

FACTORS INFLUENCING JOB DECISIONS OF MALE
COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS IN OKLAHOMA

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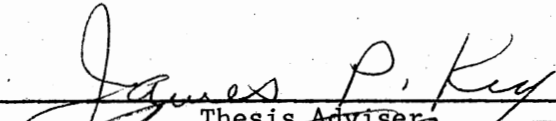
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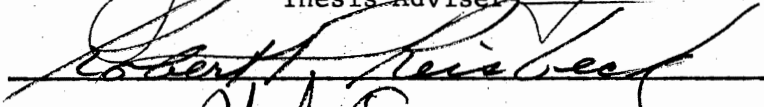
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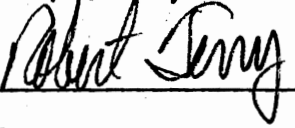


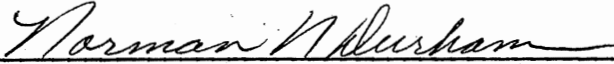
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural education today is more important to agriculture than ever before due to the changing society in which we live. Education is a process which starts when a child is born and continues until his time on earth is over. The Cooperative Extension Service is a vehicle by which people of all ages may continue their educational process. In Oklahoma, the Oklahoma State University Extension Service has 77 county extension centers, one located in each county across Oklahoma. College graduates with degrees in agriculture, home economics and related fields staff these county extension field offices, and conduct educational programs in the county as a "front door" to Oklahoma State University. These programs take the form of short courses conducted in the county, educational clinics, training sessions, field trips, and face-to-face contacts. County extension centers have helped keep men, women and children abreast of changes in society and an adequate number of educated, trained, qualified personnel are required to keep extension work fully staffed.

Statement of Problem

In Oklahoma, more and more extension field personnel retire, transfer to other jobs in extension, or leave extension work each year. One of the major tasks of extension administrators has been to keep morale

high and unnecessary job turnovers at a minimum, while another task has been to relocate, rehire, and retrain qualified college graduates as personnel changes occur. Another task of the administrator has been to help create the best possible work environment for his co-workers to function in, thus allowing them to reach job satisfaction and keep job morale at a high level. Again, extension field personnel change jobs, retire, or resign for varied reasons, and, while many times field personnel change jobs for good cause, unnecessary turnovers do occur and must be held at a minimum. Therefore, the central problem dealt with in this study is the turnover of extension personnel and the factors influencing job decisions of male field extension staff in Oklahoma.

Purpose

The major purpose of this study was to gather and analyze selected information from male extension field agents in Oklahoma dealing with job satisfaction and morale problems. This information could be used to help keep unnecessary resignations and job transfers at a minimum and to help insure an adequate supply of county extension male workers.

Objectives

In order that the purpose of the study be achieved, the following needed to be determined:

1. The geographic areas from which male county extension agents in Oklahoma came to the extension service.
2. The people which have most influenced job decisions of male county extension agents in Oklahoma.
3. The factors which have most influenced job decisions of male

county extension agents in Oklahoma.

4. The aspects of cooperative extension work which are most satisfying to male county extension agents in Oklahoma.

5. The aspects of cooperative extension work which are least satisfying to male county extension agents in Oklahoma.

Assumptions

The following are assumptions which guided the conduct of the study:

1. That the male field extension staff surveyed was representative of male field extension staff in Oklahoma.

2. That the information gathered from male extension agents surveyed would provide greater perception in relocating, rehiring and solving morale staff problems in the future.

3. That the respondents when answering questionnaires gave honest expressions of their opinions.

4. That the practices and procedures listed in the questionnaires were considered familiar to the respondent.

5. That the survey conducted with Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service would give an accurate picture since it is the only land grant university extension service in the state.

Scope

1. The male extension agents surveyed were all those working in the 77 county extension offices in Oklahoma.

2. The geographic location of hometowns dealt with where male field extension agents had been reared.

Definition of Terms

Male County Extension Agents--This term was used to describe only the professional extension workers who are employed at the county level to conduct the county extension program. It includes male county extension directors, male county specialized agents, and the male extension agents--4-H and youth development. The term "extension agents" was used synonymously with "male county extension agents."

County Extension Director--This title was used to designate the extension field worker in each county who is directly responsible for the agriculture, rural development, home economics and 4-H programs. This person is also the head administrative officer in charge of the county staff.

County Specialized Agents--This title was used to designate those county extension personnel who are in charge of an area of specialization such as horticulture, entomology, animal science, etc.

Extension Agents 4-H and Youth Development--This title was used to designate all county extension agents who work primarily with the 4-H and youth development program.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher realizes that when studying personality traits and collecting data from other human beings, that the level of accuracy is not as great as those of the physical sciences; therefore, because of this limitation, caution in generalizing from the findings of this study should be heeded.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order that the author be better acquainted with some of the reasons for extension agent job satisfaction, job transfers, resignations, and possible backgrounds of agents, a review of literature was done.

The review's main areas of consideration were: the extension agents' personality traits and qualities, and factors influencing job decisions and job satisfaction of the extension agents.

Extension Agents' Personality Traits and Qualities

As extension agents get older, they tend to become more confident and planful. This was presented in a study done by Bajaj (1) in 1969. It was also brought out that extension agents whose fathers had greater status jobs were more reliant and independent. Bajaj also pointed out that participation in fraternal organizations played a major role in leadership development. Although, as county extension agents went higher up the administrative ladder, they tended to be less aggressive. In addition, he cited that the longer an extension agent had lived on a farm, the more the agent tended to be retiring in nature as well as slow in action and thought.

Bajaj (1) also pointed out a factor which affects where extension

agents might choose to work and live, in that county agents who liked more highly populated areas were more sociable, outgoing and enterprising in addition to being demanding, aggressive and filled with self-assurance.

Bajaj's study also revealed that county extension agents who were going after graduate degrees tended to be more enthusiastic and imaginative, and the most productive years were found to be between the ages of 30 to 50. On the other hand, as county extension agents got older, they tended to be less ambitious, more cautious and leisurely. In relation to this, extension agents involved in their work were more and more productive if total years of work was less than twenty. After working twenty years they tended to become conventional, self-defensive and apologetic. However, county extension agents with little or no years of experience were more alert and ambitious. County extension agents have been found to have vocational interests similar to farmers, forest rangers, YMCA directors and school superintendents; this was presented in a Virginia study by Moore (2).

Although extension agents may choose more or less populated areas--to live as Bajaj pointed out, and have vocational interests similar to farmers, as Moore revealed--the society in which extension educators work has gone from simple to complex, as pointed out in an article by Strother (3). Strother found that the extension programs today must serve a great variety of complex needs.

Strother (3) went on to say that the old-time county agent who was all-knowing, helpful and all things to all people is being replaced by a different type of county extension agent who is a knowledgeable professional. Strother listed six qualities of a professional county

extension agent.

First, the educator as an artist. The educator must be able to master the tools he works with while at the same time being able to convey the meaning of his work to others without changing the meaning. The extension agent then must be able to capture and hold the audience in a meeting and communicate in the best way possible for that meeting.

Secondly, Strother suggested that the extension agent be clear and simple, meaning that the educator use only the needed language to get the point across clearly while holding a secure grasp of his subject matter.

Third, the extension agent must continually be interested in his subject matter. Strother pointed out that it is fine to enjoy evenings watching television or playing cards, but when these things replace the desire of one's attention for his subject matter area, then the person is not a true professional any longer.

Fourth, breadth of vision. Strother suggested that on the other side of someone's interest dying out, there is a too-consuming interest in some small part of the world of knowledge. He also said that we need more extension agents who, although they cannot master a great many things, they can still fit them into life's scheme of things today.

Fifth, goal orientation. He revealed that it is important that the extension worker not lose sight of what his true job mission is; in other words, don't get tied up just counting heads and forget about the education of your clientele in the county.

Sixth, rapport. This suggested the ability to relate to people, understand needs of clientele, and how knowledge helps them meet those

needs. Strother (3) suggested that this not only means working with clientele but also relating to co-workers, policymakers and people in the community.

In summary of Strother's ideas, he suggested at least six qualities of a professional requiring constant grooming. They are: art, clarity, depth, breadth, good orientation, and rapport.

In a similar article by Swanson (4), professional standards were drawn for county extension workers to help evaluate their job performance. Swanson presented the following:

1. County extension agents be particularly skillful and proficient in their work. He further said that this requires two types of knowledge and skill.

- a. Those directly concerned with their own speciality or area of competence dealing with whatever subject the agent works with.

- b. Those connected with skills in understanding the extension philosophy, background, and educational process.

2. County extension agents have a strong sense of public responsibility.

3. County extension agents place service to others above service for self.

4. County extension agents be especially dedicated to their job and the job's meaning. Swanson elaborates that county extension agents should take pride in their work, and not degrade or criticize it.

5. County extension agents be self-directing and self-motivating. Also, be able to take full responsibility for one's actions and accept professional criticism. A professional county extension agent seeks counsel and advice but does not try to blame others for his mistakes.

6. County extension agents continually improve themselves. County extension agents should always be trying to gain more knowledge and should realize that they never know all there is to know.

7. County extension agents be concerned about and help co-workers improve their welfare.

8. County extension agents work within acceptable ethical standards. Swanson suggested six (6) such standards:

- a. Loyalty to co-workers.
- b. Don't gossip with others.
- c. Support professional organizations to which agents belong.
- d. Take care of grudges through proper channels.
- e. Meet professional obligations with co-workers.
- f. Advance only on own merit and not at co-workers' expense.

9. County extension agents be familiar with and know professional literature of the field.

10. County extension agents be willing to change job routine when called for by policymakers.

11. County extension agents believe in exchange of information.

12. County extension agents understand and use specific language used by the profession.

Swanson (4) concluded the article by saying that thoughts he has suggested are not complete nor universally accepted, although they might be a basis for more desirable standards and criteria for county extension agents.

Now that personality traits and qualities have been reviewed, the next step shall be to examine factors influencing job decisions and job satisfaction of county extension agents.

Factors Influencing Job Decision and Job Satisfaction

County extension agents who were most involved or committed to their work tended to be more outgoing, enterprising, ingenious, competitive, energetic, awake, productive and active. This was also concluded by Bajaj (1). However, in a similar study conducted by Worden (5) in a 1975 Kansas study, it was drawn that level of commitment was not highly related to effectiveness. Worden defined commitment as the dedication or devotion of an agent to his profession.

Worden suggested that county extension agents who were more comfortable and secure in their social relationships in their counties had longer job tenure or stayed longer in that county. She also concluded that possibly the extension service did not allow some of the agents the creative freedom they desired so they resigned from extension work. Worden also concluded that county extension agents who don't feel comfortable with their own self-images and aspirations and who also are not comfortable in working on improving social relations tend to be the least satisfied with their jobs, and thus were more likely to resign or transfer jobs.

In a Missouri study to determine why extension 4-H youth agents resigned or changed positions, Henderson (6) revealed that no one single factor was responsible for county extension agents' resignations or job transfers, but he did uncover a number of factors or reasons why this occurred. Henderson listed the following:

1. A poor understanding by the agent when employed of what his duties and responsibilities were.

2. The county extension youth agent's position was regarded as a stepping stone to higher positions in county extension work.

3. A feeling of dissatisfaction with: (a) program support and leadership from the state 4-H staff; (b) the salary received was not satisfactory; (c) a lack of the proper formal education to prepare extension agents for working in the counties.

4. The county agents were working in an area of the state they did not want to live in.

5. The job position did not hold enough prestige.

6. County extension agents had the feeling that their opinions or ideas had little or no effect on policy decisions by policymakers in extension service.

Price (7) in an Arkansas extension field staff survey studying educational needs of extension agents revealed the following: competencies which were considered important to job satisfaction, fulfillment, and educational needs by more than 80 percent of the 233 county extension agents surveyed. The competencies were abilities to: analyze your own county situation, develop your own abilities in leadership, identify leadership on the county level, be able to organize effective program planning committees, involve lay clientele in program development, develop a long-range county extension program, identify problems and problem priorities, be able to make effective farm and home visits, be able to use effective teaching methods, and have an understanding of your job responsibilities and duties in the county.

Another important aspect of finding job satisfaction is the concept of job morale. Morale as defined by Webster (8) is:

Moral or mental condition with respect to courage, discipline, confidence, enthusiasm, willingness to endure hardship, etc.

within a group, in relation to a group, or within an individual (p. 554).

In a Georgia study by Johnson and Bledsoe (9), morale is said to be imprecise, but a highly important concept. They define morale as the emotional and mental reaction of a county extension worker to his job.

Furthermore, the level of an agent's job morale is determined by how much the agent's needs are satisfied and the extent to which the agent perceives that satisfaction coming from the entire job situation.

An agent's morale is described as high by Johnson and Bledsoe when interest and enthusiasm is shown for the job. They also said that important to job morale is what the agent believes and feels, rather than the way others may perceive job conditions.

Another important facet of job morale is the effect of the behavior of the leader in the county situation. Johnson and Bledsoe (9) conclude that an extension agent's morale is positively and significantly related to his perception of the county director in the county.

Also revealed in their study was the fact that white county extension agents had a significantly higher morale than black extension agents. In addition to this, agents with 15 or more years of service had a higher morale than agents with 6 to 15 years of extension service, who in turn had a higher morale score than agents with 5 years or less extension service.

In summary of Johnson and Bledsoe's study, extension agents' morale and leader behavior of the county director were significantly and highly related.

Length of service in extension also is a factor found to be one of the most critical in extension agents' morale scores. Extension agents

with 5 years or less had the lowest morale scores, followed by the group with 6 to 15 years of service; the highest morale seems held by those with more than 15 years of service in county extension work.

Thus, the authors concluded that as agents gain favorable experience in extension work and as professional expectations are met, then the probability of them studying with county extension work is increased.

As indicated earlier in the review of literature, job satisfaction and good morale are important in all organizations including cooperative extension work. This is the same idea expressed by Giegold and Skelton (10) in a 1976 article dealing with pinpointing morale problems in extension work. They say that poor morale, even if not recognized, contributed to increased personnel turnover, lowered job effectiveness and a greater struggle to keep cooperative extension fully staffed.

They identified six top-ranked job features in their study as "important" and as "deficient" on the job. The top six important factors on the job were:

- a. Pleasant co-workers
- b. Seeing results
- c. Interesting work
- d. Opportunity for growth
- e. Sound management policies
- f. Good supervision

The top six deficient job factors were:

- a. Promotion
- b. Pleasant working conditions and surroundings
- c. Getting credit for work done
- d. Sound management policies

- e. Good supervision
- f. Pleasant co-workers

These factors appeared in both columns:

- a. Sound management policies
- b. Good supervision
- c. Pleasant co-workers

These factors were the most important in the ratings, but occur the least.

The authors also identified the fact that there is no substitute for the individual employee-manager relationship as the greatest source of the employee's morale, be it high or low.

In summary, Giegold and Skelton (10) concluded that a higher degree of motivating factors will help to cancel out possible morale weakening effects such as salary or supervision, or at least make them seem less irritating.

Summary

This review of literature has shown some of the personality traits, qualities and standards of county extension agents. As mentioned earlier, as extension agents get older they tend to become more confident and planful. This review also showed that the most productive years of an extension agent were between the ages of 30 to 50 years, and county agents valued their work more and were more productive if they had worked less than twenty years, whereas agents going past twenty years of service tended to be less ambitious, more cautious and leisurely.

County extension agents were found to have vocational interests similar to farmers, yet another study revealed that the county extension

agents' society in which they work has gone from simple to complex. This suggests that the old-time county agents who were all-knowing about all subjects, all-helpful, and all things to all people are being replaced by knowledgeable professionals.

The professional county extension worker today was suggested by Strother (3) to need six qualities which require continual grooming.

They were that agents:

- a. Be skillful and proficient in their work;
- b. Have a strong sense of public responsibility;
- c. Place service to others above self;
- d. Be dedicated to their job;
- e. Be self-directing and motivating;
- f. Continually improve oneself;
- g. Be concerned about co-workers' welfare;
- h. Work within ethical standards;
- i. Be familiar with professional literature;
- j. Be willing to change job routing;
- k. Believe in exchange of information;
- l. Understand and use specific language used by the profession.

The review of literature then identified factors influencing job decisions and job satisfaction. The review showed that county extension agents who were most involved or committed to their work tended to be more outgoing, enterprising, competitive, productive, and active; yet another study revealed that level of commitment was not highly related to effectiveness. The review also showed that county extension agents who were more comfortable and secure socially in their counties tended to have longer job tenure in that county. The review also

pointed out that one cause of resignations by county extension agents was the lack of creative freedom the agents desired. Finally, the review concluded that county extension agents who are not comfortable with their own self-images and aspirations tended to be less satisfied with their job, thus were more likely to resign or transfer jobs.

The review revealed another study which indicated that no one factor alone was responsible for county extension agents' resignations or transfers, but the review did uncover several factors why resignations or job transfers occur. They were:

- a. Poor understanding of the agent when hired as to what duties and responsibilities are;
- b. The extension youth position was regarded as a stepping stone to a higher extension position;
- c. Dissatisfaction with program support from state;
- d. Salary and lack of formal education to prepare agents for working in the counties;
- e. The agent was working in an area of the state he did not prepare to live in;
- f. The job did not hold enough prestige;
- g. Agents had the feeling that opinions or ideas from field had little or no effect on policy decisions.

The review also examined the role job morale played in job satisfaction. It revealed that morale is imprecise but a highly important concept. The level of job morale was determined by how much the county agents' needs are satisfied and the extent the agent perceives satisfaction coming from the entire job situation.

Morale is described as high when interest and enthusiasm is shown for the job.

The review showed that job morale was closely related to the behavior of the county director in that morale is positively and significantly related to the agents' perception of the county director in the county. The review also related that county agents with 5 years or less had lower morale, followed by the group of agents with 6 to 15 years service, followed by the highest morale group, 15 years service and over. The review concluded that as county extension agents gain favorable experiences in extension work and as professional expectations are met, then the probability of them staying with county extension work is increased.

The review of literature pointed out that poor job morale, even if not recognized, contributed to increased personnel turnover, lowered job effectiveness, and a greater struggle to keep extension staffed. It was found that, ultimately, there is no substitute for the individual employee-manager relationship as the greatest source of employees' morale.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The major purpose of this study was to determine and analyze selected information gathered from male county extension field agents in Oklahoma which might be helpful in relocating and rehiring of male county extension agents, and dealing with job satisfaction and morale problems in order to keep unnecessary resignations and job transfers at a minimum to help insure an adequate supply of extension male county workers. Five specific objectives were formulated and served as guidelines for the design and operation of the investigation. The objectives needed to be determined were as follows:

1. The geographic areas from which male county extension agents in Oklahoma come to the extension service.
2. The people which have most influenced job decisions of male county extension agents in Oklahoma.
3. The factors which have most influenced job decisions of male county extension agents in Oklahoma.
4. The aspects of cooperative extension work which are most satisfying to male county extension agents in Oklahoma.
5. The aspects of cooperative extension work which are least satisfying to male county extension agents in Oklahoma.

In order that the geographic areas be determined, each respondent on a questionnaire was asked to list his original hometown. This data

provided an indication of areas providing a large number of male county extension agents and those supplying a small number of male county extension agents; thus the hometown of each male county extension worker was obtained. These hometowns of male extension workers were listed and also marked on an Oklahoma map.

A questionnaire was developed with help from a review of related literature and instruments developed by other researchers. Inputs from advisory committee, fellow classmates, and state extension staff were also given consideration.

The questionnaire was used to determine the background of male extension agents, most and least satisfying aspect of cooperative extension work, and people which have most influenced job decisions of male extension agents in Oklahoma.

The sample included 110 male county extension personnel which were employed by the Oklahoma State Extension Service in Spring, 1978. The questionnaire was mailed out with the help of the Staff Development Specialist and Head of Cooperative Extension Service in Oklahoma. An attached letter explaining the purpose of the study accompanied the questionnaire.

The data was evaluated by using the frequency of responses and a five-point Likert scale. The different categories for responses were as follows: "very great," "great," "some," "little," and "none." Next, values of 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 were given from "very great" on through "none" so that the mean could be calculated. The data scored from the personnel data of the instrument were tabulated using total responses given. Next the total responses in each category were multiplied by the numerical value given to that category.

These numerical values were totaled up and then averaged to give an average numerical score for each response. Real numerical limits were given to each category of responses to aid comparison of these responses. The scale used to calculate the mean responses of the respondents as to amount of influence people and factor had on their job decision to enter cooperative extension work is as follows:

<u>Response Categories as to Extent of Influence</u>	<u>Numerical Value</u>	<u>Range of Actual Limits for Categories</u>
Very Great	4	3.5 - 4.00
Great	3	2.5 - 3.49
Some	2	1.5 - 2.49
Little	1	0.5 - 1.49
None	0	0.0 - 0.49

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary and analysis of the results of the study. Findings are presented in both tabular and narrative forms.

The researcher mailed a total of 110 questionnaires to male county extension workers located all over Oklahoma. Approximately 91 percent of the questionnaires were completed and returned by mail; thus, the data in this section represents responses of 100 male county Oklahoma extension agents in Spring, 1978.

Hometown Data on Male County Extension

Agents in Oklahoma

The data in this section represent 100 male county extension agents. The information listed in Table I gives the original hometowns of the extension agents who were employed in the Spring of 1978, and the number of agents from each town were listed.

Further investigation of the data revealed that the male county extension agents in Oklahoma were from 77 different towns in Oklahoma. Nine of the agents in Oklahoma were from out of the state of Oklahoma. There were no real areas of concentration that supplied extension agents; the hometowns were evenly distributed throughout the state.

Closer inspection of the data revealed that the largest number of

TABLE I

HOMETOWN DATA ON OKLAHOMA MALE COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS IN SPRING, 1978

N	Town	N	Town	N	Town	N	Town
1	Alex	1	Hartshorne	1	Okemah	<u>Out of State:</u>	
1	Anadarko	1	Homestead	2	Pawnee	1	Ashdown, Arkansas
1	Arnett	1	Hominy	1	Pocassat	1	Quincy, Illinois
1	Bennington	1	Hunter	1	Ponca City	1	Lyons, Kansas
1	Bixby	1	Idabel	1	Prague	1	Arlington, Mass.
1	Blackwell	2	Indianoma	1	Purcell	1	Edgar Springs, Missouri
1	Blair	1	Kingfisher	1	Ralston	2	Neosho, Missouri
1	Bokoshe	1	Langston	4	Ringling	1	Paris, Texas
1	Boley	1	Laverne	1	Rush Springs	1	Perryton, Texas
1	Broken Arrow	1	Lawton	1	Ryan		
1	Broken Bow	1	Lindsey	1	Smithville		
1	Caddo	2	Locust Grove	1	Stratford		
1	Carmen	1	Madill	1	Stigler		
1	Charita	2	Mangum	1	Stroud		
1	Claremore	2	Marlow	1	Tahlequah		
2	Clinton	1	Maysville	2	Tipton		
2	Cushing	1	Minco	1	Tulsa		
1	Duncan	1	Mounds	1	Valliant		
1	Durham	1	Mt. Park	1	Vian		
1	Elk City	1	Morrison	1	Vinita		
2	Elmore City	1	Nardin	1	Willow		
1	Enid	1	Newcastle	1	Wilson		
1	Fitzhugh	1	Noble	2	Woodward		
1	Fort Gibson	1	Norman	1	Yukon		
1	Greenfield	1	Nowata	2	Waurika		
1	Guthrie	1	Oklahoma City				

agents from the same hometown was four. This was from Ringling. The next largest number of agents from one town was two. Those towns having two extension agents from the same hometown were Indianhoma, Waurika, Woodward, Mangum, Locust Grove, Elmore City, Cushing, Tipton, Pawnee, Clinton and Marlow.

Figure 1 was developed to help illustrate the geographic distribution of extension agents' hometowns from within the state of Oklahoma.

People Influencing Job Decisions of Male

County Extension Agents in Oklahoma

The amount of influence which certain people had on male extension agents' job decisions is revealed in Table II. Each response was counted and categorized utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. The scale used to calculate the mean responses of the respondents as to amount of influence people and factor had on their job decision to enter cooperative extension work is as follows:

<u>Response Categories as to Extent of Influence</u>	<u>Numerical Value</u>	<u>Range of Actual Limits for Categories</u>
Very Great	4	3.5 - 4.00
Great	3	2.5 - 3.49
Some	2	1.5 - 2.49
Little	1	0.5 - 1.49
None	0	0.0 - 0.49

In examining Table II, it was found that the county extension agent ranked highest in influencing job decisions. The county extension agent had an average score of 2.18, indicating the county agent had "some" influence on the extension agent's decision. Parents

TABLE II

EXTENSION AGENTS' RANKING OF PERSONS IN TERMS OF THEIR INFLUENCE
ON FINAL DECISION TO BECOME A COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Characteristics	Distribution by Category (Amount of Influence)					Mean Response	Response Category	Rank
	Very Great N	Great N	Some N	Little N	None N			
A. Parents	6	17	34	19	24	1.62	S	2
B. Other Relatives	4	13	18	20	45	1.11	L	5
C. Local Farmer	1	1	16	27	55	0.66	L	10
D. Other Adults in the Home Community	1	5	12	29	53	0.72	L	9
E. Local 4-H Club Member	2	8	22	15	53	0.91	L	6
F. County Extension Agent	27	22	18	8	25	2.18	S	1
G. Local Vo-Ag Teacher	2	11	19	7	61	0.86	L	7
H. High School Counselor	0	4	1	4	91	0.48	N	11
I. Fellow Students (High School)	0	2	10	12	76	0.38	N	12
J. Fellow Students (College)	3	13	27	16	41	1.21	L	4
K. College Instructors (Fr. & Soph.)	4	3	16	19	58	0.76	L	8
L. College Instructors (Jr. & Sr.)	8	18	25	11	38	1.47	L	3

received an average score of 1.62 and ranked second. These first two groups fell into the range established for "some" influence.

College instructors, the junior and senior years, ranked third with an average score of 1.47. Fourth was fellow students in college with an average score of 1.21, while fifth was other relatives with an average score of 1.11.

Further inspection of the data revealed that the third, fourth, and fifth groups fell into the "little" range, and were therefore of "little" influence on extension agent's decision to become an extension agent.

In analyzing the lower end of the average scorer, it should be noted that fellow students in high school ranked last with an average score of .38. The high school counselor ranked next to last with an average score of .48.

The researcher also asked each respondent on the questionnaire to indicate the three persons who were "most influential," "second most influential," and "third most influential" in their decision to enter cooperative extension work. The data in Table III indicates those choices. It should be noted that "County Extension Agent" was chosen 40 times as "most influential," followed by "College Instructors (Jr. & Sr.)" with 20, and "Parents" chosen 11 times.

The researcher also points out that "Parents" were chosen 22 times as "second most influential," followed by "County Extension Agent" with 20; and "Parents" were chosen as "third most influential" 22 times, followed by "Fellow Students" 21 times, and "Local Vo-Ag Instructor" 10 times. The researcher also points out that "Local Farmer," "High School Counselor," "Other Adults in the Home Community" and "Fellow

TABLE III

PERSONS WHO WERE MOST INFLUENTIAL IN EXTENSION AGENTS'
DECISION TO ENTER COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK

Most Influential Persons	Times Named	2nd Most Influential Persons	Times Named	3rd Most Influential Persons	Times Named
County Extension Agent	40	Parents	22	Parents	22
College Instructors (Jr. & Sr.)	20	County Extension Agent	20	Fellow Students (College)	21
Parents	11	Fellow Students (College)	16	Local Vo-Ag Instructor	10
Other Relatives	10	College Instructors (Jr. & Sr.)	11	College Instructors (Jr. & Sr.)	10
Local Vo-Ag Instructor	7	Local 4-H Club Leader	10	County Extension Agent	9
Local 4-H Club Leader	5	Local Vo-Ag Instructor	7	Other Relatives	8
College Instructors (Fr. & Soph.)	4	Other Relatives	5	College Instructors (Fr. & Soph.)	5
Fellow Students (College)	1	College Instructors (Fr. & Soph.)	3	Other Adults in the Home Com-	5
Other Adults in Home Com-	1	Local Farmer	2	munity	
Local Farmer	1	Other Adults in Home Com-	2	Local 4-H Club Leader	4
High School Counselor	0	munity		Local Farmer	4
Fellow Students (High School)	0	High School Counselor	1	High School Counselor	1
		Fellow Students (High School)	1	Fellow Students (High School)	1

Students (High School)" were of little significance.

Factors Influencing Job Decisions of Male

County Extension Agents in Oklahoma

The amount of influence which certain factors had upon extension agents' job decision to enter extension work is indicated by the data in Table IV. A further analysis of data reveals that "interesting work" was the number one response with an average score of 3.29, which placed that factor into the "great" category. Following next in order were "desire to work with clientele" with an average score of 2.99 and "job benefits" with an average of 2.73. Fourth was "opportunity for growth" with an average score of 2.72, and fifth was "pleasant working conditions and surroundings" which had an average score of 2.32. It should be noted that the first five responses all had "some" or "great" influence on decision to enter cooperative extension work.

The researcher also asked each respondent on the questionnaire to list the factors which were "most influential," "second most influential," and "third most influential" in their decision to enter cooperative extension work. That information is shown in Table V. The researcher points out that "interesting work" was chosen 35 times as "most influential" followed by "desire to work with clientele" chosen 27 times.

Furthermore, "interesting work" was chosen 28 times as "second most influential" followed by "desire to work with clientele" being chosen 22 times. The researcher also points out that "social life" was not chosen as "most influential," "second most influential," or "third most influential."

TABLE IV
EXTENSION AGENTS' RANKING OF FACTORS IN TERMS OF THEIR INFLUENCE
ON FINAL DECISION TO BECOME A COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Characteristics	Distribution by Category (Amount of Influence)					Mean Response	Response Category	Rank
	Very Great N	Great N	Some N	Little N	None N			
A. Job Prestige	1	29	42	18	10	1.93	S	7
B. Salary	3	21	46	19	11	1.86	S	8
C. Social Life	0	3	29	47	21	1.14	L	11
D. Promotion	7	30	37	19	7	2.11	S	6
E. Desire to Work With Clientele	28	51	16	2	3	2.99	G	2
F. The Location of County	11	24	22	20	23	1.80	S	9
G. Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	15	35	26	15	9	2.32	S	5
H. Interesting Work	42	48	7	3	0	3.29	G	1
I. Opportunity for Growth	22	44	24	4	6	2.72	G	4
J. Pleasant Co-workers	12	34	29	15	10	1.23	L	10
K. Job Benefits	24	38	29	5	4	2.73	G	3

TABLE V

FACTORS WHICH WERE MOST INFLUENTIAL IN EXTENSION AGENTS'
DECISION TO ENTER COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK

Most Influential Factors	Times Names	2nd Most Influential Factors	Times Named	3rd Most Influential Factors	Times Named
Interesting Work	35	Interesting Work	28	Job Benefits	23
Desire to Work With Clientele	27	Desire to Work With Clientele	22	Opportunity for Growth	22
Job Benefits	9	Opportunity for Growth	10	Interesting Work	15
The Location of County	8	Job Benefits	11	Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	11
Salary	8	Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	7	Pleasant Co-workers	9
Opportunity for Growth	7	The Location of County	6	Desire to Work With Clientele	6
Job Prestige	4	Salary	4	Job Prestige	5
Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	1	Job Prestige	4	Promotion	4
Promotion	1	Promotion	4	The Location of County	3
Social Life	0	Pleasant Co-workers	4	Salary	2
Pleasant Co-workers	0	Social Life	0	Social Life	0

Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction and
Fulfillment of Male County Extension
Agents in Oklahoma

The amount of influence which certain factors have upon job satisfaction and fulfillment of male county extension workers was indicated by the data in Table VI. A closer look at the data showed that most important to job satisfaction was "creative job freedom" with an average score of 3.35, followed by "working with clientele" which had an average score of 3.23. Third was "job morale" with an average score of 3.13; fourth, "pleasant co-workers" with a score of 3.11; and fifth was "pleasant working conditions and surroundings" with an average score of 2.98. All of the above fell into the "great" group as to their appeal to male county extension agents in what influenced job satisfaction and fulfillment.

The researcher also asked each respondent to list in the questionnaire what characteristics of their job were "most satisfying to them," "second most satisfying" and "third most satisfying," in their work. That data is shown in Table VII. It should be noted that "creative job freedom" ranked first as "most satisfying," being selected 31 times; followed by "working with clientele," selected 23 times; "pleasant working conditions," eight times; and "pleasant co-workers," selected seven times.

It should be noted that "creative job freedom," "working with clientele," "pleasant working conditions and surroundings," and "pleasant co-workers" were the top four of five characteristics considered "most satisfying," "second most satisfying" and "third most satisfying."

TABLE VI

EXTENSION AGENTS' RANKING OF FACTORS IN TERMS OF THEIR
INFLUENCE ON JOB SATISFACTION AND FULFILLMENT

Characteristics	Distribution by Category (Degree of Influence)					Mean Response	Response Category	Rank
	Very Great N	Great N	Some N	Little N	None N			
A. Job Morale	33	49	16	2	0	3.13	G	3
B. County Director's Leadership Behavior	16	49	28	7	0	2.74	G	7
C. Sound Management Policies	21	43	31	5	0	2.80	G	6
D. Good Supervision	16	43	34	6	1	2.67	G	0
E. Pleasant Co-workers	19	67	9	3	2	2.98	G	5
F. Getting Credit for Work Done	11	32	38	12	7	2.28	S	14
G. Promotion	18	43	32	4	3	2.69	G	9
H. Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	19	67	9	3	2	2.98	G	5
I. Employee, Manager Relationship	16	45	35	4	0	2.73	G	8
J. Creative Job Freedom	42	51	7	0	0	3.35	G	1
K. Your Social Life	1	12	52	24	11	1.68	S	16
L. Salary	12	39	37	8	4	2.47	S	11
M. The Location of Your County	13	36	30	17	4	2.37	S	12
N. Job Prestige	10	35	39	13	2	2.36	S	13
O. Working With Clientele	43	41	12	4	0	3.23	G	2
P. Working Hours	5	23	42	20	10	1.93	S	15

TABLE VII

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTENSION WORK WHICH ARE CONSIDERED
MOST SATISFYING BY EXTENSION AGENTS

Most Satisfying Characteristic	Times Named	2nd Most Satisfying Characteristic	Times Named	3rd Most Satisfying Characteristic	Times Named
Creative Job Freedom	31	Working With Clientele	28	Working With Clientele	16
Working With Clientele	23	Creative Job Freedom	22	Creative Job Freedom	14
Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	8	Pleasant Co-workers	13	Pleasant Co-workers	14
Pleasant Co-workers	7	Job Morale	11	Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	13
Job Prestige	7	Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	11	Employee-Manager Relationship	13
Job Morale	6	Salary	4	The Location of Your County	9
Salary	6	Employee-Manager Relation- ship	2	Promotion	3
County Director's Leadership Behavior	3	Promotion	2	Job Morale	3
Getting Credit for Work Done	3	Job Prestige	2	Getting Credit for Work Done	3
The Location of Your County	2	Getting Credit for Work Done	2	Salary	3
Promotion	1	The Location of Your County	2	Sound Management Policies	3
Sound Management Policies	1	Sound Management Policies	1	County Director's Leadership Behavior	2
Good Supervision	1	County Director's Leader- ship Behavior	0	Job Prestige	2
Employee-Manager Relation- ship	1	Good Supervision	0	Good Supervision	1
Your Social Life	0	Your Social Life	0	Working Hours	1
Working Hours	0	Working Hours	0	Your Social Life	0

The researcher also points out that "your social life" and "working hours" were selected less than any other characteristic.

The researcher also asked respondents to list the characteristics of their job which were considered "most deficient," "second most deficient" and "third most deficient." That information is revealed in the data in Table VIII.

A closer inspection of the data reveals that three characteristics headed the "most deficient," "second most deficient" and "third most deficient" list. Those characteristics were "salary," being chosen 57 times, and "working hours," selected 48 times. It should also be noted that "good supervision," "pleasant co-workers," "county directors' leadership behavior," "working with clientele," "creative job freedom," and "pleasant working conditions and surroundings" each were selected six or fewer times.

True-False Statements Regarding Male County

Extension Agent Views of Cooperative

Extension Service

The questionnaire also included nine statements regarding extension work. This data can be reviewed in Table IX. A closer look at the data in Table IX reveals that 87 of the male county extension agents felt new employees do not understand duties and responsibilities when hired; also 90 of the agents felt that the 4-H agent position was regarded as a "stepping stone" position. The questionnaire also showed that 90 of the agents felt that district staff support was adequate and 71 felt that state program support was adequate. The questionnaire also revealed that 72 of the extension agents felt that salary was not adequate.

TABLE VIII

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTENSION WORK WHICH ARE MOST DEFICIENT
AS PERCEIVED BY EXTENSION AGENTS

Most Deficient Characteristic	Times Named	2nd Most Deficient Characteristic	Times Named	3rd Most Deficient Characteristic	Times Named
Salary	28	Your Social Life	20	Your Social Life	17
Working Hours	28	Working Hours	19	Salary	16
Your Social Life	11	Salary	13	Working Hours	13
Getting Credit for Work Done	6	Sound Management Policies	12	Job Prestige	12
Job Prestige	6	Employee-Manager Relation- ship	6	Getting Credit for Work Done	12
The Location of Your County	5	Promotion	6	Job Morale	6
Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	3	The Location of Your County	5	The Location of Your County	5
Job Morale	2	Good Supervision	4	Sound Management Policies	4
Sound Management Policies	2	Job Prestige	4	Working With Clientele	4
Creative Job Freedom	2	Getting Credit for Work Done	3	Employee-Manager Relationship	3
Employee-Manager Relation- ship	2	Job Morale	3	County Director's Leadership Behavior	2
Promotion	2	Creative Job Freedom	2	Promotion	2
Working With Clientele	1	County Director's Leader- ship Behavior	2	Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	2
County Director's Leadership Behavior	1	Pleasant Working Conditions and Surroundings	1	Pleasant Co-workers	1
Good Supervision	1	Working With Clientele	0	Good Supervision	1
Pleasant Co-workers	0	Pleasant Co-workers	0	Creative Job Freedom	0

TABLE IX
EXTENSION AGENTS' RESPONSES TO STATEMENTS REGARDING
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Statement	True N	False N
New employees of Extension Service understand duties and responsibilities, when hired. . .	13	87
The 4-H agent position is regarded as a stepping stone position.	90	10
State staff program support is adequate.	71	29
District staff program support is adequate	90	10
New employees of Extension Service have adequate formal education.	85	15
County staff opinions have an effect on policy decisions	71	29
As Extension personnel have more years worked, they are less ambitious.	35	65
Salary is adequate	28	72
Your job position holds enough prestige.	84	16

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to determine and analyze factors influencing job decisions of male county extension agents in Oklahoma which might be helpful in developing staff training for new and old Cooperative Extension Service employees, and also might help eliminate or identify reasons why extension agents resign unnecessarily from their jobs. The objectives of the study were as follows:

In order that the purpose of the study be achieved, the following needed to be determined:

1. The geographic areas from which male county extension agents in Oklahoma come to the extension service.
2. The people which have most influenced job decisions of male county extension agents in Oklahoma.
3. The factors which have most influenced job decisions of male county extension agents in Oklahoma.
4. The aspects of cooperative extension work which are most satisfying to male county extension agents in Oklahoma.
5. The aspects of cooperative extension work which are least satisfying to male county extension agents in Oklahoma.

Findings

Hometown Data on Male County

Extension Agents in Oklahoma

The findings regarding the hometown of male county extension agents disclosed that 91 agents come from 77 different locations in Oklahoma while nine came from eight different states. The extension agents were widely distributed in the original hometowns with the largest number of agents from one town being four.

People and Factors Influencing Job Decisions

of Male County Extension Agents in Oklahoma

The important findings in the amount of influence different persons or factors had upon the extension agent's decision to become an extension worker are as follows:

1. The county extension agent had the greatest influence with an average score of 2.18 on a 4.00 scale.
2. Extension agents' parents ranked second with a score of 1.62.
3. College instructors in the junior or senior year were ranked third with an average score of 1.47.
4. Fellow students in college ranked fourth and other relatives' influence ranked fifth.

The factors influencing job decisions of male county extension agents were found to be in the following order:

1. The factor "interesting work" ranked first with an average score of 3.29.
2. "Desire to work with clientele" with an average of 2.99.

3. "Job benefits" with an average score of 2.73.

4. "Opportunity for growth" with an average score of 2.72.

In decreasing order of influence were: (5) pleasant working conditions and surroundings, (6) promotion, (7) job prestige, (8) salary, (9) the location of county, (10) pleasant co-workers, and (11) social life.

Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction and

Fulfillment of Male County Extension

Agents in Oklahoma

Factors most important to job satisfaction were ranked in the following order:

1. "Creative job freedom" was ranked first with an average score of 3.35.

2. Second was "working with clientele," with a score of 3.23.

3. Third was "job morale" with 3.13.

4. "Pleasant co-workers" was next with an average score of 3.11.

5. Fifth was "pleasant working conditions and surroundings" with an average score of 2.98.

The following is in order rank of most appeal to less appeal of job satisfaction factors: (6) sound management policies, (7) county directors' leadership behavior, (8) employee-manager relationship, (9) promotion, (10) good supervision, (11) salary, (12) the location of your county, (13) job prestige, (14) getting credit for work done, (15) working hours, and (16) your social life.

Statement Regarding Male County Extension Agent

Views of Cooperative Extension Service

The most important findings in statements regarding extension agents' views of their work were as follows:

1. Eighty-seven of the responses indicated that new employees do not understand responsibilities and duties when hired.
2. Ninety of the extension agents felt that the 4-H agent position was regarded as a "stepping stone" position.
3. Ninety of the extension agents felt that district staff support was adequate.
4. Seventy-one of the respondents felt that state staff support was adequate.
5. Seventy-two of the extension agents felt that their salary was not adequate.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based upon investigation and interpretation of the findings.

1. Oklahoma male county extension agents came from all geographic locations of Oklahoma.
2. The local county extension agent exerted the most influence on job decisions of male county extension agents early in the extension agent's life.
3. Parents exerted a great force on job decisions as did college instructors and fellow students.
4. High school counselors, local farmers, and fellow high school

students did not exert much force on decisions dealing with job decisions.

5. Interesting work was the major factor which influenced extension agents to enter extension work, followed closely by desire to work with clientele, and job benefits.

6. Factors which were important to job satisfaction and fulfillment were creative job freedom, working with clientele, job morale, and pleasant co-workers, surroundings and conditions.

7. Factors which were not as influential to extension workers but very important were working hours, social life, getting credit for work done, and job prestige.

8. New employees when hired by Cooperative Extension did not understand duties and responsibilities.

9. District and state program support was adequate in Oklahoma.

10. The 4-H agent position was regarded to a great degree as a "stepping stone" position.

11. Salary of extension agents was regarded as not adequate.

12. Although it was shown county extension agents and parents had greatest influence on job decisions, these were only at the "some" level, indicating there apparently were others exerting influence on job decisions not indicated in this study.

Recommendations

After completing this study, the investigator would like to recommend the following:

1. That opportunities in cooperative extension service be included in high school career days and proper information provided to high

school counselors.

2. That greater education be given college freshmen and sophomores dealing with careers in cooperative extension service.

3. That more in-service training and orientation be given new and old extension workers, through district and state training sessions, dealing with job responsibilities and factors influencing job satisfaction.

4. That job positions in extension work be continually evaluated and improved for better job performance of extension employees.

5. That greater emphasis be placed on salary increase and update for extension field staff.

6. That performance review of employees remain objective, and open lines of communication between district, state, and county staff remain open to all.

7. That cooperative extension remain anchored in agriculture and home economics in all program emphasis from federal level to county.

8. That local agents be provided with educational information and materials to help recruit future extension workers.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is an attempt to identify factors which may have influenced the decision of individuals to enter Cooperative Extension work. Please help us by taking approximately 15 minutes to fill out this survey form.

Name _____ Age _____

Original Hometown _____ Years in Extension work _____

College Graduated from _____ Degree _____

Were you a 4-H Club member _____

Did you grow up on a farm _____

1. Please designate (x) the amount of influence the following persons had upon your final decision to enter Cooperative Extension work.

	(Amount of Influence)				
	Very Great	Great	Some	Little	None
A. Parents					
B. Other relatives					
C. Local farmer					
D. Other adults in the home community					
E. Local 4-H Club leader					
F. County Extension agent					
G. Local Vo-ag teacher					
H. High school counselor					
I. Fellow students (high school)					
J. Fellow students (college)					
K. College instructors (fr. & soph)					
L. College instructors (jr. & sr.)					

2. Please indicate the three persons who were most influential in your decision to enter Cooperative Extension work by placing the letter indicated in the above question in the blank provided.

Most Influential _____ 2nd Most Influential _____ 3rd Most Influential _____

3. Please designate the amount of influence the following factors had upon your final decision to enter Cooperative Extension work.

	(Amount of Influence)				
	Very Great	Great	Some	Little	None
A. Job prestige					
B. Salary					
C. Social Life					
D. Promotion					
E. Desire to work with clientele					
F. The location of county					
G. Pleasant working conditions and surroundings					
H. Interesting work					
I. Opportunity for growth					
J. Pleasant co-workers					
K. Job benefits					

4. Please indicate the three factors which were most influential in your decision to enter Cooperative Extension work by placing the letter indicated in the above question in the blank provided.

Most Influential__ 2nd Most Influential__ 3rd Most Influential__

5. To what degree are the following characteristics important to your job satisfaction and fulfillment.

	(Degree of Importance)				
	Very Great	Great	Some	Little	None
A. Job morale					
B. County directors leadership behavior					
C. Sound management policies					
D. Good supervision					
E. Pleasant co-workers					

/Number 5 con't/

	(Degree of Importance)				
	Very Great	Great	Some	Little	None
F. Getting credit for work done					
G. Promotion					
H. Pleasant working conditions and surroundings					
I. Employee, manager relationship					
J. Creative job freedom					
K. Your social life					
L. Salary					
M. The location of your county					
N. Job prestige					
O. Working with clientele					
P. Working hours					

/6./ Please indicate the three characteristics of your job which are most satisfying to you by placing the letter indicated in the above question in the blank provided.

Most Influential____2nd Most Influential____3rd Most Influential____

/7./ Please indicate the three characteristics of your job which are most deficient in your job, by placing the letter indicated in the above question in the blank provided.

Most Deficient____2nd Most Deficient____3rd Most Deficient____

/8./ Please answer the following statements by marking True or False.

T or F a. New employees of Extension service understand duties and responsibilities, when hired.

T or F b. The 4-H agent position is regarded as a stepping stone position.

T or F c. State staff program support is adequate.

T or F d. District staff program support is adequate.

/Number 8 con't/

- T or F e. New employees of Extension Service have adequate formal education.
- T or F f. County staff opinions have an effect on policy decisions.
- T or F g. As Extension personnel have more years worked, they are less ambitious.
- T or F h. Salary is adequate.
- T or F i. Your job position holds enough prestige.

VITA

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