

Abstract

The purpose of the undergraduate survey research has been to answer the question, “What factors influence the success of business professionals?” We are exploring this question to help undergraduates and early professionals achieve their career goals. In this research, we designed a survey and created hypothesis mappings to outline potential questions and hypotheses. We also gathered data on Big 4 professionals and professional organizations. Platforms like Excel and Qualtrics were used to develop and analyze the survey. After collecting responses, we analyzed the data and used this analysis to determine whether our hypotheses were supported. Currently, we are examining the results to understand whether factors like hometown, major choice, first internship, demographics, etc., play a significant role in undergraduate success. The findings of this research have important implications for students, helping them predict or potentially improve their chances of being hired after graduation and building a successful career at top accounting, finance, or other business-related firms.

Introduction

- Most research on professional service firms focuses on gender and sometimes race, usually within accounting.
- These studies often look at only one outcome, such as starting salary or partner status, rather than the full career path.
- They rely heavily on archival data or interviews and rarely consider how other aspects of identity, such as religion, political beliefs, or social class, influence career decisions.
- As a result, we don’t fully understand how identity affects major choice, hiring experiences, career growth, or turnover across professions.
- Our study addresses these gaps by surveying alumni across multiple professional fields.
- We examine how different identities relate to career paths at various stages.
- We focus on diversity challenges in business, including how women and underrepresented minorities enter and advance in professional service firms.
- We explore why some professionals leave for higher-paying industries.
- Our goal is to better understand the personal, workplace, and social factors, such as mentorship and discrimination, that shape career progression and satisfaction.

Methods

- Survey distributed via Qualtrics to alumni from multiple universities and professional organizations.
- Broad sample allowed comparison of:
 - Business vs. accounting graduates
 - Professionals inside vs. outside service and accounting firms
- Survey topics included:
 - Education, career choices, internships, recruiting experiences
 - Mentoring, career progression, compensation
 - Personal values, workplace experiences, perceived discrimination
 - Reasons for not majoring in accounting
 - Demographics
- Participants: professionals currently working in accounting, finance, consulting, marketing, management, engineering, law, and more.
- Measures examined:
 - Career outcomes (jobs, salary, progression, turnover)
 - Identity and demographic factors (gender, race, socioeconomic status, religion, political beliefs)
 - Workplace experiences (mentorship, organizational fit, discrimination, job satisfaction)

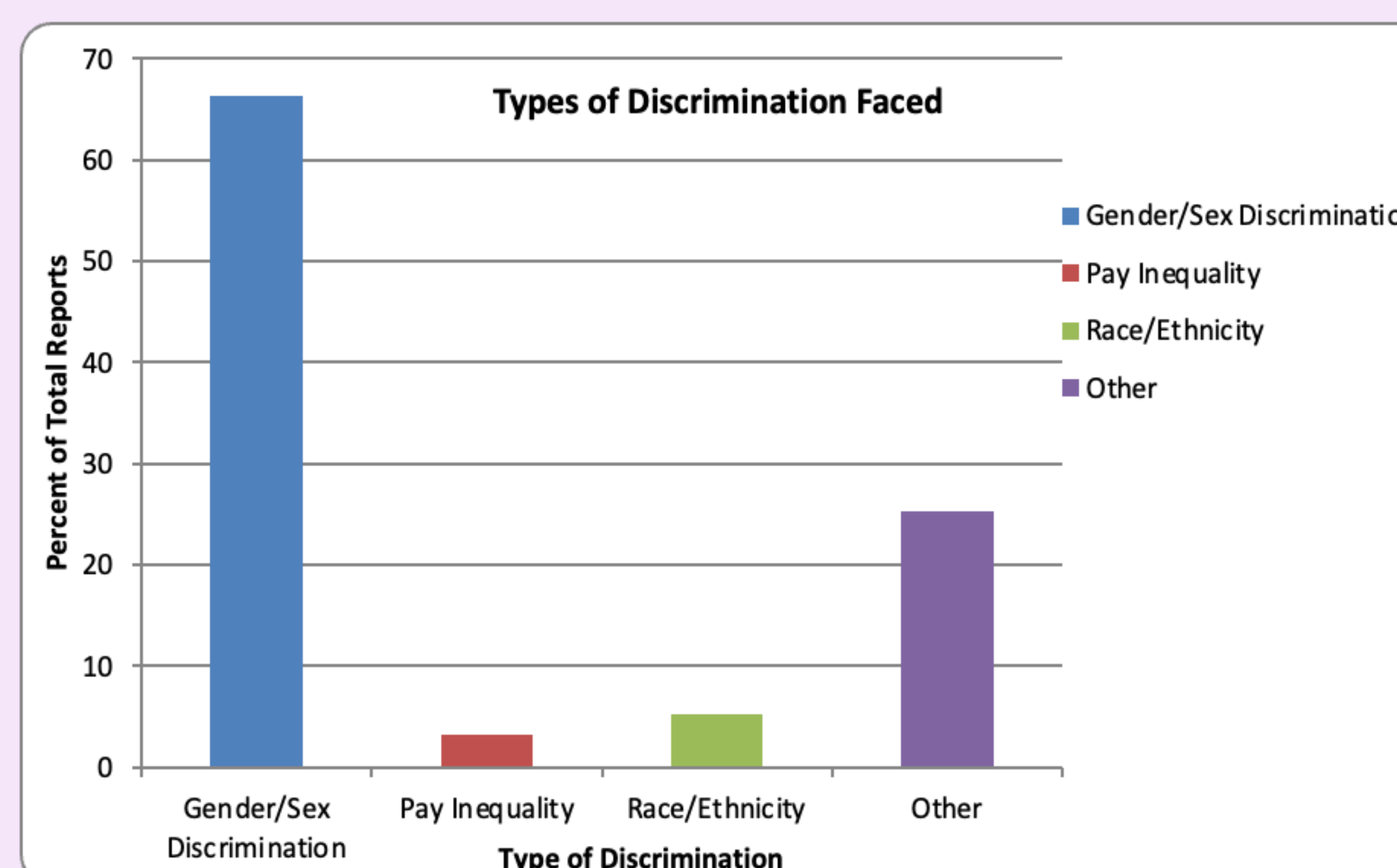
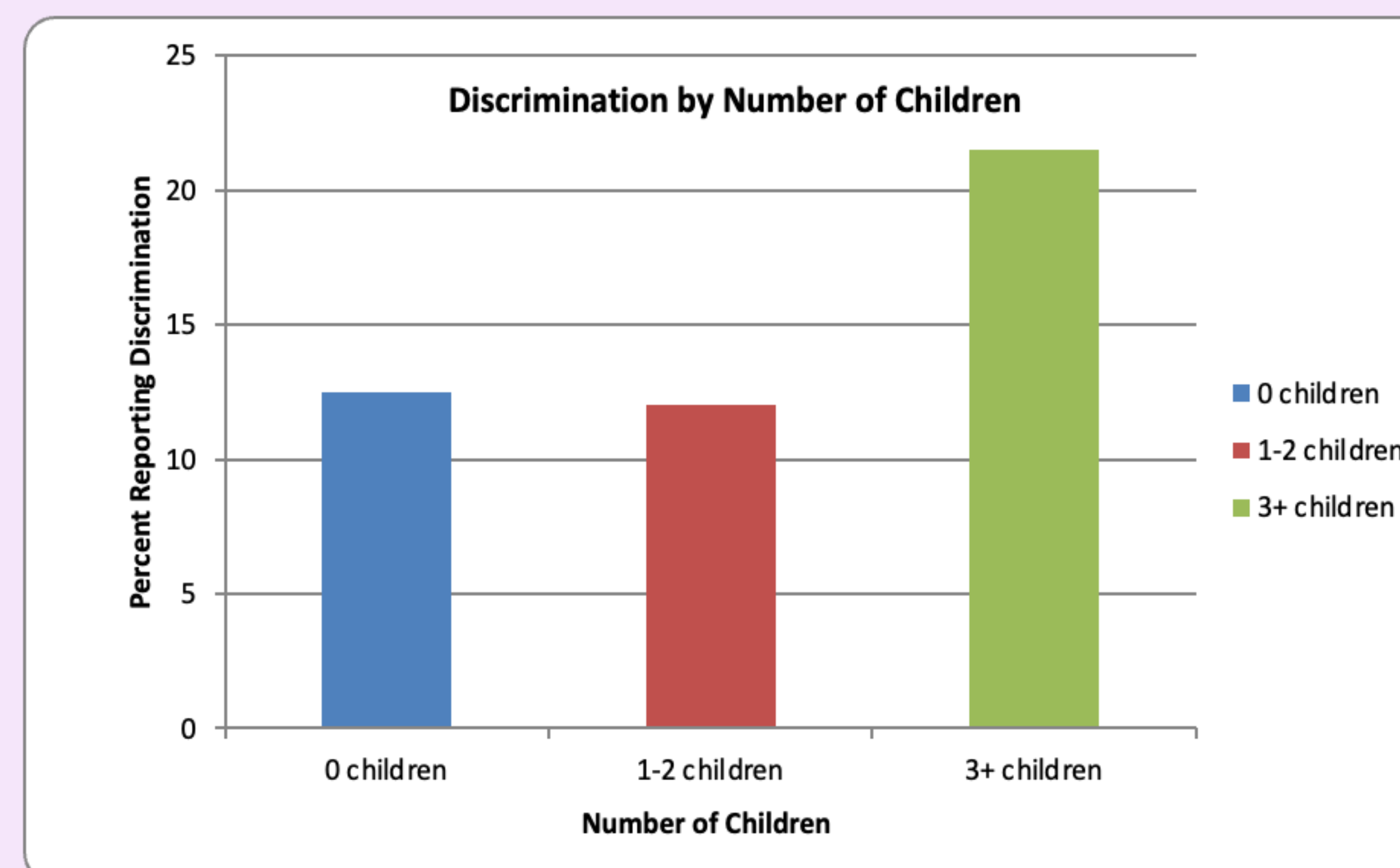
Results

- We are analyzing factors such as job, career, and life satisfaction; organizational and professional commitment; turnover intentions; work stress and engagement; perceived support and contract violations; and structural fairness.
- We are examining differences based on gender and race.
- Survey responses are tracked and organized in Microsoft Excel, where answers are categorized into clear variables and themes.
- This organization allows us to identify patterns, compare outcomes across demographic groups, and systematically analyze the data.
- Excel tools such as pivot tables, charts, and statistical functions are used to summarize trends, evaluate relationships between variables, and ensure the accuracy of our results.
- Our analysis is ongoing, and findings are still in progress as we continue to examine patterns and evaluate the data.

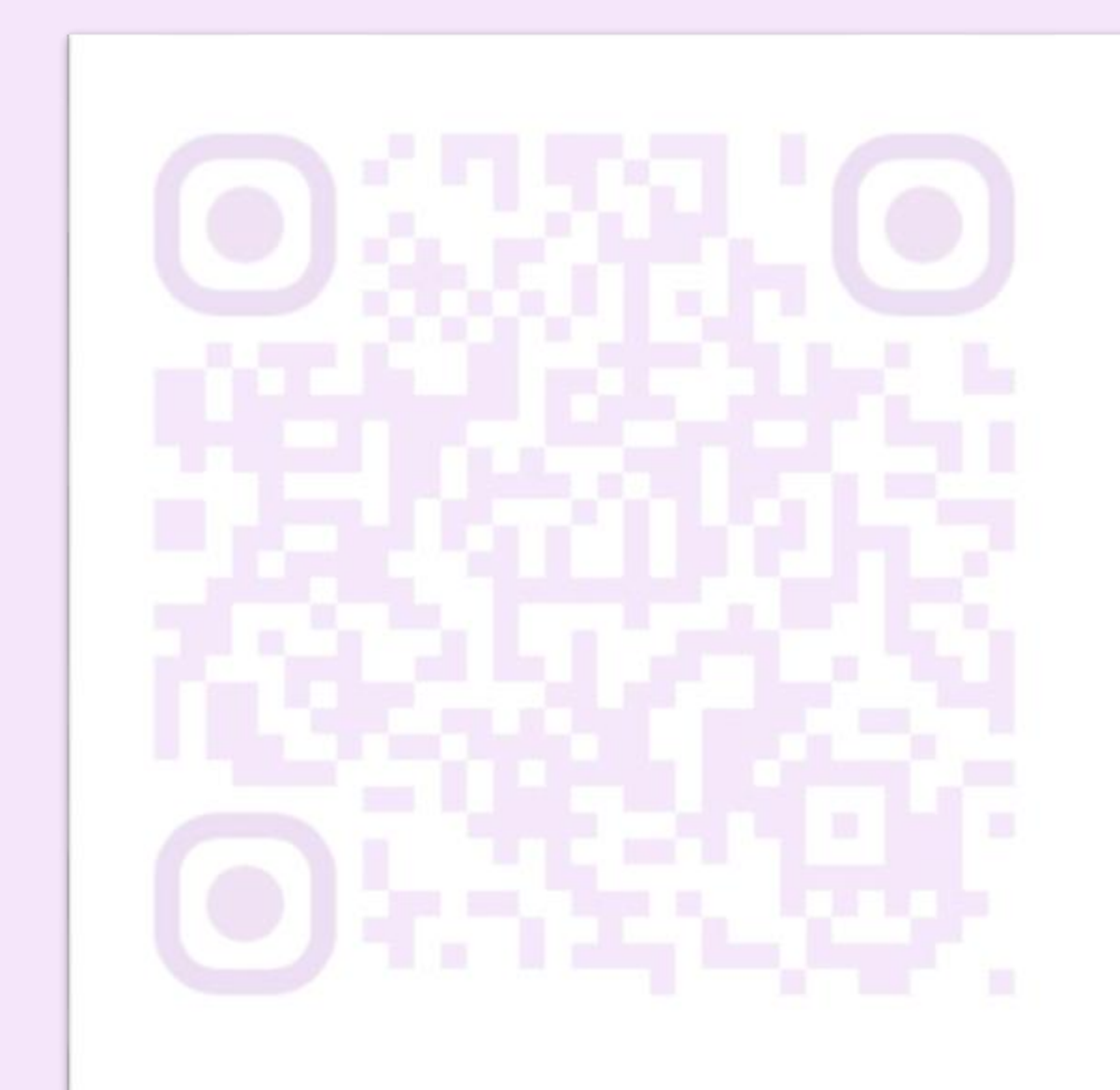
Conclusion

- The research explores factors influencing undergraduate and early career success in business professions, including academic, personal, and workplace-related variables.
- The study identifies patterns related to identity, demographics, career experiences, and professional development outcomes.
- Findings address gaps in existing research by moving beyond single-factor analyses.
- The research considers how multiple identities and life experiences shape career paths across diverse business fields.
- Survey data was collected and analyzed using tools such as Qualtrics and Excel.

Graphs



References



*Graphs are based on preliminary data collected on business professionals