

Original Research Article

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## General Dog Management Practices Followed and Constraints Faced by Pet Owners in Chennai - An Empirical Study

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### ABSTRACT

An empirical study was carried out in Chennai to explore the general dog management practices followed and constraints faced by pet parents. The data was collected using pre tested interview schedule among randomly selected 118 pet owners in Chennai. The study reflected that majority of the dog owners in Chennai were belonging to young age group (68.64 %), male (72.03 %), finished collegiate education (72.03 %), belonging to nuclear type family (51.69 %) and categorized under upper middle income group (44.92 %). Majority of the pet parents were having experience in dog rearing and owned only one dog (71.19%) as a pet in their house. Almost three fourth (74.58%) of the pet owners in the study area, reared exotic breed of dog and eighty six percent of the dog owners expressed that they reared pet as a passion. Majority of the pet owners (66.1%) spent more than three hours of their time daily with pet dog which portrays the bond of dog owners towards their pets. Majority of the dog owners (57.63 %) kept their pet inside the house only and a considerable number of the respondents (46.61 %) fed non vegetarian food to their pets. Garret ranking technique was used to rank the constraints expressed by the dog owners. As per Garret mean score, the high cost of treatment was ranked first constraint, followed by unawareness on importance of vaccination. Hitherto, it is the right time to focus on capacity building programs on scientific management of pet animals for the benefit of pet parents.

#### Keywords

Dog management practices, Constraints, Time, Food, Treatment

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### Introduction

History shows that the most suitable animals for domestication are those that naturally live in groups with a hierarchical social structure (Mathialagan *et al.*, 2015). This is more apt for canine species, as dogs were first animal domesticated by human being. From the nomadic period to digital era, dog has been reared as the best companion animal by man

all over the world (Selby *et al.*, 1981). Over the period of time, the dog management has also undergone constant changes. The pet parents were ready to spent nominal money for their pet management and health. Special care and kennel facilities are being provided to pets by its owners (Vijayakumar *et al.*, 2006). There are very few studies on pet management, pet and owner bondage and the constraints faced by pet parents. The study on

pet management practices and constraints faced by pet owners will throw light on improving health services for pets. It is high time to impart need based training on scientific rearing of dogs among pet owners (Sakshi *et al.*, 2017). A deep understanding on pet management adopted by pet owners will help the public health experts to create awareness on zoonotic diseases and its control among common public. With this backdrop, the present study was designed to analyze the general management practices, followed and constraints faced by pet owners in Chennai.

## **Materials and Methods**

The study was conducted among randomly selected 118 respondents owning dogs in Chennai, Tamilnadu. A pre tested interview schedule was used to collect data such as socio economic profile of the pet owners, number of pets reared, gender of the pet, number of hours spent with pet, feeding pattern, method of record keeping and constraints faced in pet management were recorded. The frequency and percentage tables were prepared to enumerate the results. Garret ranking technique was used to rank the constraints enlisted by the dog owners (Table 1-).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Socio economic profile of the dog owners in Chennai**

The socio economic profile of the dog owners in Chennai were collected and presented in table 1. It could be observed from table 1 that majority of the dog owners in Chennai were belonging to young age group (68.64 %), male (72.03 %) and finished collegiate education (72.03 %). This result is in line with the study of Balan (2015) who revealed that majority of dog owners in Chennai were belonging to 19-35 years of age group, male

and did graduation. Ameh *et al.*, (2014), Awuni *et al.*, (2019) and Baines *et al.*, (2020), stated in their studies that majority of the pets were owned by male.

Majority of the respondents (51.69 %) were belonging to nuclear type family which shows that pet acts as a good companion for these owners. The study revealed that nearly half of the pet owners were categorized under upper middle income group (44.92 %) followed by lower middle income group (41.53%). This is not in line with the study of Balan (2015) who disclosed that majority of the pet owners in chennai were belonging to low income group. Sawaimul *et al.*, (2009), in his study stated that majority of the pet parents in Maharashtra were belonging to higher income group. Nearly two third of the dog owners were having experience in dog rearing. Ameh *et al.*, (2014) stated that nearly three fourth of the pet owners in Nigeria had more than six years of experience in dog rearing.

### **Pet owner companionship in Chennai**

#### **No. of dogs reared**

Majority of the dog owners (71.19%) owned only one dog as a pet in their house. Nearly twenty nine per cent of the pet owners owned two or more than two pet dogs. Owning more than one pet dog revealed their love and passion towards pet rearing. Rosanna (MORE TH>N Future of Pet Ownership Report,2018), stated that, on an average, dog owners own one dog and sixteen percent of the pet owners owned two or more dogs respectively in the United Kingdom. Ameh *et al.*, (2014), disclosed that majority of the dog owners owned two or more dogs in Nigeria.

#### **Breed of the dog**

Almost three fourth per cent (74.58%) of the pet owners in the study area, reared exotic

breed of dog and this reflect the priority of dog owners towards these breeds. One fourth of the pet parents owned non descriptive breed of dog. This is in line with the findings of Ramyasri, (2019). Balan *et al.*, (2016), in his research work revealed that dogs with soft/ straight coat and large sized was mostly preferred in Chennai.

### **Gender of dog reared**

Majority of the dog owners (58.47 %) reared male dog while 41.53 per cent of the owners owned female pet dogs. This is in close agreement with Hadge *et al.*, (2009<sub>b</sub>), who reported that majority of pet parents in Akola city of Vidarbha region preferred young male dog.

### **Purpose of rearing**

Eighty six percent of the dog owners expressed that they reared pet as a passion. Only nine percent of the pet owners reared pet as a companion in old age. Meager number of pet parents stated that the purposes of dog rearing were stress relieving and safeguarding the house. This is in close agreement with Hadge *et al.*, (2009<sub>a</sub>), who observed that the main purpose of dog keeping in Akola city was hobby and very less for protection. Balan *et al.*, (2016), in his study reported that mostly companion type of dogs was preferred by pet owners in Chennai. Majority of the pet owners in Maharashtra reared dogs as hobby and for protection (Sawaimul *et al.*, 2009).

### **Age at acquisition**

Nearly three fourth of the respondents stated that the age of their dogs at acquisition was 1-2 months old. The number of pet parents who purchased 3-6 months old and more than six months old dogs were 13.56 per cent and 5.08 per cent respectively. Only nine percent of the dogs were bred by owner themselves.

### **Way of acquisition**

Nearly sixty per cent of the pet parents acquired their pet from friends and others. The number of pet owners who acquired their dogs from breeder was 39.83 per cent. Hadge *et al.*, (2009<sub>b</sub>), observed that none of the dog was pedigreed, registered and imported one in Akola city of Vidarbha region.

### **Where the dog is kept**

Majority of the dog owners (57.63 %) kept their pet inside the house only, while meager number of pet parents (7.63%) kept their dog only outside. As more number of dog owners kept their pet inside their house, it is essential to create awareness among pet parents about zoonotic diseases and its preventive measures. Nearly one third of the respondents kept their pet dog both in and outdoor. This is contradict that about half the dog owners kept their pets in separate house in Akola city of Vidarbha region (Hadge *et al.*, 2009<sub>b</sub>).

### **Time spent with dog**

Majority of the pet owners (66.1%) spent more than three hours of their time daily with pet dog which portrays the bond of dog owners towards their pets. Around thirty per cent of the pet owners spent 1-3 hour time with their dog per day. Less than five per cent of the respondents spared less than one hour time daily for their pets. As the pet owners likes to spend more time with pets, awareness on vaccination in dogs especially anti rabies vaccination schedule needs to be disseminated among dog owners. Bharathy (2017), stated that a greater proportion of the dog bites in humans at Chennai were provoked from owned pet dogs with exposures being very minor (scratch) in majority of cases which may not need post bite immunization at all. There were knowledge and attitude gaps

among individuals living in urban slums regarding rabies prevention and control (Herbert *et al.*, 2012).

**Source of food**

The proportion of pet owners who fed homemade feed and both commercial and homemade food to their pets was 48.31 per

cent respectively. Only meager per cent of the pet owners fed solely commercial food to their dogs. This is in close agreement with Seneviratne *et al.*, (2016), who reported that forty two per cent of pet dogs in Sri Lanka were fed with homemade food only and 40 per cent of dogs were fed a mixture of both commercial and homemade food.

**Table.1** Socio economic profile of the dog owners in Chennai

N=118

Socio economic profile of the dog owners	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age of the pet owner</b>		
Young (< 35 years )	81	68.64
Middle (35 – 50 years)	25	21.19
Old (>50 years)	12	10.17
<b>Gender of the pet owner</b>		
Female	33	27.97
Male	85	72.03
<b>Education status</b>		
Up to School education	33	27.97
Collegiate education	85	72.03
<b>Family type</b>		
Nuclear	61	51.69
Joint	57	48.31
<b>Annual income</b>		
Lower income	10	8.47
Lower middle income	49	41.53
Upper middle income	53	44.92
Higher income	6	5.08
<b>Extent of Experience in dog rearing</b>		
Experienced	78	66.10
No	40	33.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table.2** Number of dogs reared by pet parents

N=118

Sl.no.	Number of dogs reared	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	One	84	71.19
2.	Two	18	15.25
3.	>2	16	13.56
	<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table.3** Number of dogs reared by pet parents

N=118

Sl.no.	Breed	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Exotic	88	74.58
2.	Non Descriptive	30	25.42
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.4** Gender of dogs

N=118

Sl.no.	Gender of dog	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Male	69	58.47
2.	Female	49	41.53
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.5** Purpose of rearing dogs

N=118

Sl.no.	Purpose of rearing	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Passion	102	86.44
2.	Stress reliever	4	3.39
3.	Companion in old age	11	9.32
4.	Security purpose	1	0.85
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.6** Dogs age at acquisition

N=118

Sl.no.	Dogs age at acquisition	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Bred by owner	11	9.32
2.	1-2 months	85	72.03
3.	3-6 months	16	13.56
4.	> 6 months	6	5.08
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.7** Way of acquisition

N=118

Sl.no.	Way of acquisition	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	From breeder	47	39.83
2.	From friends	67	56.78
3.	Others	4	3.39
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.8** Where the dog is kept

N=118

Sl.no.	Where the dog is kept	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Inside the house	68	57.63
2.	Outside the house	9	7.63
3.	Both in inside and outside the house	41	34.75
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.9** Time spent with pet per day

N=118

Sl.no.	Where the dog is kept	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Inside the house	68	57.63
2.	Outside the house	9	7.63
3.	Both in inside and outside the house	41	34.75
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.10** Source of food

N=118

Sl.no.	Source of food	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Commercial feed	4	3.39
2.	Home made	57	48.31
3.	Both	57	48.31
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.11** Feeding pattern

N=118

Sl.no.	Feeding pattern	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Vegetarian	13	11.02
2.	Non vegetarian	55	46.61
3.	Both	50	42.37
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.12** Source of food

N=118

Sl.no.	Record keeping	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Yes	76	64.41
2.	No	42	35.59
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.13** Grooming hair and trimming nails

N=118

Sl.no.	Grooming hair and trimming nails	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Yes	55	46.61
2.	No	63	53.39
	Total	118	100.00

**Table.14** Constraints faced by pet owners in Chennai

Constraints of pet owners	Garrett's mean score	Rank
High cost of treatment	64.60	I
Unawareness on importance of vaccination	60.36	II
Unawareness on breeding management	51.05	III
Unawareness on importance of deworming	50.87	IV
Distant location of public veterinary hospital/ centre	49.25	V
Insufficient space to house dogs	49.05	VI
Unawareness on insurance coverage for dogs	48.83	VII
Lack of capacity building on scientific rearing of dogs	48.18	VIII
Difficult to give basic trainings to dogs	47.96	IX
Excessive shedding of hairs	47.26	X
High incidence of diseases	44.37	XI
Lack of family members support in pet management	42.38	XII

### Feeding pattern

A considerable number of the respondents (46.61 %) fed non vegetarian food to their pets. Around forty two percent of the pet parents fed both vegetarian and non vegetarian food to their dogs. The number of pet owners who reared their pets solely on vegetarian diet was 11.02 per cent. This is not in line with Hadge *et al.*, (2009<sub>b</sub>), who stated that 89 per cent of pet owners in Akola city of Vidarbha region fed both vegetarian and non vegetarian food to their dogs.

### Record keeping

Nearly two third (64.41 %) of the dog owners maintained records regarding the treatment details of their pets. The number of pet owners who didn't have records on their dogs was 35.59 per cent. Among the 56 health seeking animal owners at University of Ibadan, Nigeria, only 42.9 per cent kept treatment or vaccination record (Awosanya and Akande, 2015).

### Grooming hair and trimming nails

Majority of the dog owners (53.39 %) didn't groomed hair and trimmed nails of their pets.

The number of pet owners who had the practice of grooming hair and trimming nails in their pets was 46.61 per cent. Though majority of the pet owners spent more time with their pets, the awareness on importance of grooming and trimming nails is less. This is not in agreement with Ramyasri (2019), who reported that majority of the dog owners in Hyderabad practiced grooming and only 15 per cent of the owners never practiced grooming in their pets.

### Constraints faced by pet owners in Chennai

The constraints faced by pet owners in Chennai were given in the table 14. Garret ranking technique was applied to rank the constraints expressed by the pet owners on dog management in Chennai. As per Garret mean score, the high cost of treatment was ranked first, followed by unawareness on importance of vaccination, unawareness on breeding management and unawareness on importance of deworming the pets. Sakshi *et al.*, (2017), observed that lack of training on scientific rearing of dogs as first and foremost of dog owners in Bangalore. The distant location of public veterinary hospital/centre was perceived as fifth constraint by pet

parents of Chennai in the present study. This is in line with the findings of Ramyasri (2019), who indicated that 90 percent of the pet owners in Hyderabad were facing problem due to distant location of veterinary hospital and 20 per cent of the owners expressed that non availability of vet as a constraint. The pet owners felt that insufficient space to house dogs as sixth constraint. Unawareness on insurance coverage for dogs and lack of capacity building on scientific rearing of dogs were occupied seventh and eight ranks respectively. The dog owners find difficulty to give basic trainings to dogs and it was given ninth rank, followed by excessive shedding of hairs in dogs, high incidence of diseases and lack of family members support in pet management were ranked as tenth, eleventh and twelfth constraints respectively. This may be due to the fact that the pet owners are more passionate about their pets and hence they are not worrying about the shedding of hairs. Further, the family members are always extending a helping hand in managing the pet.

In conclusion there is an increasing pet ownership in the metropolitan cities like Chennai due to the changing life style which demands more scientific management of pets which would benefit both the pet and pet owners. The present study enumerates the strength and lacunae in managing pets and also exemplified the constraints faced by the pet owners in managing their pets. This necessitates a proper assistance from the scientists / intellects in the form of capacity building programs to the pet owners and also to take efforts to remove the constraints in pet management.

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