The SAS Project: A Longitudinal Analysis of Occupational Well-being and Commitment in Adjunct vs. Tenure-Track Faculty

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Background

- Post-secondary faculty have experienced increasing demands for quality teaching, research, and administration without corresponding increases in support (Cantano et al., 2010), contributing to greater stress and low psychological well-being (Watts & Robertson, 2010).
- Previous research has focused mainly on tenure-track faculty, with notably limited research exploring the experiences of precariously employed non-tenure-track faculty (AAUP, 2018).
- Recent research on non-tenure-track faculty is mixed:
  1. Academic job security -> mental health challenges (e.g., Canadian contingent faculty; CAUT, 2018)
  2. Precariously employed faculty are commonly assumed to experience greater passion and satisfaction (Kim et al., 2019)

Rationale

To address these inconsistent findings, the present study directly explored differences between adjunct (e.g., non-tenure-track) and tenure-track faculty in the U.S. and Canada concerning their occupational well-being and commitment.

Methods

- Post-secondary faculty were recruited from U.S. and Canadian post-secondary institutions via social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter). Participants included both tenure-track (72.6%) and non-tenure-track faculty (i.e., adjunct, contract, contingent; 24.7%) who completed an online questionnaire at three time points (5-6 months lag).

Analysis

Repeated-measures ANCOVA

- Between-subject factors: Tenure status and early career status (<5 vs >5 years of experience)
- Covariates: country, gender, ethnic minority status

Findings

Job Satisfaction: Within-subjects three-way interaction effect; [F(2,1204) = 4.02, p = .018, n² = .007] as well as between-subjects effects of academic rank [F(1,602) = 20.42, p = .001, n² = .033] and early-career (EC) status [F(1,602) = 4.10, p = .043, n² = .007]

Implications

- Study findings provide evidence of psychological challenges faced by non-tenure-track faculty and the potential role of moderating variables such as early career status and development over time.

Discussion points: As an increasing majority of faculty in Canada/U.S. do not have tenure-track positions, what institutional changes are needed to support their motivation and well-being?

Selected References


Quitting Intentions: Between-subjects effect for tenure status [F(1,608) = 16.02, p < .001, n² = .026]; within-subjects two-way interaction of early career status x time [F(2,1216) = 3.28, p = .038, n² = .005]