

Job Satisfaction of Vocational Agriculture Teachers In the Southeastern United States

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Public schools continue to have difficulty retaining vocational agriculture teachers in the profession. The percentage of vocational agriculture teachers who leave the teaching profession is higher than the percentage for other teaching fields. According to Craig (1982), the turnover rate among vocational agriculture teachers was 12.9% for 1981. This rate was higher than the rate for all teachers which was estimated to be between 7% and 10% in 1980 (Reifschneider, 1980). McCracken, Smith and Suandi (1982) indicated that if county extension agents and vocational agriculture teachers are to achieve their most effective level, administrators must reduce this turnover rate.

Mattox (1974) found that job satisfaction is one factor that is related to vocational agriculture teacher turnover. Past studies have also shown that a positive relationship exists between job satisfaction and performance (Korman, 1968). By applying these findings to teachers, it can be inferred that a satisfied teacher will perform better, which will result in the enhancement of the teaching/learning process. Therefore, the need to conduct research into the job satisfaction level of vocational agriculture teachers is imbedded in the need to improve their level of performance.

Bowen (1981) studied the job satisfaction of teacher educators in agriculture and found that teacher educators possessed a high degree of job satisfaction as measured by the Job Satisfaction Index. No significant relationship existed between the job satisfaction of teacher educators and seven demographic variables. The factor that was the highest job satisfier was interpersonal relations, and the least satisfying factor was salary.

Knight and Bender (1978) in a study of why vocational agriculture teachers quit teaching found that five factors were related to teacher turnover. These factors were: (a) long range occupational goals were other than teaching vocational agriculture; (b) there were students in class who should not have been in vocational agriculture; (c) inadequate opportunities for advancement; (d) long hours; and (e) inadequate salary. In a study of Louisiana teachers, Kotrlik, Woodley and Sharp (1982) found that vocational teachers did not perceive themselves to be more or less satisfied than non-vocational teachers.

Studies by Lacy (1973), Mattox (1974), Olson (1974) and Vecchio (1980) have found that several variables have an influence on the job satisfaction level of teachers. These variables include religion, class size, teaching experience, school size, teacher supervision, income, community size, geographical location, professional relationships and educational level.

The literature cited suggests that the job satisfaction of vocational agriculture teachers must be increased in order to decrease teacher

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turnover and increase the performance of vocational agriculture teachers. In order to do this, their level of job satisfaction and the factors that relate to this job satisfaction level must be determined.

This study is based on the theory that job satisfaction results from the difference between what is expected as fair and reasonable return and what is experienced in relation to the available alternatives (Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1976). Under this theory, job satisfaction can be determined by measuring six factors, namely, satisfaction with work, pay, promotion, supervision, people on the job, and the job in general.

Objectives

The following objectives were developed to guide the study:

1. To determine if selected demographic variables were related to job satisfaction of vocational agriculture teachers in the Southeastern United States as measured by the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1975); the demographic variables used in the study were age, sex, marital status, educational level, salary, years teaching experience, number of months employed/year, average number of students/class, number periods teaching/day, size of school, size of town, geographical location of school, number of professional organizations affiliated with, and religious affiliation;
2. To determine if the selected demographic variables significantly predict job satisfaction of vocational agriculture teachers in the Southeastern United States as measured by the Job Descriptive Index; and
3. To determine the job satisfaction of vocational agriculture teachers in the Southeastern United States as compared to the norm group of the Job Descriptive Index.

Procedures

The data were gathered through mailed questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part I was the Job Descriptive Index. This part measured job satisfaction in six areas: work on present job, present pay, opportunities for promotion, supervision on present job, people on present job, and job in general. Possible scores for each area ranged from 0 - 54. Previous reliability scores (split-half correlations) for the Job Descriptive Index scales ranged from .80 to .88 (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1975). For this study, the instrument achieved a split-half reliability coefficient of .87. Part II of the questionnaire was designed to secure demographic information.

Data were obtained from a random sample of 400 teachers. Addresses were obtained from the Vocational Agriculture Teachers' Directory. Two mailings plus a non-respondent follow-up mailing were used. The response rate was 355 or 88.8 percent. Since no differences were found, the responses from the follow-up were combined with those of the initial respondents.

Spearman Rho Rank-Order Correlations were used to determine if significant relationships existed between job satisfaction of the teachers as measured by the six scales of the Job Descriptive Index and the 10 ordinal variables. Relationships between the four ordinal variables and the teachers' job satisfaction were tested using the Eta coefficient. Multiple regression analyses were used to determine if the demographic variables were significant predictors of job satisfaction. The four nominal variables mentioned above were recoded using a dummy coding procedure for the regression analysis.

Findings

Relationships Between Job Descriptive Index Scores and the Demographic Variables

The relationships between job satisfaction as measured by the Job Descriptive Index and the ten ordinal variables were measured using Spearman Rho Correlations. The results are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlations Between the Job Descriptive Index and Selected Variables

Variable	Specific Aspects of Job Satisfaction					
	Work	Pay	Promotion	Supervision	People	Job In General
Age	.129*	.031	.021	.043	.105*	.153*
Highest Degree	.084	.006	-.057	.054	.031	.105*
Salary	.188**	.186**	.104	.138*	.114*	.205**
Teaching Experience	.100*	.052	-.001	.057	.071	.157**
No. Months Employed	.160**	.039	.012	.119*	.063	.152**
Average No. Students/Class	.037	-.051	.064	.054	.093	-.037
Avg. No. Periods Teaching/Day	.024	.004	.092*	.010	-.040	-.000
School Enrollment	-.004	.029	.060	.027	.046	.038
Community Population	-.088*	.034	.012	-.041	-.060	-.086
No. Organizations Affiliated	.187**	.033	.022	.640	.040	.128*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

None of the statistically significant correlations achieved an r value higher than .205. Therefore, even though statistical significance existed, the practical significance is in doubt.

The relationships can be summarized as follows:

1. Satisfaction with work increases as age, salary, years teaching experience, months teaching/year and number of organizations affiliated

with increases. Satisfaction with work decreases as population of community increases.

2. Satisfaction with pay increases as salary increases.

3. Satisfaction with opportunities for promotion increases as the average number of periods teaching/day increases.

4. Satisfaction with supervision increases as salary and number of months teaching/year increase.

5. Satisfaction with people on the job increases as age, salary and average number of students/class increase.

6. Satisfaction with job in general increases as age, educational level, salary, years teaching experience, number of months teaching/year, and number of organizations affiliated with increases.

Relationships between the scales of the Job Descriptive Index and the four nominal variables were analyzed using Eta. The four variables in this category were sex, geographical location, religious affiliation and marital status. Male teachers scored significantly higher on present job, supervision, people on the job, and job in general. Female teachers scored significantly higher on satisfaction with pay than male teachers. Teachers who taught in cities scored significantly higher on satisfaction with pay than those who taught in towns and rural areas.

These findings differ from those of Bowen (1982). In his study of the job satisfaction of agricultural teacher educators, he found that age, teaching experience as a high school vocational agriculture teacher and experience as a teacher educator were not significantly correlated with job satisfaction.

Predicting Job Descriptive Index Scores Using Multiple Regression

Step-up multiple regression was used to determine if the demographic variables were significant predictors of job satisfaction as measured by the Job Descriptive Index. In the analyses, the four nominal variables (sex, geographic location, marital status and religious affiliation) were coded as dummy variables so that every level of each nominal variable became an independent variable. None of the analyses resulted in a practically significant regression model although statistical significance did exist in each model. The highest R^2 achieved for the six models was .105 which was achieved when salary, number months employed/year and sex were used in a model for predicting satisfaction with the job in general. Salary, sex and geographical location combined for a R^2 value of .101 in a model for predicting satisfaction with pay.

Job Satisfaction of the Teachers as Compared to the Norm Groups of the Job Descriptive Index

As shown in Table 2, the teachers scored higher on three measures of job satisfaction--work on present job, supervision and people on present job--than the norm groups of the Job Descriptive Index. However, the teachers scored lower on satisfaction with pay and promotion.

These findings are very similar to Bowen's (1981) findings in his study of the job satisfaction of teacher educators in agriculture. He found that interpersonal relations, policy and administration, and salary were the top three job satisfiers. He also found that salary was the least satisfying factor. These findings differ from Bowen's in that he found that the least satisfying job satisfier factor was the work itself,

Table 2

Job Descriptive Index Mean Scores for Vocational Agriculture Teachers and Norm Group

JDI Scale ^a	Vo-Ag Teachers	Males	Females
Satisfaction with:			
Work	36.3	24.2	13.1
Pay	18.2	19.6	20.4
Promotion	13.2	39.2	41.6
Supervision	40.3	37.4	36.1
People	40.5	29.5	30.1
Job in General ^b	43.0	-	-

^a Job Descriptive Index scores ranged from 0 - 54. ^b Job Descriptive Index scores for job in general were not listed in the Job Descriptive Index manual.

while work on present job was one of the two strongest factors in this study.

Recommendations

1. Two variables--salary and number of months employed/year--were related to and were significant predictors of more scales of the Job Descriptive Index than other variables. Due to the fact that these relationships had a low level of practical significance, it is recommended that state supervisors in the Southeast may wish to consider making appropriate efforts to increase teacher salaries and to secure or maintain 12 month employment for their teachers if they desire to increase the job satisfaction level of vocational agriculture teachers.

2. The study was limited to vocational agriculture teachers in the Southeastern United States. Similar studies should be conducted in other regions of the United States to determine if the findings of this study are valid for those regions.

3. This study investigated those demographic variables that appeared to have a relationship to job satisfaction based on other job satisfaction studies. Since none of the variables used resulted in a practically significant job satisfaction prediction model, it is recommended that future research in the area of job satisfaction of vocational agriculture teachers consider additional or other variables in attempting to determine the job satisfaction of these teachers. These other variables might include socio-economic level of the school and/or community, leadership style of the school administrator, funding available for program operation and other similar factors that may affect the teacher on a day-to-day basis.

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