

PREFERRED CAREER PATHS OF UNDERGRADUATE VETERINARY STUDENTS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract: A study was carried out to explore the preferred career paths of undergraduate veterinary students in Andhra Pradesh and the reasons for choosing veterinary and animal science as a field of choice. Data was collected through structured questionnaire from randomly selected 150 undergraduate students from the existing three veterinary colleges (50 from each) under Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University. The results revealed that majority of the students (78.60 per cent) preferred to work in India after completion of their graduation, preferred more for government jobs rather than private practice which was opposite to those students revealed in developed countries and irrespective to the colleges majority of the students opted for Government veterinary doctor as their first career choice after graduation. The reasons that were expressed by students in choosing veterinary as a field of choice are it helps to develop clear understanding of rural living conditions and unique nature of the job.

Keywords: Veterinary science- Students- Career paths.

Introduction

The role of veterinarian and the scope of veterinary and animal science have been evolved to greater extent. Nowadays veterinarians are involved in variety of animal health care settings. However, with the advancement in veterinary practicing areas like other health care professions, fields of veterinary practice have also been modified and encompass wide range of activities. Career selection is one of the vital components for one's professional life, which will settle on their potential work plans and it will have impact throughout their lives. In veterinary profession, there are numerous career choices that would help the veterinarian to execute the duties and responsibilities with good spirit. Lack of clear perception of the realities of a career in veterinary science could adversely affect young graduates' satisfaction with profession and their long term commitment to it (Tomlin *et al.* 2010). The knowledge about the students' career choices would help the academicians to develop suitable curricula. However, there is a fact that students usually do not make their preferences until they are graduated from their institutions (Wright *et al.* 2004). So it is necessary for veterinary

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students to be aware of all these opportunities for achieving success in future. There are many reasons that influence in joining veterinary and animal science area for young veterinarians. These reasons may include: power and prestige, comfortable nature of the job, amenities at work, unique nature of the job and self satisfaction in job. Balan (2003) reported that power and prestige, unique nature of the job and high salary were the important reasons for agricultural students to choose agriculture as their field of choice. Hence the present study was undertaken with an effort to explore the preferred career paths of undergraduate veterinary students in AP.

Methodology

Ex-post-facto research design was adopted for the study. Three veterinary colleges, constituent institutes of Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University in Andhra Pradesh were purposively selected for the study as the researcher hails from the state. The data was collected through structured questionnaire form the randomly selected veterinary students, 50 each from three colleges, thus to form a sample size of 150. Fourteen careers aptly having relevance to veterinary students were considered and the respondents were asked to rank them according to their order of preference.

Results and discussion

The data from the Table 1 revealed that, majority of the students (78.60 per cent) preferred to work in India. About 8.00 per cent of students could not decide their place of preference for work. Students preferred to serve their own country because of job security reasons. Sector wise about 75 per cent of the students opted government sector followed by private organizations (18.66 per cent), self employed (2.00 per cent) and in NGOs (1.34 per cent) respectively. 3.00 per cent of the students had not yet decided about the sector in which they desired to be employed after their graduation. Heath and western (1991) also found that five per cent of veterinary graduates in Australia were undecided about the work they would be doing after their graduation. Students felt that government jobs are more secured in India with attractive salary and timely promotions. Martin *et al.* (2003) and Jelinski *et al.* (2009) reported that veterinary students from Australia and Canada preferred private practice. Irrespective to the colleges, veterinary students opted for Government veterinary doctor (92.00%) as their first choice after graduation (Table 2). This could be due to restricting themselves to treatment only. The second preferred path revealed by them was to enter into academic stream for teaching (82.66%) because of more scope for continuous learning throughout the career, while research scientist (78.66%) was the third most preferred career

choice, followed by central government farms (66.66%), military service (52.00%) and eco jobs (48.00). The studies of Thilakar *et al.* (2014), Heath (2008) and Tinga *et al.* (2001) clearly showed that treatment of animals was the most preferred career path of veterinary graduates.

Table 3 reveals that veterinary and animal science helped them to develop clear understanding of rural living conditions was the major reason for selection as a field of choice and achieved the highest total score (378). Unique nature of the job was the second reason revealed by students. Challenging nature of the job, capacity to do the job, future advancements and promotions, self satisfaction in job and work safety of the job were found to be the important reasons. Power and prestige, higher monetary benefits, little scope to do the job, comfortable nature of the job, amenities at work, enhances practical knowledge and skills and risky nature of the job were the several reasons revealed by the students. These results are in conformity with the findings of Balan (2003).

Summary

The students of veterinary profession preferred government jobs rather than private practice while the scenario was quite opposite to the preferences of veterinary students in developed countries. The reasons that were expressed by students in choosing veterinary as a field of choice are it helps to develop clear understanding of rural living conditions and unique nature of the job. Keeping the career preferences of veterinary students as well as the reasons in choosing veterinary as their field choice the policy makers, curriculum developers, academicians and administrators must draw the attention towards those careers so as to fulfil the manpower need in the field of veterinary and animal science.

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Table 1: Preferred country and sector as expressed by veterinary students

Career choices	Respondents (N=150)		Rank
	Number	Percent	
Preferred country			
India	118	78.60	I
Abroad	20	13.40	II
Not yet decided	12	8.00	III
Preferred sector			
Government	112	75.00	I
Private	28	18.66	II
NGOs	02	1.34	V
Self employed	03	2.00	IV
Not yet decided	05	3.00	III

Table 2: Preferred career paths as revealed by veterinary students

Career Paths	Respondents (N=150)		Rank
	Number	Percent	
Government veterinary doctor	138	92.00	I
Assistant professor	124	82.66	II
Research scientist	118	78.66	III
Central government farms	100	66.66	IV
Military service	78	52.00	V
Eco jobs	72	48.00	VI
Managers in milk plants	64	42.66	VII
Administrative services	55	36.60	VIII
Banking sector	48	32.00	IX
Private practice	46	30.66	X
Marketing executive	36	24.00	XI
Extension agent	30	20.00	XII
Consulting service officer in food processing and retail companies	14	09.33	XIII
Political career	10	06.66	XIV

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on the reasons for choosing veterinary science as a field of choice

S.No	ITEM	Most valuable	Valuable	Least valuable	No value	Total	Rank
1	Challenging nature of the job	70(46.66)	68(45.33)	8(5.33)	4(2.66)	354	III
2	Power and prestige	64(42.66)	56(37.33)	28(18.66)	2(1.33)	332	VIII
3	Comfortable nature of the job	52(34.66)	36(24.00)	60(40.00)	2(1.33)	288	XI
4	Enhances practical knowledge and skills	44(29.33)	56(37.33)	30(20.00)	20(13.33)	274	XIII
5	Capacity to do the job	89(59.33)	32(21.33)	22(14.66)	07(4.66)	353	IV
6	Amenities at work	64(42.66)	36(24.00)	20(13.33)	30(20.00)	284	XII
7	Unique nature of the job	98(65.33)	36(24.00)	06(04.00)	10(06.66)	372	II
8	Future advancements and promotions.	74(49.33)	48(32.00)	28(18.66)	00(0.00)	346	V
9	Risky nature of the job.	38(25.33)	40(26.66)	64(42.66)	08(5.33)	258	XIV
10	Helps to develop clear understanding of rural living conditions.	84(56.00)	60(40.00)	06(4.00)	00(0.00)	378	I
11	Self satisfaction in job	72(48.00)	56(37.33)	16(10.66)	06(4.00)	344	VI
12	Higher monetary benefits	48(32.00)	84(56.00)	16(10.66)	02(1.33)	328	IX
13	Work safety of the job.	44(29.33)	96(64.00)	10(6.66)	00(0.00)	334	VII
14	Little scope to do the job	70(46.66)	48(32.00)	08(5.33)	24(16.00)	314	X

@Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage