

Benefits, Barriers and Impact of the Kansas FFA Affiliate Fee Program

Zachary Callaghan
Kansas State University
315 Umberger Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506
785-532-1166
zcallaghan@ksu.edu

Dr. Gaea Hock
Kansas State University
315 Umberger Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506
785-532-1166
ghock@ksu.edu

Benefits, Barriers and Impact of the Kansas FFA Affiliate Fee Program

Introduction/Need for Research

The National FFA Affiliation Fee Program began in 2009. This program allows chapters to include all of their members under one fee payment rather than collecting dues from each student. The rationale for the program is to lessen the cost of joining the organization and to equalize opportunities available for students (National FFA, 2016). In Kansas, cost is determined by a sliding scale system (Kansas FFA, 2012). This program is currently voluntary for Kansas FFA chapters ($N = 200$; $n = 30$), but the state plans to require participation in the near future. Research is needed to better understand the perceptions of benefits, barriers, and impact of this program in Kansas and across the country.

Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) served as the theoretical framework for this study. His theory states that behavioral, normative, and control beliefs shape our intentions and, therefore, our behaviors. According to Ajzen, behavioral beliefs generate positive or negative attitudes toward the behavior. Normative beliefs are what people think others believe and bring about a perceived subjective norm. A control belief is one's perceived behavioral regulation or control. We used this theory to examine how teachers' beliefs about the FFA Affiliation Fee program shape their behaviors (whether or not they use it).

Methodology

A qualitative study was conducted last year and findings from that research informed the development of a survey instrument for this study. Three research questions guided this study: RQ1. What are the benefits of the Affiliate Fee Program? RQ2. What are the barriers to becoming an affiliate chapter? RQ3. What is the impact of a state-wide affiliate program? A panel of experts was used to verify the instrument and establish content validity. Qualtrics was used to disseminate the instrument via email to all 237 agriculture teachers in the state with a response rate of 52% ($N = 123$). Nonresponse bias was evaluated by comparing the early and late respondents using an independent t-test and the two groups were not statistically significantly different. It should still be noted though, that the results of this study cannot be generalized across the nation due to it only being conducted in Kansas.

Of the 123 teachers who responded, 70% ($n = 86$) were teaching in Non-Affiliated FFA chapters, while 30% ($n = 37$) were teaching in Affiliated chapters. The number of respondents from affiliated chapters ($n = 37$) was higher than number of affiliated chapters ($n = 30$) because several of those chapters have more than one teacher who responded to the survey.

Results/Findings

The first research question sought to identify the benefits of the affiliate fee program. The majority of teachers indicated they somewhat or strongly agreed that several aspects of the program were beneficial to their chapter. Of the 37 teachers who responded to the survey questions and are advising Affiliated FFA chapters, 76% ($n = 25$) of them believe that the program gives students easier access to FFA, 68% ($n = 25$) say it benefits students of low socioeconomic class, and 68% ($n = 25$) would agree that it allows students taking an agriculture class solely for a high school or college class credit to have more opportunities to become

involved with FFA. Additionally, 67% ($n = 24$) of those teachers believe that it is easier to pay for the entire chapter's dues rather than collecting money from each student, 62% ($n = 23$) would say that the program helps to complete the Agricultural Education 3-circle model, 51% ($n = 19$) say that it has made FFA a larger part of their curriculum, and 47% ($n = 17$) agree that it has increased student participation at various chapter events.

The second research question investigated the barriers to becoming an affiliated chapter. When teachers, who are currently using the program, were asked if the program would increase how active their chapter members were, 33% ($n = 12$) strongly or somewhat disagreed, while 39% neither agreed nor disagreed that it would increase activity. When asked if the program would decrease the students' awareness of their membership in the FFA, 43% ($n = 16$) strongly or somewhat agreed that it would and 27% neither agreed nor disagreed. When all teachers were asked what barriers existed with the program, 87% ($n = 107$) responded and listed several barriers, including: cost of program, administration/parent acceptance, and that not all the students will participate in FFA.

The final research question sought to understand the impact of a state-wide affiliate program. Less than half of the respondents (47%, $n = 57$) recommend that the state require affiliate membership for all chapters. On the other hand, of the non-affiliated teachers ($N = 86$) 49% ($n = 42$) strongly or somewhat agreed that they would at least consider transitioning to affiliated status. Almost two-thirds of respondents (62%, $n = 76$) believe that participation at district, state, and national FFA events would remain the same regardless of affiliation status.

Conclusions

The decision to convert or not convert to an Affiliated FFA chapter is the behavior exhibited by teachers and seems to be largely dependent on their beliefs toward the Affiliation Fee Program, just as Ajzen's theory (Ajzen, 1985) states. Teachers indicated more negative connotation in regards to the barriers when compared to the positive aspects of the benefits. As a result, they are choosing not to implement this program. This does not necessarily mean that it is a bad program, but benefits are possibly being overlooked due to the negative perceptions held among teachers.

Overall, this program provides many benefits, such as giving students easier access to FFA and benefiting students of lower socioeconomic status. There are also barriers, such as cost and decreasing students' awareness of their membership in FFA. If a state-wide affiliate program were to be implemented, teachers believe that participation on nearly every level would stay about the same. Teachers are fairly divided on the issue with slightly less than half wanting to see a state-wide program.

Implications/Recommendations/Impact on Profession

These results were shared with the state's agricultural education consultant at the Kansas Department of Education and the Kansas FFA Executive Secretary. It would be important to note here that approximately one month after concluding this study, the Kansas FFA association voted on implementing a state-wide Affiliation program and delegates failed the motion by a large margin. If this motion were to come up again at some point in the future, which is likely, the state association will be able to use these results to address concerns of teachers. These results could also be shared with teachers and FFA associations in other states.

References

- Ajzen I. (1985) *From Intentions to Actions: A Theory of Planned Behavior*. In: Kuhl J., Beckmann J. (eds) *Action Control*. SSSP Springer Series in Social Psychology. Springer: Berlin.
- Kansas FFA Executive Committee. (2012, August 11). *Kansas Affiliate Chart* [PDF].
- National FFA Organization. (2016). *Affiliation Fee Program Frequently Asked Questions* [PDF]. Indianapolis, IN: National FFA Organization.