

Commitment and Job Satisfaction

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Professional commitment or dedication seems a desirable quality for Cooperative Extension Service personnel. Administrators who hire agents need to be concerned with professional commitment. To help in understanding the relationships of agents in their roles as professionals, a study was made of 99 Kansas home economics agents to determine their professional commitment and job satisfaction. Results of the study are discussed, with implications for Extension.

THE ROLE of the professional has been receiving much attention in recent years. Professional commitment or dedication seems to be a desired quality for personnel at all levels of the Cooperative Extension Service. Yet commitment to the profession is not a requirement for securing or holding a position in Extension.

A review of literature shows that there has been and is concern about professional commitment, especially in the field of education. It has also been suggested that commitment may be a basic source of motivation since a person is more likely to perform when he is committed to a cause.¹

It seems apparent that each profession should be concerned with the dedication of its personnel to that profession. To help in an understanding of the relationships of home economics agents in their roles as professionals, a study of professional relationships seems appropriate. Such a study was designed and conducted to determine the professional commitment and job satisfaction of home economics agents in Kansas.

COMMITMENT

For purposes of this study, "commitment" was defined as the

¹Denzil Clegg, "Work as a Motivator," *Journal of Cooperative Extension*, I (Fall, 1963), 147.

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dedication or devotion of an agent to her profession. It was recognized that committed agents were ones who had serious intentions about remaining in the profession and who were serious in making an honest attempt to have their efforts count in striving toward the goals of the Cooperative Extension Service. The least committed agents were those whose major concerns and attitudes were not focused on goals or objectives of the profession.

It was assumed that professional commitment could be measured, and a mailed questionnaire was sent to each county home economics agent employed in Kansas on January 1, 1965. This consisted of MOPC (Measure of Professional Commitment),² a five-point self-commitment rating scale, a personal data sheet, and an adaptation of Hoppock's Job Satisfaction Blank #5.³ Ninety-nine agents (98 per cent) returned the questionnaires. In addition, district home economics supervisors rated each agent on professional commitment and job effectiveness scales.

Development of MOPC

The MOPC instrument was developed from 143 items thought to be descriptive of persons who could be called dedicated or devoted to the teaching profession.

Internal consistency of the questions was tested, and the 100 statements that met a .01 level of significance were used in the final form of the instrument. The statements were arranged by using a table of random numbers so the respondent would not be influenced by the location of the various statements. This final form of MOPC was administered to the Kansas home economics agents.

A panel of judges divided the statements into seven related groups: self-understanding, social relations, creativity, autonomy, rationality, ambition, and nonfanaticism. The self-understanding category included statements such as "This person is aware of his own needs," and "This person is able to accept his weaknesses." These questions attempted to find how an agent accepted and understood herself.

The social relations statements explored how the agent related herself to other people both in groups and as individuals. The agent

²Helen A. Loftis, "Identifying Professional Commitment and Measuring Its Extent among Selected Members of the Teaching Profession" (unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1962), pp. 32-47.

³For a discussion of job satisfaction and the development of the Job Satisfaction Blank, see Robert Hoppock, *Job Satisfaction* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935).

was asked to respond to such items as "This person cares about the well-being of others," and "This person likes to work with others." Closely related to this was the area of autonomy which included such statements as "This person values independent action," and "This person is easily influenced by others in making decisions."

When the agent responded to items such as "This person produces work that has unique qualities," she was indicating her perception of her creativity. Responses to other statements such as "This person finds self-advancement a worthwhile purpose," and "This person works hard . . .," indicated her ambition.

In the area of rationality, agents responded to such items as "This person feels free to examine and question ideas," and "This person makes decisions in light of possible consequences."

In the seventh area, nonfanaticism, statements included "This person is often intensely discontented," and "This person's interests are limited to his work."

In the analysis of agents' scores, it appears that the statements under the area of autonomy may have been responsible for the difference in high or low MOPC scores. Further analyses are needed before definite conclusions can be made.

Commitment Scores

The home economics agents were asked to respond to the 100 statements of MOPC, Form E, by checking "usually true of this person," "sometimes true of this person," or "does not apply to this person." A score of two, one, or zero was given to each positive statement, and a score of zero, one, or two given for the response for each negative statement. Out of a possible 200 points, scores for Kansas agents ranged from 104 to 190.

For analyses, these commitment scores were divided into quartiles. The agents in the top quartile (25 agents with scores of 169-190) were designated as having "high commitment"; agents in the middle two quartiles (50 agents with scores of 149-168) were designated as the "some commitment" group; and agents in the bottom quartile (24 agents with scores of 104-148) were described as having "low commitment." Analyses were programmed on the IBM 7094 computer.

COMMITMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION

Correlations between job satisfaction and self-judgments of professional commitment were highly significant. The agents were

shown to have a level of job satisfaction not inconsistent with their level of professional commitment, a finding supported by a correlation of .25 obtained between MOPC and job satisfaction scores of each agent. This value was significant at the .01 level. A similar finding was shown when the agent's level of job satisfaction was compared with her level of professional commitment as determined by the five-point self-commitment rating scale. It could be that an agent's perception of her professional commitment is closely related to her level of job satisfaction. Correlation of self and supervisor's rating of professional commitment suggests that the supervisor tends to rate the agent in the same way the agent rates herself.

Studies have shown⁴ that the satisfied worker is generally a more flexible, better adjusted person. He seems to be realistic about his own situation and about his goals. The dissatisfied worker, in contrast, is often rigid, inflexible, unrealistic in his choice of goals, unable to overcome environmental obstacles, and generally unhappy and dissatisfied.

In the measurement of job satisfaction of Kansas home economics agents, an adaptation of Robert Hoppock's Job Satisfaction Blank #5 was used. Table 1 shows how the agents responded.

Although the agents had varying levels of professional competence, it appears that for the most part they were quite satisfied with their present jobs. Reasons for being satisfied or dissatisfied were not given.

There was a low correlation between job satisfaction as expressed by agents and professional commitment as judged by the supervisors. This seems to indicate that supervisors did not base the commitment ratings of agents on a knowledge of the agents' job satisfaction.

FURTHER ANALYSES

Further analyses of the data showed that the level of professional commitment of Kansas home economics agents was independent of marital status, age, educational level, and job effectiveness rating. Agents in the "high commitment" group were not necessarily the oldest agents, nor did they hold the highest academic degrees. As a group, however, these more committed agents did tend to belong to more professional organizations, had attended more state and national professional meetings, and indicated they did more profes-

⁴Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, Richard Peterson, and Dora Capwell, *Job Attitudes, A Review of Research and Opinion* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Psychological Service of Pittsburgh, 1957), p. 20.

sional reading and writing than did the less committed agents.

It was interesting to find that a greater number of the more committed agents indicated they would not leave the Extension Service for another job even with a salary increase than was true for agents with low professional commitment. Professional commitment, contrary to what one might expect, was found to have little relationship with total tenure as an agent in the Kansas Cooperative Extension Service. Least committed agents, however, did tend to have shorter tenure in their present positions than did the more committed agents.

USE OF PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Another phase of the study was to help determine what professional literature was useful to home economics agents. Agents were

Table 1. Responses of Kansas home economics agents to questions about job satisfaction.

Type of response	Number of agents (N = 99)
1. How do you like your job?	
I like it	28
I am enthusiastic about it	51
I love it	20
2. How much of the time do you feel satisfied?	
All the time	9
Most of the time I am satisfied	70
A good deal of the time	16
About half of the time	3
Occasionally	1
3. How do you feel about changing jobs?	
Desire to change position and occupation	2
Desire to change to another home agent position	4
Desire to change if it is better job	46
Cannot think of job I would exchange for mine	43
I would not change my job	3
No response	1
4. If you could choose all the jobs in the world, which would you choose?	
Present job	56
Another job in the Extension Service	22
A job in another occupation	16
No response	5
5. How satisfied are you compared with other people?	
No one likes his job better than I like mine	4
I like my job much better	21
I like my job better	49
I like my job as well	24
I dislike my job more	1

asked to rank, in order of usefulness, eight professional magazines they might use in their work. A score of eight points was assigned to each magazine ranked first, down to one point for each magazine ranked eighth. Scores were totaled and divided by the number of responding agents (99) to give a mean weighted score, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Rank by mean weighted score of magazines Kansas home economics agents found useful, by number of agents who indicated the magazine was useful, 1965.*

Magazine	M.W.S. Rank		Found useful by agent (N = 99)	
			Yes	No
What's New in Home Economics	6.06	1	96	3
Journal of Home Economics	5.00	2.5	90	9
Practical/Forecast	5.00	2.5	93	6
<i>Journal of Cooperative Extension</i>	3.22	4	82	17
Changing Times	2.91	5	69	30
Kansas 4-H Journal	2.86	6	88	11
Extension Service Review	2.77	7	83	16
National 4-H News	2.66	8	84	15

* From Phyllis E. Kemp, "Professional Commitment of Home Economics Agents in Kansas" (unpublished M.S. thesis, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 1965), p. 53.

The use of various magazines and journals was compared with the tenure of the agents. It was found that agents at all levels of tenure in the Cooperative Extension Service found one or more of the eight magazines useful in their work. Use of the *Journal of Cooperative Extension* is shown in Table 3. It is interesting to note that all agents with a tenure of more than six years indicated they found the *Journal* useful in their work. Reasons for using or not using the *Journal*, as well as ways agents used it, were not given.

IMPLICATIONS

Administrators who hire home economics agents need to be concerned with professional commitment. Some attitudes expressed by the agents on the MOPC instrument indicated that the agents may place home and family values higher than career values when confronted with choices. Further analyses of the agents' attitudes, including their reasons for job satisfaction or dissatisfaction, are needed.

Table 3. Use of the *Journal of Cooperative Extension* by Kansas home economics agents, by tenure, 1965.

Years of tenure in Cooperative Extension Service	Use of <i>Journal of Cooperative Extension</i>			
	Yes	Per cent	No	Per cent
Less than 1	10	58.9	7	41.1
1-2	9	69.2	4	30.8
3-4	17	81.0	4	19.0
5-6	8	80.0	2	20.0
7-8	6	100.0	0	0
9-10	6	100.0	0	0
11-12	9	100.0	0	0
13-14	3	100.0	0	0
15 and over	14	100.0	0	0

Additional study and analyses may reveal the means by which some agents become more committed than others. Are there certain times during a career when a person is more committed than at other times? Are state staff members more committed to their work than are county workers? Which attitudes seem to characterize the more committed workers and which attitudes characterize the least committed workers?

The Extension Service needs to be concerned with finding methods of recruiting and retaining qualified personnel. Perhaps MOPC (Measure of Professional Commitment) and other instruments can be useful to administrators and supervisors in determining the attitudes desirable of candidates for Extension positions.

THE "EXPLOSION OF KNOWLEDGE" does not mean . . . the multiplication of full-grown ideas. It has often meant the fragmentation of attention to some new particle of the same world man has confronted from the beginning of time. . . . To scatter the attention of students to the increasing fragments of knowledge, to open up new courses, to survey more and more branches of so-called learning, is, therefore, to multiply their confusion. To offer a drowning man a drink of water would be as impertinent as to offer a student more fragments of knowledge than he knows how to assimilate. Education in its deeper reaches consists more in generating principles of organization than in multiplication of fragmentation.

—LOUIS WILLIAM NORRIS