

Factors Influencing School-Based Agricultural Educator Retention and Attrition Rates

Trevor P. Queen¹
Taylor D. Bird²
Eric D. Rubenstein³

Abstract

Agriculture educator retention levels remain concerning. A synthesis of research identified overall themes affecting agriculture teacher retention and attrition. Professional relations with students, administration, other teachers, and the community affect rates of agriculture teacher retention. In addition, mental and physical factors such as stress, teacher burnout, motivations, salary, and school systems each influence agriculture teachers' decisions about the future of themselves remaining in the school-based agricultural education profession. Work-life balance is a difficult situation for many agriculture educators to overcome. Job commitment within this profession varies from teacher to teacher as satisfaction, self-efficacy, and future opportunities affect commitment levels.

Introduction

The educational occupation within the United States (U.S.) has a notoriously high attrition rate. Over 90% of educators hired within the U.S. are replacing teachers who left for reasons that were not related to retirement (Clark et al., 2014). Many of those educators who choose to leave the teaching profession leave within the first five years of teaching (Keigher, 2010). Specifically, within Career and Technical Education (CTE) departments, over two-thirds of states experience shortages in one of the subject areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). With different subject areas having varying teacher retention rates, researchers hope to determine some of the underlying causes of teacher retention and attrition within the agriculture science subject area.

Nationwide, there has been a consistent demand for agriculture educators since before 1980 (Eck & Michael, 2019). According to Smith et al. (2022), 11.5% of teachers were considered new hires in school based agricultural education. In 2018, state supervisors reported over 70 vacancies within the agriculture education profession across the nation that still needed to be filled (Smith et al., 2022). Over three-fifths of agriculture educators who left the profession in 2018 noted a reason other than retirement from the educational field (Smith et al., 2022). Agriculture teachers can enter the profession in a multitude of pathways, affecting what methods of support are needed while also addressing factors that influence their decision to either stay or leave the profession (Joseph et al., 2022). Comparing the factors which affect agriculture teacher retention and attrition rates would assist in evaluation of determining why agriculture teachers stay in the profession and why they decide to leave the educational occupation behind them.

¹Trevor P. Queen is an Agriculture Teacher at Haymon Morris Middle School, 1008 Haymon-Morris Road Winder, GA 30680, trevor.queen@barrow.k12.ga.us.

²Taylor D. Bird is a Doctoral Candidate of Agricultural Education in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication at the University of Georgia, 405 College Station Rd. Athens, GA, 30602, tdbird@uga.edu. ORCID# 0009-0006-3320-2519

³Eric D. Rubenstein is an Associate Professor of Agricultural Education in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication at the University of Georgia, 405 College Station Rd. Athens, GA, 30602, erubenstein@uga.edu. ORCID# 0000-0002-8799-2502

The educational world has high rates of attrition compared to other career fields within the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). School-based agricultural education (SBAE) teachers have relationships with a variety of stakeholders that affect the rates of teacher retention and attrition (Moser & McKim, 2020). Many agriculture educators have a passion for working with students and have been motivated by the impact they have on students' lives (Clemons & Linder, 2019; Clark et al., 2014; Dainty et al., 2011; Shoulders et al., 2021; Traini et al., 2019; Solomonson & Retallick, 2018; Su et al., 2011). Research indicates that in addition to the influence agriculture educators have on students, administrative practices significantly affect teacher attrition and retention. In other words, effective administration is a critical factor in sustaining agriculture educator retention (Clark et al., 2014; Clemons & Linder, 2019; Dainty et al., 2011; Hasselquist & Graves, 2020; Mcintosh, 2019; Solomonson et al., 2019; Su et al., 2011). Other factors within the school community have also been found to influence agriculture teacher retention. For example, the support of fellow teachers (Clemons & Linder, 2019; Hasselquist & Graves, 2020; Mordan, 2012; Moser & McKim, 2020; Shoulders et al., 2021) and broader community involvement (Clark et al., 2014; Hasselquist & Graves, 2020; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Su et al., 2011) both play significant roles.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting mental and physical health contribute to the rates of SBAE teacher retention and attrition. Stress plays a major role in agriculture teacher attrition (King et al., 2013; Schmidt et al., 2022; Shoulders et al., 2021; Smalley & Smith, 2018; Traini et al., 2020). Teacher burnout, or becoming emotionally exhausted where there is little to no motivation to continue teaching, has been a factor causing agriculture teachers to leave the profession (Baxter et al., 2011; Clark et al., 2014; Kitchel et al., 2012; Murray et al., 2011; Smalley & Smith, 2018; Tippens et al., 2013). In addition, the school systems [administration, districts, superintendents, contract expectations, etc.] in which agriculture educators teach influence job satisfaction (Clark et al., 2014; Shoulders et al., 2021; Su et al., 2011). Many agriculture educators have differences in opinions on their salary caused by the presence or absence of extended contracts (Clemons & Linder, 2019; Hasselquist & Graves, 2020; Ismail & Miller, 2021; Shoulders et al., 2021; Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). The extended contract (sometimes referred to as 3 Circle Grants) that some agriculture educators receive is the occupational compensation to FFA and SAE programs that are outside of normal school hours (Solomonson et al., 2021). The incentive of compensation through extended contracts to account for the additional work and expectations being met encourages some teachers to stay in the classroom (Flood & Curry, 2022); however, extended contracts in SBAE are determined on a state and sometimes district basis.

Work-life balance can be difficult for agriculture educators to achieve, with the general expectations of agriculture educators equating to well over the normal 40-hour work week (Hopkins et al., 2020). The extra time that is spent by agriculture educators to fulfill FFA advisor duties and supervise SAE programs make it more difficult for agriculture educators to achieve a work-life balance (Hopkins et al., 2020; Solomonson et al., 2019; Sorensen et al., 2017; Su et al., 2011). Additionally, demographic factors—such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, and family responsibilities—play a significant role in how agriculture educators achieve work-life balance (Baxter et al., 2011; Guyett, 2020; King et al., 2013; Shoulders et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022; Solomonson et al., 2022). Due to the fact that work-life balance is difficult to achieve for agriculture educators, some agriculture educators have left the profession to seek less demanding careers (Clark et al., 2014; Hasselquist & Graves, 2020; Solomonson et al., 2019; Solomonson et al., 2022; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen et al., 2016; Tippens et al., 2013; Traini et al., 2019; Traini et al., 2020).

Levels of commitment among agriculture educators can vary due to several factors. One major factor influencing job commitment is job satisfaction; educators who are dissatisfied with their roles are more likely to leave the profession (Clemons & Linder, 2019; Hopkins et al., 2020; Hopkins et al., 2022; Hasselquist et al., 2017; Kitchel et al., 2012; McKim & Sorensen, 2020; Shoulders et al., 2021; Smalley & Smith, 2018; Sorensen et al., 2016). Much like the correlation between job satisfaction and SBAE teacher

retention rates, self-efficacy levels of agriculture educators and retention rates are also directly correlated. (Hancock & Scherff, 2010; Klassen & Chi, 2010; Korte & Simonsen, 2018; McKim & Velez, 2015; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014; Swan et al., 2011). However, agriculture educators are encouraged to proactively plan for their long-term career paths, whether that be staying in the profession or looking at different options through either industry or educational opportunities (McIntosh et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2022; Solomonson et al., 2022; Tippens et al., 2013). Taking all this information into consideration, there is a need to compile literature regarding SBAE teacher retention and attrition to pinpoint overall themes to lead future research and practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this synthesis of literature was to identify overall themes that could affect teacher retention, specifically school-based agriculture educator retention. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the main recurring themes affecting SBAE teacher retention and attrition rates?
2. What factors, either external or internal, affect SBAE teachers and their choice to either continue or leave the profession?

Methods

This literature review employed a semi-systematic qualitative approach to explore agriculture teacher retention and attrition (Grant & Booth, 2009). By combining structured search strategies with thematic analysis, the researchers aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the factors that have influenced retention and attrition in agricultural education. Articles were identified by reviewing the mainstream table of contents within mainstream education journals which included *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, and *Journal of Career and Technical Education*. Articles (n=42) were identified using the keywords “agriculture teacher retention,” “agriculture teacher commitment,” “agriculture teacher self-efficacy,” “agriculture teacher exodus,” and “agriculture teacher attrition.” The search was extended to Google Scholar and the University library portal using the same keywords to ensure saturation (Saunders et al., 2018). Studies were considered for review if they were published between January 2010 and August 2022 to maintain an accurate synthesis of recent literature. In addition to the consideration of the publishing date, another initial search inclusion criteria was the mention of agriculture teacher retention or agriculture teacher attrition within the article. Sixty-five articles were identified, but only 42 articles met the required review criteria for factors affecting agriculture teacher retention.

Each article was reviewed and summarized through an annotated bibliography. From these summaries, key focus points were identified based on the main findings and themes of each article. These focus points were then analyzed and inductively grouped into the following codes: relations, mental and physical factors, work-life balance, and job commitment. Coding definitions can be found in Table 1. Articles that addressed multiple codes were placed and addressed in each code accordingly.

Table 1

Code and sub-code definitions, number of articles identified in each code

Code	Sub-Code	Definition	# Articles Identified
Relations		The direct connections in which SBAE teachers communicate consistently.	15
	Students	Current or former participants in SBAE classes and chapter FFA members.	7
	Administrators	Managers of school operations (i.e., CTAE directors, principals, superintendents, etc.)	8
	Other Teachers	Other subject teachers besides agriculture.	6
Mental and Physical Factors		Intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect a SBAE teacher's decision to continue or leave the profession	18
	Teacher Burnout	The sense of having no desire or motivation to continue teaching	6
	Motivations	The desires to continue within the teaching profession or desire to enter the profession.	3
	Salary	The monetary compensation SBAE teachers receive.	5
	School Systems	The materials, setting, and location in which SBAE work.	3
Work-Life Balance		The ability to balance work and personal life.	16
	Demographics	Factors relating to gender, degree levels earned, race, and age that can affect a SBAE teacher's decision to stay in the classroom.	6
	Occupational Duties	The roles in which a SBAE teacher fulfills (i.e., teacher, FFA advisor, SAE supervisor)	4
	Work-life Balance	Roles in which SBAE teachers serve (i.e., family, career, and personal factors)	9
Commitment		The motivation to continue teaching agricultural education.	20
	Job Satisfaction	The level at which agriculture educators are satisfied with the profession.	8
	Self-Efficacy	Confidence in ability to complete task of a goal, founded by Bandura (1997).	7
	Future Career Plans	The continuation or exodus of agriculture educators within the teaching profession.	4

Trustworthiness & Rigor

Qualitative research must ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick descriptions were utilized by researchers to ensure credibility. One of the researchers analyzed the data and met with the other researcher to conduct peer-debriefing sessions, ensuring the credibility of the data analysis. To enhance dependability and confirmability, the researchers maintained a methodological journal following the guidance outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The researcher journal described the methodological decisions made by researchers throughout the course of the study. The primary researcher is a current SBAE teacher after having received an undergraduate degree in Agriculture Education and a master's degree in agricultural and environmental education. The second researcher is an Associate Professor of Agriculture Education, and the third researcher is a graduate student in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication—both are former SBAE teachers and received formal preparation in agriculture education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Findings

Relations

Students

As it pertains to SBAE teacher retention and attrition, students are not only a major motivation factor when it comes to teachers remaining in the profession but also can be a hurdle that teachers face every day. In one study, SBAE teachers were influenced to remain in the classroom by assisting students reach their individual goals (Clemons & Linder, 2019). Furthermore, many agriculture educators found satisfaction in teaching students in the classroom as well as advising students through the FFA programs (Clemons & Linder, 2019). Even in the context of having to call out of work, SBAE teachers had a desire to be within the classroom every day, as they felt as if their absence created problems for the students enrolled in their agricultural classes (Shoulders et al., 2021). In a study by Clark et al. (2014), Agriculture educators also believed that students were a factor that motivates them to stay within their career. Professional relationships that teachers had with their students can also be an indicator of a successful agriculture educator (Traini et al., 2019). In addition, mid-career agriculture teachers valued program successes, autonomy, and stakeholder support, but they also valued the successes of their students (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018).

One of the common challenges that many agriculture educators mentioned, which occurred over several years, is the difficulty to motivate students who had other obligations such as social lives, home obligations, and other extracurricular activities (Clark et al., 2014). An important factor that many career and technical educators face in classrooms is the matter of gaining students respect as it pertains to social integration of a school (Dainty et al., 2011; Su et al., 2011). This social integration of gaining students' respect is a challenge teachers face every year as there is a new class of students enrolled at the school.

Administrators

With school administrators being one of the direct superiors to agriculture educators, researchers have found that the role in which administration plays affects agriculture education retention and attrition rates. Administrative support of agricultural education has become a major factor pertaining to teacher classroom and longevity, that it is considered by many agriculture educators to have the same importance as employee health benefits (Clemons & Linder, 2019). Even among novice teachers, school administration influenced both overall job satisfaction and self-efficacy among novice agriculture educators. (Hasselquist et al., 2017). Within the CTE field, which includes agricultural education, teachers placed high value on

their relationships with administrators when making future career decisions (Su et al., 2011). Educators have also discussed the matter of administrators being a supporting factor in retaining their career choice (Clark et al., 2014; Dainty et al., 2011).

McIntosh (2019) and Solomonson (2019) both noted that agriculture educators have referenced the lack of support from administration as a reason agriculture educators have either left the occupation or have considered leaving the occupation. Hasselquist and Graves (2021) mentioned within their case study pertaining to the differences between administrative support of veteran teachers and mid-career teachers. The increased support in veteran CTE teachers from administration compared to mid-career teachers is through the advocacy of their programs done by the CTE teachers (Hasselquist & Graves, 2020). Researchers noted that while relationships with administrators are important, other factors also contribute to attrition. Many agriculture educators leave the profession before reaching veteran teacher status, suggesting that multiple influences—not solely administrative support—play a role in their decision to leave.

Other Teachers

Having a network of support within the agricultural education world and within their school helps contribute to teacher longevity, success, retention, and overall mental health. Not only was developing close friendships with other agricultural education teachers a motivator for agriculture educator retention, but friendships with fellow FFA advisors also contributed to an increase in classroom longevity (DeLay & Washburn, 2013; Clemons & Linder, 2019; Moser & McKim, 2020). A specific example that Hasselquist and Graves (2021) highlighted is an agriculture educator sharing that his CTE network was partially responsible for staying in the agricultural education profession. In addition, being assigned a mentor teacher also improved overall teaching as well as career retention in CTE teachers compared to those teachers who were not assigned a mentor teacher (Mordan, 2012). Among Arkansas agriculture educators, fellow teachers had the highest rating pertaining to job satisfaction (Shoulders et al., 2021).

Community

Part of a successful agriculture education program at a school is the influence both within the community and of the community. Findings from individual studies highlight the important role of community relationships in agricultural education. Clark et al. (2014) found that agriculture educators view the community as a vital link to their program's support system. Hasselquist and Graves (2020) reported that veteran SBAE teachers feel empowered by the impact their programs have on both students and the broader community. Additionally, Clark et al. (2014) noted that veteran agriculture educators develop the skill of delegating tasks to capable community members to help prevent burnout. Despite the importance of community connections, Sorensen and McKim (2014) found that community connectivity alone is not a reliable predictor of teacher retention. However, Su et al. (2011) identified that the reputation of the school—both within and beyond the community—relates to teachers' demonstration of commitment to agricultural education. Relationships with the community and agriculture educators remain uncertain in the retention of agriculture educators as previous research has conflicting views.

Mental and Physical Factors

Stress

Many agriculture educators have shown signs of stress while working in the occupation. Shoulders et al. (2021) noted the five daily symptoms of stress most common among agriculture educators are: fatigue, frustration, worrying, forgetfulness, and impatience. It is possible that stress levels within the occupation are influenced by generational differences, though more research is needed to fully understand this

relationship. Generation Y (1980-1994) is averaging higher average stress levels. Meanwhile, agriculture educators who are categorized as Baby Boomers (1946-1964) show the least amount of stress (American Psychological Association, 2012). Although all generations reported moderate stress levels overall (Schmidt et al., 2022), differences emerged across groups. These generational differences may be attributed either to varying years of experience within the occupation or to broader generational characteristics. Notably, SBAE teachers in their first year of teaching—whether new to the profession or new to a school—were the only group to report borderline low stress levels (Schmidt et al., 2022). In this study, new agriculture educators also felt a sense of pressure from their administration, agriculture education leaders, and community members to be “successful,” which in turn caused them stress (Traini et al., 2020).

When pertaining to national quality program standards for secondary agricultural education, agriculture educators are not stressed or concerned about certified agriculture teachers and professional growth (Smith & Smalley, 2018). On the other hand, experiential learning, as well as program design and instruction are the top two standards having the highest levels of stress (Smalley & Smith, 2018). However, Baxter (2011) noted that all participants within his study stated that teaching agriculture was a high stress job. Among female agriculture educators, the most stressful tasks related to FFA and SAE responsibilities were preparing a proficiency application, planning an FFA banquet, and preparing CDE teams (King et al., 2013). Pertaining to classroom responsibilities, paperwork and reports in addition to creating new curriculum were ranked as the most stressful tasks from female agriculture educators (King et al., 2013).

Teacher Burnout

Emotional exhaustion, mental exhaustion, or even physical exhaustion are key factors affecting SBAE teacher burnout. Tippens et al. (2013) found that Georgia agriculture educators showed mixed responses regarding feelings of burnout; while some reported experiencing significant levels of burnout, others indicated that they did not feel burned out, highlighting a lack of consensus among teachers. As far as burnout relating to depersonalization, or attitudes towards one’s students, agriculture educators reported low levels of burnout on a depersonalization level (Kitchel et al., 2012; Smalley & Smith, 2018). In addition to the low level of depersonalization, another low level of burnout pertained to the area of personal accomplishment (Kitchel et al., 2012). The burnout category that produced a moderate sense of burnout among agriculture educators was emotional exhaustion (Kitchel et al., 2012).

To combat the sense of burnout among agriculture educators, veteran teachers learned to delegate tasks that can be easily given to students, parents, and community members (Clark et al., 2014). High expectations of agriculture educators to do well in the FFA and academically from students, administration, and the community causes pressure on the agriculture educator and can lead to teacher burnout (Baxter et al., 2011). When agriculture educators engaged in social comparisons with other agriculture educators, the more burnout occurred (Kitchel et al., 2012). In addition to the typical work hours of a normal educator, agriculture educators must fulfill FFA duties as an advisor. The duties which an FFA advisor completes typically happen at night, on weekends, or summertime, which takes time away from family and in turn can lead to a higher burnout rate (Murray et al., 2011).

Motivations

SBAE teachers often cite specific motivations for entering the profession, such as a passion for agriculture, a desire to work with youth, or the influence of positive experiences in agricultural education programs. Many agriculture educators were motivated by either their former agriculture educators, through the experiences that they were able to take part in while in the classroom and FFA, or encouragement from others (Clemons & Linder, 2019; Ismail & Miller, 2021; Solomonson et al., 2019). In addition to encouragement and having a positive role model to look up to, agriculture educators also viewed making a positive impact on their students much like their agriculture educator and FFA advisor did for them (Ismail

& Miller, 2021). Other agriculture educators that were not former advisors of potential SBAE teachers have also encouraged other potential teachers to join the agricultural education community (Solomonson et al., 2019). Along with motivations coming from former teachers and current agriculture educators, job security became a motivating factor for some agriculture educators to pursue the profession (Ismail & Miller, 2021).

Salary

The salary of an agriculture educator has been noted as not matching the many extra duties which an agricultural educator fulfills. As a source of pressure from the occupation, agriculture educators reported that the workload is out of proportion with the salary (Shoulders et al., 2021). The salary in which agriculture educators receive is not influential for the decision to enter the agriculture education profession (Ismail & Miller, 2021). Many agriculture educators within the U.S. are also on extended contracts, allowing them to get paid for their time serving as an FFA advisor; however, each state within the U.S. will determine what is an appropriate contract length and payment for these duties (National Association of Agricultural Educators, n.d.). Because of the extended contracts and increased salary compared to other subject areas, agriculture educators viewed that as important when continuing their career in the agriculture classroom (Clemons & Linder, 2019). Both mid-career teachers and veteran teachers both viewed the positive impacts they have had on students and the community as a supplement to the monetary gains from the occupation (Hasselquist & Graves, 2020). Mid-career agriculture educators valued their time over their money (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018).

School Systems

As each school has different administrators, school boards, students, and parents, the school in which teachers are located plays a major role in teacher retention. Factors that vary among schools are support for agriculture programs, facilities, and teacher relations (Hasselquist et al., 2017). Challenges such as competing with sports programs, lost student potential, educational policies, and competing against livestock professionals contributed to the challenges agriculture educators face within school systems (Clark et al., 2014). Institutional factors such as the adequacy of laboratory facilities and overall working conditions play an important role in shaping agriculture teachers' experiences. Su et al. (2011) found that access to well-equipped facilities and pleasant working environments contributed significantly to a positive teaching experience. In contrast, Shoulders et al. (2021) reported that challenging teaching conditions—such as inadequate resources, outdated facilities, or unsafe environments—created additional stress and pressure for agriculture educators, potentially affecting their job satisfaction and retention.

Work-life balance

Demographics

Historically, most agriculture educators have been male; however, with recent shifts, the agriculture education field has been nearly evenly distributed between male and female agriculture educators (Shoulders et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022; Solomonson et al., 2022). Male agriculture educators who were not married, had children, received a twelve-month contract, and in a multi-teacher program were more committed to the profession than any other demographic (Solomonson et al., 2022). This higher level of commitment may be influenced by stereotypical gender roles within the United States, where females are often expected to serve as full-time caretakers of children.

In agriculture education license-eligible programs, Smith et al. (2022) reported that over three-fourths of program completers across the nation were female between 2012 and 2018. Even though the amount of female agriculture education program completers has increased, females on average do not remain in the classroom as much as their male counterparts (King et al., 2013). On average, female

agriculture educators in Georgia reported feeling either satisfied or neutral (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) with their current jobs (Guyett, 2020).

In addition to stereotypical gender roles regarding family, sexism is a challenge the female agriculture educators occasionally must overcome within the occupation (Baxter et al., 2011).

Occupational Commitments

Agriculture educators are responsible for fulfilling SAE and FFA duties in addition to their classroom teaching responsibilities. As a result, the total number of hours they work often far exceeds a standard 40-hour work week (Sorensen et al., 2017). The heavy workload and long hours not only impact the educators themselves but also affect their families; spouses of agriculture educators have expressed dissatisfaction with the career due to the imbalance between compensation and the amount of work required (Hopkins et al., 2020). Although professional development opportunities are often encouraged, participation in professional associations was identified as the least important institutional factor influencing the retention of secondary trade and industrial teachers (Su et al., 2011). Further compounding their workload, SBAE teachers frequently experience pressure from community stakeholders to take on additional responsibilities within their FFA chapters, contributing to personal and professional conflict (Solomonson et al., 2019).

Work-life Balance

The agriculture education profession has a demanding work schedule. Agriculture educators sense pressure from various stakeholders as they try to balance their work responsibilities with their personal life (Traini et al., 2019). On average, agriculture educators were reported to work 59.81 hours a week during the school year (Sorensen et al., 2016). Overall, agriculture educators agree that they could balance both family and work responsibilities (Sorensen et al., 2016). Agriculture educators also have difficulties creating clear boundaries between work and personal life as their motivation to be the best educator they can be for students creates difficulties in saying “no,” (Traini et al., 2020).

Agriculture educators noted as a likely reason to leave the career would be due to commitments to children and family (Tippens et al., 2013). This reason for likely leaving could be due to nearly all male and female agriculture educators mentioning that they were involved in home life, including raising children, which in turn creates conflict within their job (Solomonson et al., 2019). However, SBAE teachers who have children have a higher work-life balance (WLB) ability compared to those who do not have children (Sorensen & McKim, 2014). Family has become a major importance to teachers within their career so much, it has affected retention rates of teachers (Clark et al., 2014). As it relates to family responsibilities, there are no major differences in work-life balance, job satisfaction, or professional commitment between married and non-married agriculture educators (Sorensen & McKim, 2014).

Researchers have reported conflicting findings about which stage of teaching is associated with the highest level of work-life balance. For example, Solomonson et al. (2022) found that mid-career teachers reported the highest levels of work-life balance, while late-career teachers reported the lowest. However, other studies have suggested different patterns, indicating that work-life balance may vary depending on additional factors such as school environment, personal circumstances, or administrative support. However, in contrast, Sorensen and McKim (2014) found that early-career teachers had the highest work-life balance ability, while mid-career teachers had the lowest ability to achieve work-life balance. Overall, veteran teachers have higher abilities to perceive a bigger picture, specifically in work balance and family roles (Hasselquist & Graves, 2020).

Commitment

Job Satisfaction

Overall agriculture educators are mostly satisfied with their job (Clemons & Linder, 2019; Hasselquist et al., 2017; Kitchel et al., 2012; Shoulders et al., 2021; Smalley & Smith, 2018; Sorensen et al., 2016). Spouses of agriculture educators like SBAE teaching as a career because their spouse is satisfied with the job (Hopkins et al., 2020). Factors such as the variety of lessons, activities, and events all contribute to job satisfaction and the retention of agriculture educators (Clemons & Linder, 2019). However, the number of hours SBAE teachers spend working can be a deterrent to job satisfaction as many agriculture educators spend well over 40 hours a week working (Hopkins et al., 2022)

Being able to use the talents they possess, along with the combination of job security, variety of tasks within the occupation, and working conditions, agriculture educators view these factors as the important as it pertains to job satisfaction (Shoulders et al., 2021). Agriculture educators also view their jobs as interesting as well as contributing to making a positive difference in the lives of students to be factors increasing job satisfaction (Clemons & Linder, 2019). The lowest factors pertaining to job satisfaction among Arkansas agriculture educators were the hours of work and chance of promotion (Shoulders et al., 2021). The additional challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic further strained agriculture educators, contributing to a sharp decline in overall job satisfaction (McKim & Sorensen, 2020).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy among teachers not only leads to higher rates of retention but also increases overall performance of the teacher (Hancock & Scherff, 2010; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). On the other hand, low self-efficacy leads to higher rates of SBAE teacher attrition (McKim & Velez, 2015; Swan et al., 2011). In novice teachers, the lowest levels of self-efficacy were reported in student engagement, while the highest levels were in instructional practices (Korte & Simonsen, 2018). Lower self-efficacy, particularly in engaging students, can negatively affect a teacher's confidence and overall job satisfaction during the early stages of their career. In addition to greater self-efficacy levels in instructional strategies, higher levels of classroom management self-efficacy increase overall job satisfaction (Klassen & Chi, 2010). It is reasonable to suggest that agriculture educators with higher confidence in their abilities are more likely to remain committed to the profession.

Future Career Plans

When asked about future career plans for the next five years in two studies, most agriculture educators indicated they plan on continuing to teach at the second level (Solomonson et al., 2022; Tippens et al., 2013). Furthermore, Georgia agriculture educators did not, in 2013, plan on leaving for early retirement (Tippens et al., 2013). Although most agriculture educators indicated they did not plan to leave the profession early, those who did consider early departure cited the possibility of pursuing a job within the agriculture industry as a primary reason (Tippens et al., 2013). While many agriculture educators ultimately choose to remain in the profession, evidence suggests that doubts about staying are common. When asked if they had ever considered leaving, over three-quarters of agriculture educators reported having thought about leaving the profession at some point during their careers (McIntosh et al., 2018). Almost one-fifth of SBAE teachers who reported leaving in 2018, cited new employment in a business or industrial occupation for the upcoming year as the reason for leaving (Smith et al., 2022).

Conclusions/Implications

Although challenges are common across many professions, agriculture educators encounter a distinct set of demands that significantly influence their retention and attrition rates. Based on this review of relevant literature, these challenges and motivations come from a variety of sources such as relations, mental and physical factors, work-life balance ability, and commitment to the profession. Students play a vital role in the retention of agriculture educators (Clark et al., 2014; Clemons & Linder, 2019; Dainty et al., 2011; Shoulders et al., 2021; Solomonson & Retallick, 2018; Su et al., 2011; Traini et al., 2019), while administration can either influence an agriculture educator to leave or stay in the profession (Clark et al., 2014; Clemons & Linder, 2019; Dainty et al., 2011; Shoulders et al., 2021; Solomonson & Retallick, 2018; Su et al., 2011; Traini et al., 2019). In addition to the relations agriculture educators have with students and administration, the community in which they serve along with other teachers helps influence their future career choices.

Mental and physical factors such as stress, teacher burnout-motivations to continue teaching, salary, and the school system in which they teach all affect the mental and physical hardships that agriculture educators face every day. Stress from the community and administration affect agriculture educators affect overall job satisfaction and desire to continue within the profession (King et al., 2013; Schmidt et al., 2022; Shoulders et al., 2021; Smalley & Smith, 2018; Traini et al., 2020). Teacher burnout is an important mental factor affecting teacher attrition (Baxter et al., 2011; Clark et al., 2014; Kitchel et al., 2012; Murray et al., 2011; Smalley & Smith, 2018; Tippens et al., 2013); however, the motivations to impact students affect teacher retention positively (Clemons & Linder, 2019; Ismail & Miller, 2021; Solomonson et al., 2019). Other mental and physical factors that affect rates of agriculture teacher retention and attrition include salary and the school settings.

Work-life balance is a hurdle many agriculture educators face as they are on extended-day and/or extended-year contracts to fulfill roles such as the FFA advisor and SAE supervisor. Within certain demographics, work-life balance is harder to achieve compared to others (Baxter et al., 2011; Guyett, 2020; King et al., 2013; Shoulders et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022; Solomonson et al., 2022). Serving as an FFA advisor and SAE supervisor takes time away from personal hobbies and family duties, making it difficult for agriculture teachers to achieve a work-life balance (Hopkins et al., 2020; Solomonson et al., 2019; Sorensen et al., 2017; Su et al., 2011). Familial duties are sometimes put on the backburner of agricultural educator life as they must fulfill duties related to their career (Clark et al., 2014; Hasselquist & Graves, 2020; Solomonson et al., 2019; Solomonson et al., 2022; Sorensen & McKim, 2014; Sorensen et al., 2016; Tippens et al., 2013; Traini et al., 2019; Traini et al., 2020). Work-life balance, however, is not unachievable for agriculture educators, but it is a difficult challenge for many to be able to overcome.

Commitment to the profession is across the board from agriculture educators. As plain and simple as it is, if an agriculture educator is not satisfied with their job, they will leave the profession, continuing to increase attrition rates, and vice versa (Clemons & Linder, 2019; Hasselquist et al., 2017; Hopkins et al., 2020; Hopkins et al., 2022; Kitchel et al., 2012; McKim & Sorensen, 2020; Shoulders et al., 2021; Smalley & Smith, 2018; Sorensen et al., 2016). Similarly, to job satisfaction among agriculture educators, levels of self-efficacy reflect SBAE teacher retention and attrition rates. The lower the self-efficacy, the higher the attrition rates, and with higher self-efficacy the higher the teacher retention rates. (Hancock & Scherff, 2010; Klassen & Chi, 2010; Korte & Simonsen, 2018; McKim, 2014; McKim & Velez, 2015; Sorensen & Swan et al., 2011; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). Future career plans of agriculture educators reflect overall commitment to the profession, as many agriculture educators have various visions of their future as it relates to their career (McIntosh et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2022; Solomonson et al., 2022; Tippens et al., 2013).

Recommendations

Further efforts to be implemented to address agriculture teacher retention and attrition. Therefore, the researchers propose the following recommendations for current and future practitioners to consider. Findings from the reviewed literature highlight the significant occupational commitments associated with a career in agricultural education. Although these challenges are well-documented, they should not deter prospective or current educators from entering or remaining in the profession. Instead, the literature suggests that utilizing available support resources—such as professional development opportunities, mentorship, and work-life balance strategies—may help agriculture educators mitigate burnout, manage stress, and strengthen self-efficacy. The authors propose the following recommendations for university faculty to better prepare agriculture education majors for entering the classroom. While the reviewed literature highlights factors influencing teacher attrition, it does not provide evidence regarding the extent to which interventions, such as preservice preparation or post-graduation support, are currently being implemented. Future research could explore how collaboration with preservice agriculture teachers and ongoing mentorship from university faculty might impact teacher retention. Understanding existing efforts and identifying effective support strategies could be valuable in addressing attrition in agricultural education.

The authors believe further research could be beneficial to the topic of teacher retention and attrition. While several studies have examined agricultural teacher retention and attrition at the state level, and resources like the National Supply and Demand Study provide regional data, there remains a need for more targeted, in-depth research within specific states and regions. Future studies could focus on longitudinal analyses of agriculture educators' career pathways, examining factors such as support systems, administrative relationships, workload, and community engagement over time. Researchers should consider studying both early-career and veteran SBAE teachers, as well as individuals who have recently left the profession, to better understand the evolving challenges and supports influencing retention and attrition. Although prior research has extensively documented the factors that motivate agriculture educators to enter and leave the profession, future studies should focus on how these factors may shift over time in response to evolving educational, societal, and workforce conditions. Continued monitoring of trends in burnout, stress, and self-efficacy among agriculture educators is important to ensure that retention strategies remain responsive to the current realities faced by teachers across the nation.

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