

The Influence of Gender Inequities Experienced on the Intended Career Pathways of Women Veterinary Students

This study is focused on women veterinary medicine students and how misogyny and sexism have influenced their career pathways. The concept of rapid feminization of veterinary medicine was assessed as the effects can be seen industry-wide (e.g., downward trend in salaries, loss of large animal veterinarians, loss of rural veterinarians). Rapid feminization occurs when there is an influx of women in a field and a gender imbalance is created making that field disproportionately composed of women. There are persistent consequences to this swift change in the gender make-up of a field. The gender inequities that women veterinary medicine students face was explored to determine how and why these trends persist. A sample of 6 women students at Southwestern University College of Veterinary Medicine were interviewed and the findings revealed a double-sided coin of misogyny and sexism. Participants discussed their experiences not only in education but also in industry and how it has varied. On the surface, there is a supportive environment being created as the students continuously felt as though their gender did not play a role in their education, creating a seemingly agendered experience. This is relatively progressive in the veterinary medicine world as education and the industry is continuously creating environments where women are reminded of their gender with systemic inequities influencing their experiences, perspectives, and career choices. However, the School was replicating a misogynistic cycle of pushing a women-majority class into women-majority fields (i.e., small animal medicine or general medicine) through a disproportionate curriculum. This means that through their curriculum, the School is pushing for more general practice and small animal veterinarians and, whether consciously or not, are reinforcing the misogynistic cycle of tracking a majority-women class into majority-women fields.