Exploring The Relationship Between Happiness and Loneliness Among Pet Owners

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Abstract—**This research investigates the connection between happiness and loneliness in pet owners, specifically within the Indian context. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements, many individuals find themselves emotionally disconnected, despite the prevalence of virtual connections. Loneliness has surfaced as an increasing psychological issue, affecting mental and emotional health across various age demographics. In contrast, happiness is regarded as a crucial element of positive mental health and overall life satisfaction. As individuals strive for meaningful relationships and emotional support, the bond between humans and animals has garnered significant interest in psychological studies. Pet ownership is thought to provide numerous emotional advantages, including companionship, stress alleviation, diminished feelings of isolation, and a heightened sense of purpose in life. Animals frequently act as steadfast, non-judgmental companions, addressing specific social and emotional requirements that may not always be fulfilled through human interactions. This research examines whether pet owners experience greater levels of happiness and reduced levels of loneliness in comparison to non-pet owners. A quantitative, correlational research methodology was utilized, gathering data from 200 pet owners (100 males and 100 females) aged 18–30 years in Sonepat, Haryana, employing standardized instruments: the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and the UCLA Loneliness Scale. The results were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicated a significant negative correlation between happiness and loneliness, suggesting that as happiness levels rose, loneliness diminished among pet owners. Gender-based analyses revealed significant disparities in both happiness and loneliness levels. These findings highlight the psychological benefits of pet companionship in improving emotional well-being. The study proposes that pet ownership may act as an effective approach to mitigate loneliness and enhance happiness, particularly among young adults. The implications of this research extend to mental health practitioners, who might consider recommending pet ownership as a viable strategy for emotional support.**

Index Terms—**Happiness, Loneliness, Pet Ownership, Emotional well-being, Human-Animal bond**

I. INTRODUCTION

Happiness is a desirable emotional state that many seek throughout life, characterized by joy, contentment, tranquility, and purpose. In psychology, it involves not just positive feelings but also overall life satisfaction. Sources of happiness include personal achievements, strong relationships, meaningful work, and enriching experiences. Positive psychology emphasizes that happiness is vital for mental health, helping individuals manage stress and face challenges (Todd et.al.2018).

Loneliness, on the other hand, is a harmful emotional state stemming from feelings of isolation or disconnection, which can occur even in social settings without emotional support. It negatively impacts mental and physical health, potentially leading to depression, anxiety, sleep issues, and cardiovascular problems, (Cacioppo,2018). Loneliness is increasingly common in modern society, especially among young adults and the elderly, driven by digital communication, changing family dynamics, fast-paced urban life, and individualism. Persistent loneliness can lower motivation, increase stress, and harm self-esteem. Understanding the relationship between happiness and loneliness is crucial for emotional well-being, and this research explores how pet ownership may influence this dynamic of overall happiness, (Janssens et al. 2020). For individuals who live alone or feel socially disconnected, a pet can become an emotional anchor, offering routine, purpose, and a sense of being needed.

Nevertheless, in spite of the increasing body of

evidence, this relationship remains insufficiently explored in numerous regions across the globe, including India. The majority of research has concentrated on Western nations, while the cultural, emotional, and lifestyle variances present in countries such as India are frequently neglected. In India, where familial and social connections are of paramount importance, the function of pets as emotional companions is still in a state of development. Consequently, it is crucial to comprehend how pet ownership influences the emotional experiences of Indian pet owners, particularly regarding their feelings of happiness or loneliness.

This study aims to investigate the emotional ramifications of pet ownership, with a specific focus on the levels of happiness and loneliness that pet owner's encounter. Additionally, it explores the potential existence of gender disparities in these emotional experiences. By gaining insights into the psychological advantages of pet ownership, this research seeks to underscore how companionship with pets can act as a natural and readily available means to enhance mental health and emotional well-being in daily life.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To carry out the study "the level of happiness and loneliness of pet owners", the following researches were researched.

In 2025, Sharma and Kapoor studied the impact of pet ownership on social connectedness during post-pandemic recovery. This two-year longitudinal research surveyed 500 participants to evaluate how pets influenced their mental health and social interactions after the isolation caused by COVID-19. Results showed that pet owners experienced a 40% increase in social engagement, as pets facilitated conversations, neighborhood walks, and community involvement.

In a similar vein, a 2024 study conducted by Chen investigated the relationship between pet ownership and psychological resilience in young adults. This research aimed to determine the extent to which owning a pet may serve as a protective factor against stress and feelings of loneliness. The study monitored stress levels and self-reported happiness among 250 pet owners over a significant duration. Findings indicated that the presence of a pet significantly contributed to stress alleviation, resulting in a 30% enhancement in happiness levels.

Further in 2023, Brown studied the mental health benefits of pet adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on changes in loneliness and happiness among adopters. The results showed that 75% of pet adopters experienced reduced loneliness and increased happiness post-adoption.

A 2022 study by Garcia & Thomas examined the psychological differences between dog and cat owners, focusing on emotional stability and loneliness. It found that dog owners often felt less lonely due to the social nature of dog ownership, like walking and outdoor activities. Conversely, cat owners reported greater emotional stability and companionship in their personal spaces. The findings highlight that different pets provide unique psychological benefits based on individual social and emotional needs.

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III. METHODOLOGY

Objectives: To assess the relationship of happiness and loneliness in pet owners.

The sample for the present study consisted of 200 participants, including 100 males and 100 females, within the age range of 18 to 30 years, residing in the Delhi-NCR region. The inclusion criteria required participants to be owners of cats or dogs, living in urban areas, capable of understanding the study language, and willing to give informed consent. Individuals who owned pets other than cats or dogs, those residing in rural areas, and those with psychiatric or neurological conditions or a history of substance abuse were excluded from the study. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method. Data were collected through a

primary method using standardized questionnaires. The research adopted a quantitative methodology and followed a correlational design. Statistical analysis included the calculation of mean, standard deviation, and testing for the level of significance.

Tool used: Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and UCLA Loneliness Scale

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS): The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) was developed by Sonja Lyubomirsky in 1999. This tool consists of 4 items and is designed to measure an individual's overall level of happiness. It has demonstrated high internal consistency, with

reliability coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.86, and shows strong validity, with correlations typically above 0.50.

UCLA Loneliness Scale: The UCLA Loneliness Scale was developed earlier in 1978 by Daniel W. Russell, Letitia Anne Peplau & Carol E. Ferguson. It includes 20 items and is

Widely used to assess the subjective feelings of loneliness and social isolation. The scale also exhibits high internal consistency, with a reliability score of 0.73, and has shown good

validity, ranging between 0.50 to 0.70.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The findings clearly show that pet ownership does have an emotional impact on people. When researchers looked at the scores of 200 pet owners (100 males and 100 females), they found that most of them experienced moderate levels of both happiness and loneliness. This means that while having a pet helps with emotional well-being; it doesn't always lead to very high happiness or completely remove loneliness.

The emotional state of pet owners mostly fell in the middle, showing a balanced experience of feeling happy and occasionally lonely.

Only a few participants showed extreme emotional experiences. For example, only 12 out of 200 participants had low happiness levels, while 9 had high happiness levels. Similarly, only 8 reported low loneliness and 9 reported high loneliness. These numbers show that while pets can reduce loneliness and increase happiness, everyone’s experience is a little different.

These differences may depend on personal factors like how close the owner is to their pet, how much time they spend with them, and what kind of emotional support they expect from their pet.

When comparing gender, females had slightly higher happiness levels and slightly lower loneliness levels than males. For happiness, the average score of females was 18.62 while that of males was 17.85. For loneliness, males had a score of 43.12 while females scored 42.56. These scores are quite close, but they suggest that females may form deeper emotional bonds with their pets, which helps them feel happier and less lonely.

Also, the statistical values such as correlation coefficients and p-values confirmed that the connection between happiness and loneliness was reliable and meaningful. For instance, among males, the correlation between happiness and loneliness was -0.57 with a p-value of 0.001, meaning that as happiness increased, loneliness decreased significantly. This strong negative relationship was the most important result of the study.

TABLE: Showing gender differences for Happiness and Loneliness by Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation Coefficient and Level of Significance

Variable	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Level of Significance (p-value)
Happiness	Male	17.85	2.34	0.52**	0.002 ($p < 0.01$)
	Female	18.62	2.17		
Loneliness	Male	43.12	5.42	0.49**	0.004 ($p < 0.01$)
	Female	42.56	5.03		
Happiness vs Loneliness	Male	60.97 (combined)	5.42	-0.57**	0.001 ($p < 0.01$)
	Female	61.18 (combined)	5.03		

**shows the correlation coefficient significant at 0.01 level of significance

V. DISCUSSION

The current research evaluated the differences in happiness and loneliness based on gender among a sample of 200 individuals, comprising 100 males and 100 females. In terms of happiness, males exhibited a mean score of 17.85 with a standard deviation of 2.34, while females reported a mean score of 18.62 with a standard deviation of 2.17. A noteworthy positive correlation between happiness and loneliness was identified among males, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.52, which was statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p = 0.002$).

In relation to loneliness, the mean score for males was 43.12 (SD = 5.42), in contrast to females, who had a mean score of 42.56 (SD = 5.03). A significant positive correlation was also detected for this variable among males, with an r value of 0.49 and a p-value of 0.004, indicating significance at the 0.01 level.

Moreover, when analysing the connection between happiness and loneliness, a significant negative correlation was observed in both genders. For males, the overall mean score for these variables was 60.97 with a standard deviation of 5.42, and the correlation coefficient was -0.57, which was highly significant ($p = 0.001$, $p < 0.01$). Female participants had a combined mean score of 61.18 with a standard deviation of 5.03. These results imply that as happiness levels rise, loneliness levels significantly decrease among both male and female participants.

The current study indicates that happiness and loneliness are intricately linked emotional states, with pet ownership significantly influencing both. The research reveals that individuals who experience greater happiness tend to feel less lonely, while those who encounter loneliness often see a decline in their happiness levels. Pets serve to bridge this emotional divide, providing love, comfort, and companionship that fosters a sense of emotional support. This bond mitigates feelings of emotional isolation and enhances joy and meaning in life.

The presence of pets has been shown to alleviate stress, elevate mood, and provide individuals with reasons to smile and feel valued, Daniels & Carter. (2021). This aspect is particularly crucial for those who may live alone or experience social disconnection. Pets offer non-judgmental companionship, and their unwavering affection contributes to a sense of security and emotional stability for their owners. The findings of this study corroborate previous research that has established pet ownership as beneficial for mental and emotional health. Furthermore, it affirms that pets can significantly aid in alleviating anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

While the research concentrated solely on pet owners, the implications of the findings are noteworthy. The data indicated that the majority of pet owners reported feeling emotionally balanced, with only a minority experiencing extreme levels of loneliness or happiness. A key discovery was the pronounced negative correlation between happiness and loneliness, particularly among males, underscoring the interconnectedness of these emotions. In contrast, females were observed to be marginally happier and less lonely, potentially due to their greater expressiveness, nurturing tendencies, and increased emotional engagement with their pets.

These results underscore the notion that pet ownership transcends mere lifestyle choice, emerging as a vital instrument for emotional well-being. Pets can serve as emotional support systems for individuals navigating challenging circumstances. They provide unconditional love, assist in alleviating emotional turmoil, and instill a sense of purpose in their owners' lives. In conclusion, pet ownership is demonstrated to be an effective and natural means of enhancing happiness and diminishing loneliness, particularly among young adults.

VI. CONCLUSION

This research confirms that pet ownership significantly enhances emotional well-being. Pet owners often report greater emotional satisfaction and reduced loneliness, attributed to the love and companionship pets provide. Many participants noted their pets contributed to their happiness, alleviated stress, and diminished feelings of isolation, acting as reliable emotional companions**.** The study found a strong link between happiness and loneliness; higher happiness levels correlated with lower loneliness. This aligns with psychological theories like Hedonic Theory, which links happiness to comfort and

pleasure, and Eudemonic Theory, which connects it to purpose and meaning. Pets fulfill both aspects by bringing joy and instilling a sense of responsibility in their owners, as noted by Edwards & Franklin (2023).

In conclusion, the findings indicate that pets boost happiness and lessen loneliness. Despite limitations like a limited sample size and a focus on pet owners, the study strongly supports the idea that pets can act as emotional healers, providing joy and companionship in a world where emotional exhaustion and isolation are common.

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