

## **Factors Contributing to Registered Veterinary Nurses Deciding to Leave the Veterinary Profession in the UK**

Vivian, Sarah; Godbehere, Jennifer

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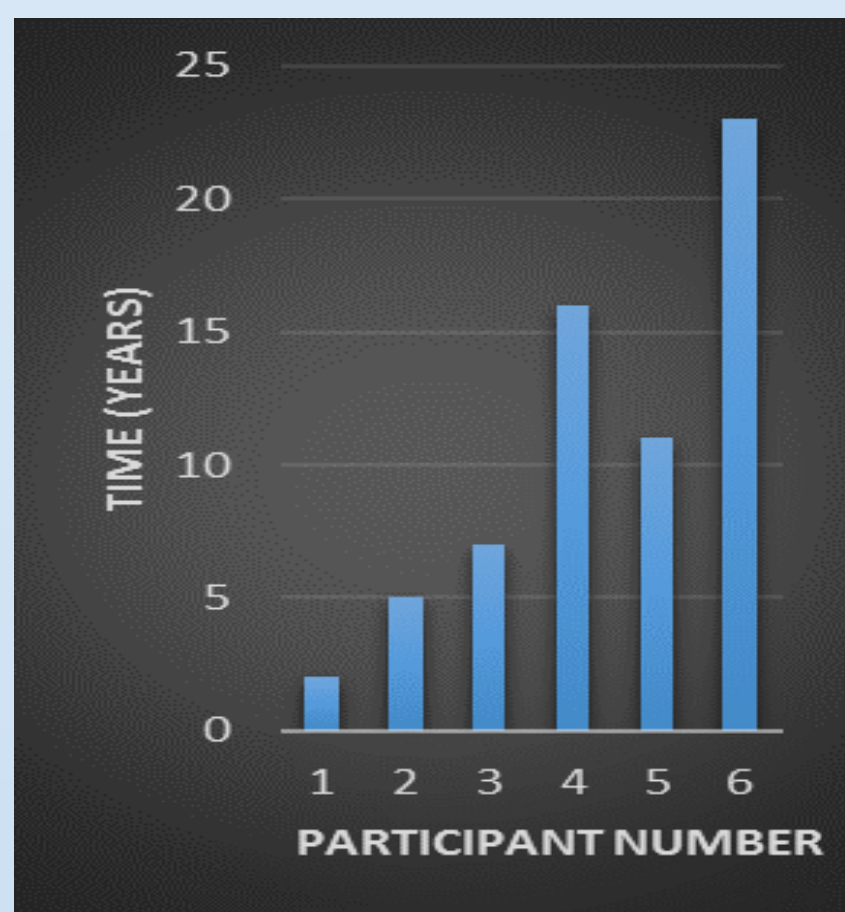
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# FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO REGISTERED VETERINARY NURSES DECIDING TO LEAVE THE VETERINARY PROFESSION IN THE UK

J. Godbehere and S. Vivian\*

**INTRODUCTION** In 2017, the majority of RVNs in the United Kingdom were aged between 26 and 35 (RCVS, 2017). The high number of RVNs leaving the profession has created a shortage across the UK, leading to an increase of untrained, unregulated and unregistered support staff taking on some responsibilities of an RVN in practices (Waters, 2017; Johnson, 2017; Coats, 2015).

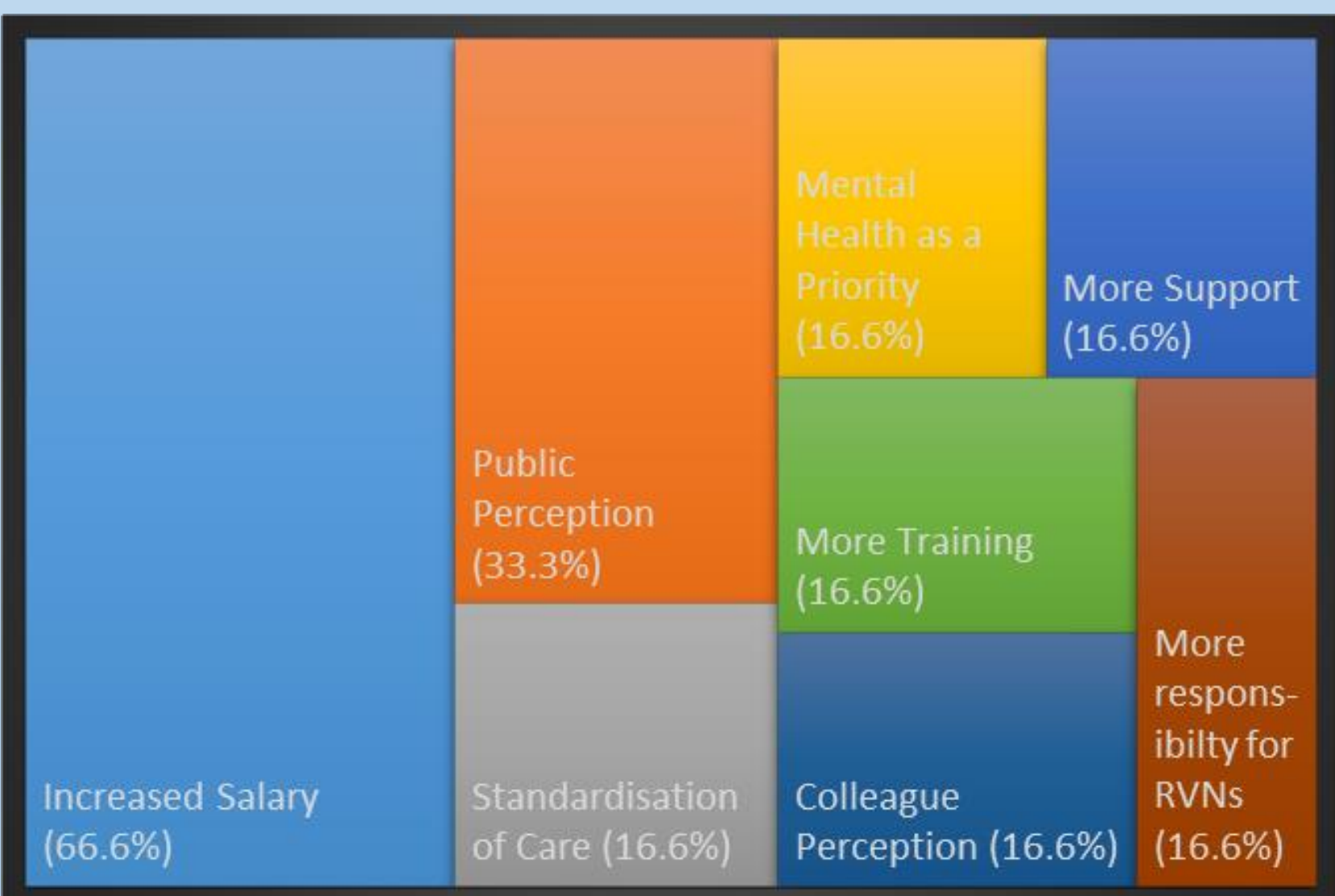
Research into the wellbeing of veterinary professionals has shown that RVNs face many of the same risk-factors for occupational stress as VSs (Deacon & Brough, 2017; Macdonald, 2014). Research undertaken around the subject of veterinary wellbeing suggests that there are many different factors that contribute to occupational stress in RVNs, with many stating reasons including fear of professional mistakes, financial circumstance, time management within the working day, working relationships and management issues (Bedford and Anscombe-skirrow, 2018; Hunt, 2018; Johnson, 2017; Hunt, 2017; Deacon and Brough, 2017; Bonnema, 2017; Coats, 2015; Macdonald, 2014; Ackerley, 2014).



*"We've been told no you're not doing that because clients pay for it and they want it to be done very well"*

**CONCLUSIONS** Occupation stress was not the main reason given for RVNs leaving the professional, however, it does still need to be taken into consideration because stress can be exacerbated by factors such as those identified as common themes in this study.

The multitude of themes identified from all participant responses leads to the idea that there are many factors that could be improved or changed in order to increase the wellbeing of RVNs within their role in practice. There is unfortunately still distance to be travelled to ensure RVNs feel valued and rewarded in their roles.



Suggested areas of improvement for RVN retention

*"I'd love to [go back], absolutely love to if I won the lottery"*

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- ❖ To identify whether the majority of interviewed RVN's feel that they are utilised professionally;
- ❖ To identify common themes that lead to RVN's leaving the profession;
- ❖ To establish whether the resources provided (Mind Matters, Vet Helpline) are being utilised by RVN's who are considering leaving the profession.

*"I see some RVN's used to their full potential...the skills and roles we can fill are actually phenomenal, and I've seen others that barely use their RVN's for anything other than cleaners"*

**METHOD** Telephone interviews, lasting an average of ten minutes, were conducted over a one month period in 2019. These interviews were audio recorded to enable them to be transcribed at a later date. Six candidates were selected using a convenience sampling method once it was established that the participants fit the criteria of previously being RVNs and that they considered themselves to have left the profession. Social media was used to initially contact the participants and then determine their eligibility. An in-depth guide was followed to ensure that all questions were covered throughout each interview. The qualitative data collected was then thematically analysed to identify common themes that were highlighted from the interviews.

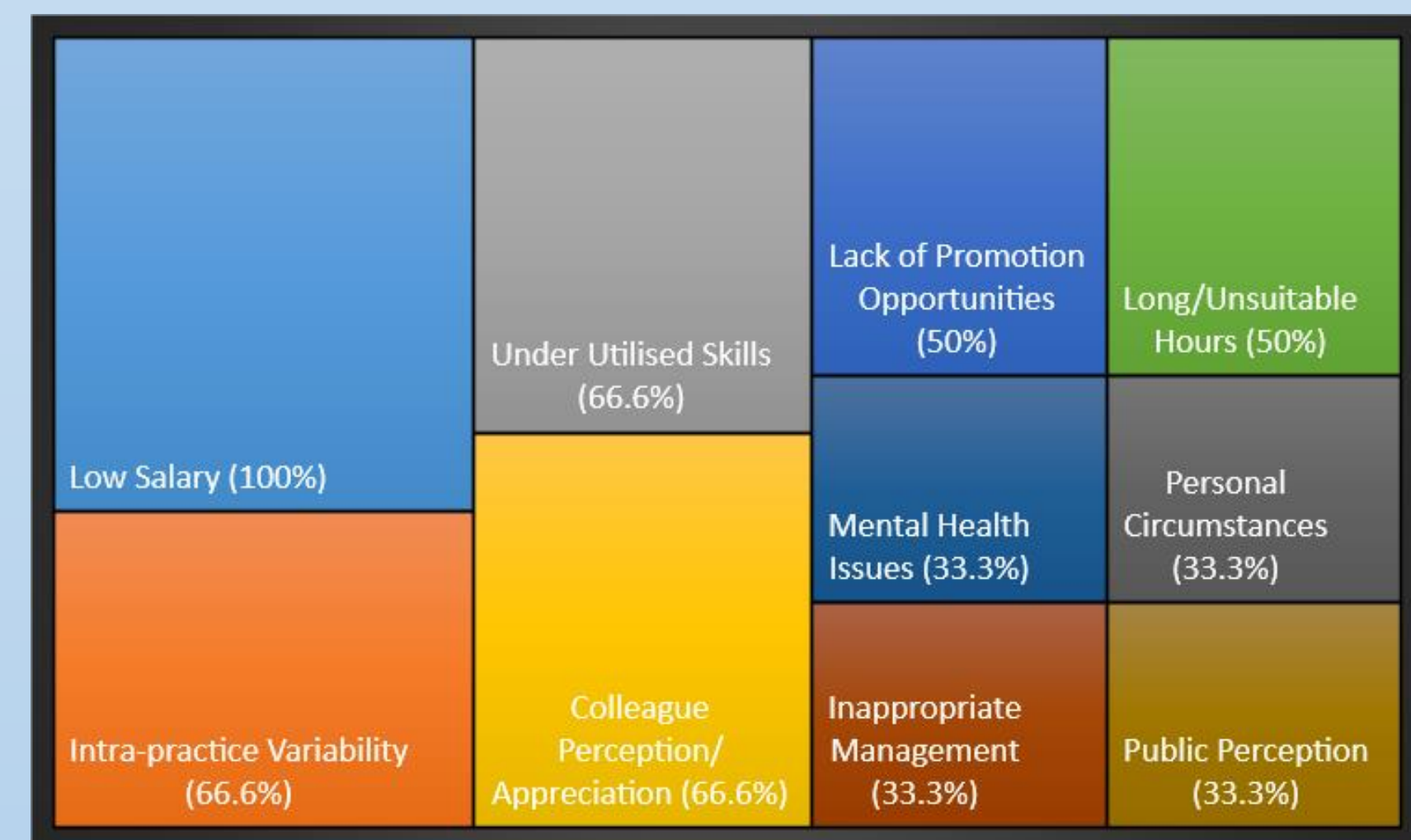


**RESULTS** 100% of the participants stated that the low salary was a contributing factor to them leaving the profession. 66% stated that under utilisation of their skill set was also a factor. Whilst 50% said that the hours also contributed to them changing their career path.

50% of participants said that they knew about the Mind Matters and Vet Helpline resources, however, they felt support was lacking in practice. Only 1 participant had felt the need to use the publicised resources.

*"Some practices I think they really focus on it and they did lots of really brilliant things, and others I think tried to pretend that mental health didn't exist"*

*"There's not many experienced nurses still in the role...I think a lot of it down to the salary"*



Reasons given by respondents for leaving the profession

*"My last job they certainly thought that my problems were just down to my personal problems, not anything that was going on in the workplace and yeah there was very little support to be honest"*

*"I enjoyed the job, really loved it I loved caring for the animals, I loved dealing with the clients"*

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