

Job Satisfaction and Mental Health among Veterinarians

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ABSTRACT

Veterinarians play a crucial role in ensuring animal welfare, controlling zoonotic diseases, and contributing to medical advancements. the nature of this work can be both emotionally rewarding and psychologically difficult, leading to unique challenges related to job satisfaction and mental health. Recent studies have highlighted concerns about the well-being of veterinary professionals, including high levels of stress, burnout, and a higher risk of mental health disorders compared to the general population. This study aims to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and mental health among veterinarians and to identify factors that contribute to both positive and negative outcomes.

The purpose of this research paper is to study the mental health and job satisfaction of veterinarians working in public and private hospitals in Kerala state. To serve the objective, the data was collected from 209 veterinarians by using a questionnaire. The data was analyzed by using the mean, coefficient of variation and chi-square test. The results revealed that veterinarians are suffering bad state of mental health, however, they were found to be satisfied with their jobs.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, Mental health, Veterinarians, Work culture

INTRODUCTION

The veterinary field occupies a special place at the nexus of scientific study, public health, and animal care. In addition to maintaining animal welfare, veterinarians are essential in preventing zoonotic illnesses and advancing medical science concerning animals. Veterinarians are often attracted to this profession by the profoundly gratifying opportunity to assist voiceless animals (The Health Implications of Employment in Non-Profit Animal Care In Eastern North Carolina: A Phenomenological Exploration. SN Fountain - 2015 - thescholarship.ecu.edu). However, the nature of the job provides a distinctive mix of emotional rewards and psychological complexities. This duality can pose particular obstacles in preserving both professional contentment and mental equilibrium. Numerous elements, including the work environment, workload, financial compensation, professional recognition, and the emotional impact of patient care, all have an impact on job satisfaction in the veterinary field. Working with sick and dying animals, having to make life-or-death decisions, and constantly engaging with upset pet owners are all part of the essence of the veterinary profession. Veterinarians' mental health may suffer greatly from such emotional labour; it may result in suicidal thoughts, anxiety, despair, and even compassion fatigue(Anderson & Coe, 2020).

On the other hand, a happy workplace might protect employees from the pressures of their line of work. According to Edwards & Cooper (2019), job satisfaction and, consequently, mental health can be improved by a nurturing work atmosphere, a sense of success from curing animals, and positive relationships with coworkers and pet owners. To fully comprehend how job satisfaction and mental health interact within the veterinary field, a comprehensive examination is necessary due to the intricate and diverse nature of these dynamics.

In addition, there have been a lot of changes in the veterinary field recently, including advances in

technology, shifts in public perceptions of pets, and modifications in ethical standards (Smith et al., 2018). It is crucial to look at these aspects in light of the current state of veterinary practice since these changes can potentially affect both job satisfaction and mental health.

The health and welfare of animals is the duty of veterinarians, and this includes a wide range of tasks like diagnosis, treatment, surgery, preventive care, and euthanasia. For many, the job is intrinsically fulfilling since it provides the chance to improve public health, save lives, and relieve suffering. But it also comes with a lot of difficulties, such as mental strain, heavy workloads, long hours, and having to perform well when it comes to life-or-death circumstances.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on occupational happiness and mental health has focused more on the veterinary field, which is recognised for having high emotional and stress needs. The purpose of this review is to better understand the dynamics affecting the well-being and professional fulfilment of veterinarians by synthesising the data from diverse studies. Smith et al. (2018) discovered that veterinarians' job satisfaction is greatly increased by a supportive work environment and helpful coworkers. Opportunities for professional growth and career advancement are essential for sustaining high levels of job satisfaction in the veterinary industry, claim Jones and Green (2019). Williams et al. (2020), highlighting the stress that comes with student loan debt among veterinarians, emphasized the need of

sufficient financial compensation in job satisfaction (Bagga et al., 2024).

Research indicates that veterinary professionals experience more mental health problems than people in general, such as stress, burnout, depression, and suicidality. According to a 2017 study by Chen and Silver, excessive job demands and long hours are major causes of chronic stress and burnout. According to Peterson et al. (2016), who studied the idea of compassion fatigue, veterinarians frequently experienced it because of their work with suffering animals. Baker and Dawson (2018) found that veterinarians had greater rates of anxiety and depression, which they attributed to the emotional demands of their line of work. Veterinarians are much more likely to commit suicide, according to a seminal study by Lee and Schwartz (2016), which highlights the critical need for mental health services within the field.

Studies reveal a multifaceted correlation between mental health and job satisfaction, implying that enhancements in one can have a favourable impact on the other. According to Thompson and Johnson (2021), there is a reciprocal association between job satisfaction and mental health, which implies that improving job satisfaction through interventions may have a positive impact on mental health outcomes (Desai et al., 2024).

Veterinarians experience job stress due to a variety of issues, such as emotional strain, work-life imbalance, financial demands, and ethical dilemmas. According to Anderson and Coe (2020), supervising pet owners who are grieving in addition to the emotional strain of caring for sick and dead animals is a major source of workplace stress. Veterinarians have a tough time striking a work-life balance, which is made worse by their long hours and on-call responsibilities, as noted by Brown and Smith (2019). Financial worries, such as managing business finances and college debt, are among the top stressors for veterinarians, especially those who are just starting in the field, according to Johnson et al. (2018). Another form of stress that Turner and Williams (2017) mention is the regular encounter with moral conundrums, such as choices regarding euthanasia. Additional research suggests that the stress of the job has an impact on veterinarians' personal and professional lives in addition to their physical and mental health. According to Green et al. (2021), there is a direct link between high work-related stress levels and a higher incidence of burnout, anxiety, and depression in veterinarians. According to Lee and Schwartz (2015), job stress has been connected to physical health issues like hypertension and sleep disruptions. According to Patel and Thompson (2016), excessive stress can have a detrimental effect on one's ability to function at work, which can lower the standard of patient care and raise the possibility of mistakes.

Job Satisfaction: Several things affect veterinarians' job satisfaction: Workplace Culture and Environment, Work-Life Balance: Financial Compensation (Hafen et al. (2020)

Mental health: There is evidence linking the veterinary field to an increased risk of mental health problems, such as: Stress and Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, Anxiety and sadness (Bartram et al., 2019)

The Interplay between Job Satisfaction and Mental Health: There is a reciprocal association between mental health and occupational satisfaction. Veterinarians who have high job satisfaction are better able to handle the demands of their profession and are less likely to experience mental health problems. On the other hand, a lack of mental health can make it harder to be happy at work, which can set off a vicious cycle of declining wellbeing and unhappiness at work (Mazur et al., 2018).

It is essential to comprehend the dynamics of veterinary professionals' job satisfaction and mental health in order to create interventions that promote their wellbeing. To address these concerns, workplace practices must be improved. Professional development opportunities, mental health resources, and work-life balance initiatives must also be prioritized (Hafen et al., 2020)

In order to provide better care for animals and society, the veterinary community—which includes employers, associations, and educators—must create an atmosphere that supports veterinarians' mental

health and professional satisfaction(Bartram et al., 2019).

The mitigation strategies are also recommended by the literature. A multimodal strategy focused on individual, organisational, and industry-wide interventions is needed to address job stress among veterinarians. According to Martin and Jenkins (2020), it is imperative to establish policies that promote work-life balance and create supportive work environments. According to Edwards and Cooper (2019), having access to mental health support services, such as counselling and stress management programmes, is essential for reducing stress. Hughes and Jones (2018) advocate preparing veterinary students to manage job stress through curricular integration of emotional resilience training and stress management.

RESEARCH GAP:

The body of research emphasises the necessity of focused interventions to meet the particular difficulties faced by veterinarians. Much of the existing research on occupational stress among veterinarians. There's a gap in comparative studies that examine the mental health and job satisfaction aspects of veterinarians. It is well known that the veterinary field has tremendous emotional and physical demands, which puts a great deal of stress on its practitioners. Research on the causes of workplace stress in veterinarians, how it affects their health and performance at work and possible remedies are compiled in this review. Addressing these research gaps could significantly contribute to developing more effective support systems, policies, and interventions to improve the well-being and job satisfaction of veterinarians worldwide.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the mental health of veterinarians
2. To identify the job satisfaction of veterinarians
3. To identify differences in mental health and job satisfaction level of veterinarians with respect to their job profile.
4. To check the impact of mental health on the job satisfaction of veterinarians

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference in the mental health of veterinarians concerning their job profile
2. There is no significant difference in job satisfaction of veterinarians concerning their job profile
3. There is no impact of mental health on the job satisfaction of veterinarians.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This research has first studied the mental health and job satisfaction of veterinarians and then the relationship between these two variables has been accessed, so the mix of descriptive and causal research design has been used.

The present study encompassed veterinarians working within the diverse array of veterinary hospitals and clinics situated throughout Kerala state. Employing a judgmental sampling approach, a sample size of 209 veterinarians was meticulously selected to ensure representation across various practice settings and demographics. A meticulously crafted questionnaire, tailored specifically for this study, was administered to the selected veterinarians. The questionnaire was designed to capture comprehensive data on the mental health and job satisfaction levels of the participating veterinarians, encompassing various facets of their professional experiences and personal well-being.

The collected data was then subjected to statistical analysis utilizing a combination of measures of central tendency and dispersion techniques. Additionally, the non-parametric chi-square test was employed to further scrutinize the relationships and associations within the dataset, providing valuable insights into the factors influencing job satisfaction and mental health among veterinarians in Kerala.

RESULTS

The questionnaire used in the present study first aimed to gather insights into the professional profiles of veterinarians, focusing on various aspects of their job roles and experiences. Table 1 presents the data collected, providing a detailed overview of the findings.

Regarding the type of organization, the majority of veterinarians (73.68%) were found to be employed in public hospitals or clinics, while 26.32% worked in private hospitals or clinics.

In terms of work experience, the data revealed that the largest proportion of veterinarians (35.41%) had accumulated 9 to 12 years of job experience. Following this, 27.75% reported having 6 to 9 years of experience, while 21.05% had 3 to 6 years of experience. The remaining veterinarians had either more than 12 years (10.05%) or less than 3 years (5.74%) of job experience.

When it came to daily working hours, the survey found that over half of the veterinarians (54.07%) reported working for 8 to 12 hours per day. Additionally, 37.32% of veterinarians stated that they typically work for approximately 8 hours daily. A smaller proportion, 5.26%, reported working for 12 to 16 hours per day, while 3.35% mentioned working for more than 16 hours daily.

Table 1: Job Profile of Veterinarians

Type of Organization	N	Percentage
Public Hospital/Clinic	154	73.68
Private Hospital/Clinic	55	26.32
Total	209	100
Work Experience	N	Percentage
Up to 3 Years	12	5.74
3 to 6 Years	44	21.05
6 to 9 Years	58	27.75
9 to 12 Years	74	35.41
More than 12 Years	21	10.05
Total	209	100
Daily Working hours	N	Percentage
Up to 8 hours	78	37.32
8 to 12 hours	113	54.07
12 to 16 hours	11	5.26
More than 16 hours	7	3.35
Total	209	100

Mental Health of Veterinarians

Veterinarians were given a list of situations and they were asked how frequently they face such situations. The scale was set on five points such as never, seldom, sometimes, often and always. Table 2 is depicting the mean score of every situation along with the standard deviation and coefficient of variation.

As per the analysis presented, veterinarians often feel that depression has become a part of life (mean=3.49), they are losing their concentration day by day (mean=3.98), they are not able to enjoy their routine activities (mean=3.64), they don't find themselves capable of overcome their difficulties (mean=3.44) and they lose their temper frequently (mean=3.87). It seldom happens that Veterinarians are not able to get rid of strain (mean=3.22) and they consider themselves worthless persons (mean=3.14). The veterinarians said that sometimes they feel that they are in the wrong profession (mean=1.95). These results indicate that Veterinarians are not in a good state of mental health, as all the values of the coefficient of variations range from 0.09 to 0.25 which shows significant homogeneity in the opinion of Veterinarians.

Table 2: Mental Health of Veterinarians

Statement	Mean	S.D.	C.V.	Frequency
I feel that I am in a wrong profession	1.95	0.29	0.15	Sometimes
Depression has become the part of my life	3.49	0.31	0.09	Often
I am not able to get rid of strain	3.22	0.79	0.25	Seldom
I consider myself as worthless person	3.14	0.52	0.17	Seldom
I am loosing my work concentration day by day	3.98	0.64	0.16	Often
I am not able to enjoy my normal activities	3.64	0.71	0.20	Often
I don't find myself capable of overcome my difficulties	3.45	0.47	0.14	Often
I lose my temper frequently	3.87	0.52	0.13	Often

Table 3 shows the overall mental health of veterinarians. According to results, more than 65% of the Veterinarians (66.99%) were suffering from a bad state of mental health whereas around 1/3rd of veterinarians (33.01%) were having good mental health. According to the mean score (3.34) the veterinarians were having bad mental health.

Table 3: Overall Mental Health of Veterinarians

Overall Mental Health	N	Percentage
Good	69	33.01
Bad	140	66.99
Total	209	100
Mean	3.34	
Result	Bad	

To check differences in the mental health of veterinarians concerning their job profile following hypothesis has been framed:-

H₀1: There is no significant difference in the mental health of veterinarians according to their job profile

H_a1: There is a significant difference in the mental health of veterinarians according to their job profile

To test this hypothesis the data on mental health was cross-tabulated with the demographic profile of veterinarians and then the chi-square test was applied as depicted in Table 4. It could be observed that the value of the chi-statistic is not significant for the type of organization whereas it is significant for work experience and daily working hours. So it can be concluded that work experience and daily working hours have a significant impact on the mental health of veterinarians.

Table 4: Chi-Square test results to measure impact of job profile on mental health of veterinarians

Job Profile		Overall Mental Health			Chi-Square Value	P-Value	Significance
		Good	Bad	Total			
Type of Organization	Public Hospital/Clinic	49	105	154	0.378	0.538	Not Significant
	Private Hospital/Clinic	20	35	55			
	Total	69	140	209			
Work Experience	Up to 3 Years	8	4	12	15.24	0.004	Significant
	3 to 6 Years	18	26	44			
	6 to 9 Years	23	35	58			

Daily Working hours	9 to 12 Years	17	57	74	19.089	0.000	Significant
	More than 12 Years	3	18	21			
	Total	69	140	209			
	Up to 8 hours	40	38	78			
	8 to 12 hours	26	87	113			
	12 to 16 hours	2	9	11			
	More than 16 hours	1	6	7			
	Total	69	140	209			

Level of Significance=5%

Job Satisfaction of Veterinarians:

Veterinarians were given a list of job parameters and they were asked to indicate their satisfaction with those parameters on a five-point scale ranging from highly satisfied (5) to highly dissatisfied (1). The final opinion has been ascertained with the help of mean score and CV as shown in table 5. It could be seen that all the values of the coefficient of variations are below 0.20, which indicates the homogeneity in the opinion of respondents. As per results, veterinarians were satisfied with job profile (mean=3.47), salary & financial benefits (mean=3.69), interpersonal relationships (mean=3.41) and dignity inside the department (mean=3.78). The same veterinarians were dissatisfied with opportunities for higher studies (mean=1.99) and workload (mean=2.05). With rest of the parameters i.e. non-financial benefits (mean=3.04), promotion opportunities (mean=3.22), attitude of superior authorities (mean=2.69), job security (mean=3.27) and dignity outside the department (mean=3.21) they have indicated neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction.

Table 5: Job Satisfaction of Veterinarians

Parameters	Mean	S.D.	C.V.	Satisfaction Level
Job Profile	3.47	0.64	0.18	Satisfied
Workload	2.05	0.28	0.14	Dissatisfied
Salary and other financial benefits	3.69	0.49	0.13	Satisfied
Non Financial benefits	3.04	0.51	0.17	Neutral
Promotion opportunities	3.22	0.55	0.17	Neutral
Attitude of superior authorities	2.69	0.42	0.16	Neutral
Interpersonal relationships	3.41	0.39	0.11	Satisfied
Opportunities for higher studies	1.99	0.24	0.12	Dissatisfied
Job security	3.27	0.35	0.11	Neutral
Dignity outside the department	3.21	0.41	0.13	Neutral
Dignity inside the department	3.78	0.58	0.15	Satisfied

Table 6 shows the overall job satisfaction of veterinarians. According to the results 53.53% of veterinarians were satisfied with their job and 46.41% of veterinarians were dissatisfied with their job. As per the mean score (3.07), the veterinarians were satisfied with their job.

Table 6: Overall Job Satisfaction of Veterinarians

Overall Job Satisfaction	N	Percentage
Dissatisfied	97	46.41
Satisfied	112	53.59
Total	209	100
Mean	3.07	
Result	Satisfied	

To check differences in job satisfaction of veterinarians with respect to their job profile following

hypothesis has been framed:-

H₀2: There is no significant difference in job satisfaction of veterinarians with respect to their job profile

H_a2: There is a significant difference in job satisfaction of veterinarians with respect to their job profile

To test this hypothesis the data of job satisfaction was cross-tabulated with the demographic profile of veterinarians and then chi-square test was applied as depicted in table 7. It could be observed that the value of chi-statistic is not significant for type of organization whereas it is significant for work experience and daily working hours. So it can be concluded that work experience and daily working hours have significant impact on job satisfaction of veterinarians.

Table 7: Chi-Square test results to measure impact of job profile on job satisfaction of veterinarians

Job Profile		Overall Job Satisfaction			Chi-Square Value	P-Value	Significance
		Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Total			
Type of Organization	Public Hospital/Clinic	70	84	154	0.2155	0.642	Not Significant
	Private Hospital/Clinic	27	28	55			
	Total	97	112	209			
Work Experience	Up to 3 Years	3	9	12	43.03	0.000	Significant
	3 to 6 Years	9	35	44			
	6 to 9 Years	18	40	58			
	9 to 12 Years	50	24	74			
	More than 12 Years	17	4	21			
	Total	97	112	209			
Daily Working hours	Up to 8 hours	30	48	78	11.881	0.007	Significant
	8 to 12 hours	52	61	113			
	12 to 16 hours	9	2	11			
	More than 16 hours	6	1	7			
	Total	97	112	209			

Level of Significance=5%

The following hypothesis has been taken to check the relationship between mental health and job satisfaction of veterinarians:-

H₀3: There is no impact of mental health on the job satisfaction of veterinarians

H_a3: There is a significant impact of mental health on the job satisfaction of veterinarians

To test this hypothesis chi-square test was applied and the results received are presented in Table8. At a 5% level,the value of the chi-statistic is found to be significant so it can be concluded that mental health has a significant impact on the job satisfaction of veterinarians.

Table 12: Chi-Square test results to measure the impact of mental health on job satisfaction of veterinarians

Overall Mental Health	Overall Job Satisfaction			Chi-Square Value	p-Value	Significance
	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Total			
Bad	85	55	140	34.879	0.00	Significant
Good	12	57	69			
Total	97	112	209			

Level of Significance=5%

DISCUSSION

Smith et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of supportive coworkers and management in fostering a positive work environment for veterinarians. It also highlights the role of professional development opportunities and mentorship programs in enhancing job satisfaction. These findings resonate with the present study's focus on the significance of supportive work environments and opportunities for growth.

Work Satisfaction: Variations in job satisfaction among veterinarians based on work experience and working hours were noted by Greenhaus & Allen (2011). The study by them underscores the challenges of maintaining a healthy work-life balance, which can impact job satisfaction and mental health. This aligns with the present study's recognition of the demanding nature of veterinary work and its implications for work-life balance. In the study by Jones & Brown (2021), financial pressures, including school debt and clinic operations, were highlighted as significant stressors impacting job satisfaction among veterinarians. This study suggested incorporating financial management support to alleviate stress and discontent. This finding is relevant to the present study's emphasis on addressing financial concerns within the professional support system to promote well-being.

Mental Health: Garcia et al. (2020) discussed the impact of technology on mental health in veterinary medicine, with digital tools contributing to stress and blurring boundaries between work and personal life. This resonates with the present study's recognition of the challenges posed by technological advancements and their implications for mental well-being among veterinarians.

Relationship between Work Satisfaction and Mental Health: Lee & Smith (2023) highlighted the correlation between job satisfaction and mental health among veterinarians, with higher job satisfaction associated with lower rates of mental health issues. Factors contributing to job satisfaction, such as a positive work environment and opportunities for growth, were noted as protective factors against stressors. These findings align closely with the present study's focus on the relationship between job satisfaction and mental well-being, emphasizing the importance of positive work environments and professional development opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The major findings from the study include:

1. Majority of veterinarians were suffering from bad state of mental health, and their mental health significantly differs with respect to their work experience and daily working hours.
2. The veterinarians were satisfied with their job and their job satisfaction differs with respect to their work experience and daily working hours.
3. There is a significant impact of mental health on job satisfaction of veterinarians.

The results of the study on veterinary job satisfaction and mental health emphasise the connection between these two aspects and the significance of treating them with a multimodal strategy. Through emphasising the development of encouraging work environments, guaranteeing chances for professional advancement, and offering tools to cope with monetary and psychological strain, the veterinary industry can improve the welfare of its members, which will raise the standard of care given to animals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding Veterinary Professionals

- **Self-Care and Boundaries:** It's critical that veterinarians set aside time for self-care and draw distinct lines between their personal and professional lives. Regular physical exercise, hobbies, and social interactions can improve general wellbeing.
- **Seeking Support:** Whether via peer support groups, professional mental health services, or mentorship programmes, veterinarians should be encouraged to seek support when necessary.

Regarding Veterinary Clinics and Establishments:

- **Creating Supportive Work Environments:** Veterinary clinics should make an effort to establish inclusive, encouraging work environments that value staff members' contributions individually and promote a feeling of community.
- **Professional Development and Financial Support:** Veterinarians can have more job satisfaction and less stress by having access to services for debt management and financial planning, as well as opportunities for professional growth.

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Authors' contributions

All authors contributed toward data analysis, drafting and revising the paper and agreed to be responsible for all the aspects of this work.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Availability of data and materials

Not Applicable

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Not applicable

Declarations

Authors declare that all works are original and this manuscript has not been published in any other journal.

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