

THE JOB AND MARITAL SATISFACTION OF SECONDARY AGRICULTURE TEACHERS AND THEIR SPOUSES

Kerry S. Odell, Assistant Professor
James E. Cochran, Graduate Student
Layle D. Lawrence, Professor
Stacy A. Gartin, Associate Professor
West Virginia University

Research concerning work/family relationships have focused largely on the differentiation of the two roles. When job satisfaction and work performance are addressed, most writers tend to deal with variables other than and separate from family and personal life. However, it has been shown that the amount of time a vocational agriculture teacher spends in professional activities, especially after regular school day hours, has a direct effect on his or her spouse's marital satisfaction and perception of problems associated with the teacher's job (Coughlin, 1987; Straquadine, 1985). Studies dealing with teacher turnover have noted that the personal and family life of the vocational agriculture teacher can influence actions concerning the professional life. Teachers have indicated that "spouse's reaction to job obligation" (Cooper and Nelson, 1981) and "wife not happy with vocational agriculture profession" (Mattox, 1974) were among the many reasons they leave the profession.

Studies with specific populations or wide cross-sections of occupations across America have shown positive relationships between job satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Anderson (1984) used the data base of 3,692 respondents from the 1987 Quality of Life in America Survey to find that job satisfaction can be a predictor of marital satisfaction. A direct relationship was found between wives' perceived job satisfaction and husbands' marital satisfaction in a dual career couples study by Albers (1981). And, in a study concerning medical residents' wives (Alexander, 1985), a primary problem to the marital relationship was the small amount of time the husband could spend in family activities. These relationships between job satisfaction and spouse marital satisfaction have not been thoroughly studied within other occupations or within the vocational agriculture teaching profession. Cooper and Nelson (1981, p. 18) suggested that "Research should be conducted regarding the effects of spouse and family obligations as they are related to continuation or level of activity in vo-ag teaching."

Purpose and Objectives

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate relationships between the job satisfaction and marital satisfaction of secondary agriculture teachers and their spouses. The antecedents of interest were: (a) marital satisfaction of the teacher; (b) marital satisfaction of the spouse; and (c) demographic variables (age, years married, level of education, years teaching, income, and presence of children). The consequence of interest was the job satisfaction of the secondary agriculture teachers.

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. Describe the antecedents and consequences among secondary agriculture teachers in the National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association (NVATA) Northeast Region of the United States.
2. Determine the nature and strength of relationships between the antecedents and the consequence.
3. Determine the best predictor(s) of the consequence, job satisfaction.

Procedures

Population and Sample: The target population of the study was the married vocational agriculture teachers and their spouses in the 13 states comprising the Northeast Region designated by the NVATA. Due to difficulty in identifying married teachers, the population for sampling was the teachers listed in each state's most current directory of vocational agriculture teachers ($N = 1,541$). A sample size of 212 was determined to be necessary for statistical representativeness using Cochran's proportional formula (1977). With an expected 75% response rate and 212 questionnaires

needed for a statistically representative sample, 283 teachers were randomly selected to receive questionnaires. A cover letter and questionnaire was sent to teachers and upon return of the survey instruments, only data provided by married teachers were analyzed.

Instrumentation: In order to study the relationships between the vocational agriculture teacher's and his/her spouse's marital satisfaction and the job satisfaction of the teacher, two previously developed and validated questionnaires that would facilitate accomplishing the objectives of this study were selected. Based on a review of previous research using these instruments and subsequent confirmation by a panel of experts consisting of selected faculty in the College of Agriculture and Forestry the content measured by the two instruments selected, the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, was judged to be valid and suitable to the population being studied. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of .96 obtained for the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire and .94 for the Dyadic Adjustment Scale were consistent with reliability coefficients of the scales noted in previous studies.

Data Collection: The Purdue Teacher Opinionaire and two copies of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (one for the teacher, the other for the spouse) and a request for additional demographic data, were assembled into a booklet and mailed with a cover letter to the selected teachers. The original mailing, a follow-up letter, and a final mailing which included another questionnaire resulted in return of 152 questionnaires, of which 113 (53% response rate) were from teachers who were married. To test for nonresponse bias, a χ^2 test analysis of early and late respondents (Miller & Smith, 1983) was utilized. Since no statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) were found between the two groups and using the logic that late respondents are most like non-respondents, results of the study were generalized to the target population of married secondary agriculture teachers and their spouses in the Northeast Region of the NVATA.

Results

Objective 1: Ninety-two percent of the teachers responding were males (Table 1). Thirty-one percent reported earning less than \$25,000 per year, while almost 42% earned over \$30,000 per year. A majority of the teachers held 11 or 12 month employment contracts. Almost 56% of the teachers held at least a Masters degree, while slightly less than 50 percent of the spouses held at least a Bachelors degree. Most of the teachers lived in a residence with a rural location. Almost 57% of the spouses were employed full-time outside the home, and 77% of the couples reported having children living at home.

Respondents had taught a mean of 15.5 years and reported spending more than 45 hours per week on the job (Table 2). The average age of teachers was 40 years of age, whereas the average age of spouses was 38 years. Couples had been married an average of 15 years. There was no difference between the mean marital satisfaction score of teachers and that of the spouses. The marital satisfaction scores of the couples in this study (113) were consistent with those found in validation studies for the instrument. The mean job satisfaction score of 272 out of a possible 400 indicates that the teachers were fairly satisfied with their jobs.

Objective 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients were computed to describe the relationships between the job satisfaction scores of the secondary agriculture teachers and the marital satisfaction scores of the teachers, the marital satisfaction scores of the spouses and the demographic characteristics. The antecedents and their corresponding correlation coefficients with teacher job satisfaction are presented in Table 3.

Objective 3: To determine the best predictor(s) of the consequence, a stepwise multiple regression technique was employed. Some antecedents were dummy coded when necessary to allow their entry into the stepwise analysis. Antecedents were entered into the stepwise regression equation according to the strength of relationship with the consequence. A significance level of .05 was chosen for entry into and removal from the model regardless of the strength or direction of the relationship.

Data in Table 4 indicate the set of best predictors of teacher job satisfaction, in order of significance, were the income category of earning less than \$25,000 per year, the spouse's marital satisfaction and the presence of children living at home. The total proportion of variance accounted for was 24.95% ($R^2 = .2495$). The best overall predictor was the earning of less than \$25,000 per year.

Table 1
Frequencies for Selected Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	104	92.0
Female	9	8.0
Salary		
< \$25,000/year	35	31.0
\$25,000 to \$30,000/year	31	27.4
> \$30,000/year	47	41.6
Teacher's Level of Education		
Bachelors	19	16.8
Bachelors +15	31	27.4
Masters	31	27.4
Masters +15	11	9.7
Higher than Masters +15	21	18.6
Spouse's Level of Education		
High School	57	50.4
Bachelors	38	33.6
Masters	12	10.3
Higher than Masters	6	5.3
Teaching Contract Length		
9 months	11	9.7
10 months	27	23.9
11 months	20	17.7
12 months	55	48.7
Location of Residence		
Rural - farm	59	52.2
Rural - non-farm	26	23.0
Town	10	8.8
City	14	12.8
No response	4	3.5
Spouse Employment		
Full time (40 hrs./wk.)	64	56.6
Less than full time	23	20.4
Not employed	26	23.0
Regularly Attend Church or Religious Activities with Spouse		
Yes	77	68.1
No	36	31.9
Children Living at Home		
Yes	87	77.0
No	26	23.0

Table 2
Means for Selected Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Mean	SD
Years Teaching	15.5	8.9
Teachers in Department	2.6	1.7
Students in School	938.8	744.4
Hours of Work per Week	45.7	8.7
Teacher's Age	40.3	9.9
Spouse's Age	38.1	9.2
Years Married	15.3	10.3
Job Satisfaction Total Score	272.3*	30.2
Teacher's Marital Satisfaction Score	113.8**	16.0
Spouse's Marital Satisfaction Score	113.8**	15.5

*Total possible score = 400 **Total possible score = 151.

Table 3
Relationships Between Job Satisfaction and Antecedents

Antecedent	r	Antecedent	r
Years Teaching	.32	Spouse's Age	.30
Teaching Contract Length	.16	Children at Home	-.16
Income Level of < \$25,000/year	-.40	Teacher Education Level of BS	-.15
Income Level of \$25 - \$30,000/year	.07	Teacher Education Level of BS +15	-.04
Income Level of > \$30,000/year	.31	Teacher Education Level of MS	-.12
Teacher's Marital Satisfaction	.25	Teacher Education Level of MS +15	.15
Years Married	.29	Teacher Education Level of > MS +15	.21
Spouse Education Level of HS	.14	Teacher's Age	.32
Spouse Education Level of BS	-.27	Spouse's Marital Satisfaction	.28
Spouse Education Level of MS	-.05	Number of Teachers in Department	.01
Number of Hours Teacher Works/Wk	-.11	Number of Hours Spouse Works/Wk	.10
Spouse Employment	.07	Gender	-.27
Rural Farm Residence	-.27	Rural Non-farm Residence	.02
Town Residence	.14	City Residence	.04
Joint Involve. in Religious Activities	-.11		

Table 4
Stepwise Multiple Regression of Teacher Job Satisfaction

Antecedent	r	Mult. R	R ²	R ² Incr.	F
Income Level of < \$25,000/year	-.40	.4052	.1642	.1642	18.67
Spouse's Marital Satisfaction	.28	.4629	.2143	.0501	12.82
Children Living at Home	-.16	.4995	.2495	.0352	10.31

p < .05.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Secondary agriculture teachers in the Northeast Region of NVATA had moderate levels of job satisfaction. Marital satisfaction of the teachers and spouses was high.

Findings of this study indicate that the job satisfaction of secondary agriculture teachers is not entirely dependent upon job related factors. Family attributes, particularly the marital satisfaction of the spouse, make a contribution to the job satisfaction expressed by teachers. Presence of children at home also factored in the job satisfaction of the teachers in this study. The demands on secondary agriculture teachers and the conflict between parental and professional responsibilities may account for the negative relationship between the presence of children in the family and job satisfaction.

Relationships between the antecedents and job satisfaction suggest that teachers, spouses and administrators need to be aware of the role family factors seem to have on job satisfaction.

Teacher salaries of less than \$25,000 per year showed a negative relationship with job satisfaction. Perhaps young teachers struggling to make ends meet perceive salary as influencing job satisfaction more than do older teachers at higher levels of the salary schedule.

Further research should be conducted on other antecedents which may predict a higher proportion of the variance in job satisfaction. In addition, comparisons of the job satisfaction of married and single secondary agriculture teachers and of the job satisfaction of secondary agriculture teachers with other teachers and administrators should be initiated.

References

- Albers, E. C. (1982). Job satisfaction and marital adjustment for dual-career couples with young children attending day care. (Doctoral dissertation, Texas Woman's University, 1981). Dissertation Abstracts International, 42(08A), 3435.
- Alexander, P. A. (1985). The forgotten other: A study of medical residents'wives. (Doctoral dissertation, California School of Professional Psychology). Dissertation Abstracts International, 46(04B), 1323.
- Anderson, K. J. (1984). An investigation of some predictors of marital satisfaction. (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Iowa, 1983). Dissertation Abstracts International, 44(12A), 3596.
- Cochran, W. G. (1977). Sampling techniques (3rd ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Cooper, E. L. & Nelson, C. L. (1981, July). Professionalism: Spouse and house. The Agricultural Education Magazine, 54(1), 17-18.
- Coughlin, M. T., Lawrence, L. D., Gartin, S. A., & Templeton, M. E. (1987). Benefits and problems experienced by spouses of vocational agriculture teachers in West Virginia. Journal of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture, 29(1), 53-57.
- Mattox, K. E. (1974, December). Why teachers quit. The Agricultural Education Magazine, 47(6), 140-142. Miller, L.E. & Smith, K.L. (1983). Handling non-response issues. Journal of Extension, 21, 45-50.
- Straquadine, G. S. (1985). Marital satisfaction as perceived by the spouses of vocational agriculture teachers in New Mexico. Master's thesis, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces.