

MALE VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS' ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS FEMALE TEACHERS OF AGRICULTURE

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Over the years, socio-economic changes, legislation, and court decisions have mandated nondiscriminatory practices in education. As a result, women began to consider educational occupations that had traditionally been male intensive (Ries, 1980). The teaching of agricultural education, which had traditionally been a male occupation, became a career option for women.

Despite slight increases in the number of female teachers of agriculture (Knight, Henderson, & Ries, 1980; Knight, 1987; Whittington, 1988; Moore, Kite & Thomas, 1979; Ries, 1980), enrollment of females in preservice teacher programs of agricultural education continued to be low (Ries, 1980; Knight, Henderson, & Ries, 1980; Dane, 1978; Knotts & Knotts, 1975). Knotts and Knotts (1975) speculated that prevailing social attitudes, sex-stereotyped counseling, early conditioning, and institutional policies contributed to the low enrollment of females in agricultural education.

Significant factors which contribute to the success or failure of a female in nontraditional employment has been the pressure or support received from co-workers, family, and friends (United States Department of Labor, 1978), and level or perceived discrimination and sexual harassment (Knight, 1987). Kane (1978) and Knight et al. (1980), suggested that the major concern shared by women who teach vocational agriculture was acceptance by their co-workers, namely the male vocational agriculture teachers. Knight (1987) stated that female teachers of agriculture reported discrimination against them at some point in their careers by administrators and other male vocational agriculture teachers. Additionally, one third of the female teachers (Knight, 1987) reported to have been harassed by administrators and other male vocational agriculture teachers.

In addition to collegial support, subtle discrimination, and sexual harassment, other factors enter into a person's career choice (Knotts & Knotts, 1975). In a survey conducted by Gregg, Hampton, and Juergenson (1975), it was concluded that "women do not have any more problems in the classroom than men and that contrary to common belief, women are accepted in the community, even though in most areas, agriculture teaching is still considered to be a man's profession" (page 272).

Teachers play a tremendous socializing role in American culture and are a key in changing student concepts regarding sex role expectations (Kaplan, 1975; Matthews & McCune, 1975; Ricks & Pike, 1973). Ricks and Pike (1973) reported that perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards sex roles are traditional, and presumably contribute to maintaining restrictive sex role expectations.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the male vocational agriculture teachers' attitude and perception towards female vocational agriculture teachers in Ohio. Specifically, attitudes of the male vocational agriculture teachers towards female vocational agriculture teachers in the areas of job competency and leadership qualities were studied. In addition, the perception towards female vocational agriculture teachers in the areas of sexual discrimination, sexual bias, and sexual harassment were also studied.

The following research questions were investigated.

1. How can the male vocational agriculture teachers be described on selected demographic variables?
2. What is the perception of male vocational agriculture teachers toward female vocational agriculture teachers in terms of leadership qualities and leadership positions within the professional organization?
3. What is the perception of male vocational agriculture teachers toward female vocational agriculture teachers in terms of job competency (classroom management, classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and the teaching in selected taxonomies)?

4. To what extent is there perceived sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual bias towards the female teachers of agriculture by selected groups as reported by the male vocational agriculture teachers?

Procedures

Population and Sample: The population for this study was all male vocational agriculture teachers in Ohio ($N = 513$). The sample consisted of a census of male vocational agriculture teachers in the taxonomies of Agricultural Business ($N = 29$), Farm Business Planning and Analysis (FBPA) ($N = 27$), and Natural Resources ($N = 13$). Utilizing Cochran's formula (5% chance of error), a random sample of male vocational agriculture teachers in Agricultural Mechanics ($N = 81$, $n = 70$), Horticulture ($N = 71$, $n = 60$), and Production Agriculture ($N = 292$, $n = 170$) were selected. The total sample constituted 369 male vocational agriculture teachers.

Instrumentation: Instrumentation consisted of a mailed questionnaire developed by the researchers. Questions on the instrument were derived following a review of literature and corresponded to the objectives of the study. The instrument consisted of one part each for leadership, job competency, adult education, demographics, and sexual discrimination, bias and harassment. Data on selected leadership questions, job competency, sexual discrimination, sexual bias, and sexual harassment were collected utilizing a 10 point (1 = strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree) Likert scale.

The instrument was reviewed for content validity by a panel of experts which consisted of teacher educators, graduate students, and male teachers of agriculture. The instrument was pilot tested for reliability using male vocational agriculture teachers not selected for the study. The reliability score using Cronbach's alpha was .89.

Data Collection: Data were collected following criteria established by Dillman (1978). Post cards announcing the forthcoming questionnaire package were mailed five days prior mailing the complete questionnaire package which consisted of a cover letter, questionnaire, and stamped return envelope. Follow-up consisted of a postcard sent to nonrespondents ten days after the mailing of the first complete package. A second complete package (cover letter, questionnaire, and stamped return envelope) was mailed to nonrespondents seven days after the first follow-up post-card. A final follow-up postcard was mailed five days after the mailing of the second complete package. There were 269 responses (73%) of which 238 (65%) were usable. Nonresponse error was controlled by comparing early to late respondents, which yielded no significant differences.

Analysis of Data: All data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

Demographic Variables: The results indicated that the male vocational agriculture teachers had a mean of 13.5 years of teaching, a mean age of 41 years, and the majority (78%) taught in rural or small towns (population less than 25,000). In addition, 80% of the male teachers were married, the majority (56%) taught in comprehensive high schools and 77% had attained at least a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, 72% of the teachers had pursued a four-year degree with a major or dual major in agricultural education. In terms of teaching taxonomy, 9% taught agribusiness, 16% agricultural mechanics, 8% FBPA, 15% horticulture, 3% natural resources, and 49% production agriculture.

Leadership Qualities and Positions: In the area of leadership qualities and leadership positions, 34% of the males had held a district level Ohio Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association (OVATA) officer position (Table 1), whereas 4% of the females had held similar positions (Whittington, 1988). Eight percent of the male teachers reported nominating a female candidate for a district level officer position in OVATA. Furthermore, 32% indicated they had voted for a female teacher for a district level OVATA office.

At the state level, 13% of the males had held a state level OVATA office, whereas less than one percent of the females had held similar positions (Whittington, 1988). Four percent of the males indicated that they had nominated a female for a state level officer position within the professional state organization. At the state level, 12% of the males indicated that they had voted for a female candidate for a state OVATA office.

Table 1
Percent of Male Vocational Agriculture Teachers Categorized on Selected Leadership Characteristics
(n = 238)

Characteristic	District Level %	State Level %
Held OVATA officer position	34	13
Nominated female for OVATA officer position	8	4
Voted for female for OVATA officer position	32	12

The percentage of male teachers who indicated they would vote for a qualified female for a state level officer position within the professional organization are the following: Secretary (97%), Treasurer (94%), Vice-President (92%), President-Elect (91%), and Chaplain (89%). Similarly, the percentage of male teachers who indicated that qualified females were capable of holding state level officer positions were: Secretary (99%), Treasurer (97%), Vice-President (96%), President-Elect (95%), and Chaplain (94%).

In addition, the male teachers were in very strong agreement (9.53), on a scale of 1-10 (10 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree; 9.0 - 10.0 very strong agreement, 8.0 -8.9 strong agreement, 7.0 - 7.9 some agreement, 6.0 - 6.9 slight agreement, and 5.5 - 5.9 very slight agreement), that qualified female teachers were competent to hold officer positions at the district and state level (Table 3). However, the male teachers were in slight agreement (6.31) that female teachers were strong leaders.

Table 2
Mean Score and Standard Deviation on Selected Female Teachers' Leadership and Job Competencies as Perceived by Male Vocational Agriculture Teachers
(n = 238)

Competencies	\bar{x} *	SD
Leadership		
Qualified females are competent to hold officer positions	9.53	1.23
Female teachers make strong leaders	6.31	2.62
Job		
Female teachers have good classroom management	6.14	2.40
Female teachers provide good classroom instruction	7.08	2.37
Female teachers handle shop classes well	5.53	2.61
Overall mean score	7.36	2.13

*Based on scale 1 = strongly disagree that female vocational agriculture teachers are competent. 10 = strongly agree that female vocational agriculture teachers are competent.

Job Competency: In regard to job competency, classroom management received a mean score of 6.14 (slight agreement); classroom instruction, 7.08 (some agreement); and laboratory instruction, 5.53 (very slight agreement). Overall, there was some agreement (7.36) that female teachers were competent teachers of agriculture.

In regard to which taxonomy females should teach, the male teachers indicated females should teach in the following rank ordered taxonomies: (Table 3) horticulture, animal care, food processing, agribusiness, natural resources, FBPA, production agriculture, and agricultural mechanics.

Table 3

Mean Score and Standard Deviation on Perceptions of Male Vocational Agriculture Teachers Regarding Taxonomies Female Vocational Agriculture Teachers are Competent to Teach (n = 237)

<u>Taxonomy</u>	<u>x*</u>	<u>SD</u>
Horticulture	9.38	1.21
Animal Care	9.21	1.49
Food Processing	9.20	1.49
Ag Business	9.10	1.58
Natural Resources	8.94	1.73
FBPA	8.50	2.12
Production Agriculture	7.76	1.79
Ag Mechanics	6.33	2.84

Note. 1 missing case

*Based on scale 1 = strongly disagree that female vocational agriculture teachers are competent to teach.

10 = strongly agree that female vocational agriculture teachers are competent to teach.

Discrimination, Bias, and Harassment: The male teachers very strongly agreed that they understood the meaning of sexual discrimination ($\bar{x} = 9.34$; $sd = 1.49$), and sexual harassment ($\bar{x} = 9.23$; $sd = 1.70$), and strongly agreed that they understood the meaning of sexual bias ($\bar{x} = 8.98$; $sd = 1.74$). In addition, the male teachers strongly agreed they were familiar with the context in which sexual discrimination ($\bar{x} = 8.75$; $sd = 1.98$), sexual bias ($\bar{x} = 8.62$; $sd = 2.06$), and sexual harassment ($\bar{x} = 8.63$; $sd = 1.99$) could occur.

Male agriculture teachers perceive that sexual discrimination, sexual bias, and sexual harassment against female agriculture teachers occurred by selected groups and was evident in the reported mean scores (Table 4).

Table 4

Mean Score and Standard Deviation on Male Vocational Agriculture Teachers Perceptions of Sexual Discrimination, Sexual Bias, and Sexual Harassment Against Female Vocational Agriculture Teachers by Selected Groups (n = 236)

Selected Groups	Extent Against Female Vocational Agriculture Teachers					
	Sexual Discrimination		Sexual Bias		Sexual Harassment	
	<u>x*</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>x*</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>x*</u>	<u>SD</u>
Male teachers of agriculture	6.53	3.12	5.46	3.27	4.12	2.56
Agricultural students	5.49	2.65	5.76	2.58	5.75	2.69
Parents of agriculture students	5.44	2.59	5.66	2.57	5.50	2.72
Agricultural community	5.56	2.65	5.71	2.65	5.42	2.65
Employers of agriculture students	5.28	2.55	5.53	2.57	4.90	2.53
School administrators	5.10	2.74	5.35	2.70	4.78	2.65

Note. 2 missing cases

*Based on Scale 1 = strongly disagree that ___ against female vocational agriculture teachers occurs.
10 = strongly agree that ___ against female vocational agriculture teachers occurs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions: Perceptions of sexual discrimination, sexual bias, and sexual harassment were evident. Perceptions of sexual discrimination, against female teachers of agriculture were evident and brought upon by male teachers of agriculture and the agricultural community. Ohio male agricultural teachers perceived that sexual bias occurred against female teachers by male agriculture teachers, students, parents, the agricultural community, and employers.

The data indicated that perceptions of sexual harassment occurred against female teachers by students and parents of agriculture students. Of sexual discrimination, sexual bias, and sexual harassment, sexual bias was the most problematic. Female teachers were not being nominated proportionately to male teachers for leadership positions at the district and state level of the professional organization. A very low percentage of male teachers have actually voted for female teachers for leadership positions within the professional organization. Female teachers are viewed as being able to fulfill leadership roles. The three most commonly selected officer positions by male teachers for female teachers were Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice-President. Male teachers perceived female teachers as being competent to teach agricultural subject matter.

Recommendations: In-service education in the area of sex equity should be a priority of the state department of education staff. Teacher education units should incorporate sex equity education into the pre-service program.

The professional organization should become more inclusive of female members at all levels in all its activities. Strategies should be established to further enhance the female representation at the district and state level within the professional organization.

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