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Perceived Work-Life Balance Ability, Job Satisfaction, and Professional Commitment among Agriculture Teachers

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Abstract

Agriculture teachers participate in various work and life roles, which can create challenges when trying to balance the pressures and responsibilities associated with each role. When one is unable to balance and prioritize between roles, both satisfaction and professional commitment may be reduced. The purpose of this study was to describe Oregon agriculture teachers' job satisfaction, professional commitment, and perceived ability to balance work and life roles. Additionally, this study sought to describe the relationship between perceived ability to balance work and life roles, job satisfaction, and professional commitment. Sex, marital status, parental status, and career stage had only small to negligible effects on job satisfaction, professional commitment, and work-life balance. Statistically significant positive correlations were found between job satisfaction, professional commitment, and work-life balance. Implications and recommendations are discussed.

Keywords: work-life balance, professional commitment, job satisfaction, life roles, attrition

In agricultural education, a teacher shortage problem exists (Kantrovich, 2010) which has spurred the prioritization of research focused on teacher recruitment and retention (Doerfert, 2011). Although increased student enrollment and retirement rates have contributed to teacher shortages, Ingersoll (2003) suggests that teacher turnover is to blame. Research indicates the majority of teacher turnover occurs within the first five years of the job (Ingersoll, 2003). During those first five years, agriculture teachers are faced with many challenges and heavy demands that may contribute to their decision to leave the profession (Myers, Dyer, & Washburn, 2005; Osborne, 1992). The purpose of this research was to explore how teachers balance these challenges and demands, and how teachers' perceived work-life balance ability relates to professional commitment and job satisfaction.

Teaching is demanding, and balancing work and family roles has become a challenging task for agriculture teachers (Crutchfield, Ritz, & Burris, 2013; Lawver, 2007; Murray, Flowers, Croom, & Wilson, 2011). Agriculture teachers spend excessive hours at work, leaving little time to devote to other life roles (Cooper & Nelson, 1981; Lawver, 2007; Murray et al., 2011; Straquadine, 1990). Trends in agricultural education show that teachers have been given more, not less, job responsibilities than in previous times (Lambert, Henry, & Tummons, 2011). Due to time constraints, these responsibilities can make it difficult for agriculture teachers to effectively balance work and non-work roles, resulting in strain. Over time, this may lead to burnout (Croom, 2003).

Stress has been associated with teacher burnout (Croom, 2003; Kyriacou, 2001; Torres, Lawver, & Lambert, 2009) which may contribute to diminished job satisfaction (Chenevey, Ewing, & Whittington, 2008) and teacher turnover (Bennett, Iverson, Rohs, Langone, & Edwards, 2002;

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Newcomb, Betts, & Cano, 1987; Walker, Garton, & Kitchel, 2004). Newcomb et al. (1987) suggested stress is a natural part of the workplace, but when stress cannot be dissipated or coped with, strain develops. As strain surpasses an individual's tolerance, burnout occurs. Agriculture teachers often experience stress because of expectations and pressures to succeed. Many agriculture teachers cope by becoming "workaholics" (Straquadine, 1990, p. 11). Torres et al. (2009) suggested that agriculture teachers tend to experience high levels of stress because of their additional programmatic roles at work. Although stress may occur because of the demands of work and non-work roles, one's ability to manage stress and balance work and life roles can impact their attitudes, including job satisfaction and professional commitment.

Despite agricultural education being a demanding profession, studies have indicated agriculture teachers are generally satisfied with their jobs (Bennett et al., 2002; Cano & Miller, 1992; Castillo, Conklin, & Cano, 1999; Chenevey et al., 2008; Grady & Burnett, 1985; Kitchel et al., 2012; Ritz, Burris, & Brashears, 2013; Walker et al., 2004) and are only experiencing minimal amounts of burnout (Croom, 2003). Chaney (2007) found beginning teachers who had already left the profession were generally satisfied with their work as agriculture teachers, but were dissatisfied with the workload and time demands placed on them. Walker et al. (2004) found agriculture teachers who left the teaching profession were as satisfied as those who remained, but those who left cited family issues as a primary reason for leaving. These findings suggest that factors beyond the workplace may be partially responsible for teachers' decisions to leave teaching.

While many work and non-work factors have been identified as reasons for agriculture teacher attrition, Tippens, Ricketts, Morgan, Navarro, and Flanders (2013) proposed a conceptual model of primary causes. They identified four major features that contribute to job satisfaction and teacher retention/attrition, which included compensation (e.g. salary), working conditions (e.g. administrative support), family and personal factors (e.g. demographics, family responsibilities), and employment factors (e.g. teacher preparation). They conducted a study to examine the features of working conditions and their relationship to job satisfaction. The current study intends to focus more holistically to include non-work domain factors in relation to work-life balance, job satisfaction and professional commitment.

Factors influencing teacher attrition and retention have been widely studied throughout education. Most studies of teacher attrition have examined the relationships between attrition and workplace domain variables, while fewer have focused on the influence of the non-work domain on attrition. Studies suggest factors outside of the work domain spill over into the work domain, influencing a teacher's job and their attitudes towards that job. For example, Foster (2001) found women in agricultural education struggled to find balance between work and family, and the job seemed incompatible with their personal life demands. Furthermore, she concluded women felt it was necessary to choose between their career and personal pursuits. Pointing to studies outside of agricultural education, Flynt and Morton (2009) stated that attrition occurs when teachers are unable to balance their home life and work life. According to Flynt and Morton, personal life stressors lead teachers to be dissatisfied with their jobs and seek employment in other professions. Finally, Ingersoll (2000) found family or personal factors to be the most common reason for teacher turnover among all teachers, with dissatisfaction following closely behind. These findings suggest the ability to balance both work and life roles can influence satisfaction and teacher turnover.

Both Foster (2001) and Murray et al. (2011) suggested that sex might be a significant demographic characteristic to explore in terms of work-life balance and teacher turnover. Flynt and Morton (2009) as well as Ingersoll (2000) suggested that personal and family characteristics, such as marital and parental status, might impact a teacher's decision to leave or remain in the classroom. Finally, numerous studies indicate that career stage may impact teacher attrition (Chapman, 1983; Croasmun, Hampton, & Herrmann, 1999; Ingersoll, 2003; Shen, 1998; Theobald, 1990). Therefore, this study will address these work and non-work domain characteristics and their relationship with work-life balance, job satisfaction, and professional commitment among current agriculture teachers.

Crutchfield et al. (2013) studied work-life balance among agriculture teachers in the southern United States, but did not examine it in relation to job satisfaction. Although they examined work-life balance and occupational commitment by career stage, they did not include other work and life characteristics, such as marital status and parental status in their analysis. This study seeks to further generalize the results of Crutchfield et al. (2013) by examining teachers in a different region of the country.

Over the past four decades, societal trends show the percentage of dual-earner families and number of married women with young children entering the workforce has risen (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008). While women's roles seem to be shifting more to the workplace, men's roles seem to also be changing. The average amount of time employed fathers spend with their children on workdays has significantly increased over the past four decades (Galinsky et al., 2008). Over the past three decades, the demographic changes in the workplace have increased the levels of role conflict and has made it more difficult for working parents, both male and female, to balance work and life roles (Galinsky et al., 2008). Among agriculture teachers, Murray et al. (2011) found both male and female agriculture teachers had home and family responsibilities that made it difficult to balance work and family roles.

With demographic trends in agricultural education showing an increase in females entering the profession along with societal trends of increased dual earner couples in the workplace, examining sociodemographic characteristics such as marital status, and parental status in relation to work-life balance, job satisfaction, and career commitment, might yield important information for the agricultural education profession. Furthermore, since these sociodemographic characteristics change over the course of one's career, career stage might also be an important variable in the analysis. Additionally, due to the demands and time commitments required of agriculture teachers, research into work-life balance is needed. Understanding the relationships between job satisfaction, professional commitment, and one's ability to balance work and non-work roles, may help researchers and professionals find solutions for the teacher shortage crisis.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The primary theory guiding this research study was the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). COR theory has been widely used to study burnout, but has also been shown to be an effective model for examining the interface between teachers' work and non-work domains (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). More recently, COR theory has been used to study the work-family interface, job stress, and burnout among teachers (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Betoret, 2006; Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2008; Okonkwo, 2013; Schorn & Buchwald, 2006).

Much of the literature surrounding the interface between work and other life roles of individuals can be traced to the concept of spillover. Wilensky (1960) proposed the spillover leisure hypothesis, which suggests that attitudes, behaviors, strain or perceptions of the worker spills over into other parts of life. Initially, the literature surrounding the spillover between work and non-work roles focused on the negative effects of trying to balance multiple life roles. Such literature was driven by the emergence of the role strain hypothesis and scarcity hypothesis. The role strain hypothesis posits that conflict between work and non-work roles occurs because of an inter-role conflict in which the demands of one domain are incompatible with another domain. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) elaborated by identifying three forms of conflict which included time-based, strain-based, and behavior based. Time-based conflict is a result of multiple roles competing for the limited resource of an individual's time. Strain-based conflict results from strain or stress in one role, which spills over or affects performance in other roles. Behavior-based conflict is a result of in-role behavior being incompatible with expected behavior in other roles. Gutek, Searle, and Klepa (1991) added to the role strain hypothesis by suggesting work and non-work roles are in competition for resources. The scarcity hypothesis, proposed by Gutek et al.

(1991) suggests that human energy and resources are fixed and limited, and therefore, resources expanded in one life role will deplete resources available in another. The demand for these finite resources leads to conflict, reduced role quality, and reduced satisfaction in the role receiving fewer resources (Barnett, 1998; Gutek et al., 1991).

Although most of the literature is focused on negative spillover, there are also positive spillover perspectives that have emerged (Barnett, 1998; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Kabanoff, 1980; Marks, 1977). These perspectives posit participation in multiple roles may provide opportunities and resources that enhance participation in other life roles. For example, spouse support may enable workers to better cope with work stress.

The COR theory encompasses both negative and positive spillover perspectives. The COR theory proposes that people strive to build and protect resources such as energies (e.g. time), conditions (e.g. married status, parental status, tenure), and personal characteristics (e.g. self-esteem, satisfaction). The COR theory conceptualizes inter-role conflict as the consequence of resources being lost in the process of juggling multiple roles (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). When these resources are lost or threatened, a psychological stress reaction develops, such as dissatisfaction or depression. However, the COR theory also proposes that each role (e.g. parent, spouse, or community leader) can offer resources to help individuals cope with stress reactions and suggests that participation in multiple life roles does not inexorably relate to higher levels of stress.

In agricultural education it is not uncommon for teachers to take on multiple roles within the job, community, church, and family (Goode & Stewart, 1981). Although studies have found that agriculture teachers are not experiencing burnout (Croom, 2003), evidence suggests that they do experience overburdening workloads and stress (Boland, King, Williams, Duncan, & Ricketts, 2010; Boone & Boone, 2007; Edwards & Briers, 1998; Moore & Camp, 1979; Mundt & Connors, 1999; Myers et al., 2005; Newcomb et al., 1987; Talbert, Camp, & Heath-Camp, 1994; Torres et al., 2009). Furthermore, there exists a shortage of qualified teachers and attrition among agriculture teachers (Kantrovich, 2010). Insight into teachers' abilities to manage, cope, and prioritize multiple life roles, referred to hereafter as work-life balance (WLB) ability, can provide valuable information into teachers' job satisfaction and their intent to remain in the profession. Figure 1 provides a conceptual model for this study.

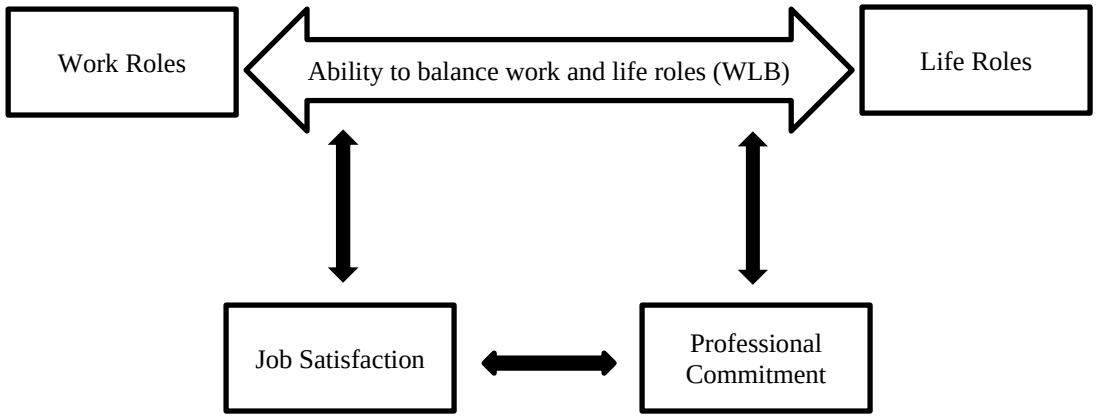

Figure 1. A conceptual model of one's ability to balance work and other life roles and its relationship to job satisfaction and professional commitment.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between job satisfaction, professional commitment, and the perceived ability to achieve work-life balance among agriculture teachers. This purpose aligns with Research Priority 3 of the American Association of Agricultural Education National Research Agenda, in pursuing research solutions to create "A sufficient supply of well-prepared agricultural scientists and professionals…" (Doerfert, 2011, p. 18). The following research objectives guided this study:

1. Describe the demographic profile of Oregon agriculture teachers.
2. Compare teachers' perceived ability to achieve work-life balance (WLB), job satisfaction, and professional commitment by demographic characteristics.
3. Describe the relationships between the ability to achieve WLB, job satisfaction, and professional commitment.

Methods and Procedures

The population for this study included all school-based agriculture teachers in Oregon (N = 111) during the 2013-2014 school year. We collected teachers' names and contact information using the Oregon Agriculture Teacher Directory. Information in the directory was vetted by a panel of experts in the field of agricultural education in Oregon. The data collected through this study were part of a larger research project.

A census of all agriculture teachers in Oregon was attempted. We collected data using Dillman's (2007) tailored design method. Data were collected in December of 2013 using the online survey program Qualtrics. We utilized five points of contact to elicit responses. The first point of contact was a notification e-mail, the three subsequent points of contact were e-mails requesting participation in the research study. The final point of contact was a phone-call to individuals who had not yet responded. A total of 80 useable responses were completed, yielding a 72% response rate. We checked for non-response error by comparing participants who responded after the final two points of contact (late respondents; n = 31) to those who responded prior to the final two points of contact (on-time respondents; n = 49) (Lindner, Murphy, & Briers, 2001; Miller & Smith, 1983). Late respondents were statistically similar to on-time respondents in the variables of interest: professional commitment, job satisfaction, and perceived ability to achieve WLB. Therefore, we considered non-response error to be insignificant (Lindner et al., 2001; Miller & Smith, 1983). In this study, we treated non-responders as a sample of the total population of Oregon agriculture teachers and we generalized our findings to this population.

A panel of experts in the field of agricultural education established face and content validity of the three constructs. We developed the four-item WLB achievement ability construct as part of a larger study. Respondents were asked about their ability to "Manage work related stress" and "Balance priorities to make time for career and family/personal life" as examples. The four items of the WLB ability construct were derived from findings in other studies and encompassed work stress, time management, and work-life balance (Boone & Boone, 2007; Crutchfield et al., 2013; Edwards & Briers, 1999; Mundt & Connors, 1999; Murray et al., 2011; Myers et al., 2005; Torres et al., 2009; Walker et al., 2004). WLB achievement ability items were measured on a five-point scale which ranged from 1 "Very Low" to 5 "Very High." The reliability of this construct, with respondents in this study was analyzed using a Cronbach's alpha and was determined to be .88.

We measured Job satisfaction using the General Job Satisfaction subscale from the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldham, 1975). The General Job Satisfaction subscale consisted of three items that measured the extent to which employees are happy with their job (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). This measure has been used in other studies with teachers (Barnabé & Burns, 1994; Klusmann et al., 2008). Previous research has established the job satisfaction scale

as being reliable, with a reported Cronbach's alpha ranging from .77 to .86 (Barnabé & Burns, 1994; Hennessy & Lent, 2008; Klusmann et al., 2008; Munz, Huelsman, Konold, & McKinney, 1996; Wiley, 1987). Wiley (1987) also tested the validity of the subscale by exploring its relationships between job involvement and global life satisfaction and found that both were positively correlated ($r = .54$, $p < .05$ and $r = .41$, $p < .05$ respectively). Furthermore, a study was conducted by Munz et al. (1996) where 644 university employees were sampled to investigate the measurements of the JDS, this study found the instrument to be reliable with a reported Cronhach's alpha of .77. Fried (1991) conducted a meta-analysis comparing the relationships of the JDS and Job Characteristics Index (JCI) with job satisfaction and performance. Fried stated, "On the basis of the median reliability value of each scale, it can be concluded that reliability estimates of the JDS and JCI scales are sufficiently high for research" (p. 691). Barnabé and Burns (1994) concluded that this measure has "utility for the teaching professions" (p. 182). The current study utilized the General Job Satisfaction subscale. Items on this scale were measured on a seven-point scale which ranged from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 7 "Strongly Agree." The reliability of this construct with respondents was identified, using Cronbach's alpha, as .64. We acknowledge that a Cronbach's alpha of.64 is questionable. Yet due to reliability evidence presented in previous studies, including studies sampling teachers and a meta-analysis of this measure confirming its reliability and validity, we proceeded with using the work satisfaction construct.

The professional commitment construct was developed using the eight-item professional commitment scale (Blau, 1985). The professional commitment scale was designed to measure professional commitment, defined as "one's attitude towards one's profession or vocation" (Blau, 1985, p. 278). Professional commitment was conceptualized as the extent to which individuals identify with and value their profession. Although professional commitment is different than attrition or withdrawal intentions, it has been shown to be a predictor of actual turnover, including among teachers (Blau, 1985, 1988, 1989; Chapman, 1983; Raju & Srivastava, 1994; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Professional commitment items were measured on a seven-point scale which ranged from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 7 "Strongly Agree." Previous research has established this construct to be reliable, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .76 to .92 (Blau, 1988, 1999; Goulet & Singh, 2002). The reliability of this construct with respondents in the current study was identified, using Cronbach's alpha, as .84.

We analyzed the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Research objective one was demographic in nature, therefore we reported the results as frequencies and percentages. Research objective two, compare teachers' perceived ability to achieve WLB, job satisfaction, and professional commitment by demographic characteristics, was answered using means, standard deviations, independent samples *t*-tests for comparisons between dichotomous variables, and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) for comparisons between multichotomous variables. Additionally, we performed Pearson-product moment correlations to obtain coefficients describing the relationship between WLB, job satisfaction, and professional commitment, as guided by research objective three. Inasmuch as statistical significance can be influenced by sample size, we deemed it appropriate to report both effect size and statistical significance for all relationships. Because multiple means were compared, we utilized the Bonferonni correction to make the alpha level more stringent and account for Type I errors. We made no attempt to generalize the findings beyond the population of teachers in Oregon during the 2013-2014 school year.

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2008) identified that, within educational research, inferential statistics are commonly used with non-probability samples. We presented our findings using inferential statistics. We recommend, in accordance with past research (Harlin, Roberts, Briers, Mowen, & Edgar, 2007), readers consider the demographics of participants in this study to make their own judgment of generalizability to other populations.

Results and Findings

Research objective one sought to describe the demographic profile of Oregon agriculture teachers (see Table 1). The average teacher was married with children and had a spouse that worked outside of the home either part-time or full-time. The mean age of respondents was 38.28 (*SD* = 11.22) with the youngest respondent being 23 and oldest being 65. The majority of participants were married (72%). Of those married respondents (*n* = 57), only 14% (*n* = 8) reported that their spouse did not work outside of the home either part-time or full-time. Respondents reported their spouses' mean work hours outside of the home to be 41.30 (*SD* = 13.21) hours per week. Fifty-one percent of total respondents had children. Teachers reported, on average, having one child who lived at home at the time of this study. The maximum number of children living at home was reported to be four. The data analysis revealed mid-career stage (6-19 years of teaching experience) was the largest category with 44% (*n* = 33), followed by 36% (*n* = 27) early-career stage teachers and 20% (*n* = 15) late-career stage teachers.

Table 1

Demographic Data of Responding Agriculture Teachers

Characteristic	*f*	%
Sex		
Female	35	44.3
Male	44	55.7
Marital status		
Married	57	72.2
Not Married	22	27.8
Children		
Yes	41	51.2
No	39	48.8
Spouse works outside the home		
Yes	49	86.0
No	8	14.0
Years teaching experience		
Early-career (0 - 5 years)	27	36.0
Mid-career (6 - 19 years)	33	44.0
Late-career (20 or more years)	15	20.0

Note. Spouse works outside the home: only married teachers (*n* = 57) were included in this analysis.

Research objective two sought to describe Oregon agriculture teachers' perceived WLB ability, job satisfaction, and professional commitment by demographic characteristics, which included sex, marital status, parental status, and career stage. Teachers were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale, their ability to balance work and life roles, and on a seven-point Likert scale, their perceived job satisfaction and professional commitment. Overall, teachers in this study perceived slight to moderately high levels of job satisfaction (*M* = 5.38, *SD* = 1.09) and professional commitment (*M* = 5.04, *SD* = 1.12). However, teachers on average identified only mediocre levels of ability to achieve WLB (*M* = 3.09, *SD* = .69). Females reported higher WLB ability (*M* = 3.12,

SD = .70) than males (*M* = 3.05, *SD* = .72), but reported lower job satisfaction (*M* = 5.12, *SD* = 1.19) and professional commitment (*M* = 4.89, *SD* = 1.07) than males (*M* = 5.55, *SD* = .97, *M* = 5.12, *SD* = 1.16) respectively (see Table 2). However, there were no statistical differences between males and females for WLB ability *t*(77) = .45, *p* = .66, job satisfaction *t*(77) = -1.73, *p* = .09, or professional commitment *t*(77) = -.90, *p* = .37. Teachers' sex was found to have a small effect (Cohen, 1988) on job satisfaction (*d* = .39) and professional commitment (*d* = .21) and a negligible effect on WLB ability (*d* = .10).

Table 2

Perceived Work-Life Balance (WLB) Ability, Job Satisfaction, and Professional Commitment by Sex

	Female (*n* = 35)		Male (*n* = 44)				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
WLB Ability	3.12	.70	3.05	.72	.45	.66	.10
Job Satisfaction	5.12	1.19	5.55	.97	-1.73	.09	.39
Professional Commitment	4.89	1.07	5.12	1.16	-.90	.37	.21

Note. WLB Ability scale based on a five-point scale which ranged from 1 = "Very Low" to 5 = "Very High." Job Satisfaction and professional commitment scale based on a seven-point scale which ranged from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree."

Non-married teachers reported higher WLB ability (*M* = 3.17, *SD* = .57), job satisfaction (*M* = 5.58, *SD* = .98), and professional commitment (*M* = 5.09, *SD* = 1.12) than married teachers (*M* = 3.05, *SD* = .76, *M* = 5.27, *SD* = 1.13, *M* = 4.99, *SD* = 1.13) respectively (see Table 3). However, there were no statistical differences between married and non-married teachers for WLB ability *t*(77) = .66, *p* = .51, job satisfaction *t*(77) = 1.10, *p* = .27, or professional commitment *t*(77) = .37, *p* = .71. Marital status was found to have a small effect (Cohen, 1988) on teachers' job satisfaction (*d* = .29) but a negligible effect on teachers' WLB ability (*d* = .18) and professional commitment (*d* = .09).

Table 3

Perceived Work-Life Balance (WLB) Ability, Job Satisfaction, and Professional Commitment by Marital Status

	Not Married (n = 22)		Married (n = 57)				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
WLB Ability	3.17	.57	3.05	.76	.66	.51	.18
Job Satisfaction	5.58	.98	5.27	1.13	1.10	.27	.29
Professional Commitment	5.09	1.12	4.99	1.13	.37	.71	.09

Note. WLB Ability scale based on a five-point scale which ranged from 1 = "Very Low" to 5 = "Very High." Job Satisfaction and professional commitment scale based on a seven-point scale which ranged from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree."

Teachers without children reported higher job satisfaction (M = 5.45, SD = 1.10) and professional commitment (M = 5.09, SD = 1.17), than teachers with children (M = 5.27, SD = 1.07, M = 4.95, SD = 1.07) respectively (see Table 4). Teachers with children reported a higher WLB ability (M = 3.09, SD = .86) than teachers without children (M = 3.07, SD = .54). However, there were no statistical differences between teachers' parental status for WLB ability $t(77) = -.10$, p = .92, job satisfaction $t(77) = .75$, p = .45, or professional commitment $t(77) = .56$, p = .58. Furthermore, parental status was found to have negligible effect sizes for WLB ability (d = .02), job satisfaction (d = .17), and professional commitment (d = .13).

Table 4

Perceived Work-Life Balance (WLB) Ability, Job Satisfaction, and Professional Commitment by Parental Status

	No Children (n = 39)		Children (n = 41)				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
WLB Ability	3.07	.54	3.09	.86	-.10	.92	.02
Job Satisfaction	5.45	1.10	5.27	1.07	.75	.45	.17
Professional Commitment	5.09	1.17	4.95	1.07	.56	.58	.13

Note. WLB Ability scale based on a five-point scale which ranged from 1 = "Very Low" to 5 = "Very High." Job Satisfaction and professional commitment scale based on a seven-point scale which ranged from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree."

Early career teachers reported the highest WLB ability (M = 3.20, SD = .60), while teachers in the mid-career stage reported the lowest WLB ability (M = 2.97, SD = .76) (see Table 5). Late career teachers reported the highest job satisfaction (M = 5.71, SD = .99), while early career teachers reported the lowest (M = 5.21, SD = 1.26). Late career teachers also reported the highest professional commitment (M = 5.33, SD = 1.16), while mid-career teachers reported the least (M =

4.83, *SD* = 1.09). However, there were no statistical differences across the three career stages for WLB ability (p = .43), job satisfaction (p = .34), and professional commitment (p = .38). Furthermore, career stage was found to have small effect on WLB ability (η = .15), job satisfaction (η = .17) and professional commitment (η = .16).

Table 5

Perceived Work-Life Balance (WLB) Ability, Job Satisfaction, and Professional Commitment by Career Stage

	Early Career (n = 27)		Mid-Career (n = 33)		Late Career (n = 15)				Eta (η) effect
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	size
WLB Ability	3.20	.60	2.97	.76	3.16	.68	.85	.43	.15
Job Satisfaction	5.21	1.26	5.28	1.08	5.71	.99	1.09	.34	.17
Professional Commitment	5.04	1.12	4.83	1.09	5.33	1.16	.98	.38	.16

Note. WLB Ability scale based on a five-point scale which ranged from 1 = "Very Low" to 5 = "Very High." Job Satisfaction and Professional commitment scale based on a seven-point scale which ranged from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree."

Research objective four sought to describe the relationships between work-life balance (WLB) ability, perceived job satisfaction, and professional commitment among Oregon agriculture teachers. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to describe the relationships (see Table 6). A large, positive relationship (Cohen, 1988) existed between job satisfaction and professional commitment (r = .71, p < .05). Positive, small relationships existed between WLB ability and job satisfaction (r = .27, p < .05) and WLB ability and professional commitment (r = .26, p < .05).

Table 6

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations (r) Between Overall WLB Ability, Job Satisfaction, and Professional commitment (n = 80)

Characteristic	*1*	2	*3*
1. WLB Ability	--	.27*	.26*
2. Job Satisfaction		--	.71*
3. Professional commitment			--

Note. WLB = Work-life Balance.
*p < .05

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

As a result of this study of Oregon agriculture teachers during the 2013-2014 school year, important descriptive results and characteristics have been provided regarding this population. Although the results of this study are not generalizable beyond this population of teachers, the descriptive results of this study might be informative beyond Oregon. In our study, female teachers

consisted of nearly half of the respondents. This is indicative of the increasing number of female teachers nationwide entering the profession. Participants reported their spouses worked outside the home an average of 41 hours per week, slightly more than a full work week. This finding is consistent with current societal trends indicating that the percentage of dual earner couples has been on the rise for decades (Galinsky et al., 2008). According to the conservation of resources (COR) theory, workers experience inter-role conflict as resources, such as time, are lost because of juggling multiple roles (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). The higher the inter-role conflict, the less satisfied workers become in both work and life roles. However, participants in this study did not indicate low job satisfaction. Perhaps, this is due to positive spillover characteristics that offset the amount of conflict through enhancement (Barnett, 1998; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Kabanoff, 1980; Marks, 1977). We explored sex, marital status, parental status, and career stage and found only little effect on WLB, job satisfaction, and professional commitment. Perhaps, other demographic characteristics have a greater effect. We recommend more research to explore other demographic characteristics in relation to work-life balance, job satisfaction, and professional commitment. Furthermore, as the numbers of female agriculture teachers increase in conjunction with the number of dual earner families, the profession should seek to be proactive in studying work-life balance in both men and women.

Teachers in this study identified only moderate levels of WLB ability. This finding is consistent with other studies that indicate teachers do struggle to balance multiple life roles (Foster, 2001; Lawver, 2007; Murray et al., 2011). However, Crutchfield et al. (2013) found in their study that agriculture teachers perceived high ability to balance. Furthermore, the ability to achieve WLB was significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction and professional commitment. This finding suggests that perhaps teachers are more satisfied and committed to their jobs as WLB ability increases. Or, is the ability to balance multiple life roles a disposition in which those who are highly committed to their work are also highly committed to their non-work roles, and therefore maintain balance? The findings of this study regarding the positive relationship between WLB ability and job satisfaction are consistent with findings from Chaney (2007) who found a positive relationship between agriculture teachers' work-life balance and retention. However, Crutchfield et al. (2013) found negligible relationships between these two variables. Gutek et al. (1991) and Barnett (1998) suggested that satisfaction is a result of retaining limited resources, such as time, despite juggling between work and other life roles. Accordingly, our results indicate that teachers are only moderately able to manage different life roles in order to maintain those limited resources. We recommend research to identify how teachers utilize resources in order to maintain balance in their life. This research can lead to recommendations for professional development opportunities in training teachers how to better utilize limited resources to improve work-life balance and enhance job satisfaction.

Furthermore, developing teachers' abilities to manage various conditions within each life role might be useful. Inservice training opportunities that focus on developing skills in managing multiple life roles should be explored for their impact on teachers' professional commitment. However, who should be responsible for delivering inservice about work-life balance and coping strategies to teachers? Are teacher educators or state and national teacher organizations in the best position to do so? What types of professional development experiences and materials would be required? These questions should be addressed by the profession if effective and efficient professional development is to be delivered in this area.

Overall, teachers in this study perceived moderately high levels of job satisfaction. This is consistent with previous research findings that agriculture teachers are generally satisfied with their jobs (Bennett et al., 2002; Cano & Miller, 1992; Castillo et al., 1999; Chenevey et al., 2008; Grady & Burnett, 1985; Kitchel et al., 2012; Ritz et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2004). We found job satisfaction was significantly correlated with professional commitment. Therefore, maintaining teacher satisfaction should be an important goal in teacher retention. However, studies seem to suggest that turnover still occurs among agriculture teachers, despite being satisfied with their jobs

(Chaney, 2007; Walker et al., 2004). Perhaps agriculture teachers are satisfied and committed to their jobs but when change occurs, either expected or unexpected, in another life role, it forces them to make changes to other life roles, including their work role. This is alluded to in other research studies in which personal and family factors such as relocation and rearing children are primary reasons for leaving teaching (Ingersoll, 2000). According to the role-strain hypothesis, events in one domain can create demands that are incompatible in other domains, thereby creating strain and conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to COR theory, when strain and conflict occur, individuals must adapt in order to retain limited resources. Perhaps the only adaptation option available to teachers, despite being fully satisfied with their jobs, is to withdraw from their current work role. More research exploring changes in one's work and non-work life in relation to work-life balance, satisfaction, and retention might be useful. Furthermore, offering more flexible options in the workplace may give agriculture teachers more resources to be able to adapt to life changes.

In this study, demographic variables had no influence on job satisfaction, work-life balance ability, and professional commitment. Male and female teachers in Oregon can be perceived as equal in terms of those variables, and the notion that females struggle the most with work life balance may not be accurate. Perhaps, as Murray et al., (2011) described, the difference may lie in the nature of role responsibilities creating more stress on women who still hold to the traditional gender roles of being primarily responsible for rearing children. Furthermore, our findings suggest that early career teachers do not differ from other teachers in terms of job satisfaction, professional commitment, and work-life balance. Yet, other studies indicate teacher attrition is highest during the first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, 2003). It is possible that attrition during this early career phase is due to major life events, such as starting a family, therefore creating an inter-role conflict between work and family in which new family demands are incompatible with work demands (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to the COR theory, our findings would suggest that resources are acquired and lost in all career stages and across different demographic characteristics of teachers. However, the COR theory also suggests that early career teachers have not accumulated large amounts of resources, such as parental status or tenure, and therefore should have more flexibility in their choice to withdraw from teaching (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Further research is recommended to examine how life and work resources (energies, conditions, and personal characteristics) impact a teacher's decision to leave or remain in the profession.

While a handful of studies regarding work-life balance have been conducted in southern states, we attempted to study teachers in a western state. Although this study included a census of agriculture teachers in Oregon, it was a relatively small sample when compared to the entire nation, and is not generalizable beyond the scope of the population of agriculture teachers in Oregon. Therefore, similar studies should be conducted in other states in order to increase the generalizability of the findings in this study. Although this study has contributed by providing insights into the relationships between demographic characteristics and work-life balance, job satisfaction, and professional commitment, still more studies are needed.

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