

Pet ownership patterns in Dimapur- Economic insights into popular pets & decision drivers

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Abstract: This study investigates the factors influencing pet ownership decisions and the economic impact of pet ownership on household expenditure in Dimapur. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, primary data were collected via an online survey complemented by secondary data from various literature. The study reveals that younger individuals, particularly those aged 21-23, are more likely to own pets, with previous ownership experiences significantly influencing current decisions. Companionship, emotional support, and security emerge as the primary motivations for pet ownership. Financially, pet ownership requires a substantial investment. Although many households budget for these costs, notable portions do not, leading to financial strain. Despite these economic considerations, pet ownership is associated with positive mental and emotional well-being, including increased happiness and reduced stress among respondents. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of pet ownership and its economic implications. This study underscores the importance of responsible pet care, financial preparedness, and support networks within pet-owning communities, providing valuable insights for pet owners, policymakers and animal welfare organizations.

Keywords: pet ownership, adoption, household well-being, mental health, social well-being, responsible pet ownership.

Introduction

Pet ownership, the act of keeping animals as part of the household, often involves viewing pets as valued family members (Walsh, 2009). It influences various aspects of household life, including social, economic, and health dimensions (Turner, 2005).

Pets provide numerous benefits, including improved physical and mental health through companionship and social support. Studies have shown that human-animal interactions can reduce blood pressure, enhance cardiovascular health, and alleviate loneliness (Matchock, 2015; Stefanini et al., 2015; Harper et al., 2015; Hui Gan et al., 2020).

Additionally, pets contribute to community-building and socialization, particularly in

rural settings. Dog ownership, for instance, is more common in households with an adult female (Westgarth et al., 2007], while individuals living alone are less likely to own pets (Friedmann et al., 2020].

Globally, more than half of households own pets, with dogs being the most common at 33%, followed by cats (23%) and fish (12%) (GFK, 2016]. However, pet ownership also presents financial burdens, including costs for food, healthcare, and potential risks such as injuries and zoonotic diseases (Cherniack & Cherniack, 2014]. Despite these challenges, the mental and physical health benefits often outweigh the drawbacks (Chan, 2017].

Rationale of the study

Examining pet ownership patterns provides a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic and cultural dynamics within the community, helping to identify areas needing community support and resource allocation for communal flourishing.

Pet ownership significantly impacts household economics, with costs related to food, healthcare, and maintenance. Analyzing these financial aspects highlights potential areas for financial assistance, improving the economic well-being of families in the society.

Pets also enhance physical and mental health, strengthen social bonds, and provide companionship. Assessing these benefits in Dimapur Town, the study intend to provide information on public health initiatives and community interventions aimed at improving overall well-being.

Moreover, pet ownership reflects cultural values and societal trends. Exploring the reasons behind pet ownership choices reveals insights into the cultural and social dynamics of village life, enriching the understanding of Dimapur's community ethos.

Significance of the study

This research paper examines the dynamics of pet ownership in Dimapur, aiming to understand its multifaceted impact on the community. By analyzing pet ownership patterns, we gain insights into the socio-economic landscape and cultural ethos of the community.

Understanding the economic implications of pet ownership is essential for addressing financial strains on households. This exploration aims to identify ways to alleviate these burdens and promote economic stability through targeted interventions.

Insights from this study can inform health initiatives that enhance community well-being. By recognizing the positive effects of pet companionship on physical and mental health, we can promote healthier lifestyles and stronger social connections.

Additionally, exploring the cultural dimensions of pet ownership reveals the traditions and values that shape community identity. Acknowledging the cultural significance of pets fosters a deeper sense of belonging and cohesion among community members.

Objectives

- i. To investigate factors influencing pet ownership decisions.
- ii. To examine the economic impact of pet ownership on household expenditure.

Literature Review

Research highlights the complex relationship between pet ownership, well-being, and economic considerations. Puskey and Coy (2020) found that alignment between pet preferences and ownership may influence mental health, but their findings were inconclusive, emphasizing the need to explore economic factors further. Schwarz, Troyer, and Walker (2007) identified pets as necessities for many families, with gender differences influencing pet-related spending. They suggest that economic choices impact ownership decisions, potentially intersecting with psychological factors.

Obradović et al. (2021) underscored the emotional and physical benefits of pets for older adults while acknowledging the financial burdens and safety risks associated with ownership. Similarly, Headey and Grabka (2003) demonstrated that long-term pet ownership may reduce healthcare expenses, supporting the idea of pets providing both economic and emotional benefits.

Kirk (2019) examined psychological ownership and its impact on the perceived economic value of pets, while Holland (2019) found that demographic factors such as age, income, and education influence pet acquisition decisions. Hornbrook (2014) reinforced the notion that pet ownership entails both emotional fulfillment and financial commitment.

Additionally, McMillan (2017) emphasized the importance of responsible breeding and rearing to prevent behavioral issues that could lead to higher financial costs. This shows how economic and emotional factors are deeply intertwined in the context of pet ownership.

Research Gaps

Further investigation is needed on how aligning pet preferences influences economic decisions in pet ownership, as different pets entail varying costs for food, healthcare, and maintenance. Understanding this link can help pet owners make informed financial choices and assist policymakers in tailoring support programs to meet specific needs based on pet preferences.

Additionally, the varying financial implications of pet ownership across demographic groups, such as age, income, family structure, and location, should be explored. This understanding is essential for developing effective support and educational programs that address the unique financial challenges faced by different segments,

ensuring all pet owners have access to necessary resources.

Lastly, research should examine the time invested in pet ownership and how spending habits evolve over time. Since pet ownership requires significant time and financial resources for activities like feeding, grooming, and veterinary care, understanding these commitments will help potential pet owners better prepare for their responsibilities.

Study Design & Approach

Research Questions

1. Does pet ownership have a positive or negative impact on household economic well-being?
2. Does pet ownership enhance or diminish social well-being and community engagement?
3. Does pet ownership contribute positively or negatively to the physical and mental health of individuals?

Methodology

Data collection : The study is both descriptive and analytical, employing a mixed-methods approach. Primary data were collected via a survey conducted in February 2023, using questionnaires distributed through Google Forms. Secondary data were sourced from reputed literature, including books, journals, websites, and articles. These sources provided essential context and support for the research findings. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies enabled a comprehensive analysis of the data collected.

Sampling : The questionnaire was distributed online to the residents of Dimapur. A total of 109 participants responded, utilizing a random sampling method.

Analysis, findings & discussions

The research study reveals significant insights into the patterns, motivations, financial implications, and well-being associated with pet ownership. The demographic analysis shows that young adults aged 21-26 represent the highest proportion of pet owners, accounting for 56.7% of the respondents. Female respondents are slightly more prevalent (54.1%) than males (45.9%), suggesting potential gender-based differences in pet ownership patterns. Additionally, most respondents are unemployed or students (64.2%), reflecting limited income but high engagement in pet ownership.

A notable 99% of respondents have owned pets at some point, indicating a strong cultural and emotional value attached to pets. Dogs are the most popular choice, with 51.5% of respondents having owned them, followed by cats (34.8%). Presently, 89% of respondents own pets, with 60% owning dogs and 30.6% owning cats. Most respondents (66.9%) own 1-2 pets, while others manage higher numbers. Pet ownership duration varies, with 31.9% owning pets for over 10 years, suggesting a deep commitment to their animals.

The primary motivations for pet ownership include companionship (43.2%) and emotional support (23.8%), emphasizing the emotional and psychological benefits of having pets. Affordability plays a crucial role for 55.2% of respondents, with 35.6% finding it somewhat important. However, a minority (9.1%) prioritize the emotional benefits of pet ownership over financial considerations.

Monthly expenses related to pet care reveal varied spending patterns. Pet food expenses typically range between 1,000 to 1,500 INR (28.7%). Veterinary care is affordable for most, with 73.9% spending between 500-1,000 INR monthly. Approximately 51.9% of respondents reported making significant pet-related purchases within the past year. In comparison, 48.1% did not, indicating differing priorities and financial capabilities. For most respondents (53.6%), pet-related expenses are lower than other household costs, though 20.4% find them somewhat higher, indicating varied financial impacts.

Pet ownership is overwhelmingly considered positive by respondents, with 99% reporting beneficial impacts, particularly in enhancing happiness (52.6%) and reducing stress (37%). Although 33.5% of respondents report experiencing financial strain from pet-related expenses, 82.6% believe that pet ownership is worth the investment. This highlights a strong attachment to pets despite financial challenges.

Financial management and planning are essential aspects of responsible pet ownership. The study shows that 56.6% of respondents plan their household budgets with pet-related expenses in mind. Among these, 66% place moderate priority on pet expenses, while 23.2% assign high priority and 10.8% low priority. Long-term financial implications are a concern for 39.6% of respondents, while 60.4% feel confident in their financial stability. For unexpected expenses, 43% rely on savings, 39.7% seek assistance from family and friends, and 10.3% turn to other methods, including credit cards or loans.

Regarding breeding and household dynamics, only 16.3% of respondents engage in breeding and selling baby pets, with most earning between 20,000 to 50,000 INR annually. Pet approval within households is generally high (85%), though 33.3% report some family members considering pets a nuisance. The acquisition of pets primarily occurs through breeders (45.5%), though significant numbers adopt from shelters (25%) or rescue stray animals (16.1%).

Key findings indicate that factors influencing pet ownership include age, gender, occupation, and previous experience with pets. Young adults are the most frequent pet owners, with previous pet ownership experiences positively influencing ongoing attachment. Emotional motivations such as companionship and emotional support are strong drivers, with financial considerations playing a secondary but significant role.

The economic impact of pet ownership is evident through monthly expenses on food and healthcare, with an average expenditure range of ₹1000-₹2000. Budgeting practices differ among respondents, with 56.6% actively budgeting for pet-related expenses, while

43.4% do not, leading to potential financial strain. Additionally, 39.7% of respondents rely on external support for emergency expenses, highlighting inadequate preparedness. The overall impact of pet ownership on well-being is positive, with most respondents reporting enhanced happiness and reduced stress. However, long-term financial implications are underestimated by 60.4% of respondents, suggesting a need for better planning and awareness.

The study demonstrates that pet ownership significantly impacts respondents' lives emotionally, socially, and financially. While the majority experience positive effects, economic challenges are notable, especially for those without proper financial planning.

Suggestions

1. Financial Assistance Programs: Provide government aid for essential pet care costs to ensure access to veterinary services and vaccinations.
2. Health & Wellness Programs: Promote subsidized services (e.g., vaccination clinics, spaying/neutering) and educate owners on preventive care.
3. Informed Ownership: Educate prospective owners about the financial commitment of pet ownership.
4. Budgeting: Encourage including pet expenses in household budgets and saving for emergencies.
5. Pet Insurance: Promote insurance to cover unexpected veterinary costs.
6. Community Networks: Foster local groups for resource sharing and support.
7. DIY Care: Suggest learning basic grooming and medical tasks to save costs.
8. Adopt, Don't Shop: Advocate adoption from shelters to save money and support welfare.
9. Preventive Care: Stress regular check-ups to avoid costly treatments.
10. Emergency Fund: Encourage setting aside funds for unexpected pet-related expenses.

Limitations recommendation for further study

1. The study's limited number of respondents may reduce the generalizability of its findings, potentially leading to biases. Future research should involve a more diverse sample to improve validity and reliability.
2. The focus on specific variables may exclude important factors, restricting the depth of the analysis. Future studies should consider a broader range of variables for a more comprehensive understanding.
3. The reliance on quantitative data may overlook important qualitative insights. Including qualitative methods like interviews could enhance the richness of the analysis.

4. Some responses may be inaccurate due to biases, affecting the results. Researchers should implement strict data collection protocols and cross-validate findings to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research highlights the diverse impact of pet ownership on household well-being, emphasizing the need for informed financial management and supportive environments for both pets and owners. By fostering responsible pet care, communities can leverage the benefits of pet companionship to enhance emotional, social, and economic well-being, contributing to more resilient and cohesive societies.

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