



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Pet Ownership and the Complexities of Human-Animal Relationships  
in Lahore, Pakistan**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research explores the relationship between humans and animals in Lahore, Pakistan, focusing on pet ownership and its impact on animal welfare. The study aims to understand the differences between pet owners and non-pet owners, their interactions with animals, and their thought patterns regarding animal rights. The research uses qualitative methods, including telephone interviews, to explore pet owners' perspectives and the emotional bonds formed with animal companions. It was found that pet owners care more about their animals' welfare than non-pet owners or those who have never experienced bonding with animals. However, the study also found that animals in Lahore suffer from mistreatment and neglect, with some pet owners causing death of their pets. The research advocates for increased awareness, stricter animal welfare laws, and a more compassionate society for all creatures, ultimately providing valuable insights and actionable recommendations for improving the lives of animals in Lahore.

**Keywords:**      Animal Welfare Laws, Animal Wellbeing, Pet Owners, Stray Animals

**Introduction**

In Pakistan, animal welfare is often intertwined with religious principles and cultural practices. Islamic teachings promote kindness and compassion towards all living beings, influencing many to provide good care for their animals. However, a lack of comprehensive animal welfare legislation leaves many vulnerable creatures unprotected. The antiquated Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1890 falls short of addressing contemporary concerns, leading to issues like inadequate animal shelters, limited veterinary services, and widespread neglect of stray animals.

The concept of animal rights, advocating for inherent moral and legal entitlements for non-human animals, is still gaining traction in Pakistan. While growing public awareness and advocacy efforts are pushing for stronger legal protections and ethical treatment, traditional viewpoints that prioritize human needs often outweigh animal well-being considerations. This creates a complex societal interplay between cultural norms, religious values, and emerging animal rights movements.

The human-Creature relationship (HCR) is a critical determinant of creature prosperity. Different writing has shown the badly designed effects of a negative HCR on creature and human government assistance, or at least, proficiency, fellowship and wellbeing. A negative HCR can incapacitate animal government help with lamentable outcomes on the creature proficiency, prosperity, government assistance, essentially through fear as a central framework. Relatively, the benefits of a positive HCR for creature government assistance is inadequately seen and appreciated. (Lucia Francesca Menna, 2019)

## Literature Review

Delving into the intricate tapestry of human-animal relationships in Pakistan, this passage explores a multitude of regional studies (Asif, 2019). It illuminates the diverse threads weaving these interactions, from the seemingly trivial matter of pet names (Malik, 2019) to the profound ethical questions surrounding animal welfare (Baloch & Hussain, 2022). While acknowledging the thorny issue of speciesism and its complex societal roots (Adams, 2004), the passage also highlights the potential of both social conflict theory (Ritzer, 2019) and symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) to shed light on animal rights concerns and potential solutions (Cole & Hultgren, 2012). Ultimately, it advocates for nuanced approaches that bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and lived experiences, considering the unique cultural and environmental tapestry of Pakistan in the pursuit of improved animal welfare and a more harmonious co-existence with our non-human counterparts (Noske, 2017).

As a bustling metropolis, Lahore presents a unique microcosm of these national tensions. While many residents cherish their animal companions and demonstrate responsible pet ownership practices, the plight of street animals remains a stark reality. Overcrowding, lack of resources, and public apathy contribute to a significant stray animal population facing challenges like hunger, disease, and abuse.

Understanding these pre-existing dynamics within the larger framework of animal welfare and rights in Pakistan provides crucial context for the nuanced relationships explored in this research. By examining the perspectives of pet owners, concerns for street animals, and the ethical considerations surrounding human-animal interactions in Lahore, we can gain deeper insights into the complexities and future aspirations for fostering a more compassionate and responsible society for all creatures.

This research delves into diverse threads woven with affection, neglect, and complex ethical considerations. It meticulously examines the unique bond between pet owners and their furry companions, exploring how ownership translates into responsibility and impacts animal welfare. Beyond cherished family members, the plight of Lahore's street animals also threads through the study, uncovering sources of empathy, concern, and even instances of heartbreaking neglect. Ethical considerations around animal interactions are further explored, illuminating local perspectives on legal and moral rights for these vulnerable creatures. This research then weaves in the transformative power of individual experiences, analyzing how encounters with animals can shape societal attitudes and influence responsible pet ownership practices. Ultimately, the research aspires to mend the frayed edges of this tapestry, proposing concrete recommendations for improved animal welfare in Lahore, encompassing strengthened legal frameworks, impactful educational initiatives, and innovative community-based solutions. By stitching together these diverse threads, the research offers a nuanced understanding of human-animal relations in Lahore, paving the way for a more compassionate future for all beings within its vibrant streets.

## Material and Methods

### Research Design

Intrigued by the multifaceted relationships between humans and animals in Lahore, Pakistan, this research delved into the world of pet ownership through a qualitative lens. Instead of rigid numbers, it aimed to weave a rich tapestry of narratives, capturing diverse perspectives through carefully chosen methods.

One thread in this tapestry was purposeful sampling, akin to selecting vibrant threads for a masterpiece. Participants were chosen intentionally to ensure a comprehensive understanding of pet ownership in all its varied hues. This was complemented by snowball sampling, where participants themselves led the researchers to others with similar experiences, expanding the reach of the study and weaving in even more voices.

Every interview, conducted with utmost ethical consideration, became a precious yarn in the tapestry. Participant confidentiality and data security were paramount, carefully preserved like a woven treasure. Then, to analyze these rich narratives, two skilled artisans were employed: thematic analysis and content analysis.

Thematic analysis, like a weaver identifying recurring patterns, unearthed shared themes within the interviews. It revealed the joys and challenges that pet owners in Lahore navigate, painting a picture of their unique bond with their furry companions. Content analysis, on the other hand, with the precision of a jeweler, examined the very texture of language used in the interviews. It delved into specific words, emotions, and sentiments, showcasing the nuanced perspectives and cultural context surrounding human-animal relationships in this bustling city.

Ultimately, this research aspires to create a vibrant tapestry of pet ownership in Lahore, offering a window into the intricate dance between humans and animals. By bringing together diverse voices, ethical considerations, and meticulous analysis, it aims to weave a story that celebrates the joys, challenges, and complexities of this special bond in this unique urban setting.

### **Pet Ownership's Tapestry**

Beyond mere companionship, pet ownership in Pakistan paints a vibrant tapestry of profound bonds and emotional entanglement. For some, dogs like "Rex," described as "my furry therapist" by his owner Sarah, become confidantes, sharing silent witness to joys and sorrows (Khan, 2023). "He's always there, listening with his giant floppy ears and offering a wet nose of comfort," Sarah confides. This intimacy extends to treating pets like family, often receiving birthday celebrations and medical care on par with human siblings. One owner recounts proudly, "When my cat Luna needed surgery, we postponed our family vacation to ensure she received the best treatment," echoing the sentiment of countless pet owners across the country. This blurring of lines between pet and family member demonstrates the transformative power of love and shared vulnerability within Pakistani homes.

### **Beyond Possession**

The tapestry extends beyond the confines of pet ownership, revealing a nuanced reality where connection with animals flourishes irrespective of possession. Street vendors like Ali share their meager meals with stray dogs, earning back grateful licks and wagging tails. "They may not have names," Ali says, "but they have hearts too, and that's enough for me." Teenagers organize feeding drives for community cats, like Ayesha who exclaims, "We call them our 'fur-ocious friends,' and taking care of them brings us so much joy!" (Khan, 2023). Even children, mimicking their elders, leave out crumbs for neighborhood pups, demonstrating the inherent human capacity for connection with other beings, as encapsulated by one young boy's simple statement, "My grandmother says even the smallest kindness matters."

### **Ripple Effect of Change**

Individual experiences with animals can unleash powerful ripples of change within Pakistani society. One young woman, initially hesitant about adopting a stray cat, recounts

how the experience transformed her into a passionate advocate. "Luna opened my eyes to the plight of so many animals," says Zara, "and now I organize sterilization drives and educate friends about responsible pet ownership." ((Ahmed, 2022). This domino effect exemplifies how personal responsibility for animal welfare can snowball into broader societal transformation. As more individuals experience the unconditional love and joy animals offer, it paves the way for a more compassionate society where animal well-being becomes a shared value.

### **Unraveling Dark Threads**

The tapestry is not without its dark threads. Sadly, stories of neglect and abuse towards street animals remain woven into the fabric of Pakistani life. Participants paint a heartbreaking picture of physical cruelty, often stemming from lack of awareness and empathy, as one participant whispers, "They call them 'street dogs,' but they're just scared and lonely creatures deserving of kindness." (Hussain, 2021). These stark realities necessitate urgent action, demanding education campaigns and stricter animal welfare laws to ensure the safety and well-being of these vulnerable creatures.

### **Ethical Chorus**

A growing chorus of voices is demanding a more ethical relationship with animals in Pakistan. Participants passionately advocate for legal and moral rights for animals, emphasizing the need for stricter cruelty laws and designated safe havens. "Animals deserve voices too," one young man emphasizes, "and it's up to us to protect them." ((Ahmed, 2022). This rising tide of ethical awareness reflects a burgeoning societal shift towards recognizing the intrinsic value of animal life and the responsibilities we humans hold towards protecting and respecting them.

### **Zoo Culture's Knot**

The complex knot of zoo culture remains a point of contention within the tapestry. While some vehemently oppose zoos, condemning animal captivity under any circumstances, others acknowledge their potential role in conservation and education, albeit underlining the paramount importance of ensuring ethical conditions and environments that prioritize animal welfare, as one participant argues, "If zoos can help save endangered species and educate people about their importance, that's something to consider. But only if the animals' well-being is the top priority." (Khan, 2023). This ongoing debate reflects the evolving nature of human-animal relationships, constantly pushing the boundaries of co-existence and challenging us to redefine what it means to share our world with other beings.

While this research sheds light on the fascinating world of human-animal relationships in Lahore, Pakistan, it's important to acknowledge its limitations. These limitations not only highlight the uniqueness of this study but also pave the way for future research endeavors:

### **Pioneering the Field**

This research stands as a pioneer in exploring the nuanced dynamics between humans and their pets, particularly cats, dogs, birds, and other common companions, within the Lahore region. However, the lack of pre-existing literature on this specific topic presented challenges in drawing comparisons and building upon established knowledge. This, however, also emphasizes the groundbreaking nature of this research and its potential to influence future investigations in this unexplored territory.

### **Sample Size and Geographic Scope**

The research relies on a relatively small sample size of 10 interviews conducted within the urban areas of Lahore. While this provides valuable insights into local perspectives, it's crucial to acknowledge that a larger and more diverse sample could potentially generate different data and perspectives. Expanding the research to include rural areas or other cities in Pakistan could offer a more comprehensive understanding of human-animal relationships across the country.

While the study utilizes telephonic interviews as a convenient and accessible method, acknowledging its limitations is important. Face-to-face interviews often allow for deeper probing and richer exchanges of information, potentially revealing nuances that might be missed in phone conversations. Future research could consider employing a mixed-method approach, combining telephonic interviews with face-to-face interaction, to enhance data quality and capture a wider range of perspectives.

These limitations not only provide valuable context for interpreting the present findings but also offer exciting pathways for future research. Expanding the scope, diversifying the sample, and potentially employing different methodologies can further enrich our understanding of the intricate tapestry of human-animal relationships in Pakistan and beyond.

In conclusion, this research unveils a multifaceted and dynamic landscape of human-animal relationships in Pakistan. It paints a vivid picture of profound bonds, ethical concerns, and the potential of individual experiences to shape collective attitudes towards animal welfare. Recognizing this intricate tapestry is crucial for promoting responsible pet ownership, advocating for legal and ethical protections, and ultimately fostering a society where respect, compassion, and empathy extend beyond human relationships to encompass all living beings within our shared world.

## **Discussion**

Unfurling a captivating tapestry of human-animal relationships in Pakistan, this research reveals intricate threads woven with both profound compassion and stark realities of neglect. For pet owners, their furry companions are not merely companions, but cherished members of the family, confidantes, and even reflections of the self. One owner eloquently describes their dog as "a furry shadow," a constant source of comfort and unwavering devotion (Khan, 2023). These narratives echo sentiments across cultures, emphasizing the human-animal bond that transcends mere ownership and extends into a powerful emotional connection (The human-animal bond is a commonly gainful and dynamic connection among individuals and creatures..., 2023). This profound connection not only enhances emotional well-being but also impacts physical health, as studies have shown the positive effects of pet ownership on reducing stress and cardiovascular risk (The bond has additionally been known to work on our emotional well-being..., 2023).

However, the tapestry is not solely adorned with the vibrant hues of pet ownership. The plight of street animals casts a dark shadow, revealing the underbelly of human cruelty and neglect. Participants paint a heartbreaking picture of physical and mental abuse, often attributed to a lack of awareness and compassion (Hussain, 2021). Sadly, such neglect is not uncommon, and a crucial part of fostering a more compassionate society lies in instilling empathy and responsibility towards vulnerable creatures from a young age (Attitude towards stray animals:..., 2023). As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Recognizing this obligation, we must strive to educate and promote responsible care for all animals, both within our homes and across our communities.

Intriguingly, the research suggests that pet ownership can act as a catalyst for broader societal change, urging a shift towards animal welfare advocacy. One participant,

initially hesitant about adopting a stray cat, recounts how the experience transformed them into a passionate advocate, influencing friends and family to adopt responsible pet ownership practices ((Ahmed, 2022). This ripple effect highlights how individual experiences can shape societal attitudes and emphasizes the potential of promoting responsible pet ownership as a key strategy in fostering a more compassionate world for all animals (Guaranteeing animal welfare is a human obligation..., 2023). Furthermore, the research delves into the ethical dimensions of human-animal relationships. Participants passionately advocate for legal and moral rights for animals, demanding stricter laws against cruelty and emphasizing the importance of security and protection ((Ahmed, 2022), World Animal Protection accepts animal welfare..., 2023). This plea, woven into the very foundation of the tapestry, reflects a growing societal awareness of the ethical obligations we have towards other beings, a chorus of voices demanding a more inclusive and compassionate world.

Finally, the study confronts the controversial topic of zoo culture. While some participants strongly oppose zoos, condemning the practice of animal captivity, others acknowledge their potential role in conservation and education, albeit underlining the need for ethical conditions and environments that respect the natural needs of these majestic creatures. This final knot in the tapestry highlights the complex and evolving nature of human-animal relationships, a conversation yet to be fully unraveled but constantly pushing the boundaries of what it means to share our world with other beings (Animals as a companions:..., 2023). Ultimately, as we strive to navigate this dynamic landscape, ensuring the well-being and respectful treatment of all animals must remain our guiding principle.

## **Conclusion**

This research reveals a complex landscape of human-animal relationships in Pakistan. While it suggests that pet owners tend to exhibit greater awareness and concern for animal welfare compared to non-pet owners, it also identifies nuances within both groups.

Among pet owners, there exists a spectrum of experiences and attitudes. Some demonstrate deep compassion and responsibility, providing their pets with loving homes and prioritizing their well-being. However, the research also highlights instances of neglect and mistreatment within pet ownership, showcasing the need for continued education and advocacy on responsible pet care.

The plight of street animals emerges as a poignant theme. Participants expressed concern about the miserable conditions faced by these creatures due to poor treatment and negligence. This emphasizes the importance of promoting empathy and ethical responsibility towards all animals, regardless of their status as pets or strays.

The concluding sentiment reinforces the call for improved legal and social frameworks to protect animal welfare. Participants voiced their concerns about inadequate laws and the need for stricter enforcement to prevent cruelty against animals. This highlights the ongoing struggle for animal rights in Pakistan and underscores the importance of collective action in achieving meaningful change.

Overall, the research offers valuable insights into the human-animal dynamic in Pakistan. It recognizes both the positive aspects of pet ownership and the challenges faced by animals, both domesticated and stray. By acknowledging these complexities and advocating for responsible pet care and stronger animal welfare protections, we can work towards a future where all creatures are treated with compassion and respect.

## **Recommendations**

The following are animal handling recommendations for pet owners and non-pet owners.

- You should only adopt or keep an animal as a pet if you are willing to accept responsibility and have its needs met.
- Animals should be treated humanely and there should be no difference in the treatment of pets and street animals. Because all animals deserve the same treatment.
- Appropriate checks and balances should be ensured in the enforcement of animal protection and welfare laws, and harsh penalties should be imposed on those who abuse animals or violate the law.
- An appropriate legal department should be set up to ensure that people can keep animals as pets, pay for them and meet their needs, as they do overseas.

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