

OPINION OF VETERINARY STUDENTS TOWARDS ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE VETERINARY CLINICS

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In India, the problem of unemployment among veterinary graduates has been steadily increasing over the last few years due to the establishment of more number of Agricultural and Veterinary Universities and professional colleges. Though the number of state run veterinary institutions increased from about 2000 in 1951 to over 54,000 by the end of 1997-98 (Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics, 2002) they are not in a position to accommodate all the veterinary graduates because of financial constraints. This has resulted in a wide gap between the available veterinary graduates and the jobs available, and this gap has been on increasing over the years. To solve this problem, fresh graduates from the universities and colleges could be potentially employed through establishment of private clinics. In this direction, the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development have started a scheme called "Agri-clinics and Agri-business" centres scheme with a view to provide training to the graduates in Agri-business and later to support them financially for establishing veterinary clinics. In this context, empirical evidence on the opinion of veterinary graduates on establishment of private veterinary clinics would unearth the ground reality, as they are the personnel who would be engaged in providing services to the farmers and hence this study was undertaken.

Methodology

The study was conducted, following exploratory research design in the state of Andhra Pradesh as it has three veterinary colleges located in three geographical regions viz., C.V.Sc, Rajendranagar (Telangana), C.V.Sc, Tirupati (Rayalaseema) and N.T.R. C.V.Sc, Gannavaram (Coastal Andhra) producing 150-160 veterinary graduates every year. Data were collected from all the final year undergraduate (112) and post graduate (94) students of the three veterinary colleges with the help of a questionnaire, which consisted of both open and closed ended questions. The data thus collected were analyzed with the statistical tools and presented separately for UG and PG students as well as for all students.

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Findings

Future plans of students

The results in the Table 1 amply show that 27.67%, 39.4% and 33% of Undergraduate (UG), Postgraduate (PG) and overall sample of students respectively opted for Government jobs especially for Veterinary Assistant Surgeon. This trend might be due to the fact that Government jobs could provide them strong security, better life settlement, self satisfaction and also recognition in society.

Willingness to establish private veterinary clinic

Table 1 revealed that a majority 85.72%, 87.24% and 86.4% of UG, PG and total sample respectively were not willing to establish private clinics due to reasons such as; lack of self confidence and entrepreneurship spirit to start one's own private clinic, inability to seek financial assistance from financial institutions, skepticism over regular and assured income as that in Government jobs and lack of risk bearing ability and uncertainty in running the clinic successfully.

Requirements for establishing a private veterinary clinic

Table 2 shows that self confidence, ability to communicate effectively, technical skills, accessibility to farmers and experience as the five major preliminary requirements expressed by UG students. But, PG students gave priority to technical skills followed by ability to communicate effectively, self confidence, accessibility to farmers and cooperation from village leaders. The total sample indicated technical skills followed by self-confidence, ability to communicate effectively, accessibility to farmers and experience as the major requirements for establishing a private veterinary clinic.

Professional training

Professional training obtained from the colleges would not be sufficient for establishing a private veterinary clinic as expressed by UG, PG and total sample of respondents (71.43%, 64.90% and 68.45%) respectively (Table 1). Inadequate exposure to various clinical cases, inadequate training in the field of gynecology especially in small animals, general surgery and emergency medicine, lack of proper training in providing technical and communication skills, management and extension methods were some of the reasons attributed for insufficient training.

Ideal location

An overview of the Table 1 reveals that about 54% of both UG and PG students con-

sidered city as an ideal location to establish a private veterinary clinic as the clients especially pet owners are opulent, educated, economically sound, have good transport facilities and better working conditions.

Type of services

About 47.32% (UG), 58.51% (PG) and 52.43% (total) respondents expressed that they would provide all types of services through their private veterinary clinic so as to make private practice a profitable venture (Table 1). These findings are in consonance with the findings of Sen and Chander (2001).

Quality of services

It is evident from Table 1 that a majority (83.03%, 80.85% and 82%) of UG, PG and total respondents respectively agreed that the quality of services would be better in private clinics as compared to government services. The probable reasons indicated by them were; adequate diagnostic facilities, effective treatment, more responsibility, readiness to take risk and personal attention towards every individual patient.

Remunerativeness of private veterinary clinics

About 52% of UG, PG and total sample felt that private veterinary clinics would not be remunerative whereas the remaining perceived it as remunerative (Table 1). High operating cost, lack of incentives from the government, economic condition of owners, low density of livestock population, low value of animals etc. could be the reasons why students felt private veterinary clinic as a non remunerative enterprise. Findings of Sen and Chander (2001) however indicate that private veterinary practice was remunerative.

Awareness about successful private practitioners

Majority (72.34%) of the PG veterinary students were aware of successful private practitioners. But, on the other hand, majority (62.5%) of the UG students were not aware of any successful private practitioners. More than half of the total (53.4%) students were aware of successful private practitioners while the remaining were not aware of any successful private practitioners (Table 1). The higher exposure and contacts of PG students may have contributed to their awareness. Strong determination, dedication, commitment, sound technical knowledge, good communication skills, support of local leaders and financial assistance were found to be the reasons for the success of the private practitioners as expressed by the students.

Scope for establishing private clinics

Table 1 indicates that the scope for establishing private veterinary clinic was less as

expressed by (68.76%, 59.58% and 64.56%) UG, PG and total respondents respectively. Lack of assured income, requirement of huge monetary resources, lack of support from local leaders, Veterinary Assistant Surgeon and para veterinarians, lack of awareness among the farmers about the benefits of quality services and the risk factor involved in it might be the reasons for less scope.

Expected changes among farmers

Awareness on the benefits of private services and attitudinal change in farmers towards willingness to pay would be congenial to establish a private veterinary clinic as perceived by (27.67%, 28.72% and 28.15%) of UG, PG and total students respectively (Table 1).

Changes expected from the veterinary college

On perusal of Table 1, it was found that 55.35% of UG, 54.25% of PG and 54.85% of the total students indicated increase in practical exposure as the major change/need expected from the veterinary college.

Policy changes expected from Government

It was expressed by 56.25% of UG, 45.75% of PG and 51.45% of total students that Government should help in economic sustainability of private practitioners by providing loans and subsidy (Table 1).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Restructuring of veterinary curriculum based on market driven demands would orient the students towards self employment. In that direction, facilities should be provided for efficient professional training with adequate skill development to make them competent and confident to establish private veterinary clinics. Financial institutions like Nationalized banks should come forward to extend financial assistance with minimum interest rates. The developmental agencies involved in Veterinary and Animal Husbandry programmes should conduct periodical interaction meetings with the rural farmers to bring awareness among them about the importance of private veterinary clinics. A significant role should also be played by the regulatory agencies to ensure that only the veterinary graduates provide private veterinary clinic services.

References

- Arindam Sen and Mahesh Chander. (2001). M.V.Sc. thesis, Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izatnagar.
- Government of India, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying. (2002). Basic animal husbandry statistics. Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi.

Table 1. Opinion of Veterinary Students on Private Veterinary Clinics

S.No	Response	UG students (n=112)		PG students (n=94)		Total students (n=206)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Future plans of the students						
	Higher education	19	16.96	18	19.14	37	17.96
	Government job	31	27.67	37	39.40	68	33.00
	Going to foreign countries	16	14.30	12	12.76	28	13.60
	Setting up of private practice	16	14.30	12	12.76	28	13.60
	Appearing for competitive examinations						
	a. Civil services	19	16.96	6	6.38	25	12.13
	b. JRF	8	7.14	0	0	8	3.88
	c. RVC	1	0.89	0	0	1	0.50
	d. SRF	0	0	2	2.12	2	0.97
	e. ARS	0	0	6	6.38	6	2.91
	f. Others	2	1.78	1	1.06	3	1.45
2	Willingness to establish private veterinary clinic						
	Planning	16	14.28	12	12.76	28	13.60
	Not planning	96	85.72	82	87.24	178	86.40
3	Professional training						
	Sufficient	32	28.57	33	35.10	65	31.55
	Not sufficient	80	71.43	61	64.90	141	68.45
4	Ideal location						
	Remote areas	7	6.25	7	7.50	14	6.80
	Own village	11	9.82	10	10.60	21	10.19
	Mandal	14	12.50	7	7.44	21	10.19
	District headquarters	20	17.86	19	20.21	39	18.93
	City	60	53.57	51	54.25	111	53.89
5	Type of service						
	Curative services	13	11.60	7	7.44	20	9.71
	Production services	19	17.00	15	15.95	34	16.50
	Preventive services	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Livestock Advisory services	0	0	0	0	0	0
	All	53	47.30	55	58.51	108	52.43
	Combination of Curative, Preventive & Production services	27	24.10	17	18.10	44	21.36

6	Quality of service						
	Better Quality	93	83.03	76	80.85	169	82.00
	Not better	19	16.97	18	19.15	37	18.00
7	Remunerativeness of Private veterinary clinics						
	Remunerative	58	51.784	49	52.12	107	51.95
	Not Remunerative	54	48.22	45	47.88	99	48.05
8	Awareness of any successful private practitioner						
	Aware	42	37.50	68	72.34	110	53.40
	Not aware	70	62.50	26	27.66	96	46.60
9	Scope for establishing private veterinary clinics						
	Good Scope	31	27.67	34	36.17	65	31.56
	Less Scope	77	68.76	56	59.58	133	64.56
	No Scope	4	3.57	4	4.25	8	3.88
10	Expected changes among farmers						
	Awareness and attitudinal changes towards willingness to pay	31	27.67	27	28.72	58	28.15
	Trust on the private practitioner	24	21.42	17	18.08	41	19.90
	Literacy and growth in economic status	17	15.17	14	14.89	31	15.04
	Farmers should opt for quality services	17	15.17	13	13.82	30	14.56
	Should be able to differentiate professional veterinarians from para veterinarians	16	14.28	10	10.63	26	12.62
	Ability to take good decisions	9	8.03	9	9.57	18	8.73
11	Changes expected from veterinary college						
	Increase in Practical exposure	62	55.35	51	54.25	113	54.85
	Equipment facilities in college should be improved	26	23.21	23	24.46	49	23.78
	Orientation towards self employment	23	20.53	17	18.08	40	19.41
	Camps should be arranged to						

get exposed to different cases	13	11.60	12	12.80	25	12.13
Congenial student-Teacher-relationship	12	10.71	1	11.70	23	11.16
Inculcation of innovativeness and self confidence	12	10.71	9	9.57	21	10.19
Counseling regarding availability of loans	4	3.57	9	9.57	13	6.31
Distribution of latest literature and clinical magazines to the alumni batches	4	3.57	5	5.31	9	4.36
12 Expected Policy changes						
Help in economic sustainability of private veterinary practitioners by providing loans and reduced interest rates (Government subsidy)	63	56.25	43	45.74	106	51.45
Introduction of user charges in Government hospitals	20	17.85	25	26.59	45	21.84
Government should conduct training programmes and provide schemes to establish private veterinary clinics	20	17.85	21	22.34	41	19.90
Government hospitals should refer cases to private clinics	5	13.39	17	18.08	32	15.53
Adequate laws to govern private practice.	14	12.50	10	10.63	24	11.65

Note: F -Frequency and % - Percentage

Table 2. Requirements of a private veterinary clinic

S.No	Requirement	Under Graduate (n=112)		Post Graduate (n=94)		Total (n=206)	
		MS	Rank	MS	Rank	MS	Rank
1	Loan for building infrastructure	2.16	XI	2.18	IX	2.17	IX
2	Cooperation from village leaders	2.40	VII	2.41	IV	2.40	V
3	Technical skills	2.75	III	2.81	I	2.78	I
4	Ability to communicate effectively	2.78	II	2.72	II	2.75	II
5	Accessibility to farmers	2.57	IV	2.47	III	2.52	III
6	Compassion for animals	2.49	VI	2.29	VII	2.40	VI
7	Perseverance	2.36	VIII	2.37	VI	2.36	VII
8	Experience	2.50	V	2.40	V	2.45	IV
9	Self confidence	2.83	I	2.72	II	2.78	I
10	Entrepreneurship	2.24	X	2.19	VIII	2.21	VIII
11	Cooperation from local VAS/AD	2.26	IX	2.02	X	2.15	X

Note: MS - Mean Score