

Teaching Ag Ed: Is it stressing you out?

Robert M. Torres, Misty D. Lambert, Rebecca G. Lawver, University of Missouri

Review of Literature

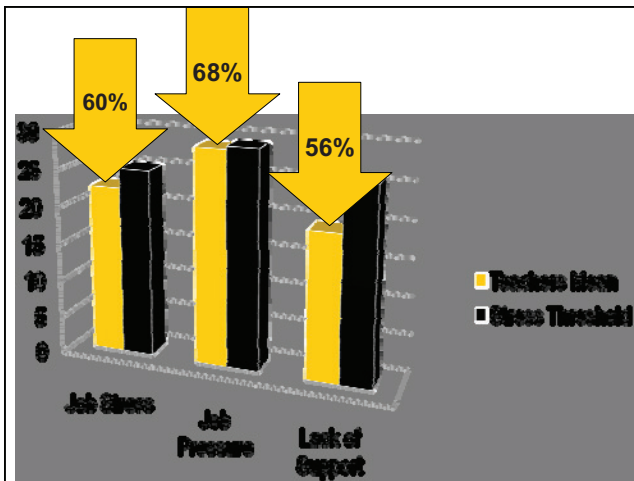
According to the American Psychological Association one third of Americans report extreme levels of stress due to their job. Teachers are no exception. While most teachers agree that teaching is rewarding, it can also be challenging. In fact, it is estimated that teachers make more than 400 decisions a day. This is particularly true in agricultural education. In addition to frequent decision making, secondary agriculture teachers work well beyond a 40-hour work week preparing lessons, evaluating student work, coaching career development teams, and supervising student projects.

Methodology

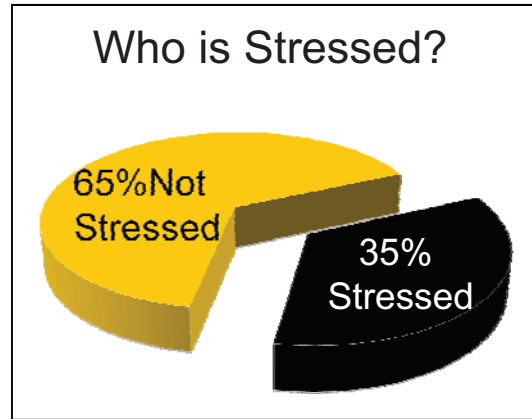
This study sought to describe the level of job stress experienced by Missouri's agriculture teachers, identify the most stressful items of the job, as well as uncover predictors of that stress. Data was collected using the Job Stress Survey, an instrument sent to all teachers ($n = 445$) during spring of the 2007-08 school year. There were 252 responses for an overall response rate of 57%. The instrument gauged severity and frequency of 30 common stressors.

Findings/Conclusions

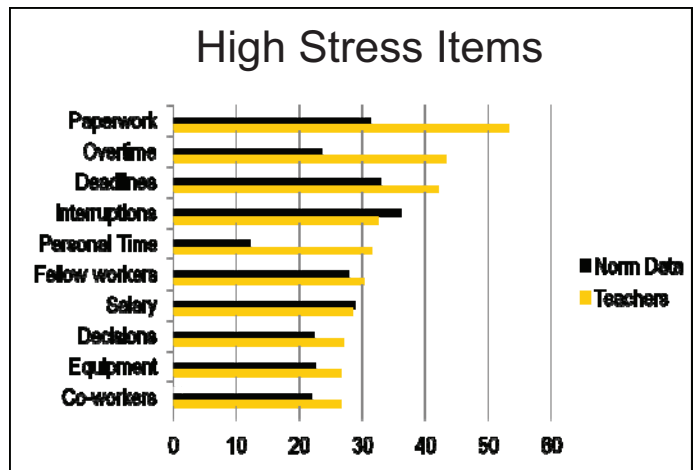
The data collected were used to calculate stress on three scales: Job Stress, Job Pressure and Lack of Support. The yellow represents Missouri data while the black bar represents the level at which a group could be called "stressed". Missouri's teachers are at the 60th percentile on Job Stress, the 68th percentile on Job Pressure and the 56th percentile on Lack of Support.



On average, Missouri's secondary agriculture teachers are not in a state of overall stress. However, 35% of the teachers were stressed.



From the data gathered, a list was compiled of the 10 most stressful items. These are shown in yellow. The black bars represent the level of stress for these items among other professionals. The most stressful item was "Excessive Paperwork" followed by "Working Overtime" and "Meeting Deadlines".



The largest factor in predicting teacher stress was the number of hours they spent at work per week, meaning the more hours at work, the more stress experienced. The next best predictor involved time in the profession, whether it was years of teaching experience or years at the same school indicating that the longer a person works in the profession, the less stressed they become. For more information on Stress Management, go to <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/stress>.

Torres, R. M., Lambert, M. D., & Lawver, R. G. (2008). Predictors of job stress among agriculture education teachers. *Proceedings of the North Central Region Conference of the American Association for Agricultural Education*, 6, 204-216.

Torres, R. M., Lawver, R. G. & Lambert, M. D. (2008). Job stress among agriculture teachers: Highs and lows. *Proceedings of the North Central Region Conference of the American Association for Agricultural Education*, 6, 217-228.