



Constraints Perceived by Women Veterinarians to Render their Services at Field Level in Telangana State

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ABSTRACT

The research addresses the underexplored challenges faced by women field veterinarians in Telangana, India. To comprehensively assess the multifaceted challenges experienced by women field veterinarians in Telangana State. The research was conducted in 2020-2021 during the COVID period, 182 women veterinarians with a minimum of four years of experience were selected as a sample. Employing the Henry Garrett ranking method. The research reveals significant challenges, such as inadequate transportation facilities, shortage of trained extension workers, and irregular medicine supply. These findings underline the need for targeted interventions to address these constraints and enhance the effectiveness of women field veterinarians in the region.

Key words: Women veterinarians; Livestock sector; Regional context; Constraints analysis.

In India, the livestock sector is the fastest-growing component of the agriculture and allied sectors. India is rich in livestock population (535.78 million) and production (20th Livestock Census, 2019). But the bitter truth, we must have to believe is that India is lagging back in productivity. Indian cattle and buffalo productivity was 14000 & 19000 hectograms per animal respectively which is much lower than the US (101000 hectograms/per animal) (FAO, 2014). Some of the reasons behind this might be the poor practices followed by Indian farmers, different extreme weather conditions in different Indian places, and communication gaps & technical backwardness of livestock farmers. Only 5.1 per cent of livestock farmers are getting information regarding animal husbandry practices whereas agriculture farmers are getting 40% of information about crop production (NSSO, 2005). “Most of the animal husbandry practices like fodder cutting, transportation of fodder, offering water and fodder to the animal health care, milking, and cleaning of sheds were done by the women farmers. In this era of global competition, if we want to combat challenges of food security and climate change, we have to focus on the women farmers” (Bishnoi, *et al.*, 2014). “Coverage of too many target groups by one agent, too much official work in addition to fieldwork, lack of technology suitable for farm women were the three

major constraints faced by the village level extension workers and agriculture development officers” (Saikia, *et al.*, 2021).

There is a scarcity of veterinarians who stand for animal welfare, protect them from diseases and injuries, *etc.*, and give technical advice to livestock farmers. India needs 72,000 working graduate veterinarians, but the current availability is approximately 43,000 (OIE, 2015). In addition to this, small-scale animal husbandry is prevalent in India, in which farm women play a major role. The transformation of information from extension personnel to dairy farm women was only 34.80% (Dhaka *et al.*, 2017). The reason behind this is probably the cultural norms in the society which make them hesitate to contact the male veterinarians and get information from them. These situations indicate the significance of women vets in the field. Formerly, the number of women enrolled in the veterinary profession was very low in India. “At present, 70 percent of veterinary students are girls in the country,” said T. P. Sethumadhavan, former director, of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, 2018 (The Hindu, March 8th, 2022). This brings an automatic change in the percentage of women working at the field level. In this context, an analysis was conducted to identify the constraints encountered by the women field veterinarians in performing their duties.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to perceived constraints and their ranking (N=182)

Statements	Category of WFV's			MPS	Rank
	MS (3)	S (2)	LS (1)		
<i>Administrative constraints</i>					
Non-VAS duties	105(57.69)	51(28.03)	26(14.28)	81.11	II
Lack of involvement of vets in various policy-making and planning processes.	20 (10.99)	45 (24.72)	117(64.29)	48.90	VII
Less manpower.	107 (58.79)	44 (24.18)	31 (17.03)	80.60	III
Political interference	24 (13.18)	116 (63.74)	42 (23.08)	63.40	VI
Larger jurisdiction under control	38 (20.86)	99 (54.38)	45 (24.76)	65.40	V
Lack of transport facility	127 (69.77)	35 (19.23)	20 (11.00)	86.30	I
Lack of adequate funds.	41 (22.53)	106 (58.24)	35 (19.23)	67.80	IV
<i>Extension constraints</i>					
Lack of availability of livestock farmers at the time of visit.	56 (30.77)	82 (45.05)	44 (24.18)	68.90	II
Lack of literacy and technical knowledge of the dairying of the farmers.	22 (12.09)	59 (32.42)	101 (55.49)	52.20	V
Lack of idea on the preparation of extension information material.	6 (3.30)	20 (10.99)	156 (85.71)	39.20	VII
Lack of trained village-level extension workers.	120 (65.93)	43 (23.63)	19 (10.44)	85.16	I
Lack of inputs for preparation of client-specific AV Aids.	21 (11.54)	90 (49.45)	71 (39.01)	57.50	IV
Lack of skill-based training on new farm technologies and advances in veterinary & animal husbandry sciences.	30 (16.48)	113 (62.09)	39 (21.43)	59.52	III
Lack of support from neighboring field veterinarians in extension campaigns.	2 (1.10)	71 (39.01)	109 (59.89)	47.06	VI
<i>Clinical constraints</i>					
Inadequate and irregular supply of medicine supply.	108 (59.34)	56 (30.77)	18 (9.89)	83.15	I
Supply of poor-quality semen for AI.	22 (12.09)	73 (40.11)	87 (47.80)	54.80	VI
Inadequate facilities for diagnosis.	55 (30.22)	75 (41.21)	52 (28.57)	67.21	V
Lack of essential equipment and instruments.	105 (57.70)	42 (23.07)	35 (19.23)	79.48	II
Treatment by quacks.	100 (54.95)	47 (25.82)	35 (19.23)	78.60	III
Delayed reporting of disease.	69 (37.91)	50(27.47)	63 (34.62)	67.80	IV
<i>Gender constraints</i>					
Gender discrimination in work conditions.	14 (7.69)	93 (51.10)	75 (41.21)	55.50	II
Sexual harassment in the workplace.	4 (2.20)	3 (1.65)	175 (96.15)	33.90	IV
Safety and security issues while return to home after late work.	19 (10.44)	18 (9.89)	145 (79.67)	48.60	III
Availability of crèche and lounge at the workplace.	147 (80.77)	23 (12.64)	12 (6.59)	91.40	I
<i>Organizational constraints</i>					
Communication is not proper in an organizational system.	8 (13.19)	16 (17.58)	158 (86.81)	39.20	IV
Lack of department coordination.	6 (3.30)	28 (15.38)	148 (81.32)	40.60	III
Non-Co-operation from subordinates.	15 (8.24)	37 (20.33)	130 (71.43)	45.60	II
Lack of proper supervision and guidance by a superior.	0 0	7 (3.85)	175 (96.15)	34.61	V
Lack of support/ faculty in working with other line departments.	18 (9.89)	127 (69.78)	37 (20.33)	63.18	I

MS= most serious; S= serious; LS= less serious; MPS= mean percent score; Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage.

In India, Telangana state was purposively selected as a research area for the study during 2020-2021 and it is striving to thrive in every aspect. Telangana state was categorized into two zones viz. zone-V & zone-VI (1973 - article 371 D) and all the employees who are working under the state government, are appointed according to the zonal system.

There were approximately 230 women veterinarians working as VAS (Veterinary Assistant Surgeons). So, a total of 182 members, from each zone

1/3rd of the women field veterinarians was selected through proportionate random sampling as the sample for the study based on their experience (women veterinarians with ≥ 4 years' experience as VAS in the field). The questionnaire was prepared using google-form and sent through the mail to the respondents after that, a telephonic interview was also conducted at the time of the COVID pandemic. A structured interview schedule was prepared with a total of 29 constraints identified and divided into categories namely

administrative, extension work-related, clinical work-related, gender-related, and organizational for the convenience of the researcher. Each statement in the schedule was scored by 3-point continuum and named as more serious, serious, and less serious with the weightage of 3, 2, & 1 respectively. To analyze the constraints “The Henry Garret ranking method” was adopted. In this method mean percent score of each statement was calculated and a high-scored statement was ranked highest, which indicates the most serious constraint in the perception of respondents.

Constraints perceived by WFVs were divided into 5 categories as administrative constraints, extension constraints, clinical constraints, gender constraints, and organizational constraints, listed and briefly discussed below.

Administrative constraints: In this study, administrative constraints were defined as the constraints perceived by women field veterinarians due to the administrative system of their organization.

Table 1 explains the constraints perceived by WFVs in their work based on the mean percent score. The table reveals that in the case of administrative constraints, “Lack of transportation facility for veterinary assistant surgeons for their field visits to remote areas” was found to be the most serious (69.77%) and ranked first with a mean percent score of 86.30. Followed by “non-VAS duties” (57.69%) and “Less manpower” (58.79%) were ranked second and third, respectively. “Lack of adequate funds” (22.53%) with a mean percent score of 67.80 and “Larger jurisdiction under control” (20.86%) with a mean percent score of 65.40 were ranked fourth and fifth. As discussed above, on average a WFV oversaw 16 villages. “Political interference in the implementation of animal husbandry schemes” and “Lack of involvement vets in various policy-making and planning processes” were perceived as most serious by 13.18 per cent and 10.99 per cent, respectively, and kept them at the bottom two places. These empirical results were scientifically shown similarity with the study of Goyal *et.al.* (2018). And, with another study of Rajput and Tripathi (2010), in their research, found that a deficient budget for program implementation, less manpower under the AHS providers, and paucity of awards, rewards, and incentives were the most severe constraints perceived by AHS providers.

Table 1 also explains extension constraints faced by women field veterinarians, among all “Lack of

trained village-level extension workers” (65.93%) was found the most serious constraint perceived by WFVs and ranked first among all. WFVs perceived that there was no regular and need-based training like extension-related, clinical, and diagnostical training for them to update their skills and technology. “Lack of inputs for preparation of client-specific audio-visual Aids” (11.54%), and “Lack of literacy and technical knowledge of dairying of the farmers” (12.10%) were found to most serious and ranked fourth and fifth. 1.10 percent of them perceived the “Lack of support from neighbouring field veterinarians in organizing extension campaigns” as the most serious one and placed in the sixth position. “Lack of idea on the preparation of extension information material” was perceived by 3.30 per cent of them as less serious and placed at the bottom. The findings are supported by Baig and Aldosari (2013). The study showed similarities with Belay and Abebaw (2004), research findings. They reported that extension workers lack practical skills. Sawant and Nikam (2007) in their study informed the non-availability of needed literature, and lack of time to communicate with farmers.

In clinical constraints, “Inadequate and irregular medicine supply” was perceived by above half (59.34%) of total respondents as the most serious constraint and placed in the first position. Followed by, “Lack of essential equipment and instruments” (57.70%) and “Treatment by quacks” (55%) were ranked second and third with a mean percent score of 79.80 and 78.60, respectively. Therefore, “Delayed reporting of diseases” (37.90%), “Inadequate facilities for diagnosis” (30.22%), and supply of poor-quality semen for AI (12.09%) were perceived most serious and ranked fourth, fifth, and sixth, respectively. Overall, results revealed that there was an insufficient supply of basic clinical equipment and medicine and it should be rectified as soon as possible to provide better and proper treatment. The study is in line with the work of Ratnayake *et.al.* (2015).

In gender constraints, “Availability of lounge at any of the places you worked?” was found as the most serious one by 80.77 per cent of WFVs and placed at the first position. So, most of them didn’t have lounge areas and restrooms in their working area. Which may affect the respondents' health, and performance., remaining other gender constraints like “Gender discrimination in work conditions” (7.09%), “Safety and security issues while returning to home after late work” (10.44%), and

“Sexual harassment in the workplace” (2.20%) were there but, were very low and in few areas.

Overall organizational constraints were perceived by the WFVs as the least. Among all organizational constraints, “Lack of support/ faculty in working with other line departments” was found as the most serious one by 63.18 percent of WFVs and ranked first. Followed by, “non-co-operation from subordinates” (8.24%), “Lack of department coordination” (3.30%), and “Communication is not proper in an organizational system” (13.19%) were ranked second third, and fourth, respectively. “Lack of proper supervision and guidance by a superior” was perceived by no one (0%) placed at the bottom.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the WFVs who were working in cities, towns, and nearby city areas perceived fewer constraints, better facilities, availability of basic equipment, and attending trainings and programs than of who were working in rural areas. Among all types of constraints, administrative constraints were perceived by most of the respondents. All constraints, lack of transportation facilities, lack of trained village-level extension workers, lack of basic equipment and instruments, inadequate and irregular medicine supply, and diagnostic facilities to veterinary dispensaries were the crucial constraints perceived by most of the WFVs. It is mandatory to provide basic and minimal facilities, equipment, and medicine to veterinary dispensaries for proper treatment to prevent animal diseases, and to make people aware of advanced technologies and methods to increase productivity. It was requested by the respondents to provide transportation facilities for at least those who are working in remote areas. The results were considered after total analysis as discussed in the methodology above, of the data given by the WFVs. There is a chance of error in the data provided by the respondents.

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Data would be made available on request

Authors' contribution:

The first author conceptualized, designed, collected data, and prepared the manuscript. The second author supervised the entire study process. The third and fourth authors contributed to writing and editing.

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