

Work-Life Balance Cost Analysis

Stephen C. Cole
California State University, Chico
sccole1@csuchico.edu

Jessica M. Toombs
California State University, Chico
jmtoombs@csuchico.edu

400 W 1st Street
Chico, CA 95929
530-898-5844

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Defined as the balance of one's personal and professional life with keeping the harmony of organization, management, and the prioritization of personal tasks (Franco et al., 2021), work-life balance within school-based agricultural education (SBAE) is a contributing factor to the overall commitment of those intending to begin their journey in the educational field (Eck et al., 2021). If an employee has a balanced lifestyle between their personal and work life, they are more likely to stay at the current job they are working (Sudibjoa et al., 2020). An effective work-life balance contributes to teacher retention (Clemons et al., 2021; Solomonson et al., 2018).

Expectancy Value Theory (EVT) served as the theoretical framework of the study. EVT analyzes motivation through an expectation of success moderated by the subjective task value (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). The cost construct of EVT considers what time, effort, and resources are needed to be successful and is the least researched component of EVT (Flake et al., 2015). This study focused on the cost of work-life balance as perceived by SBAE preservice teachers.

Purpose and Research Objectives

The purpose of this research was to analyze the cost of a work-life balance associated with the SBAE profession as perceived by preservice teachers. The research objectives were to...

1. Describe potential career choices of seniors in a teaching methods course.
2. Describe the perception of work-life balance costs in the SBAE profession in seniors in a teaching method course.

Methods and Procedures

This study utilized a preexisting instrument from Tan-Wilcon and Stamp (2015). The instrument asked participants to compare components of work-life balance between a career as an SBAE teacher and a chosen alternative career. Items were ranked on a 7-point Likert-type scale with -3 representing much easier to accomplish as a SBAE teacher and +3 as much more difficult to accomplish as a SBAE teacher (Tan-Wilcon & Stamp, 2015). Post-hoc reliability returned a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77. A panel of SBAE experts assessed face and content validity.

The instrument was distributed to students in a senior level SBAE teaching methods course and repeated yearly in the spring semesters of 2022, 2023, and 2024. The instrument was introduced during an in-person class session with electronic reminders sent to absent students. Over the three years, 83% of students completed the instrument. No statistically significant difference was present between the three cohorts of participants.

Findings

Of the 75 seniors included in the study, 60 (80%) were likely to teach SBAE. When prompted to provide a potential alternative career choice outside of SBAE, about 50% of seniors provided a career in the agricultural industry. Another 25% listed careers in education while the remaining 25% listed various other occupations. Over 75% of participants felt work-life balance was very important to their future careers.

As shown in Table 1 below, participants felt *engaging in community organizations and activities*, *feeling fulfilled in your professional life*, *feeling fulfilled in your personal life*, and *living in your chosen geographical area* as easier to accomplish as a SBAE teacher than their other potential career choice. They also reported *meeting your personal wellness goal*, *meeting your financial goals*, and *balancing quality time between work demands and family/personal demands* as more difficult to accomplish with a career in SBAE.

Table 1.

Average of Work-Life Balance Components in Comparison to Career in SBAE ($N = 75$)

Using the career choice(s) you identified, compare each of the following items to a career as an agricultural education teacher.	M	SD
Engaging in community organizations and activities	-1.44	1.47
Feeling fulfilled in your professional life	-1.11	0.98
Feeling fulfilled in your personal life	-0.12	1.08
Living in your chosen geographical area	-0.03	1.21
Meeting your personal wellness goals	0.09	1.27
Meeting your financial goals	0.39	1.52
Balancing quality time between work demands and family/personal demands	1.17	0.84

Note. Negative means indicate areas perceived to be easier to accomplish with a career in SBAE.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Work-life balance is an increasingly important topic for preservice and inservice SBAE teachers (Eck et al., 2021; Solomonson et al., 2018). The preservice teachers included in this study are bringing preconceived notions to the costs and benefits of work-life balance within the SBAE profession. By highlighting the ability of SBAE teachers to engage in community activities, feel fulfilled in professional and personal life, and live within a chosen location, teacher educators, cooperating teachers, and state staff may increase preservice teachers' attitudes to the benefits of a career in SBAE. Additionally, instruction and support should be provided in the areas of personal wellness, financial goals, and balancing family demands. To fulfill the demand for highly qualified SBAE teachers, the profession needs to be more conducive to balancing family and professional demands (Traini et al., 2019).

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