

University of Prince Edward Island

Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
Summary of Dissertation

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of the Requirements for the

DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Veterinary students' perspectives of their relationship with animals used in veterinary education

This thesis explored the perspectives of veterinary students regarding their interactions with animals used for teaching. I aimed to understand how the quality of life of animals used for teaching affected students' emotional well-being and learning, and conversely, how students' emotional well-being influenced the care they may provide for animals. The literature review in Chapter 1 indicated that veterinary students have a high level of acceptance of using animals for educational purposes; however, veterinary education may negatively shift their attitudes and empathy towards animals. Chapter 2 described original research that utilized qualitative methods to conduct focus groups and interviews of 4th-year veterinary students (n = 43) at two Canadian veterinary institutions. Four key themes were identified, including 1) experiences of moral distress from ethical and moral conflicts in veterinary education, 2) the connection between students' emotional well-being and animal welfare, 3) the impact of teaching approaches on students' emotions, and 4) students' perspectives on re-defining the role of animals and alternatives in veterinary education. Participants described particularly benefitting from performing purposeful procedures on non-institutionally owned animals, such as shelter animals, which positively influenced their learning experiences. However, the generalizability to a broader population of veterinary students is limited due to the study's focus on a single cohort and the use of qualitative methodologies. Future research should further explore how moral distress is experienced in veterinary students and, given the increasing representation of women in the profession, the impact of gender identity on their experiences during veterinary education. Overall, this thesis emphasizes the need for veterinary education to adopt more compassionate practices that prioritize both student well-being and animal welfare, fostering a more ethical veterinary culture.

Publications

Khoddami, S., Ritter, C., Brunt, M. W., Ventura, B. A., Renaud, D. L., Proudfoot, K. L. (2024). “I felt like a lesser veterinarian”: Veterinary students’ perspectives on their relationship with animals used in veterinary education. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Association*. (In-review).

Khoddami, S., Kiser, M. C., & Moody, C. M. (2024). US and Canadian cat caregiver’s ratings of cat-cat interactions: A video-based survey. *Journal of Animal Welfare*. (Forthcoming/inpress).

Khoddami, S., Kiser, M. C., & Moody, C. M. (2023). Why can't we be friends? Exploring factors associated with cat owners' perceptions of the cat-cat relationship in two-cat households. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 10, 1128757.

Presentations

*indicates presenters.

Khoddami, S.*, Ritter, C., Brunt, M. W., Ventura, B. A., Renaud, D. L., Proudfoot, K. L. (2024). “I felt like a lesser veterinarian”: Veterinary students’ perspectives on their relationship with animals used in veterinary education. Canadian Emerging Veterinary Scholars Summit, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Oral presentation.

Khoddami, S.*, Ritter, C., Brunt, M. W., Ventura, B. A., Renaud, D. L., Proudfoot, K. L. (2024). Veterinary student perceptions of the relationship between their well-being and the welfare of animals used for teaching. 33rd International Society for Anthrozoology Conference, Hartpury, Gloucester, UK. Oral presentation.

Khoddami, S.*, Ritter, C., Brunt, M. W., Ventura, B. A., Renaud, D. L., Proudfoot, K. L. (2024). The quality of life of animals used in veterinary education: perspectives of 4th year veterinary students. 57th Congress of The International Society for Applied Ethology Conference, Curitiba, Brazil. Virtual Poster presentation.

Khoddami, S.*, Ross, M.*, Vernick, J.*, Proudfoot, K.*, (2024). Animal welfare research presented by the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre. Humane Canada’s Summit for Animals. Halifax, Canada. Oral presentation.

Khoddami, S.*, Roussac, A.* (2024). What is animal welfare? Dr. Tim Ogilvie Atlantic Veterinary College Vet Camp. Charlottetown, Canada. Participants: 50

Proudfoot, K. L.*, Khoddami, S.* (2024). Navigating a healthy supervisor-student relationship. Research Seminar Series. Atlantic Veterinary College, Charlottetown, Canada. Participants: 25

Khoddami, S.* (2024). Introduction to Qualitative Research. 'Epi on the Island' Summer Course. Centre for Veterinary Epidemiological Research, University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Canada. Participants: 12

Khoddami, S.*, & Proudfoot, K.* (2023). What is animal welfare? Dr. Tim Ogilvie Atlantic Veterinary College Vet Camp. Charlottetown, Canada. Participants: 25

Biographical Data

Born in Esfahan, Iran

Awards

2022 Canada Graduate Scholarship-Master’s – SSHRC Agency

2024 Colleen MacDougall Graduate Student Travel Awards, University of Prince Edward Island

2024 Canadian Emerging Veterinary Scholars Summit Travel & Attendance Grant, University of Calgary