

are agents' interests, job satisfaction, and performance related

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In the past, many educators and Extension professionals have said, "To work in Extension you must be able to work with people." This social orientation or the ability to relate to many publics has seldom been challenged. However, is this social orientation measurable? If so, is this orientation related to other variables like job satisfaction and performance? These key questions were investigated in Ohio, and the findings of the study are reported here.

Background

The idea for this research was generated from the study of a theory of vocational choice. In this theory, Holland hypothesized that individuals have six different types of interests.¹ Each individual will have more or less of some interests, but all interests are represented. These interests are expressed in six themes: realistic (R), investigative (I), artistic (A), social (S), enterprising (E), and conventional (C). Campbell described these six themes with "pure" or extreme examples of each type;² however, no one single theme will exactly fit a person.

A person's interests may be described as realistic or rugged, practical and physically strong with good physical skills; investigative or task-oriented with specific interests in science or scientific activities; artistic or self-expressive and enjoys the artistic setting; social or likes to help and understand others; enterprising or has great facility with words, which are used as tools in selling, dominating, and leading; and conventional or prefers a highly ordered atmosphere that is characterized in office work. Therefore, each

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person may be described as possessing all six of these interests in some order.

Interest tendencies are determined for each individual by paper and pencil instruments designed from Holland's theory. Occupational interests are described in a general way from this questionnaire. Scores on each of the 6 themes usually range from 30 to 70, with an average score of 50. The higher or above-average individual scores on each theme describe the occupational interests.

When individual scores are combined into a group and simple means are computed, the group can be described. However, because the group theme means tend to be extremely close, the more themes that are used to describe a group, the more valid the description will be. It was recommended that at least the three highest themes be used to describe a group.³

Significance

State Extension offices across the nation, similar to many other employing institutions, have to screen applicants to fill positions. Each time an applicant is selected, a risk of choosing an individual who may perform poorly in the future or exhibit low job satisfaction exists. In Ohio, the turnover rate among all county agents for 1979 was 13%; for 4-H agents, the rate was 23%.

Therefore, the main question is: Is there a method available that can help the organization align individuals and their interest types with available positions within their organization, thus maximizing the possibility of good performance and job satisfaction? It's from this question that the area of occupational interests or vocational choice was investigated.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship, if any, among the six occupational interest themes of agents with one or more years of experience in the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service and the agent's job satisfaction and performance.

Methodology

All county 4-H, agriculture, and home economics agents with more than 1 year of experience in January, 1980, were included in this study. Community development agents were excluded from the study because the actual number of these agents wasn't high enough to make a valid comparison with the other groups. Of this population (230), usable data were collected from 212 agents.

The agents responded by mailed questionnaire to the Strong Vocational Interest Blank-Strong Vocational Interest Inventory (SVIB-SCII) which established the six occupation-

al interest theme scores and the Brayfield-Rothe Job Questionnaire⁴ which established the job satisfaction scores. Performance data were collected from area supervisors by a paired comparison analysis as computed by Johnson and Cassell.⁵

Scores from the SVIB-SCII interest theme categories, scores from the Job Questionnaire, and performance scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product moment correlations, and regression programs.

Findings
Group Means

From the literature review, it was expected that agents would have above-average social/realistic/investigative theme scores. However, the group means for Ohio agents indicated they were best described as realistic, enterprising, social, conventional, investigative, and artistic with mean scores of 54, 53, 53, 52, 49, and 45, respectively. The four higher means were extremely close and best describe the agents' interest. When comparing these findings with related literature, only the investigative theme score appeared lower than expected. The artistic theme score wasn't expected to be above average.

Coefficients were computed in this study to determine the direction and magnitude of the relationships among all possible pairs of variables. As a result of this analysis, the following were supported:

1. A positive relationship exists between the social occupational interest theme and job satisfaction.
2. A negative relationship exists between the artistic occupational interest theme and performance.
3. A positive relationship exists between performance and job satisfaction.

Position Comparisons

Looking at the agents in this study by position, agent positions were compared with the interest, job satisfaction, and performance variables using the Scheffe method of analyzing pairs of variable means. Significant findings ($p \leq .05$) are:

1. Agriculture agents have higher *realistic* scores than 4-H and home economics agents.
2. 4-H agents have higher *realistic* scores than home economics agents.
3. Agriculture agents have higher *investigative* scores than home economics agents.
4. Home economics agents have higher *artistic* scores than agriculture agents.
5. 4-H agents have higher *artistic* scores than agriculture agents.

6. Agriculture agents have higher *job satisfaction* scores than 4-H agents.
7. No other significant pairs were found among the social, enterprising, conventional, and performance variables when compared by position.

This later analysis also helps describe the agent interests by position. The mean scores on interest variables indicate that all the agents can best be described as realistic, enterprising, social, and conventional. However, a delineation by position indicates that 4-H agents are best described as realistic, enterprising, and social; home economics agents as social, conventional, and enterprising; and agriculture agents as realistic, enterprising, and conventional (see Table 1).

Conclusions

Based on the data presented in the study, these conclusions were drawn:

1. Agents with high social interest theme scores tend to be more satisfied with their job.
2. Agents with higher artistic interest scores tend to perform less well.
3. A low positive relationship exists between job satisfaction and performance. This indicates that agents who are more satisfied with their jobs tend to outperform less-satisfied agents.

Implications

This study confirms that interests could be measured and that Ohio agents have stronger realistic, enterprising,

Table 1. Mean scores by all variables and position.

Position	Independent variables*						Dependent variables**	
	R	E	S	C	I	A	JS	PERF
4-H agents (n=68)	<u>56</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>54</u>	50	50	47	69	50.1
Home economics agents (n=71)	45	<u>51</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>52</u>	46	49	71	50.1
Agriculture agents	<u>60</u>	<u>55</u>	52	<u>54</u>	51	39	72	49.6
All agents (n=212)	<u>54</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>52</u>	49	45	71	50

*One letter abbreviations are used for interest variables: R=realistic, E=enterprising, S=social, C=conventional, I=investigative, and A=artistic.

**Job Satisfaction (JS) and Performance (PERF) are the dependent variables.

social, and conventional interests and weaker investigative and artistic interests. Also, the socially oriented agents tend to be more satisfied with their jobs, and the artistic-oriented agents tend to perform less well.

... Diversity of personnel is crucial to the survival of Extension's many programs. The threat of using a system that perpetuates possible weaknesses isn't desirable. However, this study supports the central idea that Ohio Extension field staff do have primarily a social orientation.

Considering these conclusions, Extension administrators should determine the extent to which they might be applied. Ohio now has a general profile of its agents' interests and should seek agents that are generally realistic, enterprising, social, and conventional if continuity of current staffing patterns is desired.

Although statistical tests support the main conclusions in this study, it's strongly recommended that this study be replicated before personnel decisions based on these findings are made. Diversity of personnel is crucial to the survival of Extension's many programs. The threat of using a system that perpetuates possible weaknesses isn't desirable. However, this study supports the central idea that Ohio Extension field staff do have primarily a social orientation.

Footnotes

1. John L. Holland, *Making Vocational Choices: A Theory of Careers* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973).
2. David P. Campbell, *Manual for the SVIB-SCII* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1978).
3. Ellen L. Betz, "Vocational Behavior and Career Development, 1976: A Review," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, XI (October, 1977), 129-52.
4. Arthur H. Brayfield and Harold F. Rothe, "An Index of Job Satisfaction," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, XXXV (October, 1951), 307-11.
5. Alton C. Johnson and Roy D. Cassell, *Appraising Personnel in the Cooperative Extension Service* (Madison, Wisconsin: National Agricultural Extension Center for Advanced Study and Division of Management Operations, 1962).