

School-Based Agricultural Education Teachers Support Needs

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Introduction and Theoretical Framework

In an effort to build and maintain complete and comprehensive agricultural education programs, school-based agricultural education (SBAE) teachers must prioritize an exorbitant number of tasks, potentially adding to the overwhelming workload required to manage a successful and comprehensive SBAE program (Best et al., 2023). Twenty-first century societal pressures and educational policy further exacerbate SBAE teachers' professional workload, thus reducing job satisfaction and increasing teacher burnout, often resulting in mental, physical, and emotional stress, thus driving the ill-being of SBAE teachers (Doss et al., 2023; Marsh et al., 2023; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Such a system conflicts with the recommendation of Eck et al. (2019), who posited that leading a balanced life is critical for SBAE teachers to develop career-specific human capital to be effective in their role and maintain adequate job satisfaction. Establishing healthy boundaries, personal wellness, and work-life balance are essential components of maintaining a balanced life as an SBAE teacher (Eck et al., 2019; Shoulders et al., 2021). However, despite SBAE teachers' mental, physical, and emotional career-related stress being well-documented (Doss et al., 2023; Marsh et al., 2023; Marsh et al., 2024; Shoulders et al., 2021), little is known about the extent of the personal needs of SBAE teachers to bridge and support these gaps to increase job satisfaction, promote teacher wellness, and reduce teacher attrition (Doss et al., 2023; Eck & Edwards, 2019; Marsh et al., 2023; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

While a valid instrument exists to evaluate these components, the specific support needs of SBAE teachers are still unknown (Marsh et al., 2024). Therefore, this study aimed to identify the humanistic needs of SBAE teachers, which was guided by the overarching question of, what is the current level of SBAE teachers' support needs based on the SBAE model of support instrument? This inquiry is supported by the *Conceptual Model of Support for SBAE Teachers* was used to provide a human lens (Marsh et al., 2023). The conceptual framework is grounded in *Maslow's Hierarchy for Teachers* (Fisher & Royster, 2016), *The Three-Component Model for Agricultural Education* (FFA, n.d.), and *The Effective Teaching Model for SBAE Teachers* (Eck et al., 2019), which provides researchers a lens to identify the level of SBAE teachers needs within their professional roles and responsibilities to provide opportunities to develop their career-specific human capital and increase job satisfaction and career retention.

Methods/Procedures

In-service SBAE teachers in Region II of the National Association of Agricultural Educators (i.e., Arkansas, Louisiana, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) were the population of interest ($N = 3729$) for this study (Privitera, 2013). A researcher developed email frame was established using existing listservs and publicly available email addresses from the seven states. Recruitment emails were personalized by the state and included three reminders following the recommendations of Dillman et al. (2014). The 46-item instrument used in this study is a validated instrument representing the 21st century job satisfaction and personal human capital needs of SBAE teachers (Marsh et al., 2024). The five defined instrument support components represent the essential support needs of SBAE teachers, including *personal needs* represented by 17 items, 15 *intracurricular needs* items, seven *relationship needs* items, five *classroom and instructional needs*, and two items focused on *school-based support needs* (Marsh et al., 2024).

Survey instruments were distributed to the population of interest, asking SBAE teachers to identify the current level of ability on a five-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = never/high need and 5 = always/low need). Data collection resulted in 553 emails being returned undeliverable and 581 SBAE teachers participating, resulting in an 18.3% response rate. Unfortunately, only 257 instruments were complete for data analysis. Given the low response rate, non-response bias was addressed by comparing early to late respondents based off the recommendations of Lindner et al. (2001), finding no difference between respondent groups. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 was used for data analysis for descriptive statistics and calculations of summated need scores.

Results/Findings

To determine the current level of SBAE teachers' support needs based on the SBAE model of support instrument, summated scores across the 46-items were calculated. Summated score ranges were aligned with the *Model of Support for SBAE Teachers* hierarchy with potential scores ranging from 46 to 230 for the complete instrument. Scores less than 79 represent a *subsistence* level of needs, 80 to 119 represent security, 120 to 159 represent association, 160 to 199 represent *respect*, and *self-actualization* is represented by scores greater than 200. Composite mean scores from the participants ($n = 257$) ranged from a low of 78 to a high of 230, with a mean of 162.06 ($SD = 30.42$) for all 46 items. The composite mean score represents a corresponding level of *respect* within the *Model of Support for SBAE Teachers* based on participant responses.

Conclusions/ Discussion/ Implications

The overall mean needs scores for SBAE teachers align at the level of *respect* within the *Model of Support for SBAE Teachers*, with scores ranging from 78 to 230, indicating that participants vary greatly on their current level of support needed within the profession (Marsh et al., 2023). The span of needs identified within the study demonstrates that evaluating participants alignment within the hierarchy can provide insight needed to better address the depth of SBAE teacher's career-specific human capital needs (Eck et al., 2019; Marsh et al., 2023).

The supports that are essential for those at *subsistence* and *security* levels (i.e., scores of 119 or less), who are currently surviving within the profession, need support in managing and maintaining their daily practice. In addition, guidance and structure for developing the needed career-specific human capital needs to be retained within the profession (Eck et al., 2019; Fisher & Royster, 2016; Marsh et al., 2023) are essential for teachers at these levels. Could it be that these factors limit an individual's ability to ascend to higher levels within the hierarchy (Fisher & Royster, 2016; Marsh et al., 2023), ultimately impacting their career tenure? Participants aligning with the *association* level are in need of collaboration and belonging within the profession while continuing to develop competency as effective SBAE teachers managing complete programs (Eck et al., 2019; Fisher & Royster, 2016; Marsh et al., 2023). It is recommended that the model of support instrument be used for mentoring and developing preservice and inservice SBAE teachers.

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