

CHAPTER 1: Gender Balance In The Veterinary Industry: An Overview of Issues and Context

The study seeks to examine the gender balance in the veterinary industry. The veterinary industry offers employment to veterinary doctors and nurses who graduate from colleges and universities including the University of Zimbabwe. For gender balance it is important to involve both men and women in the industry. The importance of gender balance has been recognised at the global level on the Millenium Development Goal number 3 that is specifically targeted at gender equality and the empowerment of women (Puri, 2013).

The University of Zimbabwe (UZ) is a major tertiary training institution in the country. One of its faculties, the Faculty of Veterinary Science offers training in veterinary science for the country. In 1982, the Faculty of Veterinary Science (FVS) was inaugurated as a teaching institution at UZ and it offers the Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) degree and various Master of Veterinary Science degree programmes. Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (DPhil) degrees are also offered by research only. The FVS also conducts short courses for veterinarians who are in government or private practice (FVS Handbook, 2000). Apart from the degree programmes, the FVS also offers a Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (DVN) where students study for two years (UZ Prospectus, 2005).

The FVS pays particular attention to animal management systems, disease control measures and human-animal-environment interaction that will benefit the agricultural economy and enhance the quality of

life in Zimbabwe and the Southern African region (FVS Handbook, 2000).

The faculty thus, produces graduates whose career opportunities are mainly in the veterinary industry. The industry covers the government, education sector, private surgeries, Zimbabwe Republic Police, pharmacies, private organisations, farmers union, wildlife management, research laboratories and pet shops to mention a few. In Zimbabwe, the veterinary industry was established in the 1890s (Mutowo, 2001).

Upon completion of studies in the FVS at UZ one becomes a qualified doctor or nurse. Those who do the BVSc for five years are qualified to be doctors and those who do the DVN are qualified to be nurses. The veterinary graduates (veterinarians) register with the Council of Veterinary Surgeons to qualify to practice in the surgery and medicine in the profession regardless of gender, Zimbabwe Veterinary Surgeons Act [Chapter 27:15]. The FVS has the potential of being a pillar in the economic wellbeing of the region through the production of high-quality graduates, who will inevitably be the players / drivers of the veterinary industry. The buoyancy of the veterinary industry is according to this researcher, highly depended on the quality and mental preparedness and willingness of the players injected into the industry by the university.

The veterinarians are mostly involved in animal welfare, regular and routine inspections of abattoirs and poultry slaughterhouses, modes of transportation of animals to such slaughter areas, security company guard dogs, police horses, pet shops, research laboratories. They react to reports on outbreaks of diseases of animals within 24 hours and initiate immediate control measures. They also undertake investigations into wildlife poaching, illegal importation of alien

species and cases of suspected animal cruelty. The aim of this study is to research if there is gender balance in the recruitment, selection, job opportunities and salaries.

Since its inception in 1982, the FVS has successfully trained 517 BVSc graduates to 2014 and 60 DVN graduates (para-vets) (FVS Strategic Plan, 2013). The researcher is interested in studying the gender balance in the veterinary industry for UZ graduates. Gender equality or balance denotes women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere. Gender equity also signifies the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognising their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources (Goodman, 2004).

According to Jirira (2008), in workplaces there is 'genderised' division of labour whereby men and women seem to assume different roles and responsibilities with men assuming more authoritative positions and women taking on the subordinate roles, hence they are less paid as they are viewed as minors, incapable of making concrete decisions. Feminists argue that women are discriminated against, and the imbalances are reinforced by custom. This is supported by Connell (1987) who points out that gender divides work in the home and in the economic production, legitimizes those in authority, and organises sexuality and emotional life and this also affects men and women at workplaces. Thus, gender balance is important at workplaces though gender inequality is common in most industries. This research is based on the veterinary industry, Harare market.

The researcher realised that females are highly under-represented in the veterinary industry and has passion in seeing the University producing a well-balanced gender that will have a gender balance in the veterinary industry and beyond. Through continuous observation

and evaluation, the researcher realizes that there are some new developments in gender balance in other sectors of employment and there is a gap in the veterinary industry such that in some surgeries one would find that the number of male veterinarians outnumbers that of females. In the Veterinary industry, in Harare, there are twelve surgeries and only one out of these surgeries is female owned (Council of Veterinary Surgeons, 2000). In this regard, it shows that female veterinarians are not as dominating in the field as compared to their male counterparts therefore there is reason for investigating gender balance in the veterinary industry to substantiate facts.

A study done by Cooper (2013) in South Bank, London observes that most of the higher positions in the veterinary industry are male dominated yet women continue to be held back from top positions thus maintaining gender imbalance. There is a gap in that the previous researcher did not go further to look for the reasons for imbalance and how to solve the problem. A similar study was done in London on bringing perceptions on gender equality in the veterinary science closer to reality. There is need to do a similar study in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular.

Therefore, it is against this background that this research is undertaken to examine gender balance in the veterinary industry. Zimbabwe has adopted many policies to promote gender equality in all sectors of the economy. Among these are the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 2004 National Gender Policy (NGP), and the gender affirmative action policy of 1992. Despite these gender equality policies, there appears to be little impact in practice in some sectors. The researcher through observation has discovered that in the veterinary sector, there are fewer female veterinarians and more male veterinarians occupying higher positions in the veterinary industry. The researcher has found

this to be a problem and thus the need to examine gender balance in the veterinary industry.

This study is guided by Gender and Development theory (GAD). It is a feminist theory that promotes equality for both women and men in economic, political and social spheres of life among others (Jirira, 2008). The proponents of the GAD approach acknowledge that women were being left out and were not benefiting from economic development. They take the position that women are unfairly treated in all spheres of life and strategies can be developed to make the world a better place for women (Jirira, 2008:10). The GAD concept emerged in the 1980s out of the criticisms of the earlier WID concept and has its roots in socialist feminism. Socialist feminists have identified the social construction of production and reproduction as the basis of women's oppression and have focused attention on the social relations of gender, questioning the validity of roles that have been ascribed to both women and men in different societies (Rathgeber, 1990).

According to Smyth *et al.* (2003), GAD is an approach that supports for an integrated gender-planning perspective in all development work, concentrating on the power relations between women and men. GAD does not exclusively emphasize female solidarity, but it welcomes contributions of sensitive men and as well recognizes women's contribution inside and outside the household, including non-commodity production. GAD looks at the totality of social organisation, economic and political life to understand the shaping of specific aspects of society (Young, 1987).

The assumption of GAD is that a gender-and-development perspective does not lead only to the design of intervention and affirmative action strategies to ensure that women are better integrated into ongoing development efforts. It leads, inevitably, to a fundamental re-

examination of social structures and institutions and, ultimately, to the loss of power of entrenched elites, that will affect some women and men. It demands a degree of commitment to structural change and power shifts (Rathgeber, 1990). The GAD concept sees women as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development efforts and the main instrument of the GAD is the 'gender mainstreaming'. The instrument of 'gender-mainstreaming' aims at integrating women's concerns in the design, implementation, and evaluation of all socioeconomic and political policies. It puts a strong emphasis on women's emancipation and focuses on women's legal rights on inheritance and land ownership. GAD puts greater emphasis on the participation of the state in promoting women's emancipation, seeing it as the duty of the state to provide some of the social services that women in many countries have provided on a private and individual basis.

This theory encourages government and non-governmental organisations to include women in the workforce. It promotes gender equality. The theory links with gender balance that may be seen in the workforce and avoid a scenario whereby most high posts in the industries are held by men. Effects of African culture are also observed as men dominate in the workforce. GAD calls for equal treatment of women and men in the issues of development such that women are no longer discriminated in most institutions and there are many global, regional and national policies and reforms that have supported women's in-roads in the public sphere in support of women's participation in the world of work without any discrimination (Jirira, 2008).

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To analyse effects of gender balance in the veterinary industry.

2. To establish the status of gender balance in the veterinary industry.
3. To examine the nature of gender balance in the veterinary industry.
4. To recommend strategies that can be adopted to achieve gender balance in the veterinary industry.

The Research Questions were stated as follows:

1. Why are there few females in the veterinary industry?
2. How does the veterinary industry handle gender mainstreaming?
3. How do employers feel about gender balance in the veterinary industry?
4. How can gender balance be improved in the veterinary industry?

The research hypothesis was: There is no gender bias in the veterinary industry in Harare.

The significance of the study is to improve gender balance in the FVS and the veterinary industry at large. This will create opportunities for female veterinarians to compete with their male counterparts in the industry. The study will benefit stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education to encourage the girl child to do science subjects at secondary school so that they will be able to take up science studies at high school and tertiary education. It will also benefit the Dean of FVS, Departmental Chairpersons in the FVS and their lecturers, business owners in the veterinary industry and graduates in the veterinary industry. The benefits will be seen in terms of affirmative action in the selection of students. If there are more female veterinarians in the industry some clients will feel free to consult. If more females are engaged in the veterinary industry, it means women empowerment.

The outcomes of this research might influence and inspire women to vie for top posts in the veterinary industry. Furthermore, female veterinarians will find themselves participating in having their own surgeries after reading the findings of this study. Academically, the results may contribute to the knowledge base as they will be used to assist future research (literature) and those interested in pursuing the field.

The recommendations of this study will help policy makers on drafting policy recommendations. All stakeholders will derive health information and there will be disease prevention that saves more resources than curing.

In carrying out this study the following assumptions have been made: Employers in the veterinary industry prefer men to women. Education system in Zimbabwe does not encourage women to do sciences and the African patriarchal set up still dominates in workplaces.

Due to limitation on time and other resources, the study was done in Harare urban area. It was the convenient place for the study since the researcher's interest has been captured by the geographical site of the area because there are so many veterinary surgeries/ hospitals, government institutions, veterinary private organisations and education institutions that employ veterinarians in the area that exactly suits the desired population.

The first limitation was that of resources, it was the intention of the researcher to carry out a national survey, but the researcher ended up mainly centred in the Harare area due to limited funds. Veterinary institutions in the Harare urban were visited for consultations.

Some of the targeted respondents did not cooperate, especially top management, in most cases they were always busy, and it made data collection difficult and instead the researcher had to spend more time pursuing them. Some organisations in the industry were not willing to release information hence some information was not provided for the research, however the researcher made effort to get the information through interviews. Most veterinarians were scattered all over Harare therefore the collection of data took longer than anticipated.

Operational Definition of Key Terms:

Culture: A complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, law, customs and habits acquired by humans as members of society (Hawkins & Coney, 2001).
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Cultural values: Widely held beliefs that affirm what is desirable (Doole & Lowe, 2008).
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Gender: Gender refers to roles, attitudes and related behaviour of males and females that are culturally defined (O'Donnel, 1999).
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Gender balance: A balanced composition of women and men to bring equality to the current male-dominated workplace.
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Gender equality: Gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. It refers to the process of being fair to women and men (Jirira, 2008).
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Gender inequality: refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles and manifests itself differently according to situations (Jirira, 2008).
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Gender Mainstreaming: Gender mainstreaming means considering the perspectives, roles and responsibilities of both women and men in development initiatives (Lusuva, 2009).
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Graduate: Someone who completed an educational program and received a degree.

Veterinarian: One who has successfully completed a degree in Veterinary Medicine (FVS Handbook, 2002).
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Veterinary Industry: Animal hospitals/surgeries, clinics, laboratories and pharmacies (FVS Strategic Plan, 2007).

The chapter has provided a detailed background of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Zimbabwe that offers veterinary graduates to the veterinary industry. The current research problem

was highlighted that was to seek if there was gender balance in the veterinary industry. In addition, the chapter stated theoretical framework, research questions, its specific objectives and significance of the study. It also focused on assumptions under that the study may be carried out, the limitations of the study and delimitations of the study. The operational definitions of key terms were given. The next chapter focuses on literature related to the topic.