purpose in life by taking stock of what is truly important to the individual. The greater the variety and growth in complexity, the greater one's growth can become. This growth requires reflection and imagining possibilities. The second step is the analysis and assessment of one's values and needs. Emphasis is placed on reflection of the 10 most meaningful values that help define the individual's life. This reflection helps to provide a clearer understanding of who and why one is who they are (identity). The third step is elevating expectations and not being satisfied with the status quo. This raising of expectations drives the belief that one can improve and get more out of life, focused on directing one's self-growth by not limiting capacity and pushing for achieving maximum capability. The last step for an individual to develop their QoL framework requires continually customizing and defining the criteria by which quality of life will be assessed,

providing guidelines by which measurement of an individual's performance in obtaining success can occur (Jain et al., 2020). This individualized custom list will be used for multi-dimensional measurements of what will constitute fulfillment and greater meaning in one's life. Due to their subjective nature, these QoL criteria are intensely personal and their development is critical in providing an individualized objective for measuring QoL. The challenge is then how to effectively choose what is important in aiding each individual's self-growth.

Additionally, the development of QoL criteria is a cyclical process because measuring quality of life is conducted in the moment and based on lived experiences. Circumstances, outside forces, and life stages provide means by which the significance in an individual's life will change, and as a result, the significance of QoL criteria must be continually re-evaluated during the self-growth process. This re-evaluation requires prioritization throughout one's life in defining the most significant dimensions within the various domains that matter most to the individual as they gauge what brings quality to their life.

This article examines the criteria established by people within the PE Self-Growth community. It utilizes the Self-Growth Framework as a tool to classify the criteria and determine commonalities of individuals' choices of domains

and dimensions they use to measure their QoL. The most popular criteria are suggested as a starting place for someone beginning their self-growth journey. By addressing these key aspects, this research contributes to a deeper and practical understanding of QoL criteria and provides valuable insights for individuals seeking to enhance their self-growth journey through the development of personalized QoL criteria.

Methodology

To understand the commonalities across the QoL criteria of different individuals, participants were recruited for this study using purposive or judgmental sampling technique which involved distributing a Google Form survey to 34 individuals identified as Process Education Experts and/or Self-Growth Institute participants. This sampling technique enabled the authors to target individuals who are engaged in self-growth and could therefore potentially provide relevant data for our study's focus.

The aim of the survey that was distributed was to gather data on participants' QoL criteria. Respondents were asked to provide the QoL criteria which guide their life decisions. Demographic factors such as income, age, career stage, and status were also collected to examine their correlation with the identified QoL themes. The survey, available as Appendix A, remained open for 2.5 weeks.

Those recruited for the study participated voluntarily, receiving a link to an online questionnaire and notification that their responses would contribute to a study on QoL. Of the 34 individuals contacted, 18 responded, providing their answers to the QoL criteria questionnaire.

Coding Process

The collected responses were subsequently coded by the co-authors through collaborative online sessions. As discussed, the Self-Growth Framework in Table 1 was used to classify each respondent's QoL criteria. This structure served as a comprehensive reference point for systematically categorizing and analyzing the QoL criteria submitted. As each participant's criteria were reviewed, statements were individually matched with the appropriate domain or dimension, with the aim of objectively categorizing subjective statements. Each QoL criterion provided by the respondent was coded after a consensus was reached by the authors that the criterion was aligned with a corresponding QoL domain and/or dimension.

While this coding process was followed for responses by each respondent, all three co-authors also submitted their QoL criteria for this study. When analyzing the QoL criteria submitted by a co-author, the coding process was conducted by the other two co-authors to minimize bias.

The decision structure used to analyze QoL criteria provided valuable insights from the diverse range of criteria submitted. Detailing the decisions made at each stage of the analysis provided transparency in the methodology and the considerations that guided the approach. However, issues did arise during the coding process. These issues and their resolution are explained further.

Challenges in QoL Criteria Interpretation

Potential measurement errors were identified due to ambiguity in participants' QoL criteria. For example, terms like *joy* and *wellness* lack specificity. To mitigate these types of errors, every dimension within each domain was marked off during coding.

Coding for multi-dimensional QoL criteria proved challenging due to the broad and subjective nature of the criteria. Some QoL criteria, such as *be healthy* or *well-being*, were overly broad and lacked specificity, posing challenges in coding. Other broad and subjective criteria, such as *leave the world better for my part than I found it*, were excluded from coding due to challenges in objective measurement.

Several times during our analysis, it was observed that QoL criteria submitted contained deeper insights that could only be fully understood by the individuals themselves. Merely reading these criteria from a survey did not sufficiently clarify their meaning. This observation underscores the inherent subjectivity and personal significance embedded within individuals' QoL criteria and highlights the importance of further exploration and clarification through qualitative methods such as interviews or follow-up discussions.

Non-Orthogonal QoL Dimensions

Some level of complexity was encountered when interpreting QoL criteria within specific domains. For instance, in the Personal Development domain, which comprises dimensions such as learning to learn, self-improvement, life vision, growth, and self-growth, the interrelatedness of these dimensions posed a challenge. Notably, achieving growth and self-growth often necessitates elements like learning to learn, self-improvement, and life vision. Therefore, when participants mentioned self-growth in their QoL criteria, the decision was made to mark off all five dimensions for consistency, recognizing the interconnected nature of the dimensions within the Personal Development domain.

Missing Dimensions

Several instances were encountered where certain dimensions from Table 1 were not explicitly accounted for in the initial framework. This issue was addressed

by compiling a list of possible additional dimensions to fill gaps in the framework.

Upon reviewing QoL criteria, which included *DEVELOP OTHERS (mentoring) by providing mentoring, coaching, or other forms of support to aid others in achieving their goals*, no suitable dimension in Table 1 was identified. While mentoring may align with the volunteering/gifting dimension under the Spiritual Well-Being domain, this placement may not fully capture its essence. Therefore, it became evident that a distinct mentoring dimension should be considered for inclusion within the framework under the Personal Development domain. Alternatively, considering the depth and significance of mentoring, it may warrant its own distinct domain. Furthermore, the distinction between paid and unpaid mentoring raises questions about its categorization within domains. Consideration was given to including mentoring as a distinct dimension within the Personal Development domain or as its own domain.

If self-growth coaching encompasses a broader range of activities beyond individual self-growth (in the Personal Development domain), it may warrant consideration as a separate dimension or domain within the framework.

The Work Well-Being domain does not include the dimension of *work-life balance*, mentioned at least twice in survey responses. Additionally, *being one's own boss* was coded under the freedom dimension within the Intellectual Well-Being domain. However, it was considered whether it may warrant a separate dimension under the Work Well-Being domain. It was also noted that *productivity* was not explicitly categorized under the work well-being domain.

Mindfulness, not listed as a dimension in Table 1, was identified as a crucial aspect of intellectual or mental well-being based on participant submissions.

Data and Descriptive Statistics

While the sample size of this study (18 respondents) is small, it can be viewed as a pilot study to explore and highlight similarities in QoL dimensions that warrant further exploration.

The data were categorized by gender identity, career stage, and age. As displayed in Figure 1, 35% of the respondents identified as a woman, 59% as a man, and 6% as non-binary. Due to the small size of the non-binary group, and in order to protect their anonymity, their responses were excluded from the aggregate graphs.

As depicted in Figure 2, 41% of respondents are aged 45-54, making it the largest age group. This cohort was followed by 24% of respondents aged 55-64, and two smaller groups, each representing 18 percent of the sample: those aged 35-44 and those 65 and older. This age distribution underscores a concentration of respondents in the mid to later stages of life, aligning with the observed career stage distribution.

Career stage analysis, depicted in Figure 3, revealed that 53% of respondents were in the late stage of their careers, while 47% were in the mid stage. Notably, there were no participants from the early-career stage, indicating a focus on more experienced professionals, which may influence the prioritization of specific QoL criteria.

Figure 1 Gender Identity

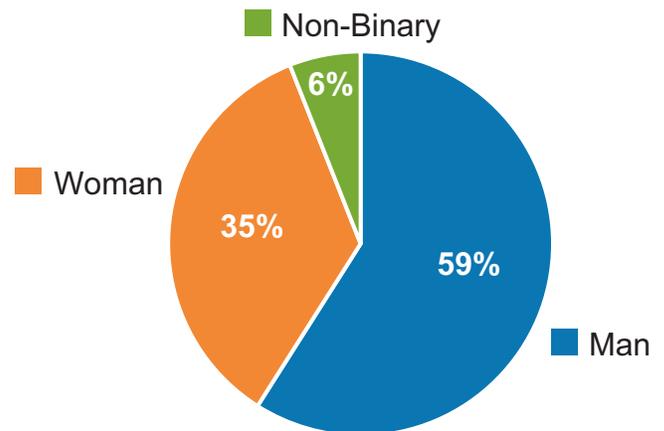


Figure 2 Age Profile

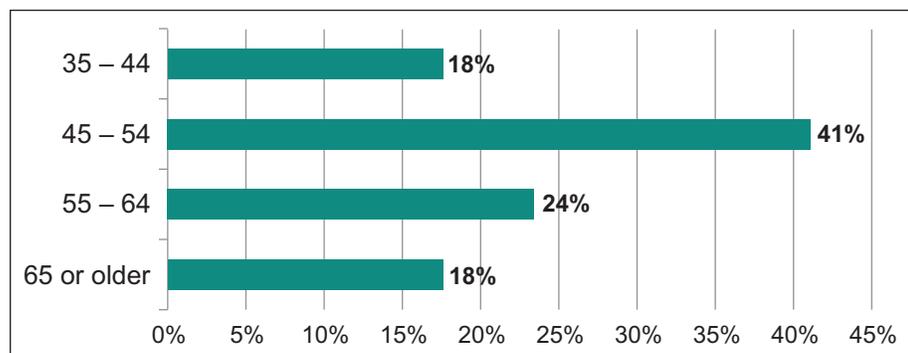


Figure 3 Stage of Career

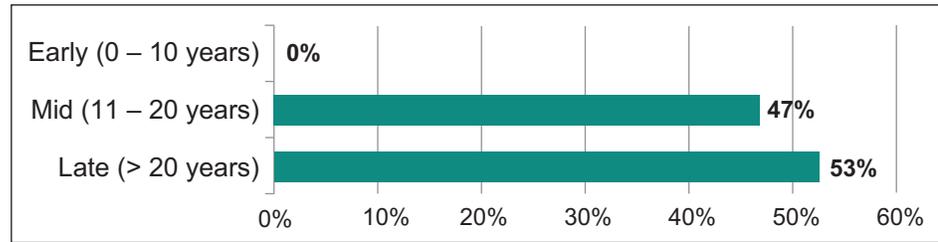
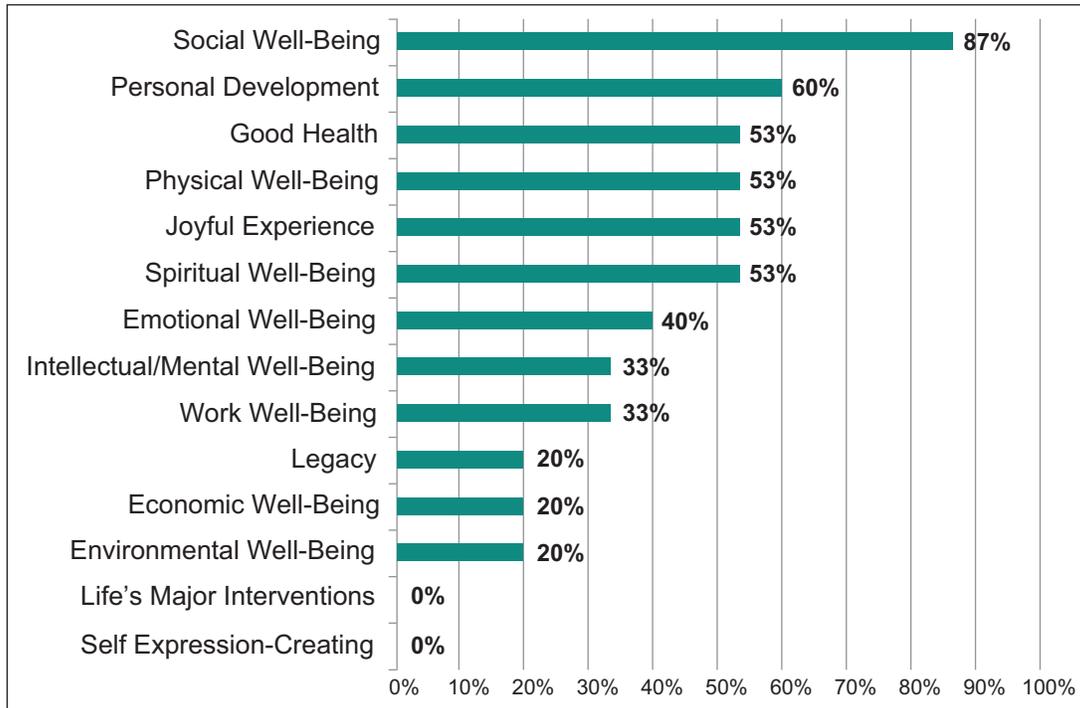


Figure 4 Pareto Chart of Respondent QoL Domains



Results

Due to the small sample size, the Life Domains listed in Table 1 were analyzed first to better understand the overall areas that respondents indicated within their QoL criteria. These domains, sorted with the most common domain listed first, are depicted in Figure 4.

Social Well-Being is by far the most common domain with 87% of respondents indicating criteria in this domain. There is a drop off to 60% indicating criteria within Personal Development as part of their QoL criteria. Just over half of the respondents had criteria within the domains of Good Health, Physical Well-Being, Joyful Experience, and Spiritual Well-Being.

Demographic Analysis

To explore differences in criteria by respondent demographics, the domains were disaggregated by Gender Identity as well as Career Stage. The age of the respondent is not depicted as it is highly correlated with career stage and yields similar results.

Gender Identity

The distribution of Gender Identity across the domains is depicted in Figure 5. Social Well-Being has the highest responses regardless of gender identity with 83% of those identifying as a woman and 80% of those identifying as a man indicating this domain within their criteria. Two-thirds of women and half of those identifying as men indicated Personal Development as part of their QoL criteria. Respondents identifying as a man indicated Good Health and Intellectual/Mental Well-Being significantly more than those identifying as a woman, whereas those identifying as women indicated Physical Well-Being, Joyful Experience, Work Well-Being, and Environmental Well-Being at a significantly higher percentage than men.

Career Stage

When examining the criteria by the respondent's stage in their career, there are distinct differences as depicted in Figure 6. Social Well-Being is indicated by 90% of those

Figure 5 Responses by Gender Identity across the QoL Domains

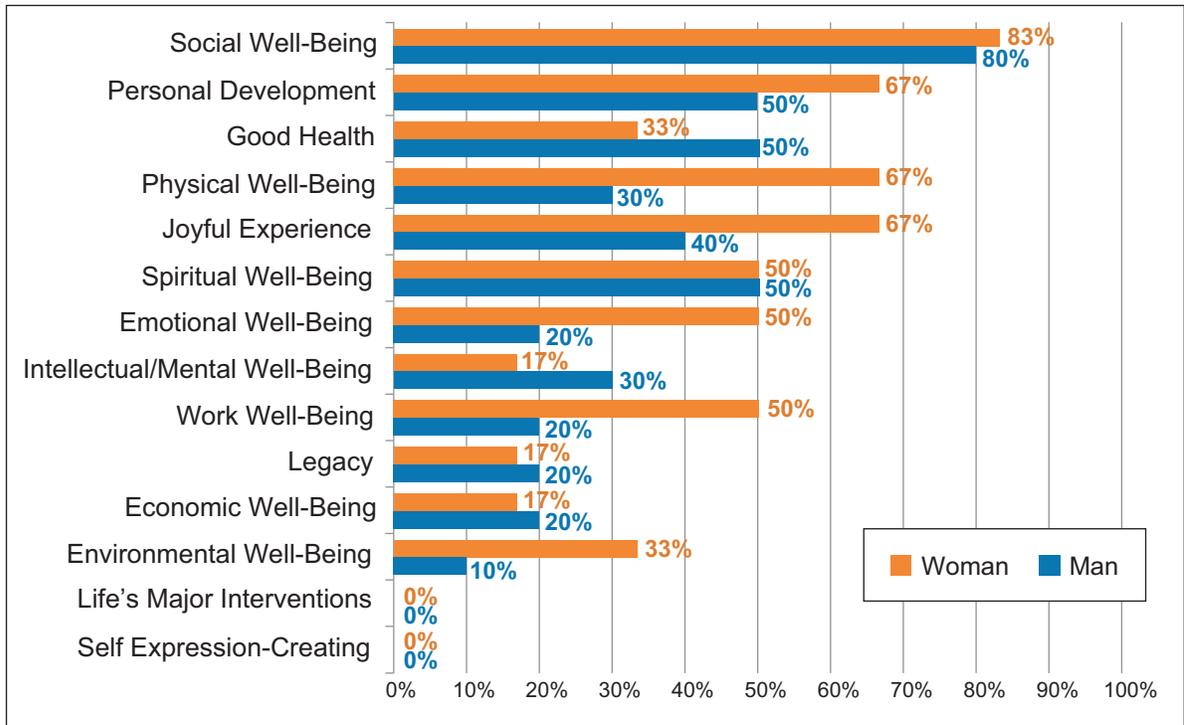
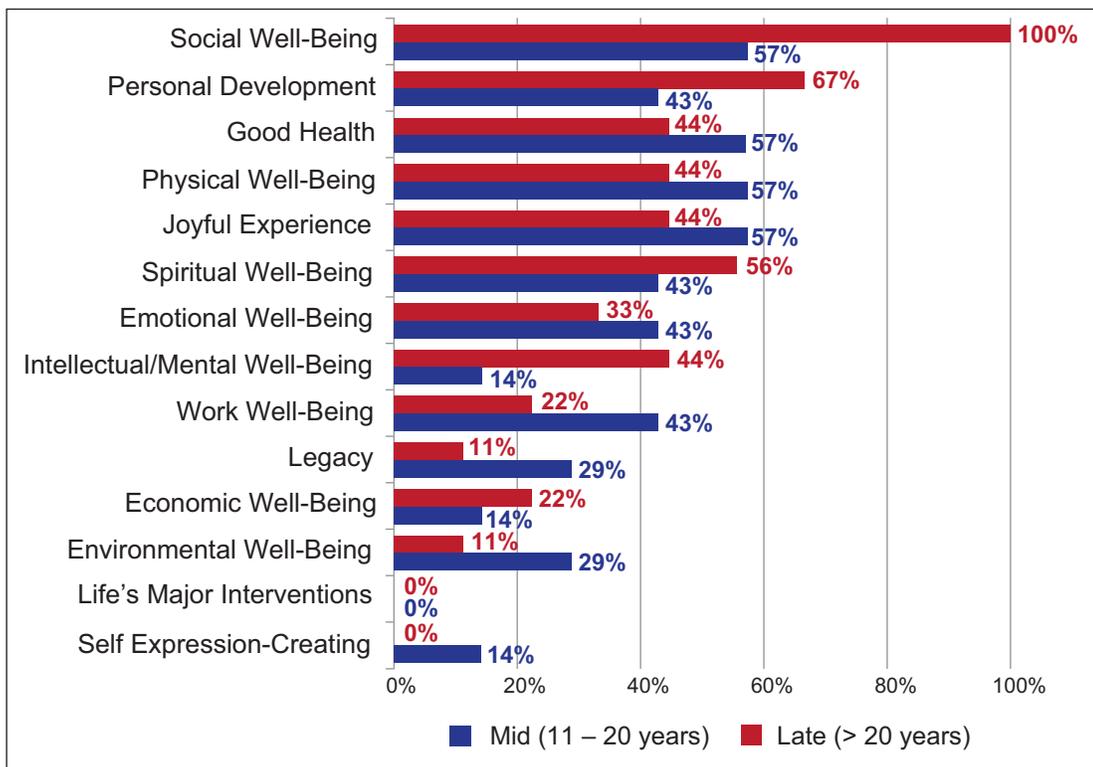


Figure 6 Responses by Career Stage across the QoL Domains



at later stages of career compared to 67% of those who are mid-career. Individuals later in their career indicated criteria in Personal Development, Intellectual/Mental Well-Being at notably higher rates than those at mid-career. In contrast, those in their mid-career indicated Good Health, Physical Well-Being, Emotional Well-Being, and Work Well-Being at comparatively higher rates. Interestingly, those in their mid-career have a higher percentage in Legacy than those in a late career stage.

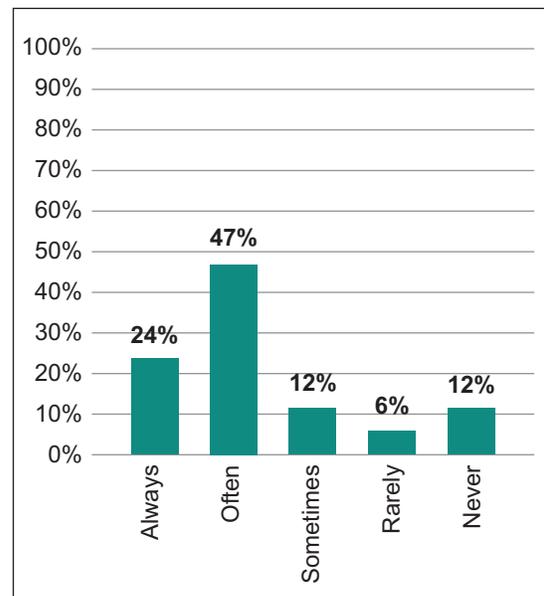
Dimension Analysis

The top dimensions present in the respondents' decision-making criteria are delineated in Table 2. (The full listing of dimensions for all domains in Table 1 are listed in Appendix B.) The top three dimensions indicated within the QoL criteria are in the Social Domain and align with those found in the existing literature. These dimensions are: Family, the only dimension indicated by more than half the respondents (59%), Life Partner (47%), and Friendships (47%). Rounding out the top seven highest dimensions, all with 41% of respondents indicating these dimensions within their criteria are Growth, Self-Growth, Exercise, and Wellness.

Use of QoL Criteria

Having QoL criteria to help guide decisions only provides greater benefit if they are leveraged when making decisions. As depicted in Figure 7, 71% of respondents indicate that they either always or often use their criteria in decision making. There are distinct differences by gender identity. As

Figure 7 Overall Use of QoL Criteria



shown in Figure 8, 84% of those identifying as a woman use their QoL criteria always or often whereas only 67% of those identifying as a man use their QoL criteria often or always (22% of men indicated they rarely or never use them.)

When the use of QoL criteria used in decision making is examined by stage of career, there are also clear differences in the distribution as viewed in Figure 9, with 88% of those late in their career using their criteria often or always. No one in mid-career indicated that they always use them and only 57% indicated they use their criteria often.

Table 2 Top Dimensions within the QoL Criteria

Percent	Domain	Dimensions with Descriptions
59%	Social Well-Being	Family: All members: children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews, and very close family friends who are part of the family
47%	Social Well-Being	Life Partner: The person you choose to share life's journey, love, experiences, and quality
47%	Social Well-Being	Friendships: Meaningful relationships that contribute to who you are, what you do, and help you to become the future you
41%	Good Health	Exercise: Workouts that keep a person feeling fit
41%	Physical Well-Being	Wellness: Making sure to take care of self physically so to minimize sick days
41%	Personal Development	Growth (Personal Growth Rate): Use life moments to see how to improve and move along the path towards idea self, i.e., systematically improve yourself, your situations, and performances, and their positive impact on QoL
41%	Personal Development	Self-Growth: Spend energy and time on increasing growth capability by increasing its components' power

Beginning Your QoL Criteria Exploration

When beginning to explore one's own QoL criteria, reflecting on all 14 domains and 68 dimensions within Table 1 can be overwhelming. Thus, using the subset of dimensions that were most common within the QoL criteria presented in Table 2 may prove to be less daunting and a preferable initial step for those beginning this exploration.

The top seven dimensions common across the sample are aligned with the pillars that other researchers found in the literature discussed previously. Family, friendships, health and wellness, as well as personal development defined by growth and self-growth are the most common across QoL criteria explored in this study. These areas can serve as a starting point for those beginning to explore the criteria that increase their own QoL. Asking, *Does (insert Table 2 dimension) bring joy to my life?* and *How does (insert Table 2 dimension) enhance my life?* are two questions that will help guide the reflection needed to begin discerning one's own QoL criteria.

Discussion and Future Directions

Despite the small sample size, our findings reveal significant similarities with the existing literature on the key dimensions people use for QoL considerations. While anecdotal evidence suggests a possible alignment with our research, further investigation is necessary to substantiate these observations. Given the subjective nature of QoL criteria, follow-up interviews should be conducted to more accurately capture individuals' criteria and explore how

they can be intentionally applied in decision-making.

Currently, little research has focused on the intentional decision-making process related to maintaining or improving QoL. Further research should examine this process through the lens of intentionality and self-awareness, using adult development theory. This approach could successfully capture the dynamic nature of QoL criteria as well as the influence of time, season, and life circumstances.

The ultimate challenge lies in helping individuals identify, develop, and continually assess their own QoL criteria, and then consistently use these criteria to guide their decisions. QoL assessment should be viewed as a cyclical process, akin to a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, where individuals aspire to a certain level of QoL while continually evaluating and adjusting their current state in response to life's ongoing changes.

Finally, encountering a QoL criterion like *financial stability* prompted the authors to consider collecting a larger sample to enable future research to include a deeper analysis that includes controls for demographic characteristics. By leveraging an individual's demographic data, such as age, insight into the participant's perspectives on financial stability relative to their life stage would potentially reveal nuanced interpretations and priorities associated with this criterion. Such enhanced analysis leading to commonalities could enable individuals beginning the practice of self-growth to better focus on personalizing their QoL criteria and thereby improving their quality of life.

Figure 8 Use of QoL Criteria by Gender Identity

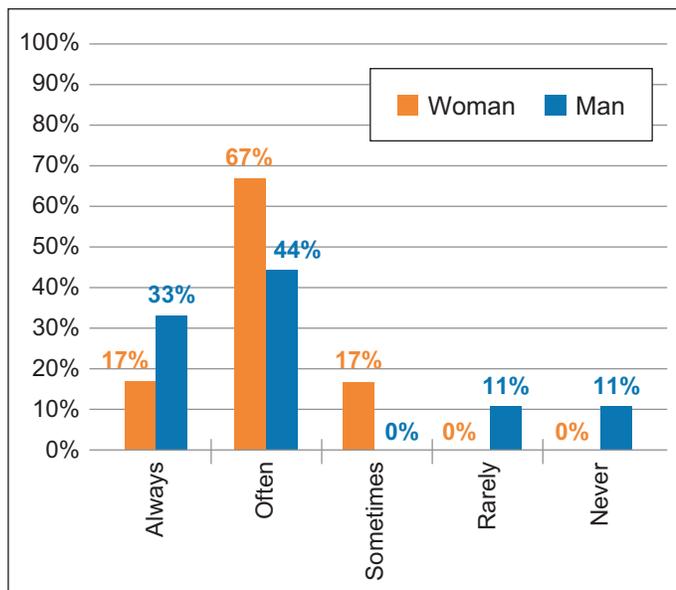
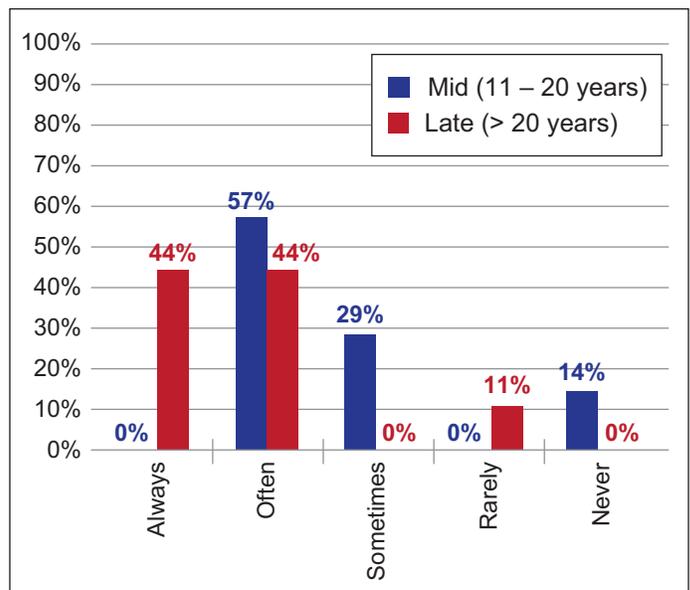


Figure 9 Use of QoL Criteria by Stage of Career



References

- Apple, D. K., Ellis, W., & Leisure, D. (2018). *The professional's guide to self-growth*. Hampton, NH: Pacific Crest.
- Ashing-Giwa, K. T. (2005). The contextual model of HRQoL: A paradigm for expanding the HRQoL framework. *Quality of Life Research*, 14 (2), 297-307. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-004-0729-7>
- Ashing-Giwa, K. T., Felce, D., & Perry, J. (1995). The contextual model of HRQoL: A paradigm for expanding the HRQoL framework. *Quality of Life Research*, 14(2), 297–307. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-004-0729-7>
- Barcaccia, B., Esposito, G., Matarese, M., Berolaso, M., Elvira, M., & De Marinis, M. G. (2013). Defining quality of life: A wild-goose chase? *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 9(1), 185-203. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v9i1.484>
- Bowling, A., Gabriel, Z., Dykes, J., Dowding, L. M., Evans, O., Fleissig, A., Banister, D., & Sutton, S. (2003). Let's ask them: A national survey of definitions of quality of life and its enhancement among people aged 65 and over. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 56(4), 269-306. <https://doi.org/10.2190/BF8G-5J8L-YTRF-6404>
- Brooks, A. C. & Winfrey, O. (2023). *Build the life you want: The art and science of getting happier*. Portfolio/Penguin.
- Brown, J., Bowling, A., & Flynn, T. (2004). *Models of quality of life: A taxonomy, overview and systematic review of the literature* (Project Report). European Forum on Population Ageing Research. p. 113.
- Burckhardt, C. S. & Anderson, K. (2003). The Quality of Life Scale (QOLS): Reliability, validity, and utilization. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 1, Article 60. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1477-7525-1-60>
- Costanza, R., Fisher, B., Ali, S., Beer, C., Bond, L., Boumans, R., Danigelis, N. L., Dickinson, J., Elliott, C., Farley, J., Gayer, D. E., Glenn, L. M., Hudspeth, T. R., Mahoney, D. F., McCahill, L., McIntosh, B., Reed, B., Rizvi, A. T., Rizzo, D. M., ... Snapp, R. (2008). An integrative approach to quality of life measurement, research, and policy. *Surveys and Perspectives Integrating Environment and Society*, 1(1), 11-15. <https://doi.org/10.5194/sapiens-1-11-2008>
- Estoque, R. C., Togawa, T., Ooba, M., Gomi, K., Nakamura, S., Hijioka, Y., & Kameyama, Y. (2019). A review of quality of life (QOL) assessments and indicators: Towards a "QOL-Climate" assessment framework. *Ambio*, 48(6), 619-638. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-018-1090-3>
- Felce, D. & Perry, J. (1995). Quality of life: Its definition and measurement. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 16(1), 51-74. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0891-4222\(94\)00028-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0891-4222(94)00028-8)
- Grabowska, I. (2021). Quality of life in poor neighborhoods through the lenses of the capability approach: A case study of a deprived area of Łódź city centre. *Sustainability*, 13(13), Article 7185. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13137185>
- Haraldstad, K., Wahl, A., Andenæs, R., Andersen, J. R., Andersen, M. H., Beisland, E., Borge, C. R., Engebretsen, E., Eisemann, M., Halvorsrud, L., Hanssen, T. A., Haugstvedt, A., Haugland, T., Johansen, V. A., Larsen, M. H., Løvereide, L., Løyland, B., Kvarme, L. G., Moons, P., ... Helseth, S. (2019). A systematic review of quality of life research in medicine and health sciences. *Quality of Life Research*, 28(10), 2641-2650. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-019-02214-9>
- Jain, C. R., Apple, D., Ellis, W., Leise, C., Leisure, D. (2020). Bringing self-growth theory to practice using the self-growth methodology. *International Journal of Process Education* 11(1), 73-100. <https://www.ijpe.online/2020/sgmethodology.pdf>
- Kagawa-Singer, M., Padilla, G. V., & Ashing-Giwa, K. (2010). Health-related quality of life and culture. *Seminars in Oncology Nursing*, 26 (1), 59-67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soncn.2009.11.008>
- Kane, R. L. (2001). Scaling the heights of quality of life. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 54(11), 1079-1080. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0895-4356\(01\)00394-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0895-4356(01)00394-8)
- Kane, R. A. (2003). Definition, measurement, and correlates of quality of life in nursing homes: Toward a reasonable practice, research, and policy agenda. *The Gerontologist*, 43(Suppl 2), 28–36
- King-Berry, A., Apple, D., Ellis, W., & Leise, C. (2021). Developing a quality of life (QoL) framework for self-growth. *International Journal of Process Education*, 12(1). <https://www.ijpe.online/2021/qol.pdf>

- Lawton, M. P. (1982). Competence, environmental press and adaptation of older people. In M.P. Lawton, P.G. Windley, & T.O. Byerts (Eds.), *Ageing and environment: Theoretical approaches*. (pp. 33-59). Springer. New York: Springer.
- Lawton, M. P. (1983a). Environment and other determinants of well-being in older people. *The Gerontologist*, 23(4), 349-357. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/23.4.349>
- Lawton, M. P. (1983b). The varieties of wellbeing. *Experimental Aging Research*, 9(2), 65-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03610738308258427>
- Luce, Bryan R., Weschler, Joan M., & Underwood, Carol. (1989). The Use of Quality-of-life Measures in the Private Sector. In F. Mosteller & J. Falotico-Taylor (eds.), *Quality of Life and Technology Assessment*. Washington DC: National Academy Press. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK235124/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK235124.pdf
- Maggino, F. (2014). Indicator development and construction. In A.C. Michalos (ed.), *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research*. Dordrecht, Springer Science + Business Media. DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5
- Quality of life indicators - measuring quality of life. (2024) Eurostat Statistics Explained. Retrieved February 29, 2024, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality_of_life_indicators_-_measuring_quality_of_life
- Rosenberg, R. (1995). Health-related quality of life between naturalism and hermeneutics. *Social Science & Medicine*, 41, 1411-1415. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(95\)00123-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(95)00123-0)
- Scanlon, T. (1993). Value, desire, and quality of life. In M. Nussbaum & A. Sen (Eds.), *The Quality of Life* (online ed.). Oxford Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198287976.001.0001>
- Schalock, R.L., Verdugo, M.A., Gomez, L.E., Reinders, H.S. (2016). Moving us toward a theory of individual quality of life. *American Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. 121(1):1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1352/1944-7558-121.1.1>
- Sirgy, M. J., Michalos, A. C., Ferriss, A. L., Easterlin, R. A., Patrick, D., & Pavot, W. (2006). The quality of life (QoL) research movement: Past, present, and future. *Social Indicators Research*, 76(3), 343–466. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-005-2877-8>
- Veenhoven, R. (2014). Quality of life (QOL): An overview. In A. C. Michalos (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5>
- Veenhoven, R. (2000). The four qualities of life. *Journal of Happiness Studies* 1(1), 1–39. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010072010360>
- What is quality of life? (2024). Community Living British Columbia. Retrieved August 19, 2024, from <https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/provincial-projects/include-me-a-quality-of-life-focus/what-is-quality-of-life/>
- Young, R. D. (2008). *Quality of life indicator systems—Definitions, methodologies, uses, and public policy decision making*. Retrieved from <https://crp.trb.org/acrpwebresource12/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2021/09/Quality-of-Life.pdf>

APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

Survey Questions

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your insights are crucial to our exploration of Quality of Life (QoL) criteria among individuals engaged in self-growth journeys. This survey aims to understand the patterns and commonalities in the criteria individuals use to guide their life decisions.

Demographic Information:

A. Full Name _____

B. What is your gender identity?

- Prefer not to say
- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Other (Specify: _____)

C. What is your current career stage?

- Early (1 - 10 years)
- Mid (11 - 20 years)
- Late (> 20 years)

D. What is your current position?

- Higher Education Faculty
- Higher Education Non-Faculty
- Other (Specify: _____)

E. Age:

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or older

F. Ethnicity: (Select all that apply)

- Hispanic/Latina/Spanish
- Black or African American
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- White/Caucasian

H. Home Residence:

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

I. Marital Status:

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Separated
- Domestic Partnership
- Prefer not to say

J. Household Income:

- Under \$25,000
- \$25,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$149,999
- \$150,000 and above
- Prefer not to say

Quality of Life (QoL) Criteria:

A. Say, you have been offered a new job in a different state. What 3 aspects of your life will you consider when making your decision?

B. What are your QoL criteria?

C. How often do you explicitly use these criteria when making decisions?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Appendix B

Pareto Chart of All Dimensions with Domains

Percent	Dimensions with Descriptions	Life Domains
59%	Family: All members: children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews, and close friends who are part of the family	Domain 1: Social Well-Being
47%	Life Partner: The person you choose to share life's journey, love, experiences and quality	Domain 1: Social Well-Being
47%	Friendships: Meaningful relationships that contribute to who you are, what you do, and help you to become the future you	Domain 1: Social Well-Being
41%	Growth (Personal Growth Rate): Use life moments to see how to improve and move along the path towards idea self, i.e., systematically improve yourself, your situations, and performances, and their positive impact on QoL	Domain 6: Personal Development
41%	Self-GrowthGrowth: Spend energy and time on increasing growth capability by increasing its components' power	Domain 6: Personal Development
41%	Exercise: Workouts that keep a person feeling fit	Domain 8: Physical Well-Being
41%	Wellness: making sure to take care of self physically so to minimize sick days	Domain 9: Good Health
35%	Volunteering/Gifting: Provide time, energy and personal resources to help others better their lives and its quality	Domain 3: Spiritual Well-Being
35%	Being Positive: Use each day to treat others with respect, kindness, and compassion to better everyone's life quality	Domain 3: Spiritual Well-Being
29%	Valuing Your Impact: Understand and enjoy the contributions you make to all stakeholders	Domain 2: Work Well-Being
29%	Practicing Faith: Use of prayer, traditions, and beliefs to help make greater meaning of life regarding a greater being or spirit	Domain 3: Spiritual Well-Being
29%	Being connected to something greater: Understanding, believing and experiencing significance beyond self	Domain 3: Spiritual Well-Being
29%	Meaningful Pastime: Take in the pure joy of doing what you want to do because of the personal value it returns in its repeated activity	Domain 7: Joyful Experiences
24%	Community: Groups of people you value belonging to, such as a neighborhood, church, professional learning community, association, etc.	Domain 1: Social Well-Being
24%	Personal Support System: Strength of friends, family, community members, mentors, and co-workers, especially during tough times.	Domain 1: Social Well-Being
24%	Sense of Purpose: Build a philosophical meaning of life that centers you and produces a personal compass to guide your actions	Domain 5: Intellectual/Mental Well-Being
24%	Self-Improvement (assessment): Use every experience and performance to increase future situations	Domain 6: Personal Development
24%	Spending Time with Loved Ones: Joy sharing holidays, events, life happenings with people who are close and meaningful	Domain 7: Joyful Experiences
24%	Maintenance: Keep the body in functioning order by getting routine checkups	Domain 9: Good Health
24%	Nutrition: Balance body's physical needs through eating, sleeping and dietary choices thus maintaining a healthy weight and alertness	Domain 9: Good Health
18%	Positive Civic Action: Through individual and collective action, help increase justice, freedom, and equity	Domain 3: Spiritual Well-Being
18%	Taking Care of Self (Needs): Each day there is a fulfillment of primary needs to keep you whole	Domain 4: Emotional Well-Being

Percent	Dimensions with Descriptions	Life Domains
18%	Being Productive: Use each hour effectively to produce experiences and results that exceed expectations	Domain 4: Emotional Well-Being
18%	Leisure: Enjoy taking time to explore aspects of life, including travel, that are outside of routine for the experiences they might provide	Domain 7: Joyful Experiences
18%	Living Conditions: Quality of housing, personal living space, cleanliness, autonomy, and things to make daily living viable	Domain 10: Environmental Well-Being
18%	Perceived Standard of Living: How you feel about the level of comfort experiencing against expectations	Domain 11: Economic Well-Being
12%	Reason to Live: A driving life force which encompasses purpose, passion, goals, direction, and people for relishing the experience of living	Domain 4: Emotional Well-Being
12%	Being Happy: Waking up positive, constantly smiling and bringing joy to yourself and for others	Domain 4: Emotional Well-Being
12%	Learning: Construct understanding of self and the world to allow a person to process life in the ways they choose	Domain 5: Intellectual/Mental Well-Being
12%	Learning to Learn: Increase ability to learn and learning performance	Domain 6: Personal Development
12%	Attending Performances/Events: Enjoy the quality produced by others in all dimensions of life performances	Domain 7: Joyful Experiences
12%	Outdoor Recreation: Physical activities to commune with the environment and tap into the vast resources	Domain 8: Physical Well-Being
12%	Safety: Protecting yourself from obvious harm by being situationally aware and taking normal precautions	Domain 8: Physical Well-Being
12%	People Impacted: Children, Family, Friends, Mentees, Associates, Employees, Students, and other people you have helped in crafting their own futures	Domain 13: Legacy
6%	Social Status: How you are perceived within the various communities you are engaged with	Domain 1: Social Well-Being
6%	Valued for Work: Work you produce is valued by the organization, clients, supervisors and yourself	Domain 2: Work Well-Being
6%	Job/Profession Status: How you are recognized in your professional career by society	Domain 2: Work Well-Being
6%	Professional Network: Quantity and quality of influential individuals invested in your future, want to see you succeed, build your reputation, and are willing to help you progress in your career	Domain 2: Work Well-Being
6%	Being in Nature: Enjoy bonding with nature's beauty, resources and wonder for renewal	Domain 3: Spiritual Well-Being
6%	Self-worth: A sense that your importance to the world is as good as anyone else's	Domain 4: Emotional Well-Being
6%	Efficacy: Self-believe that you are capable to do anything you set your mind and being towards doing	Domain 4: Emotional Well-Being
6%	Freedom: Opportunity to make your own choices and own their consequences with minimal social constraints by others	Domain 5: Intellectual/Mental Well-Being
6%	Life Plan: Thoughtful development of a life vision, life goals, broad criteria and strategies to direct life efforts with a productive growth mindset	Domain 6: Personal Development
6%	Sport: Enjoy the physical competition of giving it your all, trying to excel and continually improve	Domain 8: Physical Well-Being

Percent	Dimensions with Descriptions	Life Domains
6%	Local Environment: The quality of the Parks, Green Space, museums commercial establishments, upkeep, transportation, etc.	Domain 10: Environmental Well-Being
6%	Environmental Quality: the level of quality in the environment including such things as water, air, vegetation, industrial plants, restoration, repairs, and general maintenance	Domain 10: Environmental Well-Being
6%	Cost of Living: How expensive is it to maintain the standard of living	Domain 11: Economic Well-Being
6%	Net-Worth (Retirement Plan): The amount of resources accumulated for the future so retirement is well funded and future work will not be a requirement	Domain 11: Economic Well-Being
6%	Organizations/Community: building something that continues to bring people together with common purpose and unity that increases quality to those involved	Domain 13: Legacy
0%	Pets: Animals who bring love, warmth, and compassion	Domain 1: Social Well-Being
0%	Mobility: Being able to make choices to do things because you can relocate to achieve access	Domain 10: Environmental Well-Being
0%	Orating/Writing: Communicating ideas that impact other ideals and views on how to live their life	Domain 12: Self-Expression – Creating
0%	Producing Art: the creation of new works	Domain 12: Self-Expression – Creating
0%	Creating Music: Producing pleasant sounds and meaning for appreciation	Domain 12: Self-Expression – Creating
0%	Acting/Storytelling: Sharing representations of life experiences via many forms of medium	Domain 12: Self-Expression – Creating
0%	Crafting: The production of substances and products that bring value and appreciation	Domain 12: Self-Expression – Creating
0%	Playing: Creating experiences that others and self enjoy intentionally (e.g., parties)	Domain 12: Self-Expression – Creating
0%	Gardening: The cultivating of new vegetation for beauty and bounty	Domain 12: Self-Expression – Creating
0%	Cooking: Preparation of dining experiences of tasty delights	Domain 12: Self-Expression – Creating
0%	Intellectual Properties: Contributions that produce copyrighted material to greater mankind to improve the conditions of others	Domain 13: Legacy
0%	Arts/Crafts Artifacts: Tangible items that represent some aspect of who you are that others value and appreciate their quality	Domain 13: Legacy
0%	Systems/Processes: Building new structures that are so stable the outlast own involvement in their creation	Domain 13: Legacy
0%	Philanthropy: Setting up a foundation that provides means for ongoing support that increase the opportunities and conditions for others to have a better quality of life	Domain 13: Legacy
0%	Inheritance: Providing resources for others to have a greater QoL after you are gone	Domain 13: Legacy
0%	Potentially Dimensions	Domain 14: Life's Major Interventions
0%	Life Challenges: The number of major life crisis that has set back one's progress towards ideal self	Domain 14: Life's Major Interventions
0%	Illness: The long-term status of health by a continuing problem regarding health (e.g., diabetes)	Domain 14: Life's Major Interventions
0%	Major Health Issue: A serious health issue that needs to be addressed (e.g., heart operation)	Domain 14: Life's Major Interventions