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What is the Real Cost of Professional Success? A Qualitative Analysis of Work and Life Balance in Agriscience education

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate United States secondary agriscience teachers' perceptions and attitudes of balancing personal and professional responsibilities. While many researchers are asking educators why they have or would leave the profession others have suggested a more forward-looking approach to why teachers remain in the profession. The theoretical framework for this study was structured in Self-Determination Theory and framed in Attrition Theory. This study addressed two research questions: what are your perceptions of overcoming professional challenges in your career, and how do you evaluate and address your personal wellbeing as an agriscience teacher. Five semi-structured research questions were prepared prior to the telephone interviews. The frame for this study consisted of six women and ten men in 14 states. Independent analysis of participant comments were organized into 19 categories using 318 coded objects. Three emergent themes were developed and included secondary agriscience teacher contributions to the student learning environment, secondary agriscience teacher resilience confronting conflicting experiences between personal and professional responsibilities, and professional motivation and validation of individual self-worth. The findings of this paper identified a connection between professional success through intrinsic motivation affected teacher's personal life and feelings of contentment and happiness. Findings also revealed student success in programs, academic student success in local, state, and the national FFA organization were influential as extrinsic motivators to drive intrinsic happiness.

Keywords: motivation; intrinsic; extrinsic; reliance; fatigue; agriscience; success

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Introduction

Successful secondary education agriscience educators are often described as possessing a high commitment to their profession (Crutchfield et al., 2013), support from personal and professional stakeholders (Clark, et al., 2014), having motivated students (Rice, et al, 2011), positive work climate (Thobega & Miller, 2003), and appropriate compensation for work performed (Clemons & Lindner, 2019). These characteristics describe a career choice born from intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivation (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Lawver and Torres (2011) indicated intrinsic motivational

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factors were the greatest predictive insights for describing careers in secondary school agriculture education.

Roberts and Dyer (2004) characterized the field of agriscience education as more demanding regarding the multifaceted expectations of school-based agriculture. Kitchel et al. (2012) reported that even though teachers might not feel distanced from the profession or doubt their self-efficacy they could feel the emotional implications of a complex and multifaceted career. Kitchel et al. (2012) highlighted the historical changes within our field related to perceptions of professional motivation and teacher's emotional well-being.

Croom (2002) reported that the effects of emotional exhaustion would not be a concern, as long as teachers maintain a high degree of self-efficacy. The assumption of professional success being an indicator of personal happiness can cause teachers to reevaluate their work-life balance (Solomonson & Retallick, 2018). Professional achievements are often explained by teachers as a result of personal support networks yet current research has indicated counterpoints to this claim. Traini et al. (2019) conceptualized that agriculture teachers could be either balanced or successful, but never both. Agriscience teacher's efforts to rationalize the expenditure of personal happiness for professional success was summated by Sorensen et al. (2017) that negative psychological strain is the outcome of teachers' multiple roles within the profession.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) described teaching agricultural education as "an uncertain career which fuels a teacher's dissatisfaction" (p. 584). To address the trustworthiness of this statement our study investigated the positivistic paradigm of teacher longevity and classroom success by attempting to understand the personal and professional work-life balance (WLB). The overarching research question of our study was to understand if discrepancies exist in the work and life balance of agriscience education teachers.

Multiple studies have reported the negative relationships between WLB and personal expectations in agricultural education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1996; De Lay & Washburn, 2013; Hargreaves, 2001; Traini et al., 2019). Previous studies identified the value of individual relationships associated with personal and professional constructs (Castillo & Cano, 1999; Croom, 2001; McKim et al., 2017). Crutchfield (2013) reported that teachers remained in the profession when obtaining a balance between work and family life. Crutchfield's (2013) findings supported the work of Arnold and Place (2010) that employees who were viewed as change agents positively affect society and was indicative of work and life balance. Work and life balance achieved by secondary school agriscience education teachers was reinforced by Thieman et al. (2012).

Agricultural education scholars have historically addressed mental and emotional exhaustion in professional and personal arenas (Croom, 2003; Hainline et al., 2015; Kitchel et al., 2012; Lawver & Smith, 2014; Smith & Smalley, 2018). The outcomes of those studies reported increased attrition and a decrease of professional and personal self-efficacy. Sorensen and McKim (2014) reported the demands of teaching and balancing work and family roles as a specific set of challenges for secondary agriscience education teachers. Talbert et al. (2014) addressed the responsibility of agriculture teachers to build and maintain a successful agriscience education program well beyond traditional classroom instruction.

Traini et al. (2019) clarified the roles of agriscience education support organizations awarding teachers for their intrinsic motivation to meet and exceed demands outside of the traditional classroom. Traini et al. (2019) supported Ryan and La Guardias' (2000) findings that intrinsic motivation can be limited by social pressures to perform activities that are not interesting. Challenges associated with excessive hours of work beyond contractual agreements, little time for family, and stress can negatively affect a teacher's self-efficacy in the classroom. Blackburn et al. (2017) reported decreased self-efficacy impacts a person's ability to cope with varying experiences which can affect motivation toward responsibilities.

Professional challenges and responsibilities were reported by Torres et al. (2008) as the demands experienced by secondary agriscience education teachers: Being a school team member, planning and developing a comprehensive agriscience education program, preparing to teach class, delivering instruction, evaluating student progress, advising student organizations, supervising student experiences, relating to the public, and lifestyle. Torres et al. (2008) and Sorensen and McKim (2014) reported that accumulating responsibilities of secondary agriscience education teachers over time within their positions contribute to work and life imbalances. Smalley and Rank (2019) reported the value of further investigation regarding why secondary agriculture teachers acquire additional duties beyond the school-based agriscience education program. They further suggest these additional responsibilities contribute to the perceived balance between work and life balance.

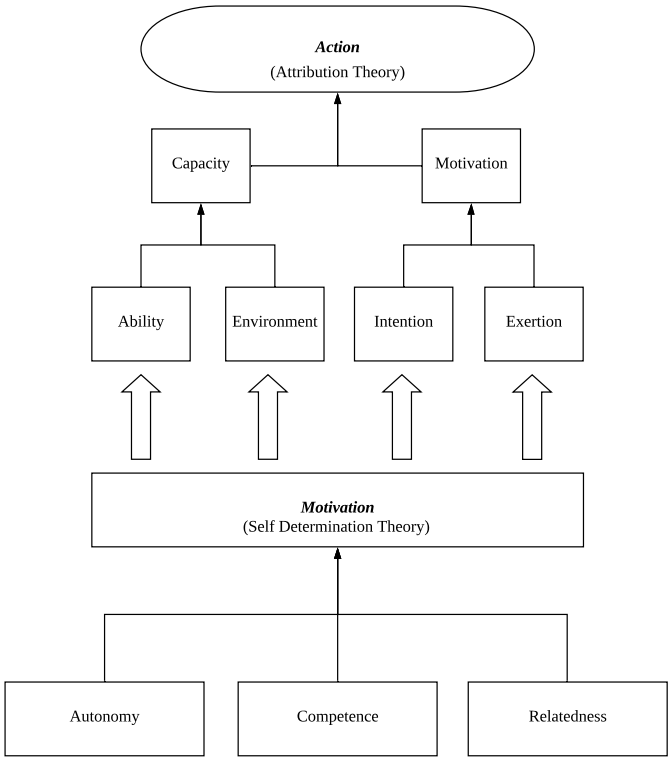
Agricultural education researchers have addressed the cost between professional rewards and loss of personal happiness. While many researchers may ask educators why they have or would leave the profession others have suggested an approach as to why teachers remain in the profession. Prior research (Crutchfield et al., 2013) demonstrated a negative correlation between teachers' perceptions of increased balance in their professional lives while the degree of conflict between work and family declined. Idealistic approaches to the profession (Clemons & Lindner, 2019) have indicated participants valuing the opportunity to blend their professional enjoyment of agriculture and their personal beliefs of making positive differences in the lives of students and community members. Understanding secondary agriscience education teachers' management of professional and personal responsibilities coupled with their perceptions of work and life balance is of primary concern within our field. As teacher-educators, academics, and practitioners in our field we are well situated to evaluate the motivational factors driving teacher success in professional and personal arenas while establishing sound practices for successful teacher longevity.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding the nuances of personal motivational frameworks in agricultural education are vital to the success and longevity of secondary agriscience teachers. The theoretical framework (Figure 1) for this study was structured using Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and bound by Weiner's (1972) Attribution Theory. The historical contexts of motivation theory were grounded in the work of Vroom's (1964) expectancy-valence theory where individuals will exert themselves in any task under the umbrella of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Porter and Lawler's (1968) model defined intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as work of the individual was interesting and resulted in satisfaction. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) addresses the core emotional constructs to observe the motivation of social environments, behavior, and well-being of the individual being observed. Furthering this explanation Ryan and Deci (2000) reported that one can view motivation as the evolutionary outcome of evolved inner resources for personality and behavioral self-regulation.

Figure 1

Model of Determined Motivation and Derived Actions



Varied experiences in professional and personal settings develop motivational pathways for how we make and implement actions. Researchers have addressed the developmental processes of human decision-making and the complexity of deliberate choices as a culmination of interconnected life events:

> Self-Determination Theory addresses such basic issues as personality development, self-regulation, universal psychological needs, life goals and aspirations, energy and vitality, nonconscious processes, the relations of culture to motivation, and the impact of social environments on motivation, affect, behavior, and well-being. (Deci and Ryan, 2008, p. 182)

Ryan and Deci (2000) suggested motivation as the energy, persistence, and equifinality of achieving an end result by many potential means. Understanding peoples' inherent growth and psychological needs are the basis for individual self-motivation and personality. Historically, motivational theories were viewed as a combination of behaviors, decisions, and actions which define the individual. Gagné and Deci (2005) emphasized that the importance of distinguishing between autonomous and controlled motivation of the independent and interdependent relationship between individual experiences and choices.

Self-Determination Theory disaggregates motivation into autonomous and controlled types of behavioral analysis. Gagné and Deci (2005) emphasized an inherent aspect of SDT is that extrinsic motivation varies autonomous versus controlled. Addressing the differences between motivational processes has led to a more differentiated approach by assessing which type of motivation is being displayed at any given time. Autonomous motivation includes both intrinsic motivation and the values individuals place on activities which drive extrinsic motivation. Controlled motivation relies upon external regulation where one's activities are weighed against reward or punishment. Controlled motivation is described as individual's internalization of factors including approval, avoidance of

shame, self-esteem, and ego-involvements. Deci and Ryan (2008) described controlled motivation as the processes related to thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. Motivational analysis further frames the importance of assessing agriscience educators' response to professional and personal choices. Understanding how autonomous and controlled motivation influences are perceived by the individual will provide valuable insight for evaluating choice and the positive or negative outcomes derived.

Weiner's Attribution Theory (1972) conceptualized the framework for understanding the observed and intentional behaviors of participants. Weiner (1972) attributed participant behaviors as a result of internal or external variables. An important distinction of Weiner's (1972) Theory of Attribution exists between the willingness of the individual's behavioral choices (intentionality) and the underlying intentions to expend effort (motivation) to complete the task.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate United States secondary agriscience teachers' perceptions and attitudes of balancing personal and professional responsibilities. Two research questions guided this investigation to better understand WLB: What are your perceptions of overcoming professional challenges in your career and do you evaluate and address your personal wellbeing as an agriscience teacher? This research study aligns closely with research priority three of the American Association of Agriculture Education's research area, question two: "what methods, models, and practices are effective in recruiting agricultural leadership, education, and communication practitioners (teachers, extension agents, etc.) and supporting their success at all stages of their careers" (Stripling & Ricketts, 2016, p. 31).

Methods

Potential participants for this study were identified during research (Clemons & Lindner, 2019) conducted in 2018 from United States of America secondary school agriscience education teachers. This population was appropriate for sampling as potential subjects participated in previous teacher longevity and classroom success studies. The population of potential participants consisted of 63 (N = 63) secondary school agriscience education teachers from the USA. Participants were selected through a non-probability approach (Saunders, 2012), using a criterion-based selection process. Participants included in the study currently teach in a secondary agriscience education program for at least three years, advisor of a local FFA program, and had previously indicated their willingness to participate in future studies addressing teacher success and longevity. This type of purposive sampling technique is supported by Patton (2002) as a means for obtaining information-rich participants who possess a high degree of understanding and insight towards the research questions being asked. A panel of experts was consulted to review the population (N = 63) of this study and evaluate the strata for selecting the sample participants.

The research frame for this study consisted of sixteen participants (n = 16) from the United States. Delbecq et al. (1975) suggested that ten to fifteen subjects are sufficient if the background of the respondents is homogenous. This process ensured a representative distribution of potential participants while accounting for regional and geographical differences within secondary school agriscience education programs. To appropriately address the research questions framing this study, a telephone interview protocol was used to acquire participant responses. Grounded theory was used from the collected data to explain the significant findings.

To support the trustworthiness of the data, participants represented a variety of educational backgrounds, professional experiences, relationship status', years of employment, and age. In accordance with qualitative design measures for anonymity, pseudonyms (Kaiser, 2009) were assigned to each participant prior to interviews to protect their identities and responses. Participant characteristics related to classroom longevity and success presented an impressive range (three years-35 years) of

teaching experience and a median age of 34 years. Participants indicated their teaching environment as both single (n = 6) and multiple teacher (n = 10) programs.

Data Collection

Five semi-structured interview questions were pilot tested with five similarly situated secondary school agriscience education teachers in five states to ensure credibility. These individuals did not participate in the final research study. Frost and Rayfield (2020) supported the use of semi-structured interview questions to increase consistency in establishing protocols for interviewing participants. Feedback from pilot participants included revisions for question clarity, reducing the potential for biased or leading questions, and alleviating asynchronous questions.

Two university agricultural education faculty, two Alabama secondary school agriscience education teachers, and two Alabama Department of Education personnel were consulted to assure questions were reflective of the pilot participants recommendations. Participants (n = 16) were contacted electronically to explain the purpose of the research, to understand their participation, and how data would be collected prior to interviews. Prior to data collection we sent a pre-interview notice to all participants containing the date, time, and means of contact for the interview. Informed consent was obtained in the pre-interview e-mail notice prior to interviews. Participants indicated their willingness to participate by completing an intake approval form using Qualtrics.

Based on previous teacher longevity and success studies (Blackburn et al., 2017; Clemons & Lindner, 2019; Solomonson et al., 2019) five semi-structured (Table 1) interview questions (Merriam, 2009) framed the recorded telephone interviews. Hatch (2002) supported the use of semi-structured interview questions to allow freedom and exploration during the interview sessions.

Table 1

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Primary Interview Question	Expanded and Clarifying Questions
During your teaching career, describe the most rewarding and positive experience you have had.	What are your highest aspirations as an agricultural education teacher, both personally and professionally? Describe the ways teaching agricultural education impacts your life.
How have you met your teaching goals when confronted with challenges?	How do you believe that you fit into the broader field of teaching and education? Where do you see the profession of agricultural education in the next ten years?
Describe the support groups you have in place for your personal well-being as an agricultural education teacher.	Do you talk about your career with others and how would you describe the tone of those conversations?
How do you use your position as an agricultural education to improve your quality of life?	How does your position affect your professional and personal life?
Describe your optimism for the future of teaching.	

Participants were contacted by telephone for up to two hours and interviews were audio-recorded using computer-based software. Transcribed interviewed were completed by a professional transcription service. Researchers field notes, participant comments, and inter-researcher discussions were captured during and after each interview. These notes were reflective of participants affect and general demeanor during the interviews and used later during the evaluative component of the data analysis.

Data Analysis

We approached the analysis of data by acknowledging our roles in the context of agriscience education during participant response analysis. To address our own preconceptions, bias', or assumptions we present them within the researcher's frame of mind for this study. Malterud (2001) stated that: "preconceptions are not the same as bias, unless the researcher fails to mention them" (p. 484). Therefore, the perspective of the researcher affects the findings and ultimately the outcome(s) of the completed study.

The analysis of the data was conducted by faculty members with previous secondary school agriscience education teaching experience. These lived experiences include advocating for the agricultural education profession, developing instructional lessons, advising local FFA programs, and building positive community relationships. The researchers cumulatively have over 50 years of agriscience education experience and value teacher success and classroom longevity. These experiences focused the researcher's lens of to analyze and interpret the participant responses.

Grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) served as the basis for this study. In grounded theory Patton (2002) in Walker and Myrick (2006) reported "data analysis has a well-defined process that begins with a basic description and moves to conceptual ordering then on to theorizing" (p. 549). Walker and Myrick (2006) concluded the strengths of grounded theory as the analysis and coding of all data using codes to verify or prove a proposition, and the analyst inspects the data for categorization, tracking of analysis, and development of theoretical ideas.

Researcher memos, discussions, and participant transcripts were transcribed verbatim from an independent transcriptionist and analyzed by the research team. To insure credibility and trustworthiness each participant was asked to independently review the electronic transcript of their interview. Hatch (2002) referred to participant review as the member checking process while Doyle (2007) advocated for giving power, voice, and engagement to participants through member checking processes. Creswell and Miller (2000) supported the use of member check as a means to increase trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry. Processes to sort data from respondents included open, axial, and selective coding. Guetzkow (1950) reported the appropriate use of coding to separate qualitative material into units and establishing category sets into which information may be classified. The results of coding the participant responses served as the basis for grounded theory as researchers can identify patterns, commonalities between and within statement responses, and the development of emergent themes.

During data analysis a constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was used to compare data against participants responses. They supported the use of the constant comparative method to allow researchers to reduce concepts, develop thoughts based on their properties, and differentiate ideas from each other. Glaser and Strauss (1967) supported the use of direct quotes in the reporting of the findings to develop a grounded theory presentation of the emergent and selective codes. Researchers analysis of participant comments were evaluated and organized using each of the five research questions to produce 19 categories using 318 coded objects into three emerging themes. The themes describe teacher's reflection on achieving work and life balance in a professional and personal atmosphere.

Findings

During the interviews several characteristics emerged which helped define work and life balance for secondary agricultural education teachers. Three emergent themes were developed and included secondary agriscience teacher contributions to the student learning environment, secondary agriscience teacher resilience confronting conflicting experiences between personal and professional responsibilities, and professional motivation and validation of individual self-worth. All of the

participants presented a positive affect during the interviews and portrayed a general sense of pride in their program and role as an FFA advisor when responding to our question prompts.

Several participants mentioned their appreciation when asked questions and the opportunity to talk about facets of teaching secondary agricultural education that are not always appropriate with their peers. [Adam], a 21-year veteran in secondary agricultural education summated the generally positive feelings of the participants: "I think the future [of agricultural education] is really bright! Agriculture fits so many different careers and it's our jobs as educators to open the doors [for students] to those opportunities!" From the participant data three themes (Table 2) emerged in response to the semi-structured interview questions.

Table 2

Emergent Themes Resulting from Data Analysis

Theme Number	Theme
1	Contributions to the Student Learning Environment to Fulfill Personal Emotions
2	Confronting Conflicts Between Personal and Professional Emotions
3	Contingency-Based Assurance (Professional Success Enables Personal Happiness)

These categories emerged as the factors most influencing participants perceptions of professional work and personal life balance in secondary school agriscience education . Frost and Rayfield (2020) supported framing the results using participant quotes by expand and clarifying questions, research field notes, and inter-researcher discussions to support the analysis of the data.

Contributions to the Student Learning Environment to Fulfill Personal Emotions

When secondary agriculture teachers reflected on their most rewarding experiences during their teaching career they often spoke of current and former students' successes during their teaching careers. These positive experiences included: developing skills with students who experience academic struggles; visiting with former graduates who have become successful in their chosen path in life; developing state and national award-winning career and leadership development teams and FFA officers; encouraging students to pursue a career in agricultural education; and creating opportunities for wide exposure in the field of agriculture.

During the discussions many of the participants were interviewed during their preparatory schedule. We identified in field notes the general level of activity, noise, questions from students to the teacher and consistent interruptions while the teacher was being interviewed. An anecdotal evaluation of interviewing teachers during preparatory time was the amount of interactivity secondary agricultural education teachers have with students. Teachers approached the interruptions without frustration or hesitation and instead made the student their primary focus even in the middle of interviews. This observation reinforces the intrinsic value teachers place on helping students.

An emerging theme during the discussion was framed in how teachers help students experience success in the classroom, FFA, and life beyond high school. The participants responses to student academic success was the primary reward in their careers. As participants expounded on their feelings of success, other participants explained how the lessons they prepared in class were helpful to their students after graduating high school. [Gary], a retired secondary school agricultural education teacher, stated: "I would get former students who would come back [to the school] after they graduated. They would visit and talk to me about how important something they learned in my class has been in their lifetime." [David], who retired from teaching in 2019, reflected on his experiences: "I can think of a lot of students I feel like I helped and changed their lives from maybe being in jail to someone who can be a productive citizen." [David] further added that "one of my former graduates who really struggled all

through school was recognized as an outstanding FFA alumni member at the National FFA Convention." Veteran participants were not alone in their descriptions of motivational factors as many younger and less experienced teachers felt similar in their portrayal of student success. Interestingly, mid-career participants echoed their peers' feelings of student success as a factor in their positive personal and professional experiences.

[Richard] is completing his tenth year of teaching and had similar feelings regarding his own motivating experiences: "what is most rewarding to me is seeing kids have new experiences." We probed for a deeper understanding of his response regarding student experiences. [Richard] explained that each year his program organizes a tour of agriculture in a different state for his students: "we have kids that have hardly left the county or travel to another state. Touring agricultural practices has been a cornerstone of my career. They [students] come back after graduation and ask where the program is going this year." [Sheila], a secondary school agricultural education teacher completing her third year, explained that, in her experience, "the most satisfying feeling I have is when I'm working with the students in the classroom and after going over and over a process or a specific idea and they finally get it'.

Sheila's validation of personal success from external affirmation was a consistent theme throughout the interviews with participants. Other participants reinforced Sheila's feelings of internal validation from student success. [Jesse], who has taught for four years, explained: "for me, it is seeing those kids light up and to see them actually getting excited to learn something new."

Evaluation of student success suggests that intrinsic professional motivating factors transcend all levels of experience when teaching secondary school agricultural education. [Susan], a fifth-year secondary agricultural education teacher, supported her peer's evaluation of student success as an intrinsic motivating factor stating: "the most rewarding experience is actually after they're [students] done, they come back to you." Asking [Susan] to expand on her comment she explained: " the best compliment I've ever received was from a child going through some rough times and they heard my voice in their head." She further qualified her remark by explaining that "they didn't hear parents, an aunt or an uncle, they heard my advice on how to handle a situation." [Susan] described the intrinsic feelings of pride she experiences with her student's success as: "I think in my life the true measure of their [student] success is the type of mentor I have been." Her self-reflection through professional actions emphasizes the connectedness of teachers' professional success intertwined with their personal lives.

Participants summated their experiences of student success and the feelings of accomplishment as a teacher in the classroom and beyond. The academic content and "life" lessons imparted on students helps understand how these successes positively affect the teacher. As an extension of their interaction with students [Charles], described his reflective thoughts on the differences agriscience education teachers have on student growth "just knowing that ag teachers can have a huge impact on student's lives improves my life."

Helping students experience classroom success was not the only intrinsic motivational factor for teachers. Participants reported success in the FFA was a major factor in their motivation and reinforced their intrinsic feelings of self-worth. [Andrew], a teacher of nine years, described how he enjoys classroom instruction, but the real motivating factor has been the FFA. [Andrew] stated that " the most rewarding life experiences for me come from through the FFA" and continued "that having a national officer was a goal from the beginning." His statement reinforces how his professional experiences validate happiness in his personal life.

Other participants continued to speak of their experiences with student success in the FFA. [Harrison] reinforced Andrew's sentiment: "one of my goals was to teach a state FFA officer." [Harrison] explained that as a first-year teacher he dreamed of having his students successful at the state and national level and the feeling of personal accomplishment associated with attaining his goal.

[Charles] explained his feelings regarding student success in the FFA as: "I would love to see all students involved in at least one FFA activity, if not more."

Many of the participants highlighted classroom and FFA success (Table 3) as major factor of their success while others privately explained the potential cost of their personal emotions, individual happiness, and self-worth for successful professional outcomes.

Table 3

Contributions to the Student Learning Environment

Discourse and dimension	Example Quote
Student learning	
Current students	"The most satisfying feeling I have is working with the students in the classroom and they finally get it'. (Sheila, 3 years' experience)
Former students	"I can think of a lot of students I feel like I helped and changed their lives from maybe being in jail to someone who can be a productive citizen." (David, 33 years' experience)
FFA	"The most rewarding life experiences for me come from through the FFA" and continued "that having a national officer was a goal from the beginning." (Andrew, nine years' experience)
Being a mentor	"Just knowing that ag teachers can have a huge impact on student's lives improves my life." (Charles, four years' experience)

The interconnectivity between classroom instruction and FFA involvement was strongly reinforced through participant experiences and intrinsic motivators during their career.

Confronting Conflicts Between Professional and Personal Emotions

Secondary school agricultural education teachers presented a positive representation when asked to speak about their program, desire to improve students' academic and personal lives, teaching, and their love of agriculture. As we interviewed each participant the questions we asked became more reflective of teacher's emotions between their professional and personal life. Many of the participants were very responsive when asked about their role as a professional and the emotions they have when working with students, community, and the FFA.

When participants were asked about their personal emotions the teachers became quieter, noticeably reserved, and spent more time reflecting on how to answer the prompt from the researchers. We noted in field notes that the length of time spent responding was consistent when participants were addressing the positivistic approach they commonly use to describe their role as a teacher or the overall success of their program. This insight into teacher's demeanor may describe a "readied" reply when asked professionally about their role(s) by administration, students, and the community. This observation of positive program statements may be the reward for a conditioned response when asked publicly about the entire agriculture program.

In contrast to that observation, teachers may not feel as comfortable when talking about the personal difficulties of the profession, seeking educational/FFA answers, or sharing their personal emotions with outside stakeholders, relationship partners, or their peers. Participants indicated that discernable differences exist between the tone and content of their conversations with other secondary school agriscience education teachers compared to their non-agriscience education teachers, spouses, partners and friends.

Building, district, or county administrators were consistently discussed in their role as educational managers and how their opinion of the agriscience education program has significant bearing on professional conversations. [Susan], a five-year secondary agriscience education teacher, commented on her internal emotions when talking with administration: "I joke that my administration doesn't understand what I do." We asked for an example to substantiate her claim. "I presented my program of work addressing a learning standard and the administration commented on the length of the report. They [administration] don't understand the demand [time, duties, FFA] on agriculture teachers."

[Carol], an agriscience education teacher of eight years, was asked about support groups she has as a teacher. She continued to explain that the tone of the conversations depended on the group or individuals she was talking with: "We're [agriscience education teachers] all really supportive of each other because we share things that we need." [Carol] further explained that in her opinion other [core academic] teachers don't share materials or curricula with their peers and this lack of sharing strengthens her relationships with her agriscience education peers.

As [Carol] continued her response her tone moved away from the positivistic affect she was displaying to a more cautious tone when describing the perception of how negative thoughts would be interpreted by other agriculture teachers: "This is one area [discussing feelings of self-efficacy] I don't talk about with other agriculture teachers because it seems we [ag teachers] only talk about the good things." [Charles] also spoke of his perception associated with discussing non-positivistic issues with his agriscience education peers: "a few weeks ago a colleague mentioned that I need to stop putting in so many hours at work. I thought that was interesting because teaching ag really becomes our life. It's the instant gratification I get when my [secondary school agriculture education] peers acknowledge how hard I work." [Charles] expounded that even though he has opportunities to discuss his personal emotions some of his secondary school agriscience education peers *will* be open regarding their personal emotions. He commented that his internal thoughts are: "whew, my job is a walk in the park compared to yours" when listening to his agriscience education peers talk about their personal emotions resulting from their professional life. We followed his response inquiring about his rationale for not engaging in these types of conversations: "being open with other ag teachers could cost me respect or FFA success in the future."

As our interviews continued, more participants echoed their peers' sentiments regarding professional emotions and not sharing their personal struggles with peers. [Adam], a twenty-one-year veteran, reflected on how he approaches the emotions of his position: "I talk a lot about my career and its usually the most common topic of conversation. When I'm talking to other people the tenor of conversation about teaching and the program is very positive. I guess because it's a lifestyle that permeates everything I do." [David] followed and reinforced [Adam's] sentiments: "I've talked about my career with everybody and never said one negative thing about it."

Other participants discussed their lack of conversations with outside stakeholders having a purposive interest in the program. [Rose], a secondary agriscience education teacher of nine years, was dismissive and laughed when asked about discussing her program with others: "if they are not a community member that I want to be invested in our program, I generally don't talk about my job."

Participants continued to discuss the conflict between professional and personal emotions. [Jesse] began his response to the ways he talks about his career with others by saying: "it depends on who I am talking to. If it's a community member it always a positive experience. If I'm bragging about my program it's one of my peers." This response reinforced the observational findings that the participants in this study would talk to their peers if the conversation was viewed as positive, successful, and placed the teacher in a less vulnerable emotional state than their peer.

As teachers became more comfortable during the interviews many began to discuss the emotions they share with non-agriscience education teachers, spouses, partners and friends. These groups were often described as a listening ear but lacked the contextual understanding of the stress,

workload, and self-doubt experienced in secondary school agricultural education. We noted that a common frame between participants was the lack of depth in which they spoke to support groups and the commonality that all participants would only discuss topical issues related to unpopular administrative decisions, student behavior, or in general about the experiences of the day.

This reservation to discuss the stress, anxiety, and self-doubt of their career reflects the difficulties in establishing trustworthy support networks. [Jesse] explained: "it's challenging for me to talk to them [non-agriscience education support groups] because they don't necessarily understand ag education because they are not involved in the field." [Jesse] continued his explanation of how his partner is a teacher but lacks the depth of understanding the variables in secondary school agricultural education. Jesse provided an example specifically to this issue: "I've been struggling personally for a while. My co-teacher left and I'm worried that I won't get any more support in the future." Asking for more information [Jesse] explained: "I realize a lot of times the people in my personal life don't get it and I really need them to understand sometimes." [Andrew] also shared his feelings regarding conversations with his spouse: "A lot of times my conversations aren't positive. Usually it's about administration or a decision out of my control. Very few conversations are a result of something that happened in my classroom or FFA program." Many of the participants spoke of the limitations of being emotionally open (Table 4) with their agricultural education peers and their personal support networks. Our observations from field notes indicated a tone of uneasiness when participants were discussing conflicting emotions between professional and personal experiences.

Table 4

Confronting Conflicts Between Professional and Personal Emotions

Discourse and dimension	Example Quote
Positive expressions of professional success to stakeholders	
Community	"If it's a community member it always a positive experience." (Jesse, four years' experience)
Peers	"It's the instant gratification I get when my peers acknowledge how hard I work." (Charles, four years' experience)
Administration	"They [administration] don't understand the demand on agriculture teachers." (Andrew, nine years' experience)
Expression of personal emotions to non-stakeholders	
Spouse, partner, and family	"Very few conversations are a result of something that happened in my classroom or FFA program." (Andrew, nine years' experience)
Assuming a lack of agricultural education contextual understanding	"It's challenging for me to talk to them [non-agriscience education support groups] because they don't necessarily understand ag education because they are not involved in the field." (Jesse, four years' experience)

Overall participants indicated an internal metric for determining the tone, depth, and content of conversations with non-agriscience education teachers, spouses, partners and friends. These self-imposed limitations were commonly framed within the individual and their willingness to be open with trusted individuals. [Wanda], a third-year secondary school agriscience education teacher, summated discussing the profession with non-stakeholders: "sometimes you have to leave work at work and not take it home with you."

Professional Motivation and Validation of Individual Self-Worth

Participants referred to their professional activities as essential to their career but also to the way in which they view the value of their personal lives. The interplay between professional motivation and internal validation of individual self-worth was discussed often by the participants. This theme emerged from participant responses throughout the interviews and the exploration of how professional success impacted participants' overall happiness in their personal life. To fully understand contingency-based assurance, it is important to describe this theme in greater detail.

The intrinsic motivation of secondary agriscience education teachers highlights the drive and determination for professional success in the classroom and affirms positive assurance in their personal life. Participants reported various applications and opportunities in different ways but common descriptions of professional intrinsic motivation emerged: engaging students in learning, validation of the success and relationships developed with former students, career and leadership development student success, developing future agriscience education teachers, being a mentor for students, and developing program success in the FFA. Participants discussed motivation for teaching and [Reese] explained factors which contribute to her intrinsic motivation: "I think some of my personal goals have been to become a top ten chapter in the state. Then to be able to hold on to that title year to year."

Answering questions associated with professional success was very easy for participants especially for areas in which they felt confident. When discussing intrinsic motivation, [Henry] described his experiences by saying: "without a doubt it's the relationships I have built with students." [Henry] further explained: "as with anything else teaching is teaching but it's the relationships I've built with current and former students: that's what really keeps me here." [Henry] balanced his response with the contingency of time away from personal responsibilities as a secondary agriscience education teacher: "Time is one of the negatives with my job. Time constraints are hard because teaching ag is so different than other teaching positions. There's never a day off." [Henry] continued by describing how family roles are affected: "There's just so many things to do. That becomes tough when you have family obligations and you still have work obligations when you're not at work." [Mary], a seventeen-year veteran agricultural education teacher, described her motivation for her longevity in the secondary classroom: "I love to see kids be successful in their learning and knowing they will become good citizens." [Mary] further explained that her students' success was a metric for her own personal well-being: "seeing my students succeed is how I feel proud of myself."

When discussing how professional classroom success impacted his personal life [Wallace] explained: "My family is all educators. A few years ago, my hometown where I teach experienced a tornado. When I pulled in my parents' driveway there were about 300 people including current and past students there to help clean up and put it all back together." [Wallace] described his pride in developing close bonds with his community and students but went further to detail how there is no differentiating his profession from his personal life: "I would say that my job, like many other agricultural education teachers takes up almost every aspect of my life. I've built my personal life on my job and my family and friends understand how demanding my job is." The lack of differentiating between professional and personal self-identities was prevalent throughout the participant interviews.

Teachers in this study discussed the lack of division between professional and personal experiences. [Gary], a recently retired agriscience education veteran with 35 years of experience in the secondary agricultural education classroom, discussed how his professional responsibilities affected his personal life as a young teacher: "It seems early on in my career a lot of time was spent in the classroom after school hours building the program away from my family. I think agriscience education teachers feel that way because we're told we have to spend the hours to maintain the program and the [administrative, community, agriculture teaching peers] expectations for success." [Gary's] sentiment was supported by a recently retired colleague in agriculture education.

[David], a retired 33-year veteran of agriculture education, explained his perceptions of contingency based assurance in his professional experience: "My community often commented that they appreciated the 18-hour days I spent making the program better and I often gave myself pep talks that I loved my job and had a good thing going. I can live with anything." [David] commented on the positive quality of his personal life because he was viewed as a dedicated and successful secondary agriscience education teacher by his peers, community, and school administration. [David] valued the conversations he has with new teachers by conveying his perceptions of success in the profession and the impact of his success on his family.

To better understand the complexity of participants professional success and personal self-efficacy (Table 5) a summation of responses was appropriate when defining contingency-based assurance.

Table 5

Professional Motivation and Validation of Individual Self-Worth

Discourse and dimension	Example Quote
Professional success	
Successful instruction and advisement for students and FFA programs.	"I think some of my personal goals have been to become a top ten chapter in the state." (Reese, 10 years' experience) "It's the relationships I've built with current and former students: that's what really keeps me here." (Mitchell, 8 years' experience)
Establishing and maintaining student relationships	
Recognizing peer and community affirmation of success	"A few years ago, my hometown experienced a tornado. About 300 current and past students helped clean up and put it all back together." (Wallace, 4 years' experience)
Personal self-efficacy	
Disconnections between professional decisions impacting personal life	"It seems early on in my career a lot of time was spent in the classroom away from my family." (Gary, 35 years' experience)
Professional success drives personal self-efficacy	"Seeing my students succeed is how I feel proud of myself." (Mary, 17 years' experience)

[Reese] summated her feelings of motivation and her drive to be professionally successful and happy in her personal life. She explained the toll being a teacher has on her emotions as a mother and secondary school agricultural education teacher: "One time I was in a meeting with other ag teachers and I was lamenting on when I'm a teacher and when I'm a mom. I said to the group that I always feel like I am an ag teacher…it's just part of what I do every day."

Conclusions and Implications

Participants revealed student success in local programs, family, peer and partner/spousal support were paramount to addressing the challenges experienced as a secondary agriscience teacher. Consistent with Crutchfield (2013), our conclusions indicated that participants were motivated by student success and autonomy of local program decisions to address the demands and nuances of the profession. Our conclusions are similar to Deci and Ryan's (2008) theory of autonomous motivation. Participants felt motivated when self-determined choices resulted in rewards and gratifications associated with teaching agriscience education .

Participants indicated their reluctance to openly address professional issues with their agriscience education peers but would discuss general educational issues with partners, family, and spouses. Participants disclosed feeling anxious or fearful of negative peer evaluation of their performance as a teacher and FFA advisor. This internal struggle reflects a degree of controlled motivation, and the drive for participants to withhold information as a means of external regulation where behavior is contingent on perceived reward or punishment.

Internal perceptions of controlled motivation may address the underlying psychology of agriscience teachers occasionally portraying a self-positive description of actual events. The conclusions revealed that balance between professional achievements and personal life happiness were paramount to addressing the challenges experienced as a secondary agriscience teacher. Oftentimes, evaluation from program stakeholders fails to peek behind the curtain of professional achievement to reveal personal sacrifices. Motivation towards professional and personal responsibilities demands an introspective analysis of the decision-making process by agriculture teachers in regards to professional justifications and personal well-being. Increased professional demands and a perceived lack of balance in personal responsibilities exist well within the pragmatic ethos of agriculture teachers. This tug of war between career and family, balancing professional expectations against personal happiness, and the difficulty of setting boundaries describes the rationalization of personal capital to gain professional success (Sorensen et al., 2017). Investigating the emotional and mental health realities facing agriscience education teachers' is vital to classroom success and longevity.

Participants referred to their professional activities as essential to their career but also to the way in which they view the value of their personal lives. These conclusions reflect a framework of behavior and well-being of the individual. Weiner's (1972) theory of attribution was affirmed by teachers intrinsic motivating behavior was determined to be intentional attributed to internal or external causes. The theme of interconnectivity of professional activities as a reflection of self-perception described the internal dilemma participants may experience when professional expectations regulated personal self-worth. The intrinsic motivation of secondary agriscience education teachers highlights the determination for professional success in the classroom and affirms positive assurance in their personal life. This implication aligns with Weiner's (1972) that behavioral choice is the means of two determinants: "can: the characteristics of the individual including intelligence and ability and try: determined by the momentary intentions and effort expenditure of the individual" (p. 204). Participants were motivated by student success and autonomy of local program decisions (Crutchfield, 2013) to address the demands and nuances of the profession.

Contributions to the student learning environment were paramount when secondary agriculture teachers reflected on their most rewarding experiences during their teaching career. Instilling academic success for students, establishing skills and aptitudes which support former students after graduation, and visiting with former graduates and discussing their personal success in life were affirmations for teacher's profession and helped affirm their happiness in their personal lives. Further research should investigate the connection between intrinsic professional motivators influence on personal happiness and self-fulfillment. Collaborative research should extend beyond our field into the realms of workplace psychology to better understand intrinsic motivation between professional and personal satisfaction. Perhaps the perception of professional success can only be reached when standing at the precipice of sacrificing personal relationships and self-care.

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