

# CAREER MOTIVATION AND SPECIALITY CHOICE OF VETERINARY MEDICAL STUDENTS AT USMAN DANFODIO UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO, NIGERIA

D. B. U. EDEMEKA, and O. P. AJAGBONNA

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## ABSTRACT

Analysis of the responses of 90 clinical veterinary students of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, on career motivation and specialization preference showed that 38% of the students choose veterinary medicine as a profession because of their love for animals. High income accounted for 32.3%, high status 22.2%, while only 11.1% choose the course because of their family tradition. Animal Production and Public Health are most favoured fields of specialization followed by Medicine and Surgery, then Microbiology. The basic veterinary sciences like Anatomy and Physiology scored zero percent, as none of the students sampled wanted to specialize in these areas.

**KEY WORDS:** Students, Veterinary Medicine, Career Motivation, Specialty Choice, Sokoto.

## INTRODUCTION

Various factors are known to influence quality of training in medical and veterinary school, especially in Europe and America (Ali and Fernandes, 1972, McGrath and Zimet, 1977). Major special factors considered intrinsic to the practice of medicine have been excellently reviewed (Zimny and Shelton, 1982, Turner and Griffirin 1982), but such information on veterinary medicine in developing countries is scanty in scientific literature. Also, results from a previous study on medical students in the United States of America showed that female students enrolment increased steadily over the years, i.e 9.1% in 1970 to 26.2% in 1981 ( Turner and Griffirin 1982). Similar observation has also been made in studies on Nigeria medical students emrolment (Obionu, 1994, Edemeka, et al 1996).

Our present study area is the veterinary school of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, established in 1984 with a student intake of 15, all being males, the population of which has increased over the years to (1995/96 academic session) 105 with 90 males and 15 females, showing also a steady increase in the number of females entering the veterinary profession in Nigeria. Aspect such as specialty choices, social background and career expectations as were studied for medical students in Nigeria are considered in the present study.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A confidential, structured and anonymous questionnaire was administered to clinical

veterinary students in different years of training (DVM 3 to 5) and information gathered on parents occupation and educational status, motivation or reasons for studying veterinary medicine, preferred area of future specialization and choice of career after graduation.

Questionnaires were distributed to 90 students at the end of their lectures for each level of study for five days. In order to obtain their co-operation, and stress the confidentiality of the study, no name was inserted in the forms. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University.

Parents social status was classified as manual if they had no university education or were doing manual labours, and the non-manual group included workers, professionals and university graduates irrespective of their occupation.

## RESULTS

Ninety students responded by filling and returning the forms. This gave a 100% retrieval rate. Of the 90 students interviewed, 77 (83.7%) were males and 13 (14.4%) were females. While 35% of the males are from non-manual families as many as 85% of the females are from non-manual families. Table 1 summarises reasons for studying veterinary medicine by sex and social background. It can be seen that 38% of the respondents had love for animals as their reason for studying veterinary medicine. Love for animals featured highest for both sexes in the non-manual group with 50% and 63.6% for the males and females respectively. In the manual group, love

TABLE 1: MOTIVATION FOR STUDYING VETERINARY MEDICINE BY SEX AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

	Manual Social Background		Non-Manual Social Background		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
High Status	11(21.6%)	0(0.0%)	8(30.8%)	1(9.1%)	20(22.2%)
High Income	19(37.3%)	0(0.0%)	1(3.8%)	1(9.1%)	21(23.3%)
Family Tradition	5(9.8%)	0(0.0%)	4(15.4%)	1(9.1%)	10(11.1%)
Love for animal	12(23.5%)	2(100%)	13(50.0%)	7(63.6%)	34(37.8%)
Any other	4(7.8%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(9.1%)	5(5.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>51(100%)</b>	<b>2(100%)</b>	<b>26(100%)</b>	<b>11(100%)</b>	<b>90(100%)</b>

for animals ranked second with 23.5% in males while it reached 100% in females.

High income from the profession came second with 23.3% as reason for studying veterinary medicine. Its motivational influence is higher in males than in females especially in the manual social background. It is also significant to note that of all the motivational factors, high income ranked highest among the responders for the manual group. High status in the society accounted for 22.2%, while 11.1% gave family tradition as reasons for studying veterinary medicine. Only 5.5% gave other reasons such as parental wish, accidental and academic challenge as motivation for their career choice. A further review of the 5 respondents from the manual social background who gave family tradition as reasons for their chosen career, showed that all of them are of Hausa/Fulani lineage, whose parents are traditional cattle rearers.

Table 2 shows the preferred areas of future specialization of the respondents. 29.3% gave Animal Production as their preferred area of specialization followed by Public Health with 21.7% while 13.0% each hope to specialize in both Surgery and Medicine. Only 5.4% gave Microbiology as their preferred area of future specialization while 4.4% and 2.2% choose Theriogenology and Parasitology respectively. 1.1% of the respondents choose Pathology. Basic veterinary sciences (Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology) recorded 3.3%. A further review of those that gave basic veterinary sciences as their possible area of specialization showed that none wanted Anatomy and Physiology as they all preferred Pharmacology.

## DISCUSSION

That a higher proportion of female students in this study is from educated parents

TABLE 2: PREFERRED AREAS OF FUTURE SPECIALIZATION BY SEX

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Public Health	15(19.2%)	5(35.9%)	20(21.7%)
Surgery	11(14.1%)	1(7.1%)	12(13.0%)
Medicine	11(14.1%)	1(7.1%)	12(13.0%)
Theriogenology	4(5.2%)	0(0.0%)	4(4.4%)
Pathology	1(1.3%)	0(0.0%)	1(1.1%)
Microbiology	4(5.2%)	1(7.1%)	5(5.4%)
Parasitology	2(1.3%)	0(0.1%)	2(2.2%)
Animal Production	22(28.2%)	5(35.7%)	27(29.3%)
Basic Veterinary Sciences	3(3.8%)	0(0.0%)	3(3.3%)
Not decided	5(6.4%)	1(7.1%)	6(6.5%)

indicates the value placed on education by parents with previous experience of university education. It further suggests that non-elite parents may not encourage their daughters to undergo training necessary to gain admission and pass through a veterinary medical school.

Love for animals features highest as reason for studying veterinary medicine. It is also important to note that this factor seems to be affected by sex and not by family social background as 100% of the female respondents in the manual group choose love for animal as their motivational factor against 23.5% in the male respondents. This is also the case in the non-manual group where 64% of the female respondents choose the same factor against 50% in the male respondents. It may be assumed that the more caring attitude of the females may probably be responsible for this significant sex variation. In a similar study from medical colleges in Egypt, and Nigeria, love for humanity also ranked highest among the motivational factors for studying medicine (Ali and Fernandes, 1972, McGrath and Zimet, 1977, Edemeka et al, 1996).

In the present study, high income ranked next with 23.3% followed by high status. It is, however, important to note that the majority of the respondents in this group, 19 out of 21 students, (table 1) are all from the manual social background. This may not be unexpected since people from this group are more likely to consider improving their lots economically than those from the non-manual educated group where love for animals ranked highest for both males and females (table 1).

Of the students interviewed 6 (6.5%) had not yet decided on their specialty choice which suggests that they may be students not yet properly informed about career prospects in veterinary medicine. More students had higher preference for clinical areas like Surgery and Medicine (table 2) than other areas like the paraclinicals and basic veterinary sciences. Perhaps more opportunities for future private practice may probably account for this observation, since over two-third of the respondents preferred private practice to academic and of civil service jobs after their course of study. These observations also agree with findings among medical students in Nigeria and America where more students also have higher preference for Surgery, Internal Medicine, and Obstetrics and Gynaecology (Ali & Fernandes, 1972, McGrath and Zimet, 1977, Zimny and Shelton, 1982, Turner & Griffin, 1982, Obionu, 1994, Edemeka et al, 1996) with a view to going into private practice thereafter. Sex also

appeared to influence choice of specialty because the females are less disposed toward clinical areas like Surgery and Medicine (14.1% in males against 7.1% in females for Surgery specialty).

Veterinarian oversupply in clinical areas is a disturbing phenomenon, especially when this is done at the expense of specialties such as Anatomy and Physiology, which serve as basic foundation in the training of veterinarians. It is therefore conceivable to conclude that if efforts are not made to change this trend, a time may come when no veterinarian will want to specialize at all in these areas.

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