

Review of: "Factors Influencing Smallholder Farmers' Preference for Veterinary Services Providers in Zimbabwe"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I offer my congratulation on this work. Mainstreaming social aspect into the performance of agriculture is of paramount importance to set the sectors on sustainable pathways. I particularly appreciated the approach to analyze livestock sector in the context of smallholders. The key strength of the study is the rigorous data collection, including reality checks with households.

Please find below minor observations related to the structure, the presentation of the results, and the robustness of the model. The review also includes minor comments on the style and formatting.

Introduction chapter:

Optional comment: I would recommend combining the introduction with the literature review, including summaries of the international evidence. This could help emphasize and support the selection of the topic. The following introduction formula is particularly useful to structure the article: 1. rationale and problem statement, 2. research question, 3. ancestors of the research, 4. contribution to the science, 5. roadmap of the article. The current structure of the introduction is not far from this formula, but some reshuffling could help readers understand the motivation and the article.

The paragraphs "The objectives of this study are two-fold:...." and "By examine the factors influencing" are repetitive. Merging them would make a more concise flow of text.

Background to the problem chapter:

If possible, please include a more factual and figure-backed overview of the contribution of livestock sector to the livelihood in Zimbabwe. Statistical information about the share in GDP, contribution to employment etc. would properly demonstrate the importance of the sector, in particular in the context of livelihood development.

I am not sure whether the terminology "information asymmetry" is correctly used in the last paragraph. I would rather call it simply "false information", but I might have misunderstood the sentence. Please decide whichever you find most appropriate.

Materials and methods chapter:

Summary statistics of the variables would largely support the understanding of the collected data and data quality. Summary statistics in table format also helps understand whether the database is suitable for probit regression. The

description of the variables, including the “Demographic data and resources” or “Livelihoods” can make a part of this chapter, as this sort of information is used to characterize the analysis.

Results chapter:

Please differentiate the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis. A better structured presentation of results could help readers understand the cause-effect relationships and the relevance of different results. I recommend starting with the results of the quantitative analysis in a table format. Please avoid copying the outputs from the statistical software, and rather, organize the relevant results in a table. The write-up and discussion of the results of the quantitative analysis can be supported with the results of the qualitative methods (e.g. focus-group discussion) then.

Selecting the reference level of significance would be important to improve the robustness of results. I suggest that you use $\leq 5\%$ as reference level and omit the analysis of variables at 10%.

While the probit model seems to be robust and has a sufficient explanatory power, I would suggest including at least one more alternative model specification to prove the validity of results (i.e. non-parametric models).

Style and formatting

The word ‘smallholder’ includes the meaning of ‘farmers’, therefore, I suggest removing the duplications such as ‘smallholder farmers’.

Please use present tense consistently in the document, e.g. “The objectives of this study are two-fold” and “The survey questionnaire ~~will~~ collect information...”.

The reference “DVS, 2022” in the chapter “Background to the problem” does not appear in the bibliography. Also, please spell out the word when it first appears in the text.

The results in some cases are not presented in an identical manner. For example, the “repeat treatment.” and “Age:” are separated as individually explained variables. This might disrupt the style and flow of text.

I am happy to support the authors with further explanation if required.