

**CONSTRAINTS FACED BY VETERINARY OFFICERS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study was conducted to identify various constraints which affect the performance of Veterinary officers of Himachal Pradesh, India. Data were collected from sixty-five field Veterinarians through well-structured questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents were male (81.54%), young in age (50.77%), Masters in Veterinary science (58.46%), having moderate job experience (50.77%) and were serving Veterinary hospitals (78.46%). Inadequate clinical or diagnostic facilities, poor internet and computer facilities, too much reporting, unavailability of clerical staff and shortage of supporting clinical staff were the top five reported constraints faced by the field Vets with weighted mean scores of 4.58, 4.51, 4.45, 4.40, 4.38, respectively. Inadequate clinical facilities along with poor internet and computer facilities fell into high priority constraints area, as analysed through mean and standard deviation analysis. Therefore, the provision of better clinical or diagnostic facilities, providing more autonomy to Veterinarians, creation of more hospitals/polyclinics, adequate supporting staff and increased promotion avenues for the Veterinarians are critical measures which can be implemented to improve the effectiveness of services rendered by Veterinarians.

**Keywords:** Constraint analysis, Himachal Pradesh, Job efficiency, Veterinary officers

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The total livestock population of Himachal Pradesh is 4.41 million and 1.34 million poultry birds (20<sup>th</sup> livestock census). The livestock sector in the state of Himachal Pradesh is of utmost importance and contributes around 28-30 per cent of the total value of agricultural produce (Kumar *et al.*, 2012). At the national level, improving provision of animal health and Veterinary services is the foremost priority in the livestock development agenda (Birthal and Negi, 2012). The state animal husbandry department solely bears the responsibility of providing clinical and extension services to the needy livestock keepers of the state. Veterinary officers have to perform the dual duty of clinician as well as extensionist for the livestock farmers because there are no specific cadre/posts for information and advisory services. Thus the job profile of the Veterinarian includes an array of responsibility ranging from disease diagnosis, treatment and surgical procedures to post-operative care, project/policy implementation, administration, reporting and execution of advisory services (Singh *et al.*, 2107). Various constraints are faced by the Veterinarians in execution of their professional work, which lead to reduced work efficiency (Sahu *et al.*, 2019). The removal of these constraints help in better services delivery along with higher job satisfaction, which in turn is a catalytic factor for more professional output. No study has been conducted till date to assess various constraints faced by Veterinary officers serving in the state. Keeping in view the facts, this study was undertaken to mine out the constraints faced by the Veterinary officers of the state in different aspects of job profile.

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**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study was conducted among the Veterinary officers serving state animal husbandry department (SDAH) of Himachal Pradesh, between July to December, 2020. Convenience sampling method was used and a well-structured questionnaire was used for the purpose. This questionnaire was mailed to about 200 veterinarians (comprising > 50% of cadre) of the state, out of which 65 responded to the data collection request, constituting more than 20% of the total state cadre. Fifteen possible constraints were finalised after review of literature, consultation with the experts. Pretesting was done with the help of 5 faculty members who had served SDAH, prior to joining as faculty member. The respondents were asked to measure their perception about these constraints on a scale of 1 to 5 (1- Strongly agree; 5- Strongly disagree). The data regarding age, qualification, job experience and posting institution was also recorded. The scores assigned by all the respondents for any given constraint were added together. The sum obtained was divided by number of respondent to yield the index (Weighted mean score out of 5) for that constraint. The ranking of the constraints was done based on this index for better prioritisation. In case of two constraints getting same mean score, the one with more choices of highest score i.e. strongly agree was given higher rank. The individual constraints were also categorised as low, medium and high priority, based on mean and standard deviation as:

Low = Less than Mean – SD

Medium = Mean ± SD

High = More than Mean + SD

Five suggestions to improve work efficiency of Veterinarian officers were also given choices on similar five-point scale by the respondents and their ranking was also done.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Socio-personal profile of respondents:** As presented in Table 1, 81.54% of the respondents were male Veterinarians while rest 18.46% were females. Majority (50.77%) of the respondents were below 35 years in age, followed by 47.69% in between 35-50 years and rest were above 50 years. Thirty-eight respondents (58.46%) were post graduates in Veterinary science, while 21 respondents (32.31%) had joined service only after Graduate degree (BVSc. & AH). Six Veterinarians (10.77%) had attained PhD degree. About job experience, majority respondents (50.77%) had job experience of 5-20 years, followed by 25 respondents (38.46%) with below 5 years and 7 respondents (10.77%) had job experience more than 20 years. This signifies that majority of respondents were in their early to mid-level stage of their professional career. Fifty-one respondents (78.46%) were working in Veterinary hospitals, 7 (10.77%) in Veterinary polyclinics, 4 (6.15%) in administrative offices and 3 (4.62%) respondents in livestock farms, operational under the control of state animal husbandry department. Similar findings have been reported in Karnataka by Channappagouda and Sasidhar (2018) and in West Bengal by Sen *et al.* (2001).

The scoring of constraints, as done by the respondents, is presented in Table 2. The provision of inadequate clinical and diagnostic facilities emerged as the top-ranked constraint with weighted mean score of 4.58, as perceived by the field vets. This implies that the available diagnostic or treatment facilities at the field level do not comply with the competencies of the Veterinarians i.e. they can perform well if enough facilities are provided to them. Poor internet and computer facilities, which was the second ranked constraint with weighted mean score of 4.51, highlighted the need for provision of information and communication technologies, as it saves time, makes official reporting easy, and information retrieval and transmission more efficient. Excessive and redundant reporting system need to be done away with as it has been perceived as third ranked constraint by the field Veterinarians, with weighted mean score of 4.45. This was followed by unavailability of clerical staff (4.40), shortage of supporting clinical staff (4.38), schemes/project work affecting routine clinical work (4.38), lack of motivation/reward/promotion avenues for vets (4.37), inadequate in service trainings (4.25), additional workload of vacant posts of other hospitals (4.18), unrealistic targets (4.18),

administrative workload of dispensaries (4.17), higher livestock count per Veterinarian (4.15), irregular medicine and chemicals supply (4.06), cumbersome departmental procedures (4.05) and high OPD numbers (3.52). In similar studies, arbitrary target fixation, inadequate subordinate staff, too much paper work etc. (Verma *et al.*, 2020), inadequate supply of medicines, shortage of human resource, administrative work load etc. (Channappagouda and Sasidhar, 2018), inadequate manpower, more area of coverage, poor transportation facilities, low and untimely availability of inputs etc. (Sahu *et al.*, 2019), insufficient number of Veterinary professionals at field, less avenues for promotion, favouritism, lack of advanced disease diagnostic technologies etc. (Goyal *et al.*, 2018), were the major constraints perceived by field Veterinarians across different states of India in efficient delivery of services to livestock farmers. Kumar *et al.* (2015) reported that lesser posts of supporting staff, delay in recruitment of vacant posts, lack of incentive for working under hard conditions and too much reporting work were the widely spread constraints faced by subject matter specialists of selected KVK's in North India. Sharma *et al.* (2021) reported that advancements in clinical skills was top most ranked in service training need among Veterinarians serving state animal husbandry department of Himachal Pradesh.

Table 3 depicts the categorisation of the constraints based on the mean and standard deviation. Inadequate clinical and diagnostic facility along with poor internet and computer facility fell into high priority area which means these constraints seek immediate attention and need to be done away with, in a short span of time. The need for better ICT tools have emerged due to implementation of various ICT based government schemes such as INAPH (Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health) and reporting system. This, also, is indicative of changing job nature of Veterinarians and para veterinarians and calls for change in curriculum of professional degree or diploma programmes. The rest of the constraints were grouped in medium level priority group, which require their redressal in a long span of time. Jadoun *et al.* (2017) reported "Heavy work-load due to multidimensional activities of the project during peak season" and "Inadequacy of staff in the scheme" were the major administrative constraints faced by animal husbandry officials in the implementation of integrated Murrah development scheme (IMDS) in Haryana State of India. Similarly, Phand *et al.* (2020) reported that that irregular recruitment of officers, prioritising implementation of scheme or projects rather than developing the knowledge and skills of the farmers and focus on reproductive and health aspect only etc. were the most

**Table 1. Socio personal profile of the respondents**

Variable	Respondents (n=65)	Percentage
Sex	Female	12 18.46
	Male	53 81.54
Age	Below 35	33 50.77
	35-50 Years	31 47.69
	More than 50	1 1.54
Qualification	BVSc & AH	21 32.31
	MVSc	38 58.46
	PhD	6 9.23
Job Experience	Up 5 Years	25 38.46
	5-20 years	33 50.77
	more than 20 years	7 10.77
Institution type (Place of Working)	Livestock Farm	3 4.62
	Veterinary Hospital	51 78.46
	Veterinary Polyclinic	7 10.77
	Administrative Office	4 6.15

**Table 2. Ranking of perceived Constraints faced by Veterinarians**

Constraint	Highly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted	Rank Mean Score
Inadequate clinical facilities	45	13	7	0	0	4.58	1
Poor Internet and computer facilities	47	10	4	2	2	4.51	2
Too much reporting	41	14	9	0	1	4.45	3
Unavailability of clerical staff	38	18	7	1	1	4.40	4
Shortage of supporting clinical staff	36	21	6	1	1	4.38	5
Schemes/project target affects clinical work	36	19	9	1	0	4.38	6
Lack of motivation/reward/promotion	35	20	9	1	0	4.37	7
Inadequate in- service trainings	32	21	9	2	1	4.25	8
Additional Hospital Charge/responsibility	30	22	9	3	1	4.18	9
Unrealistic targets	28	26	7	3	1	4.18	10
Administrative workload	29	21	13	1	1	4.17	11
Very higher vet to livestock ratio	30	19	13	2	1	4.15	12
Irregular medicine/Chemical supply	24	27	9	4	1	4.06	13
Cumbersome Departmental procedures	23	26	12	4	0	4.05	14
High OPD numbers	9	24	26	4	2	3.52	15
Mean = 4.243 and Standard Deviation = 0.256							

**Table 3. Prioritization of constraints on the basis of mean and standard deviation**

Priority Level	Score Range	Constraints
High Priority	More than Mean + SD > 4.499	Poor Internet and computer facilities Inadequate clinical facilities
Medium Priority	Between Mean ± SD 3.987- 4.499	Shortage of supporting clinical staff Irregular medicine/Chemical supply Very higher vet to livestock ratio Additional Hospital Charge/responsibility Unavailability of clerical staff Unrealistic targets Inadequate in- service trainings Too much reporting Administrative workload Cumbersome Departmental procedures Lack of motivation/reward/promotion Schemes/project target affects clinical work
Low Priority	Less than Mean – SD < 3.987	High OPD numbers

**Table 4. Ranking of suggested measures to improve work efficiency of the field veterinarians**

Suggestion	Highly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Mean Score	Rank
Better Clinical facilities/labs	58	6	0	1	0	4.86	1
More autonomy to Veterinary officers	53	12	0	0	0	4.82	2
Creation/ up gradation of more Veterinary hospitals	53	11	0	1	0	4.78	3
More Supporting Staff	39	22	4	0	0	4.54	4
Increased promotional avenues	35	26	4	0	0	4.48	5

remarkable constraints faced by extension officers of SDAH.

The ranking of the suggested measures on similar lines yielded that better clinical / lab facilities was highest ranked remedial measure with weighted mean score of 4.86 followed by more autonomy in work to Veterinary officers (4.82), creation/up gradation of more Veterinary hospitals (4.78), more supporting staff (4.54) and increased promotional avenues for vets (4.48). Agrawal and Agrawal (2014) reported that major factors in achieving higher level of job satisfaction among Veterinarians in Rajasthan hover around stressful job work, adverse work conditions, inadequate promotional opportunities, etc., which should be duly taken care of by the management to ensure higher level of job satisfaction.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of the study conclude that inadequate clinical diagnostic facilities, insufficient ICT tools, unnecessary paperwork and lack of supporting official staff were major reported constraints in Himachal Pradesh. Therefore, steps should be undertaken to strengthen disease diagnosis facilities at every block/district level to boost disease diagnosis. Alternatively, such services may be outsourced to the private sector in a public private partnership mode ICT tools can be strengthened and promoted to bring efficiency in operations, by providing training to the staff members of the department.

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