Job Satisfaction of Vocational Agriculture Teachers in Louisiana

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In recent years, there has been a shortage of qualified vocational agriculture teachers in many states. The problem seems to be present for two reasons. One is that only about 50% of agricultural education graduates enter the teaching profession (Craig, 1983). The other reason is the numerous individuals leaving the profession. This exodus of vocational agriculture teachers from the profession implies dissatisfaction, at least with some aspect of teaching, to such a degree that other jobs appear to be more satisfying. According to Gruneberg (1976), there is a definite relationship between turnover and job satisfaction. It would seem that identification of factors influencing teacher satisfaction would be an important focus for individuals seeking to reduce this turnover.

Several theories have been developed to explain job satisfaction. One is Expectancy theory. This theory defines job satisfaction as the judgement an employee makes regarding the equity of the reward received for the effort expended. This, in turn, affects future performance (Lawler & Porter, 1967). The theory suggests that satisfaction is a function of two kinds of rewards, intrinsic and extrinsic.

With respect to these factors, Hadaway (1978/1979) reported that teacher satisfaction was dependent primarily on intrinsic factors, while dissatisfaction stemmed from extrinsic factors. However, Kaufman and Buffer (1978) concurred with Hall (1973) in their study of industrial arts teacher educators that any variable in the job situation could be both a satisfier and a dissatisfier.

The present study was designed to add to the research regarding teachers in vocational agricultural education, by assessing job satisfaction of agriculture teachers in secondary institutions.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. Ascertain the job satisfaction of vocational agriculture teachers in Louisiana.

2. Identify the job factors that significantly affect overall job satisfaction.

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3. Ascertain relationships between job satisfaction and selected demographic variables.

Methodology

The target population for this study was the vocational agriculture teachers in public secondary institutions in Louisiana. A random sample of 50 vocational agriculture teachers was drawn from the Louisiana State Department of Education Directory of Vocational Agriculture Programs and Teachers (1982-83).

The instrument employed to assess job satisfaction was the long form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Weiss, Dawis, England, and Lofquist (1967). The MSQ measures responses to 20 factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) that affect job satisfaction. The respondents were asked to check the response (very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neutral, satisfied, very satisfied) that best indicated their degree of satisfaction with each item on the questionnaire. The determination of factors that were intrinsic and extrinsic was made by the instrument developers through factor analysis. However, they recommended conducting a supplementary factor analysis with each group being studied because the job related variables may load on different factors. A factor analysis was therefore conducted using the data in this study to confirm the intrinsic and extrinsic factor loadings suggested by Weiss, et al. (1967). The suggested intrinsic and extrinsic variables were confirmed. A standardized Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .95 for this MSQ was computed using data from the group involved in this study.

The MSQ has established norm group percentile scores for a variety of occupations. Job satisfaction score comparisons can be made with a selected norm group that is similar to the one under study to determine the relative satisfaction in a general population of workers. Weiss, et. al., (1967) suggested that if there is not an occupational group similar to the one under study, comparisons should be made to the norm group entitled "Employed Non-Disabled." This group included skilled and unskilled blue collar workers, white collar workers, and professional personnel. When comparisons are made, a percentile score of .75 or higher indicates a high degree of satisfaction, a .25 or lower represents a low level of satisfaction, and scores in between these reflect a moderate level of satisfaction.

In addition to the MSQ, a demographic information form was utilized to collect personal information from each teacher. The demographic variables included were:

1. Years of vocational agriculture completed by the teacher,
2. Annual income,
3. School setting (rural/nonrural),

4. School enrollment,

5. Marital status,

6. Distance from hometown,

7. Highest degree held,

8. Years of vocational agriculture teaching experience,

9. Type of institution from which teacher training was received, and

10. Tenure status.

The instruments and a cover letter were mailed to all 50 teachers in the sample. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a telephone follow-up of nonrespondents was conducted. A 90% usable response rate was obtained with 45 of 50 teachers responding.

Descriptive statistics were used in analyzing data relative to identifying satisfaction with the 20 job factors on the MSQ. Multiple regression analysis was employed to identify job factors which explained a significant portion of the variance of overall job satisfaction. A least squares analysis of variance with main effects only was used to determine if there was a difference in overall job satisfaction with respect to selected demographic variables.

Results

Data in Table 1 indicate that 40% of the teachers had mean overall satisfaction scores falling in the 70s. Most teachers (33 or 73.3%) reflected a general satisfaction score between 70 to 89. The mean general satisfaction score was 76.62. When compared to the "Employed Non-Disabled" group, the vocational agriculture teachers' general job satisfaction score fell into the 45th percentile, indicating a moderate level of job satisfaction. No teacher had a score lower than 58. Few teachers reflected a job satisfaction score of more than 90. Mean scale satisfaction scores are presented in Table 2. The highest score possible on each scale was 25. Looking at the raw scores, the teachers appeared to be least satisfied with advancement, company policies and practices, and compensation. The job facets they seemed to be most satisfied with were social service, moral values, and creativity.

The variables comprising a highly significant model accounting for a portion of the variance in the job satisfaction score are displayed in Table 3. This table presented in partial regression coefficients, *F* values, and significance levels with respect to each variable's contribution to the model. The model reflected a $R^2 = .96$, *p*

Table 1

Categories of General Job Satisfaction Score

Score category	Frequency	Percent
50-59	2	4.4
60-69	7	15.6
70-79	18	40.0
80-89	15	33.3
90-100	3	6.7
Total	45	100.0

Table 2

Vocational Agriculture Teachers Mean Score on Scales of the MSQ

Scale	$\bar{X}$	SD
Intrinsic		
Social service	21.93	2.22
Moral values	21.66	2.44
Creativity	21.24	2.72
Ability utilization	21.22	2.80
Activity	21.22	2.52
Achievement	21.09	2.43
Variety	20.96	2.52
Responsibility	20.95	2.41
Independence	20.68	2.49
Authority	19.04	2.95
Social status	19.04	2.64
Co-workers	18.93	3.39
Recognition	17.28	4.57
Extrinsic		
Security	20.24	3.19
Supervision--human relations	18.22	4.76
Working conditions	17.22	4.93
Supervision--technical	17.13	4.63
Company policies/practices	16.24	4.98
Advancement	15.44	4.72
Compensation	14.84	5.02

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis of General MSQ Score by Scales of the MSQ

Job factor	*B*	*F*	Prob > *F*
Authority	.64	18.39	0.0001
Responsibility	1.03	26.03	0.0001
Security	.33	4.03	0.0518
Compensation	.35	18.39	0.0001
Co-workers	.58	19.70	0.0001
Supervision-technical	.59	42.54	0.0001
Working conditions	.32	17.64	0.0002

Note. Total $R^2 = .96$, $p < .01$

<.01. Seven of 20 job facets were included in this model. These were authority, responsibility, security, compensation, co-workers, supervision--technical, and working conditions. The resulting model was placed into PROC REG (SAS, 1982) to determine if multicollinearity problems existed among any of the independent variables. Upon examination of the multicollinearity diagnostics, no problems were observed. Therefore, the variables identified in the model were considered to have explained 96% of the variance in the general job satisfaction score.

Demographic data were also collected from the vocational agriculture teachers. A total of eight demographic variables from the teachers were used to determine if there was a significant difference in overall job satisfaction. The teacher demographic variables used in the analysis were:

1. Annual income,
2. School setting (rural/nonrural),
3. School enrollment,
4. Marital status,
5. Distance from hometown,
6. Highest degree held,
7. Years of vocational agriculture teaching experience, and
8. Type of institution from which teacher training was received.

Table 4

Least Squares Analysis of Variance of General Job Satisfaction by School Enrollment

Enrollment	*n*	Least squares means	Prob > *t*
Less than 200	13	81.05	.0173
200-599	20	79.51	.0297
600 or more	12	71.59	

Note. Pair-wise comparisons were made between "600 or more and the other two enrollment categories. The probabilities are placed with the categories compared to "600 or more."

Table 5

Least Squares Analysis of Variance of General Job Satisfaction by Teaching Experience

Years	*n*	Least squares means	Prob > *t*
0-6	11	69.75	.0078
7-14	22	76.32	.0416
15 or more	12	86.08	

Note. Pair-wise comparisons were made between "15 or more" and the other two categories. The probabilities are replaced with the categories compared to "15 or more."

The least squares analysis of variance using main effects only with no interactions was used to test the relationships of these demographic variables to job satisfaction as measured by the MSQ. Only the main effects were tested because there were not enough subjects in each cell to analyze all interaction effects.

A general satisfaction score, as measured by the MSQ, was used as the dependent variable in the analysis. Data in Table 4 show that a significant difference in job satisfaction with respect to school enrollment was found, F (1,29) = 3.92, $p < .05$. In addition, data in Table 5 indicate that a significant difference in teacher job

satisfaction was found regarding years of teaching vocational agriculture, F (1,29) = 4.09, p <.05. An examination of the least squares means with regard to both these variables indicated that teachers teaching at larger schools tended to be less satisfied than teachers at smaller schools. Furthermore, teachers with more experience tended to be more satisfied with their jobs. No significant differences in overall job satisfaction were found with respect to the other demographic variables placed into the analysis.

Conclusions and Implications

Based on the findings of this study, vocational agriculture teachers in Louisiana appeared to be moderately satisfied with their jobs (45th percentile). Satisfaction was generally higher with intrinsic job factors while lower satisfaction levels tended to be associated with extrinsic job factors.

In addition, overall job satisfaction level was influenced by satisfaction with both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. This concurs with the findings of Hall (1972/1973) and Kaufman and Buffer (1978) related to intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing job satisfaction. The findings reflected agreement with the Expectancy Theory posed by Lawler and Porter (1967) with respect to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing job satisfaction. However, not all factors that have been identified as either intrinsic or extrinsic were included as comprising a model explaining a portion of the variation in one's overall job satisfaction. This suggests that fewer job related variables may be creating the fluctuations in job satisfaction among these teachers. Even though a teacher may be satisfied with a variety of job related factors, there may be only a few that are associated with meaningful changes in the overall satisfaction of the population of these teachers. It should be noted that four of the seven factors identified as explaining 96% of the variance in job satisfaction were extrinsic factors (security, compensation, supervision-technical, and working conditions). The remaining three intrinsic factors were authority, responsibility, and co-workers.

Some might support the assumption that teacher satisfaction with the job comes from satisfaction with the intrinsic elements of the job and is not influenced by extrinsic factors such as pay and working conditions. This does not appear to be the case when one examines the findings in this study. Extrinsic factors did indeed have a significant influence on the job satisfaction responses of these teachers.

The teachers seemed to be concerned about comfortable working conditions, competent supervision, job security, and the amount of pay received. Intrinsically, they prefer to have control over their job and have the freedom to use their own judgment on the job. Moreover, the relationships between themselves and their co-workers were important to these vocational agriculture teachers.

For whatever reason, satisfaction was higher for more experienced teachers than for less experienced ones. This may be due to the fact that more experienced teachers may feel less anxiety and pressure to perform than newer teachers. In addition, as one becomes more familiar with the job, it seems likely that he/she would better adjust to job characteristics, interpersonal relationships, and requirements peculiar to teaching vocational agriculture. Moreover, values and expectations may well change as the teacher grows older. This, in turn, could impact on teacher job satisfaction. This suggests that agricultural education teacher educators may need to develop some specific types of programs to assist new teachers in adjusting to teaching vocational agriculture for more satisfying experiences. Such satisfaction would appear to lessen teacher attrition.

It seems, as well, that teachers teaching in smaller schools are more satisfied with teaching vocational agriculture. This statement may be revealing an advantage of teaching vocational agriculture in a small school. Many would say this is no surprise due to the assumption that smaller schools seem to have less disciplinary problems, better co-worker relations, and less pressures. In addition, more of what teachers like, such as autonomy and responsibility, may be present in smaller schools. Moreover, it seems likely that smaller schools, usually found in more rural areas, may place more emphasis on agriculture than larger, more urban schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Teacher educators should provide educational opportunities, such as inservice and graduate courses, for administrators and supervisors to enhance their competence in supervising vocational agriculture teachers. Consideration of what vocational agriculture teachers identify as areas of improvement would be important in developing topics.

2. Vocational agriculture teachers should be encouraged to develop positive working relationships with other teachers in the school in which they teach. Strategies for building interpersonal relations on the job should be an integral part of preservice educational experiences of these teachers.

3. Policy makers and administrators should give attention to the salary administration of these teachers since this category was the one with which the vocational agriculture teachers were least satisfied. This would involve not only giving consideration to dollar amounts, but also to how the salaries are administered. That is, determining salaries by including consideration of the job tasks and time requirements peculiar to teaching vocational agriculture should be addressed.

4. Future research should be conducted to determine if the job satisfaction of vocational agriculture teachers in Louisiana is similar to that of vocational agriculture teachers in the nation.

5. A study needs to be conducted to determine if job satisfaction has any relationship in a person's performance or effectiveness as a vocational agriculture teacher.

6. Further job satisfaction research should be designed and completed considering teachers in other vocational education subject matter areas.

7. Effort should be made to ascertain why teachers in smaller schools and those with more experience tend to be more satisfied in teaching.

8. Researchers conducting future job satisfaction studies with vocational agriculture teachers may want to consider addressing the seven factors identified as accounting for 96% of the variance in overall job satisfaction. The evidence strongly suggests that identifying and assessing these factors may well give the researcher insight into teacher job satisfaction without considering other dimensions that offer no significant explanatory power.

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