

The Impact of Pet Ownership on Mental Health

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19/3/2025

Introduction

Pets play a significant role in many people's lives, providing companionship, emotional support, and joy. There has been growing interest in understanding how pet ownership affects mental health. This report analyzes survey data collected to investigate the relationship between pet ownership and mental well-being. The goal is to determine whether having a pet contributes positively to mood stability, reduced loneliness, and overall mental health improvement.

Research Question

Does pet ownership have a significant impact on an individual's mental health, including mood improvement and reduced loneliness?

Hypothesis

We hypothesize that pet ownership positively influences mental health by reducing loneliness and enhancing mood. Individuals with pets are expected to report a higher sense of emotional well-being compared to those without pets.

Population of Interest

The population of interest includes individuals who own pets and those who do not, covering a diverse range of age groups, backgrounds, and living environments.

Sampling Method

The study utilized convenience sampling, where respondents voluntarily participated in an online survey. This method was chosen due to its efficiency in collecting data from a broad audience within a limited timeframe.

Bias Identification

Several measures were taken to minimize bias:

1. **Self-Selection Bias:** Since the survey was voluntary, individuals with strong opinions about pets may have been more likely to respond.
 2. **Confirmation Bias:** Questions were framed neutrally to avoid leading respondents toward a particular conclusion.
 3. **Demographic Bias:** Efforts were made to reach respondents from various backgrounds to ensure diversity in perspectives.
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Survey Questions

1. Do you currently own a pet?
2. What type of pet(s) do you own?
3. How long have you owned your pet?
4. How often do you feel your pet has a positive impact on your mood?
5. Have you ever felt more relaxed or calm after spending time with your pet?
6. Do you feel less lonely due to the companionship of your pet?
7. Do you believe that owning a pet improves your overall mental health?

Online survey link: <https://forms.gle/baqjBgR6WJuo56737>

Number of responses collected: 50

Analysis

To analyze the collected data, descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and mode were calculated. Visualizations were created to identify trends and patterns in the responses.

Distribution of Pet Types

A bar chart was generated to illustrate the distribution of pet ownership among respondents.

Key Findings:

- The most commonly owned pets were dogs and cats.

Frequency of Positive Mood Impact from Pets

A pie chart was created to show how frequently respondents felt that their pet positively influenced their mood.

Key Findings:

- A large proportion of respondents reported that their pets always or often improve their mood.
- Very few respondents indicated that their pets had little to no impact on their mood.

Do Pets Improve Mental Health?

A bar chart was used to illustrate responses to whether pet ownership improves mental health.

Key Findings:

- Most respondents agreed that having a pet contributes positively to mental health.
 - A small number of respondents were uncertain or disagreed, indicating variability in personal experiences.
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Conclusion

The findings support the hypothesis that pet ownership has a generally positive effect on mental health. Most pet owners reported feeling happier, less lonely, and emotionally supported due to their pets. While the results suggest a strong correlation between pet ownership and improved well-being, further research is needed to establish causation.

Potential Issues and Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged:

1. **Sample Representation Bias:** The sample may not be fully representative of the general population, affecting the generalizability of the findings.
 2. **Self-Reported Data:** Respondents may have exaggerated or underestimated the impact of their pets on their mental health.
 3. **Confounding Variables:** Factors such as lifestyle, social interactions, and pre-existing mental health conditions were not controlled for, which may have influenced the results.
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Recommendations

To improve the reliability of future research, the following steps are recommended:

- Expanding the survey to a larger and more diverse sample population.
- Conducting longitudinal studies to observe long-term effects of pet ownership on mental health.
- Including psychological assessments to validate self-reported data.

This study highlights the potential benefits of pet ownership on emotional well-being, but further research is necessary to draw definitive conclusions.