



# A STUDY BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL PET OWNERS AND INDIVIDUAL NON-PET OWNERS ON PERCEIVED STRESS

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## Abstract:

**Thematic Area:** Community Mental Health, Perceived Stress

The sample consisted of 200 individuals of which 100 were Individual pet owners and 100 were Individual non-pet owners between the age group of 25 to 30 years. The Individual Pet Owners included only those who match the criteria of primary caregivers, and are dog owners for more than 6 months. Stress was measured by the Perceived Stress Scale developed by Cohen (1983). Using the technique of random sampling, 200 English-speaking adults who had a minimum education of 12th standard with a middle class status from the urban area of Pune city were selected for this study. The independent sample t test was used to statistically analyze the data.

The mean for the Individual non pet owner group was 15.73, the standard deviation was 7.05 and standard error mean was 0.705. The mean for the individual pet owner group was 15.43, the standard deviation was 6.75 and the standard error mean was 0.675. Thus, this indicated that the differences between the two were not significant. The value of the Levene's test of equality of variances was 0.270 and the significance was 0.587 and equal variances was assumed. For the t-test for equality of the means, the t value was 0.347, the degree of freedom was 198 and the significance value which was two tailed was 0.711 indicating that there was no significant difference between the two groups.

**Keywords: Individual Pet Owners, Perceived Stress.**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **Individual Pet Owner**

According to the Collins English Dictionary (2014), the noun pet owner refers to “a person who owns a pet”. Hence, a pet owner is someone who tames an animal and is kept for recreational purposes. The first of the animals to be domesticated was the dog and their interaction with one another and still have (Udell, Wynne, 2008). The evolution of the domestic dog is seen from 18,800 and 32,100 years ago when a group of wolves interacted with European Hunter-gatherers (Yong, 2013). There are many reasons for owning a pet, may it be a sign of status, their beauty or as play toys. However, many pets do recognise the individual who feeds them more in the sense of conditioned behaviour. It is the recognition that keeps people associated with pets (Grier, 2006).

## **STRESS:**

Cannon defined stress as a primarily physiological response to an external stressor (Cannon, 1932 cited in Ogden, 2007)

Lazarus and Folkman defined psychological stress as, “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being” (Lazarus, Folkman, 1984 cited in Contrada, Baum, 2010).

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

To Compare Perceived stress among Individual Pet Owners and Individual Non-Pet Owners.

## **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:**

The researcher has chosen the topic due to personal and psychological significance. Stress can be seen to have an effect on the individual's health and hence it is important to have various coping mechanisms that help deal with the reactions caused by stress. The field of health psychology and behavioural medicine are fields that deal with the interaction of the biological, social and behavioural areas in an individual's life (Kaplan, 2009). Hence, it is important to study pets and stress and to see if its effects on pet ownership so as to explore the relations in the field of health psychology. In industries common manifestations of job stress can be seen through burnout and where situations may be seen as overwhelming (Ciccarelli, Meyer, 2008). Hence it is important to study stress and pet

ownership so as to explore its applicability in the field of organizational psychology.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

The present study is an attempt to help spread awareness about being an Individual Pet-owner and its effect on stress, and in turn on the individual's health. This study will help spread awareness among people at large and also be useful in the field of positive psychology. Positive relations and having a good support system is said to help build resilience (Baumgardner, 2009). Hence, this study can help explore the effects of individual pet owners on stress and help in its applicability globally. The study can enhance Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) through increased awareness in the society.

### **Objective of the study.**

- To compare and study perceived stress among individual pet owners and individual non petowners.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review is based on which the hypothesis was formulated.

#### **Individual Pet Owner and Stress**

Pets have also been seen to have perceived positive psychological and organizational effects. One such study was done on 193 employees from 31 companies where they had to fill questionnaires on their perceptions on bringing a pet to work. Results showed that pets in the workplace were perceived to reduce stress as well as for the participants to have a positive affect. It was seen that participants who brought their pets to work perceived greater benefits than those who did not own or get them to work (Wells, 2001). Hence, we can infer that pets are perceived as reducing stress and providing psychological and occupational benefits.

Another study on 5741 pet owners and non pet owners who attended a free clinic screening for the risk of cardiovascular disease by measuring their blood pressure, plasma cholesterol and triglyceride and plasma cholesterol levels found that pet owners had significantly lower plasma triglyceride and systolic blood pressure than non pet owners (Anderson et al., 1992).

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **VARIABLES, DEFINITION AND HYPOTHESIS.**

- i) Independent variable: Individual Pet Owner.

a) Pet Owners – With respect to this study, a Pet Owner is an individual who currently owns a dog, this includes owners who live in the same household as the dog. They are also the primary caregiver of the dog and hence will be the individual who feeds, walks or trains the dog. They should also be a pet owner for more than 6 months.

b) Non-Pet Owners – Non-Pet Owners are individuals who do not own or look after any dogs nor have they been owners or caregivers for any dogs for more than 6 months.

## ii) Dependent variable: **Stress**

The Perceived Stress Scale measures the extent to which situations are evaluated as stressful in a person's life (Cohen, et al., 1983). In the current study, stress is measured as a person's evaluation of his or her environment as exceeding his or her own capabilities or as a danger to oneself which is measured by the Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen 1988.

## iii) Controlled variables:

- Age range
- Socio-economic status
- Minimum qualification
- Gender
- Time Duration for being a individual pet owner

## **HYPOTHESES**

1) The scores on Perceived Stress will be significantly higher among individual non petowners than individual pet owners.

## **SAMPLE**

The sample consisted of 200 individuals of which 100 were current pet owners and 100 were non-pet owners between the age group of 25 to 30 years. The sample was randomly selected from the population of Pune City from colleges and offices. However, they were English speaking individuals from the middle class, who have minimum Junior college (12th– English medium) education. The Individual Pet Owners included only those who match the criteria of individuals who are primary caregivers, who currently own and live in the same household as a dog for more than 6 months. Of the 100 Individual Pet Owners 50 were male and 50 were female and of the 100 Individual

Non-Pet Owners 50 were male and 50 were female.

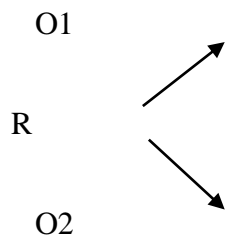
## TOOLS

### 3.3.2. Perceived Stress scale by Cohen in 1983

The Perceived Stress scale was developed by Cohen in 1983 and was printed by the American Sociological Association. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring an individual's perception of stress. Hence, it is a more subjective measure of stress. The theoretical perceptions of Lazarus in 1966 have been the basic guidelines for the development of this scale. The Perceived Stress Scale measures the amount to which a person evaluates a situation as stressful (cited in Cohen, et al., 1983). Items in this scale measure how uncertain individuals perceive their life to be. The items in the PSS focus on the individual's thoughts and feelings during the last month. It is a 10-item self-report instrument with a five point scale ranging from 0 to 4 where 0=never, 1=almost never, 2=sometimes, 3=fairly often, 4=very often). The scoring of the PSS for the 4 positively stated items are 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1 and 4=0 and for the negatively stated items 0=0, 1=1, 2=2, 3=3 and 4=4. The PSS is also available in a 4 item self-report instrument with the same five point scale. (Cohen et al, 1988).

## EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The research design for this study was the Randomised Post Test Only Design.



R stands for random selection

O is a measure of stress which is a score obtained on the Perceived Stress Scale; 1 stands for Individual Pet Owners and 2 stands for Individual Non-Pet Owners

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:

In this study, stress among individual pet owners and individual non-pet owners was seen and hence the t test was used to measure the difference between the mean of the two groups.

## 4.2 RESULTS

The independent sample t test was used to statistically analyze the data. Table 4.1.a Descriptive Statistics Table of Individual pet owner and stress

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perceived Stress	Individual Non pet owner	100	15.73	7.05	0.705
	Individual Pet owner	100	15.43	6.75	0.675

From table 4.1.a it shows that the total number of participants (N) of the study was 200 and the total number of Individual non pet owners was 100 and Individual pet owners was 100.

The mean for the Individual non pet owner group was 15.73, the standard deviation was 7.05 and standard error mean was 0.705. The mean for the individual pet owner group was 15.43, the standard deviation was 6.75 and the standard error mean was 0.675. This indicated that the means of the two groups were highly similar and hence the difference between the two were not significant.

Table 4.1.b. Independent Sample T Test Table for the two groups that are individual non petowners and individual pet owners.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference

Stress	Equal variances assumed	0.270	0.587	0.347	198	0.711	0.300	0.843
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It can be seen in table 4.1.b that the f value of the Levene's test of equality of variances was 0.270 and the significance was 0.587 and equal variances was assumed.

For the t test for equality of the means, the t value was 0.347, the degree of freedom was 198 and the significance value which was two tailed was 0.711 indicating that there was no significant difference between the two groups.

### DISCUSSION:

From the results shown in tables 4.1.a. and 4.1.b. it can be observed that the mean for the individual non pet owner group was 15.73 and for the pet owner group was 15.43. The results also show that the t value for the two groups was 0.347 and the significance was 0.711 indicating that even though there was a very slight difference between the means of the two groups it was not significant and hence there was no significant difference between the two groups.

Thus, the hypothesis stating that "The scores on Perceived Stress will be significantly higher among individual non pet owners than individual pet owners" was rejected.

A study was conducted to examine the associations of pet ownership and perceived health disease, on 20- 54 year olds from the Finnish population, binary and logistic regression was used to analyze the data. Results showed that pet owners were associated with poorer rather than good perceived health (Koivusilta, Ojanlatva, 2006). There could be other factors that affect stress among the pet owner group like age and health of the dog which could have been the reason for causing more stress instead of decreasing it.

### CONCLUSION:

The conclusion of the study is as follows:

The hypothesis stating that "The scores on Perceived Stress will be significantly higher among individual non pet owners than individual pet owners" was rejected.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

- The personality of the individual was not controlled and hence its effects on stress were not controlled.

- The age range being a wide range could also be seen as a limitation as included people who were studying and working and hence, the stress experiences by these two groups would also be different.
- The occupations of the individuals in the sample too were not controlled and hence, the type of job one has could be seen as an influence on stress.
- The test being a self-report questionnaire, the possibility of social desirability and response biases cannot be ruled out.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:**

A cross cultural study can also be done on stress and individual pet ownership as what is considered stressful in one culture may not be thought as stressful in another (Ciccarelli, Meyer, 2008). Sample size can be expanded, various metropolitan cities can be included along with including different strata of the society.

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