

**The Daily Grind: Assessing Male and Female Agricultural Educators' Perceived Job Satisfaction**

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## **Introduction, Purpose, and Objectives**

School-based agricultural education (SBAE) has impacted millions of students since its inception. Unfortunately, one of the largest threats to this impact is the lack of qualified educators entering the classroom (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). The challenge of recruiting and retaining high-quality educators has plagued the profession for decades (Lemons et al., 2015). One of the main factors affecting longevity in the SBAE profession is a lack of job satisfaction, which can lead to burnout (Sorensen et al., 2016). This sense of burnout is caused by a variety of factors, such as FFA/SAE duties (Traini et al., 2019), compassion fatigue from emotionally supporting students (Schmidt et al., 2022), and balancing the numerous duties associated with operating a successful SBAE program (Shoulders & Toland, 2017). While the job satisfaction of SBAE teachers has been studied, there is a lack of knowledge on the differences in how male and female educators perceive their job satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of male and female agricultural educators on their job satisfaction. The following research objectives guided this study:

- 1.) Assess statistical differences between the job satisfaction of male and female agricultural educators.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the motivator-hygiene theory (MHT). The MHT suggests that various factors influence job satisfaction, and they can be manipulated to improve overall fulfillment (Herzberg et al., 1959). This study sought to identify specific factors influencing job satisfaction among male and female agricultural educators.

## **Methodology**

This study was guided by a descriptive correlational research design and evaluated agricultural educators' job satisfaction. The instrument was distributed via Qualtrics to educators in four states- Oklahoma, Montana, Virginia, and Louisiana- and systematic sampling was utilized to select every third agricultural educator in each state. The study's frame consisted of 608 educators, with 249 in Oklahoma, 61 in Montana, 165 in Virginia, and 133 in Louisiana. Overall, we had 127 responses for a 20.9% response rate, with 31 incomplete responses. These incomplete responses were missing critical data and were excluded from parametric statistical analysis, which provided 96 usable responses. Within the 96 usable responses, there were 51 male respondents and 45 female respondents. To increase the response rate, the survey was distributed electronically with three weekly reminder emails following the initial distribution (Dillman et al., 2014).

The instrument utilized in this study was modified from the Abridged Job Descriptive Index (AJDI) developed by Stanton et al. (2002). This index evaluates overall job satisfaction using five factors (Work, Compensation, Promotion, Supervision, and Coworkers) with five descriptors for each factor. This instrument measured these five factors for the three components

of agricultural education (Classroom Instruction, FFA, and SAE) to assess job satisfaction. The participants in the study were provided a descriptor and asked to rate how often they felt that emotion toward the factor using a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Always*. The researchers chose not to conduct a pilot study to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument because the AJDI has been previously assessed by Stanton et al. (2002). To assess the instrument's validity for this audience, a committee of two New Mexico State University faculty was assembled to assess the instrument, which was deemed acceptable for this study. Furthermore, the instruments' reliability was evaluated *post hoc* using reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha). The reliability coefficient for Classroom Instruction was .88, FFA was .88, and SAE was .88. To accurately assess reliability with Cronbach's alpha, negatively worded descriptors were reverse-coded for the analysis. According to Ary et al. (2010), these reliability coefficients meet the minimum threshold for a reliable instrument. The data for this study was analyzed using SPSS version 28.0. Independent samples *t*-tests were utilized to execute the research objective. To effectively analyze Likert data using parametric statistics, groups of five more items should be grouped to form constructs (Johnson & Creech, 1983; Norman, 2010). This study utilized five descriptors within all five job satisfaction factors to analyze fulfillment within classroom instruction, FFA, and SAE. To effectively use independent samples *t*-tests, the negatively worded descriptors were reverse-coded in the analysis.

## Results

This study's research objective was to assess the job satisfaction of male and female agricultural educators using independent samples *t*-tests. The analysis suggests that male agricultural educators (Classroom Instruction,  $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = .56$ ; FFA,  $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = .54$ ; SAE,  $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = .58$ ) have significantly more job satisfaction in classroom instruction ( $t(94) = .22$ ,  $p = .03$ ; FFA  $t(94) = 2.81$ ,  $p = .006$ ; and SAE  $t(94) = 3.29$ ,  $p = .001$ ) than female agricultural educators (Classroom Instruction,  $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .36$ ; FFA,  $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = .39$ ; SAE,  $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = .41$ ). Overall, the means roughly correspond to the *Sometimes* to *Often* descriptors which suggest educators are generally satisfied with their career.

## Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

From these findings, job satisfaction was lower for female agricultural educators in every aspect of a school-based agricultural educator's role (classroom instruction, FFA, and SAE). This is highly concerning considering the continual increase in the number of females entering agricultural educator roles (Foster, 2003; Smith et al., 2024). To encourage retention of a significant portion of the agricultural educator population, it is imperative to ensure female agricultural educators are satisfied in their careers. For practice, we recommend that supervisors and administrators of female SBAE teachers closely consider aspects of motivator-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) like administrative practices, quality of supervision, and building rapport between supervision and staff to reduce job dissatisfaction among females. We also recommend additional research to gain a deeper understanding about this phenomenon. Qualitative interviews among female SBAE teachers could provide detailed insight into the reasons why they are less satisfied with their current roles when compared to their male counterparts.

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