
JOB AMBITIONS OF EMERGING VETERINARIANS IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

A study was carried out on 180 respondents of the final year students of the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Mannuthy and the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Pookode, to assess their job ambitions in the changing scenario. The student's profile and the role of veterinary curriculum on the development of their personality were also assessed. The study was carried out using a structured questionnaire and the data were collected by personal interview technique. The data were then analysed using non-parametric statistical tests. Majority of the students (69%) wanted to become veterinary surgeon in the state Animal Husbandry Department followed by academic jobs (41%) and public sector undertakings (36%). A new trend of opting for jobs in IT companies handling foreign veterinary claim evaluation was also observed. More female students (57.57%) wanted to join university service, bank and appear for civil service/MBA examinations in contrast to

male counterparts (43.28%) who preferred to do private practice and wanted to go abroad for jobs/higher education. Unlike other professions, government institutions are the key to provide job opportunities to veterinary students in Kerala. Emphasise on livestock entrepreneurship has to be given to make them job providers rather than job seekers and they should be supported by all means, adequately to venture into these new avenues.

Keywords: Job ambition, Attitude, Job opportunity, Veterinary education

INTRODUCTION

The noble profession of veterinary science grew on scientific lines since the establishment of British rule in India. Dr. William Moorcroft was the first veterinary surgeon to be employed in India in 1808. The first veterinary training school came into existence in the year 1862 in Pune. In 1882, the first veterinary college was established at Lahore; this was followed

by establishment of other colleges, viz., Bombay in 1884, Bengal in 1893, Madras in 1903 and Bihar in 1930. At the time of independence, there were nine veterinary colleges existing in the country. At present there are 51 veterinary colleges functioning in India, which are recognised by the Veterinary Council of India.

In Kerala, approximately 200 veterinary graduates are passing out every year from the two veterinary colleges of the state. As far as the employment opportunities are concerned, the government and its allied institutions are the chief employers of the graduates so far. There was a regular intake of veterinary graduates in the state Animal Husbandry department until 1990. After that the regular appointment came down and the graduates were appointed as and when vacancies arose, which led to unemployment among veterinary graduates. Hence the students started to explore other career opportunities and developing their own personal ambition, about the career choices in life.

Under these circumstances, the job ambition of veterinary students in Kerala state in the context of changing scenario was studied to draw meaningful conclusions and inferences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out at

Thrissur and Wayanad districts of Kerala state, where the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Mannuthy and College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Pookode, the constituent colleges of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University were located. The study was carried out among randomly selected 180 final year students of both the colleges. The final year students were purposively chosen for the study due to the reason that they were compelled to take a decision on their career choice, just before the completion of the veterinary degree programme shortly. The data were collected using a well structured questionnaire, by personal interview technique. The independent variables selected and scored were; gender, social status, residential origin, sib position, parental occupation, parental education, family's annual income, mass media exposure, academic progress, scholarship received, family support, perception on current employment status, attitude of students towards veterinary profession, role of veterinary education system on personality development and the dependent variable was job ambitions of veterinary students.

Statistical techniques such as cumulative frequency, Mann-Whitney U test, correlation, and regression were carried out and the results were interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile characteristics of veterinary students

Gender: Among the respondents 51 per cent were female and the rest 49 per cent male. It can be inferred that more female candidates are now opting for veterinary science than males. Similar trends were reported by Heath (2008) in Australia, Jelinski *et al.* (2009) in Canada and by Tomlin *et al.* (2010a) in United Kingdom (U.K)

Social status: 60 per cent of the respondents belonged to backward communities followed by other backward communities (23%), scheduled cast/scheduled tribes (13%) and socially forward cast (4%). This clearly indicates the social transformation occurring in the society due to the reservation policy of the government.

Residential origin: 54 per cent of the respondents were hailing from rural background and the rest 46 per cent were from urban background. The students from rural background were more exposed to animal husbandry and were aware of the worth and necessity of veterinary doctors. This might be the reason for more students from rural background to pursue this course. This is in conformity with the findings of Thilakar *et al.* (2014) and Krishna and

Sharma (2016).

Sib position: 43 per cent of the respondents were elder children in their family and 42 per cent were younger once. 15 per cent belonged to middle order in the birth sequence.

Parental occupation: 39 per cent of the respondents' parents were employed in government sector and 35 per cent in private sector/business. Only 16 per cent were engaged in farming as primary occupation. Better education, emerging I.T sector, income contributed by family members working abroad, migration from rural to urban areas and shrinking farming activities might be the reasons for the job distribution of government jobs followed by business and private jobs followed by farming occupation of the parents. This is contrary to the findings of Thilakar *et al.* (2014).

Parental education: An overwhelming majority of the respondents' parents were educated from degree to postgraduate level. 32 per cent were postgraduates. Majority were degree holders (48%). 14 per cent had higher secondary education and the rest 6 per cent up to secondary levels. This is in conformity with the findings of Akila (1997).

Family's annual income: Majority of the respondents belonged to middle

income group (61%), followed by low income group (36%) and only a meagre 3 per cent belonged to high income group.

Mass media exposure: 84 per cent of the student' browsed internet, 76 per cent watched television, and 41 per cent had the habit of reading news paper. Almost equal number of respondents were reading magazines and listening to radio programmes (35 and 33%). This might be due to the emergence of affordable smart phone with internet facilities, and outcome of 4th generation internet connectivity with high speed. Moreover, television, newspaper and magazines are available free of cost to the students in the hostels. This is in agreement with the findings of Law and Arthur (2003).

Academic progress: Majority of the students (53%) secured first class in their overall grade point average. 45 per cent scored second class and a minority 2 per cent managed to get distinction in veterinary course.

Scholarship received: Since majority of the respondents belonged to middle income group, they did not receive any government financial support. Government offers supports only for low income group with scholarship to excel in academics. Thus 78 per cent of the respondents did not receive any

scholarship and the rest 28 per cent received scholarships.

Family support: An overwhelming 91 per cent of the respondents were receiving full financial support from the family and only 9 per cent were partially supporting themselves. This shows that the well established, deep rooted institution of family in the socio-cultural setup of the Indian society played a very crucial role in the career of individuals. This is contrary to the situations in Australia (Heath, 2008), Canada (Jelinski *et al.*, 2009) and U.K (Tomlin *et al.*, 2010b) where the students were supporting themselves.

Perception on current employment status: Only 5 per cent of the respondents opined that the current employment status for veterinary graduates was very poor. Majority (61%) of the respondents were having good perception on the current employment status. Eight per cent felt that they could be self employed.

Attitude of students towards veterinary profession: The term attitude broadly describes all the objectives that were measured which affects feelings, value or beliefs. (Heath *et al.*, 1996). Based on the scores obtained, the individual respondents were categorised into three groups as more favourable, favourable and less favourable. Attitude of students towards veterinary profession is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Attitude of the students towards veterinary profession

		(n=180)
Sl. No	Category	Per cent
1	Less favourable	7
2	Favourable	32
3	More favourable	61

Table 3. Overall perception of students on the role of veterinary education on personality development

Sl.No	Category	Percentage
1	Communication skills	79
2	Presentation skills	67
3	Decision making skills	60
4	Convincing farmers	58
5	Physical appearance	56
6	Organisational abilities	43
7	Leadership qualities	39

An overwhelming majority (61%) of the respondents had more favourable attitude towards veterinary profession. Only a meagre 7 per cent had less favourable attitude. This might be due to factors like not getting admission to the profession of their choice, tough curriculum and wrongly perceived social status.

Role of veterinary education system on personality development:

A substantial majority (79%) of the respondents agreed on the improvement of their communication skills, presentation skills, decision making skills, dealing with farmers and physical appearance, which helped them to improve their overall

personality due to veterinary education. (Table 3). Two-fifth of them admitted improvement of their organisational abilities and leadership qualities.

Majority of the respondents acknowledged about the role of veterinary education system on developing many positive aspects in their personality.

Job ambitions of Veterinary Students:

Majority (69%) of the respondents expressed their desire to become government veterinary surgeon in the state Animal Husbandry Department. The authority, prestige and additional income through private practice, inherent to the veterinary surgeon’s post could be the reason for more respondents opting for such an ambition. Similar results were reported by Thilakar *et al.* (2014) and Krishna and Sharma (2016). But Jelinski *et al.* (2009) and Tomlin *et al.* (2010b) reported that veterinary students in Australia, Canada and U.K preferred private practice. About two-fifth (41%) of them aspired to become academicians, which showed their desire to pursue master and doctoral degrees and join the university as faculty in future. Over one-third (36%) opined that they wanted to enter into public sector units like banks, insurance firms, milk marketing federation and livestock development board. A new trend of opting for jobs in IT companies handling foreign veterinary insurance

claim evaluation was also observed. The job security, low risk and non hectic nature of the job could have motivated the veterinary students to aspire for such jobs. Almost an almost equal portion (27%) of respondents wanted to appear in competitive examinations *i.e.* civil services/ MBA and going abroad for higher studies/ jobs. Joining private firms and Remount Veterinary Corps in the Indian army were chosen as ambition by only 15 per cent of the respondents. Only a meagre 7 per cent wanted to become entrepreneurs.

Difference in the job ambitions of male and female veterinary students: Statistical analysis of the data collected revealed that, there was significant difference ($P < 0.05$) between the overall job ambitions of male and female students. The results are depicted in Fig. 1

Though getting job as government veterinary surgeon in the state Animal Husbandry Department was ranked first by both genders, there was difference in the percentage level. 87.87 per cent of the female students and 66.67 per cent of males aspired for this job. This difference could have occurred due to the social compulsions existing in the society to settle early in life after graduation than their male counterparts. 57.57 per cent of the female students aspired to join university service compared to only 43.28 per cent of their male counterpart. Teaching as a career could have attracted more female students than male. Only one-third of the female respondents were interested in private practice, while 50 per cent of the male respondents wanted to carry out private practice. The limitations such as

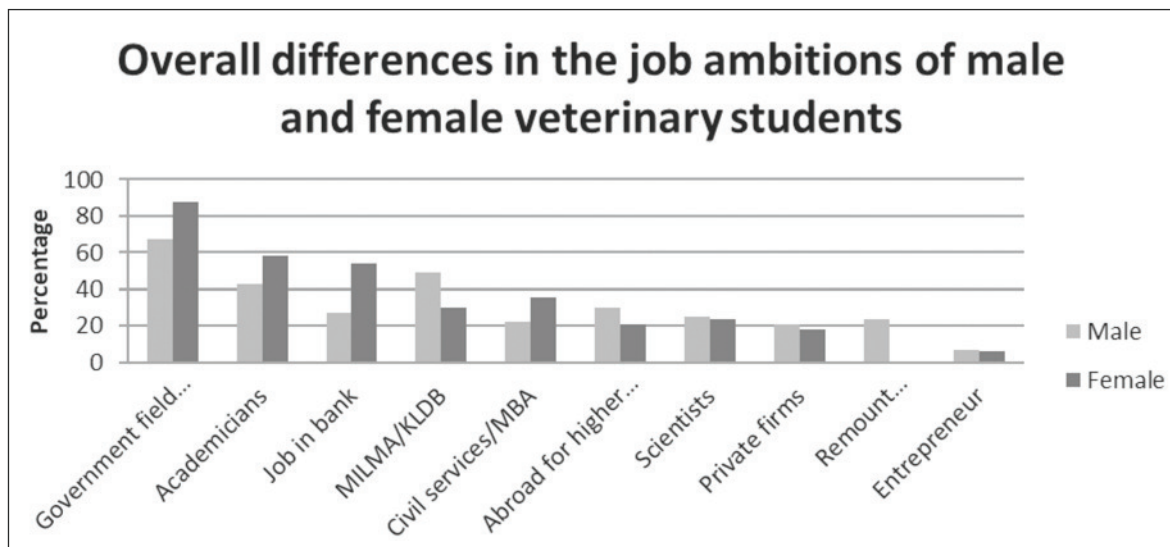


Fig. 1 Difference in the job ambitions of male and female veterinary students

vehicle, distance, security and time could have played a negative role for females. Interestingly 29.85 per cent of females expressed their wish to appear for civil service/MBA examinations than males (22.38%). This shows that female students have an internal aspiration to occupy top executive post. In contrast 29.85 per cent of male students wanted to go abroad for job/higher studies than the female students (21.2%). The prestige associated with visiting a foreign country and getting a job there might have motivated more male students for such an ambition. There were not many variations between sexes in the aspirations for becoming scientist, working in private firms and to become an entrepreneur.

Parental occupation and attitude towards veterinary profession showed a positive and significant correlation ($P < 0.01$) to the job ambitions of veterinary students. This was also confirmed by Tomlin *et al.* (2010a)

SUMMARY

This study revealed that family's position in the society and an individual's own thinking played an important role in deciding the job ambitions of emerging veterinarians. Unlike medical or engineering profession, government institutions are still the key provider of employment opportunities to veterinary students. This

could be due to the well-established public funded veterinary institution serving the vast majority of livestock farmers at affordable costs. Hence, filling up of vacant posts in government institutions and implementing new schemes with livestock components are important to satisfy the job ambitions of veterinary students. The veterinary education system should focus more on creating conducive learning environment and skill transfer by adopting new approaches and advances in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector, which will facilitate capacity building among the veterinary students. The teachers should motivate the students to develop leadership qualities, organisational skill and facilitate societal interactions to enhance their personality in the society. Bifurcation of veterinary science and animal science to concentrate more on clinical education and skills were suggested by many students.

Even with the establishment of a Directorate of Entrepreneurship and lot of programmes on scouting novel ideas, incubation, support and hand holdings into entrepreneurs, students are still reluctant to venture into entrepreneurial activities in the livestock sector. This shows that thrust must be given for inculcating the attitude of entrepreneurship among veterinary students.

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