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Public Opinion on the Market for Pet Dogs in Chennai

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Abstract

Dogs have played an integral role in society since ancient times however, colonisation combined with globalisation has provided easy access to buying foreign pedigree dogs that are not accustomed to living in Indian climatic conditions. This increasing obsession over foreign pedigree dogs has given rise to a highly unregulated and cruel pet trade market. This research aims to identify the consumer opinion on the market for pet dogs in Chennai and it aims to find out what proportion of the dogs that were bought were obtained from licensed breeders. Secondary data from literature review and primary data from 234 samples collected through questionnaires has been utilised to conduct this research. The study has concluded that there is a positive shift in consumer preferences, many prefer Indian mongrels over foreign pedigree breeds however, consumers awareness about a breeder license is still low leading to many backyard breeders thriving without facing repercussions.

Keywords

Dogs, pedigree breeds, breeders, pet market, Indian mongrels.

INTRODUCTION

Dogs have played an integral role in Indian society since prehistoric times. The 9000 year old rock painting of a man with a dog in the Bhimbetka rock caves dating back to 7000 BCE near Bhopal stands as proof of this relationship between man and dog. Dogs have been reared centuries together for hunting, retrieving, guarding, companionship and for many more reasons. During the era of colonisation, the British began to import foreign breeds to provide companionship and serve as guard dogs for their properties. India gained its freedom on August 15, 1947 and the British left our country however, the dogs they had initially imported had gained significance and its breeding continued to serve the needs of the Indian diaspora. Following this, globalisation opened the gates to a higher import of various other foreign breeds.

In current times, the survivability of these foreign breeds in India has been studied and it is revealed that many of the foreign breeds suffer significantly as they are unable to sustain the climatic conditions of the Indian sub-continent. India majorly experiences a tropical climate with scorching summers. Most of these foreign breeds are compatible with living in cold conditions and prolonged exposure to heat induces heat strokes and other health complications in them.

Another issue at hand is the uprise of illegal breeders within the dog market. Exploiting the overwhelming demand, many backyard breeders are applying unethical, cruel and improper breeding mechanisms to breed and sell puppies that are accompanied by a range of genetic disorders. A study conducted by the Animal Welfare Board of India in Bangalore (2015) revealed that the pet trade has emerged as an highly unregulated one that is plagued with unethical practices where cruelty to animals is inherent. It also concluded that there was a rise in health defects of the pups.

The government has taken several policy measures and introduced initiatives to curb these issues. The Prevention of cruelty to animals act, 1960 authored by the acclaimed classical dancer and animal activist Rukmini Devi Arundale prevents the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals. It mandates the need for a breeding license provided by the Animal Welfare Board of India. This license must be obtained in order to commercially breed and sell dogs.

Objectives:

This research aims to:

- (i) study the public opinion of the consumers on the market of pet dogs in Chennai
- (ii) to identify what proportion of pet owners have bought their dog from a licensed breeder who has adhered to the relevant laws and norms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

C. Balan e.t.al (2016) Studied the part-worth estimate of attributes of pet dogs from 60 dog owners in the corporation of Chennai. Data were collected through a sample survey using well-structured and pre-tested surveys. Multilevel sampling techniques were introduced and data analysis tools such as conjoint analysis were used to model respondents' preferences. The study concluded that most respondents preferred large dogs, followed by medium and small dogs. As for the coat type, the soft straight type was more popular than the curly coat. Overall, the companion type of this breed was favored primarily by guard dogs, with dog size being the most important factor for domestic dog owners, followed by coat and breeding purpose. Katrina E. Holland (2019) reviewed the factors affecting the decision making of prospective dog owners when acquiring a pet dog. No methodology is mentioned since this is a secondary review paper. The findings of this review demonstrate the importance of several dog-related factors that often influence a potential owner's decision-making. It recommended strategies to promote responsible behavior in the Dog Acquisition Process. Samantha E Cohen and Peter M Todd (2019) studied the preferences of adopters in companion animal choice. They have used old and new field data regarding the dog adoption process. A total of 145 participants finished the entire survey and provided information to locate the relevant files of their chosen dog. The traits that were highly preferred were friendliness, playfulness, and level of energy whereas the least commonly preferred traits were sex, purebred status and colour. Lei Jai e.t.a.l (2022) has studied how exposure to pets such as cats and dogs influences consumer behaviour. Various studies on consumer behaviour were conducted. They applied different methods such as (secondary data sources, laboratory based experiments, and behavioural experiments) to conduct these studies. Sample sizes of 37, 264, 280 and more were used in these following studies. The research concluded that pets largely influence a consumer's social judgements and

behaviour. The influence of pets also extends to a consumer's pet unrelated judgments and decisions socially.

Lindsay L Farrell e.t.a.l (2015) studied the inherited disorders and poor health in Pedigree dogs and what approaches can be applied to mitigate the effects of the issues. Secondary data from various organisations and UK kennel club was collected and analysed for the study's purposes. The study concluded that many incentive programs such as genetic testing are being implemented by breed clubs, however public awareness about the importance of testing is to be drastically improved. Screening programs are paramount in understanding the prevalence of how prone one is to develop a disease. Measures need to be adopted to curb the said issues by recognising the benefits of cross breeding, maintain proper records of specimens by encouraging owners to register their pets and record ancestral data if any. It also concluded that public awareness plays a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the recommended practices. Danika Bannasch e.t.a.l (2021) studied the relationship between inbreeding morphology and health. They used genotype inbreeding estimates, weight of the body and insurance data for morbidity. The data 1 sample set consisted of non-invasive cheek samples from veterinary clinics and submitted to DNA testing. Data 2 had DNA samples procured from 274 dogs as controls for disease studies. The study concluded that body size and inbreeding accompanied by unfavourable morphological features contributed to a hike in essential health care in dogs.

Jerold S Bell (2017) studied the ten most common hereditary diseases in dogs. A number of secondary data sources were used to support the study. Several diseases such as canine hip dysplasia, skin allergies, Brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome, cardiac diseases, cranial ligament rupture, hereditary cancer, cataracts and other genetic disorders. The study concluded that dogs with genetic disorders should not be selected for breeding because most of these genetic diseases are entirely inherited.

Bernice Bovenrick and Hanneke J Nijland (2017) have researched to provide insights in order to further the animal - ethical, political and society wide discussion regarding the future of pedigree dog breeding in the Netherlands. They utilised multiple methods and adopted a case driven research such as interpretive empirical research, literature review and target group sampling. In conclusion, their empirical research with reference into genetic components of dogs through breeding and genetic modification led to an appeal to virtue ethics. Animal Welfare board of India and compassion unlimited plus action conducted a comprehensive investigation into the cruel trade of puppy mills in Bengaluru city to expose the cruel practices of the pet trade. They conducted the research through site investigations and interviews with breeders, brokers and middlemen for a period of 8 months and it was discovered that Bangalore's pet breeding trade was a highly unregulated industry that is filled with unethical practices. A rise in health defects of pups, a rise in backyard breeders, and unregulated sale of animals on online platforms were a common occurrence in the industry. Steven L Hernman (2008) analysed the relationship between people and dogs in contemporary India. His methodology involved the review of various literary sources and secondary data collection. The study explains the significance of dogs since the early Vedic period and the beginning of import of foreign dogs during colonial times. The study also explores cultural and religious practices involving dogs such as the marriage of dogs to humans to ward off evil spells or as an act of repentance. It explores the use of dogs for various purposes in the past such as for herding, hunting, guarding and more. Emily Weiss e.t.a.l (2012) researched why adopters choose pets in an animal shelter, what behaviours were first expressed by the pet to the adopter, what information was most pertinent during the selection process and the relative importance of seeing the animals attitude in various situations. The methodology involved surveying five organisations with questionnaires and a total of 1599 adopters completed the survey. The study concluded that overall appearance of the animal, social behaviour towards the adopter, and character were the most important reasons for adoption across all species. Most adopters gain information regarding adoption selection by conversing and interacting with a staff member and with animals.

R Judith Priya and Nandhini Muniyappa (2018) studied the various opportunities involved in the pet industry and to comprehend the utilisation of various factors behind the pet industry. The research made use of primary data which was collected using structured questionnaires. The sample size for the study consisted of 100 respondents. The study concluded that India has experienced a double digit growth in its pet industry. Markets relating to pet grooming, health and other indulgences. The growth of online pet care retail market is also observed. Karan Poonam Parekh e.t.a.l (2020) researched to test the consumers attitude towards the purchase of pet care in Coimbatore city. Several studies about the consumers attitude was reviewed then a questionnaire was provided to the consumers with pets residing in Coimbatore. They did descriptive research for the study. the sample size was 124 and the study concluded that the attitude of a consumer towards finance is differing in paying total money from their perception. Their perception is influenced by cost benefit and price affordability, whereas their attitude is majorly dependent on the pets worth , price fixing for the pets and comparing parameters such as breeders image, location and financial risks.

Daniel Mota Rojas e.t a.l (2021) researched to widen the readers comprehension of the causes for the rise in the number of stray dogs and the reason people abandon pets, specifically in Latin America. The researchers used secondary data to conduct their work along with Literary reviews. The study concluded that the reasons for abandonment were the lack of permanent sterilisation campaigns, lack of education on responsible pet ownership, extreme poverty that causes malnourishment to both the owners and the pet animal too. Federation of veterinarians of Europe and Federation of European Companion published this position paper to express growing concerns of veterinarians about selective breeding becoming focused on the appearance and on the popularity of certain breeds with no importance over health, performance, and longevity. Secondary data and literature review was adopted as the methodology. The meeting unanimously expressed their concern for the health and welfare of dogs. It demanded that breed standards should not include the requirements and recommendations that destroy the physiological function of organs and parts of the body.

Katrina E Holland e.t.a.l (2022) researched to find the reason behind dog acquisition in a sample of UK current and prospective pet owners. The study applied convergent methods to procure complimentary data which was recorded in parallel, analysed independently and interpreted together in a comparative and contrasting method. The study concluded that the decision to get a dog was due to self related and social based motivations and also due to positive feelings towards dogs. Majority got a dog for companionship, to help a dog in need, and due to previous dog ownership. In some cases dogs are wanted to fulfil multiple roles in their owners life.

Michael J Dobson and Eva M Hyatt (2008) conducted this research that identifies seven underlying dimensions that contain the construct of dog companionship. It surveyed 749 dog owners who completed questionnaires in a mall intercept setting. The exploratory factor analysis gave a seven factor solution that accounts for 70% of the variation in the data. The results show that dog companionship is a complicated, multi-faced phenomenon, in which different dogs might possess differing levels of varying dimensions.

Sharon L Cowell Davis (2008) studied the reasons for pet ownership with regards to behaviour problems. The research used secondary data collection. In conclusion, a pet owner's reason for having a pet was to significantly affect his or her tolerance for various behaviour problems. To most effectively involve owners in their pets behaviour therapy, veterinarians need to identify the different factors that influence how owners treat their pet and adjust treatment strategies that could be utilised

Eva Bernek e.t.a.l (2021) proposed an elaborate management system for amelioration of overpopulation and abandonment of pets by using greater regulations that control the supply and demand of the pet market, highlighting the role of the mandatory owners liability insurance to prevent abandonment. The study used secondary data resources for its research. It concluded that current overpopulation and abandonment prevention mechanisms are unable to solve these issues because the causes appear to have

unforeseen situations as common variables. The paper recommended newer policies and framework to curb the said issues.

Shireen Jagriti Bhalla e.t.a.l (2021) conducted this research to study about stray dogs living alongside the human communities sharing urban space in Bangalore. The provided insight into the conflicts between humans and free ranging dogs and proposed new population management techniques that are less stressful on the environments. The study uses mixed methods approach to comprehend the ecological and sociological facets of free ranging dog-human relationships in Bangalore, India. The study concluded that only 105 to 185 of the households supported the large population of dogs, highlighting the need for residents to act responsibly towards dogs and also that the density of houses, bakeries and garbage piles were an indicator of dog population size in a particular area.

David Smith (2008) studied the spatial awareness and problem solving abilities of Crossbred dogs and pure Pedigree dogs. The study involved 100 dogs that underwent 7 tests. The study concluded that crossbred dogs were better suited for Police work as guides for the blind. It discovered that crossbred dogs had better spatial awareness and problem solving abilities than Pedigrees.

N J Rooney and D R Sargan (2010) studied the welfare concerns that arise due to direct and indirect effects of selective breeding in pedigree dogs. The study utilised secondary data resources to conduct the study. It concluded that each individual breed suffered from its own list of problems and that a case by case approach needs to be adopted for each breed to ensure its survival and improvement. The paper has also suggested an array of suggestions which may help improve the welfare of pedigree dogs.

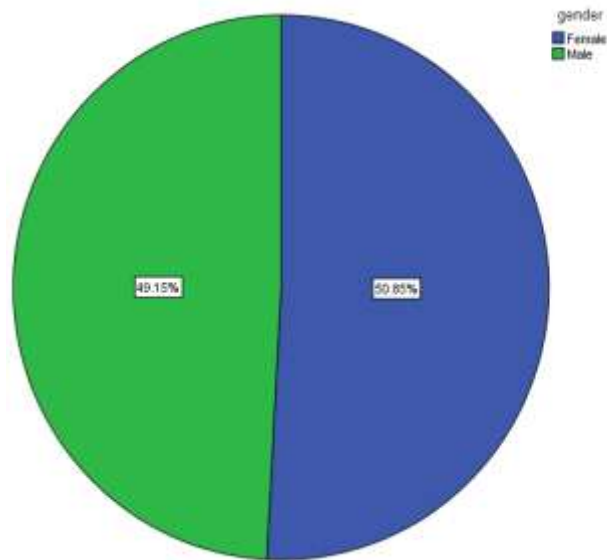
Tammie e.t.a.l studied why scientists need to develop valid and reliable behavior tests for dogs kept as companions. The study used several secondary data research papers to conduct this study. This paper focuses on how roles for dogs have evolved and the importance of taking physical health and perceived beauty into consideration when selecting dogs as companions or during breeding. It suggested the development of behavioural assessments, in order to identify desirable canine behaviour traits as this would serve as a valuable tool of assessment in an array of dog-related organisations.

S.M.K Karthikeyan e.t.a.l (2015) studied the Chippiparai breed, a native breed of Tamilnadu and assessed its physical and performance characteristics. The study was conducted in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu and a total of 50 pet owners along with their dogs participated in this study. The study concluded that the Chippiparai dog breed is a medium-sized ndegenous sight hound dog of Tamil Nadu.

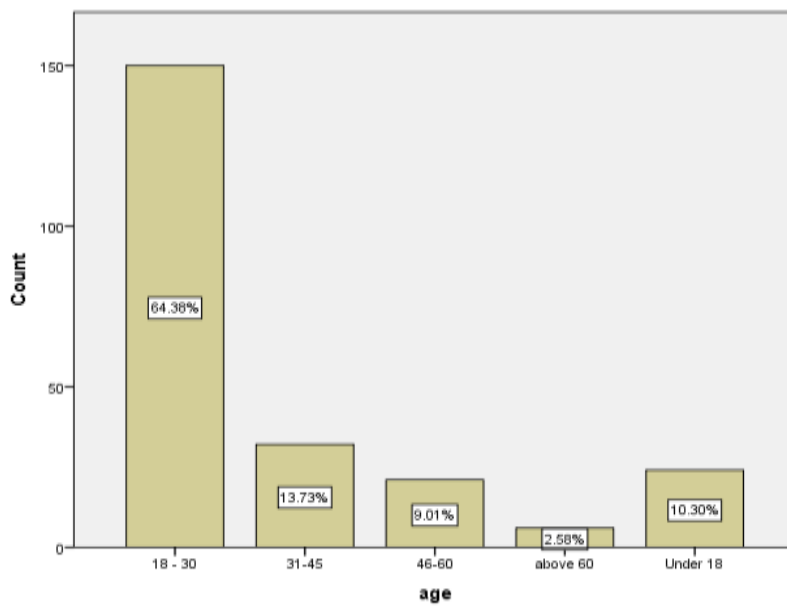
METHODOLOGY

The research method used here is descriptive in nature. The research sampling has been conducted using convenience sampling and the total number of samples used for analysis is 234. The research collected information from relevant samples through a questionnaire. The Independent variables utilised in this study are age, gender and income of the respondent. The dependent variables in this study are namely breed of the dog, means of obtaining the dog, factors that influence the choice of dog, license status of breeder and consumer opinion on various statements regarding the features of pedigree and Indian mongrels. The tools used for analysis are pie charts and bar graphs through SPSS.

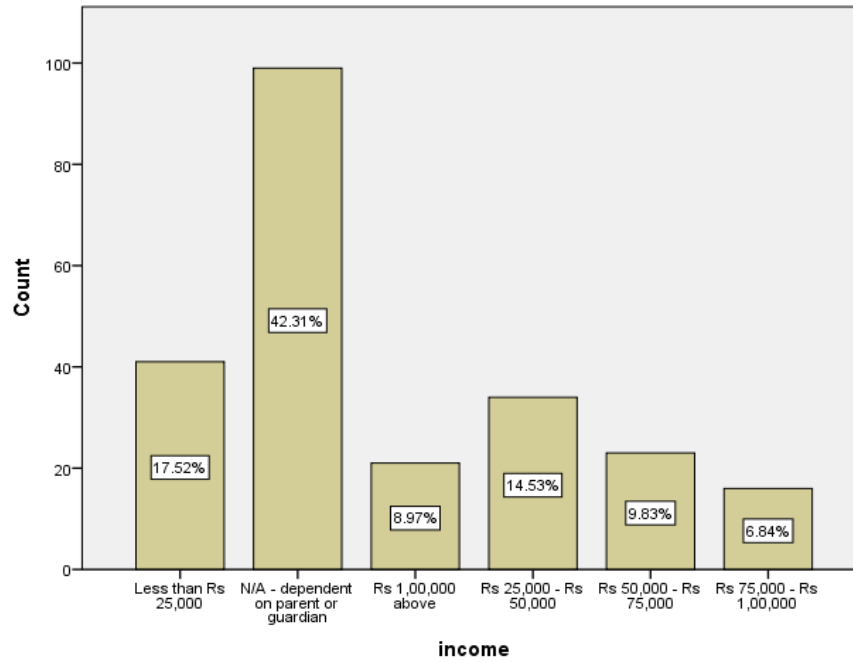
ANALYSIS



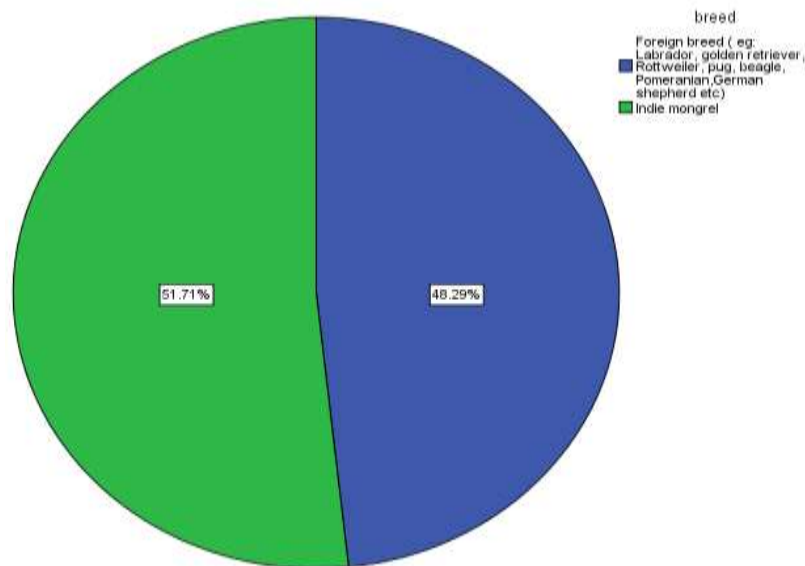
Legend: Fig 1: shows the gender distribution of respondents



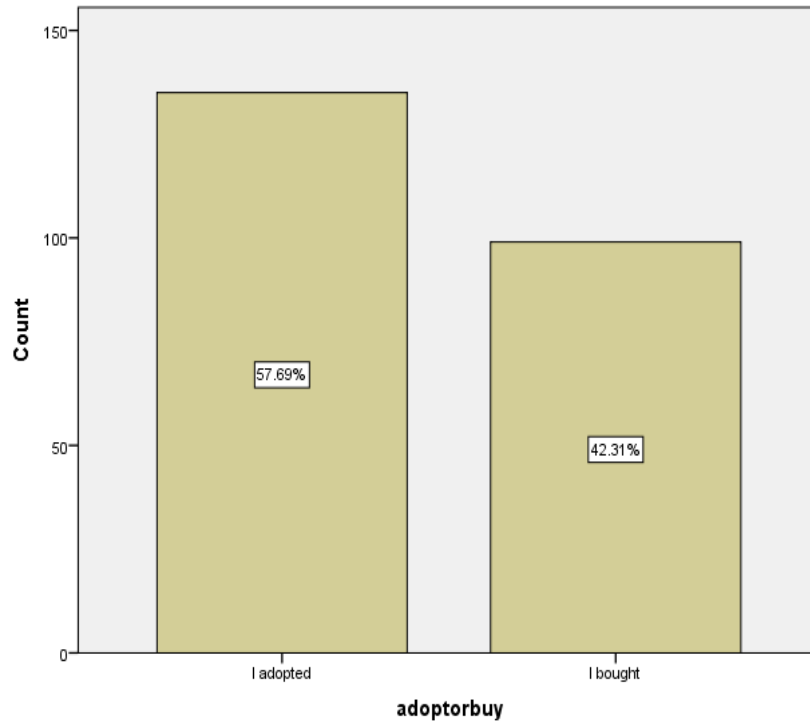
Legend: Fig 2 : shows the distribution of age groups of respondents



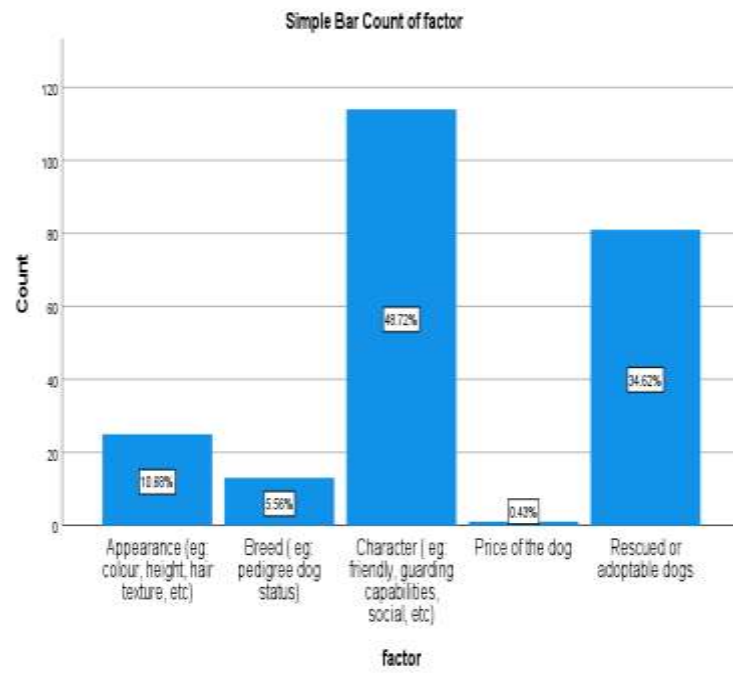
Legend: Fig 3: Shows the income status of respondents



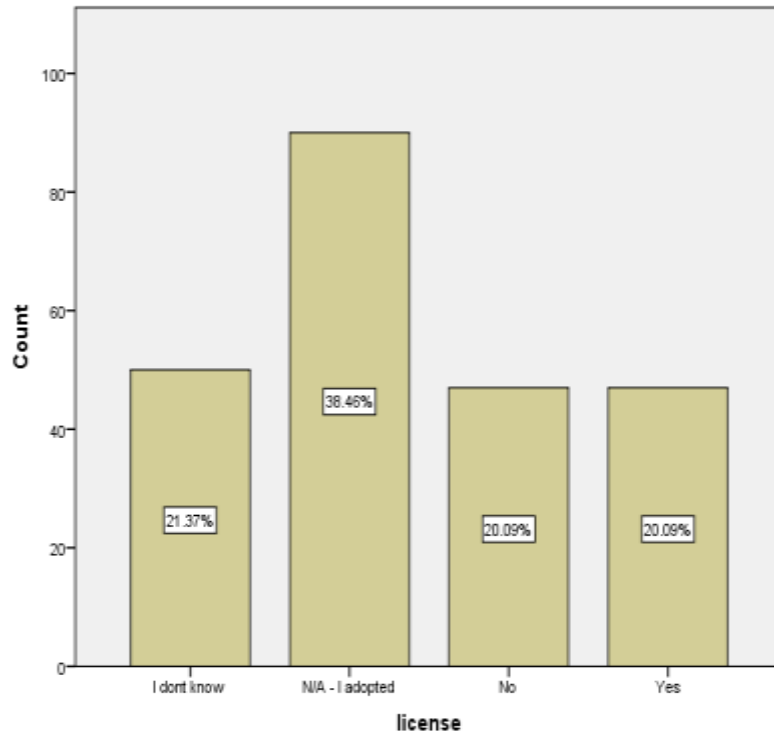
Legend: Fig 4 :shows the distribution of Indian mongrel owners and Pedigree breed dog owners.



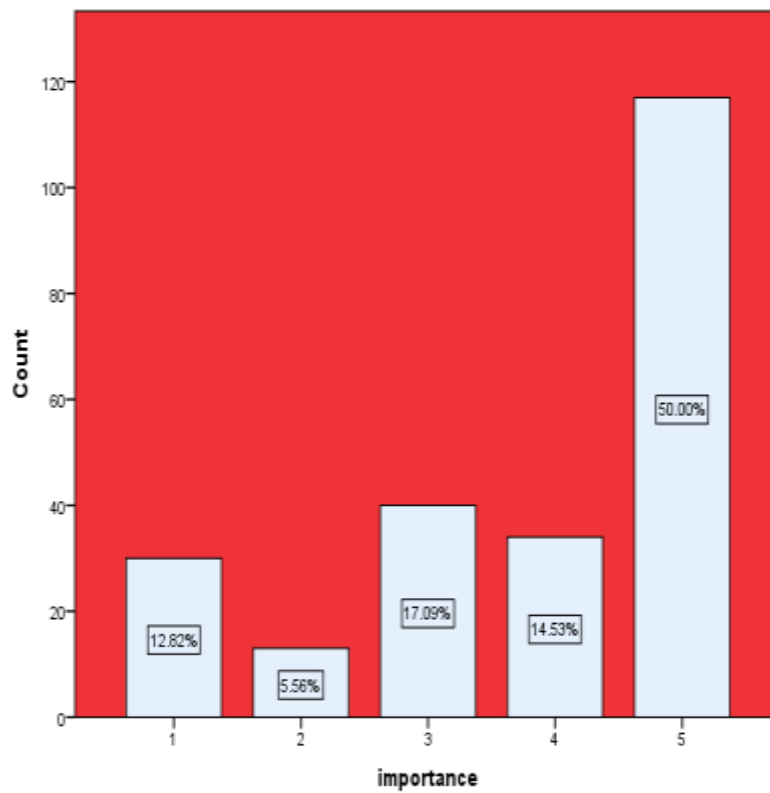
Legend: Fig 5: shows the distribution of adopted owners and bought pet dog owners



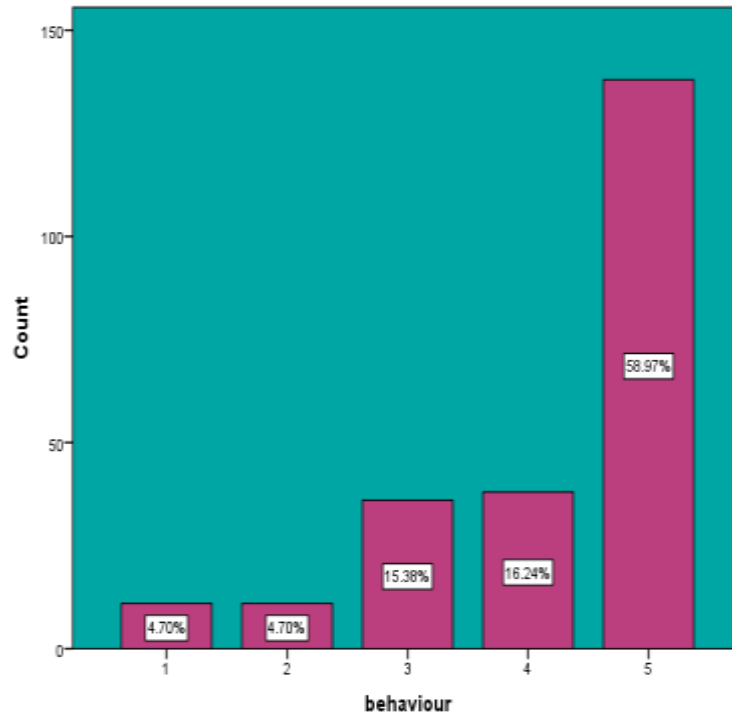
Legend: Fig 6: shows the factors influencing the selection of a pet dog



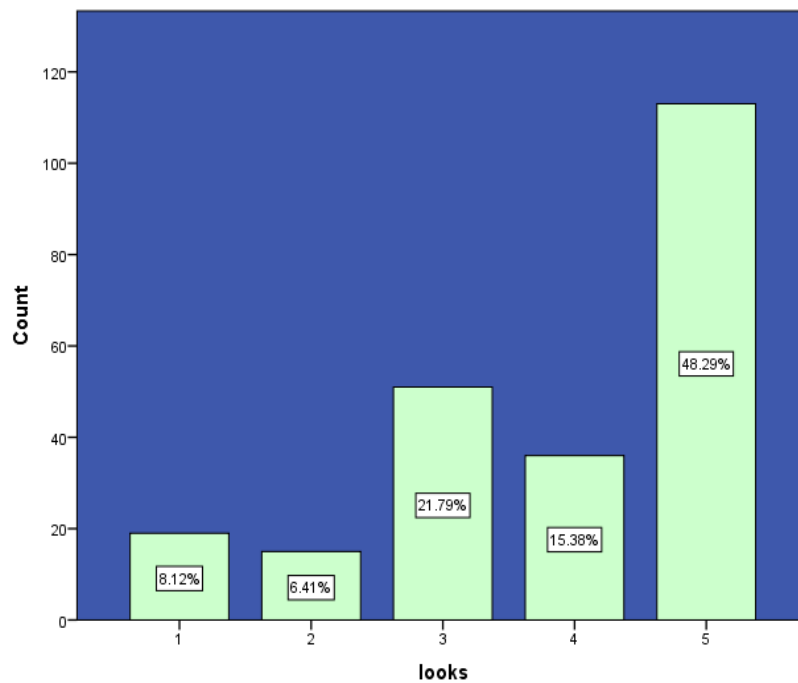
Legend: Fig 7: shows the proportion of dogs obtained from licensed and non-licensed breeders



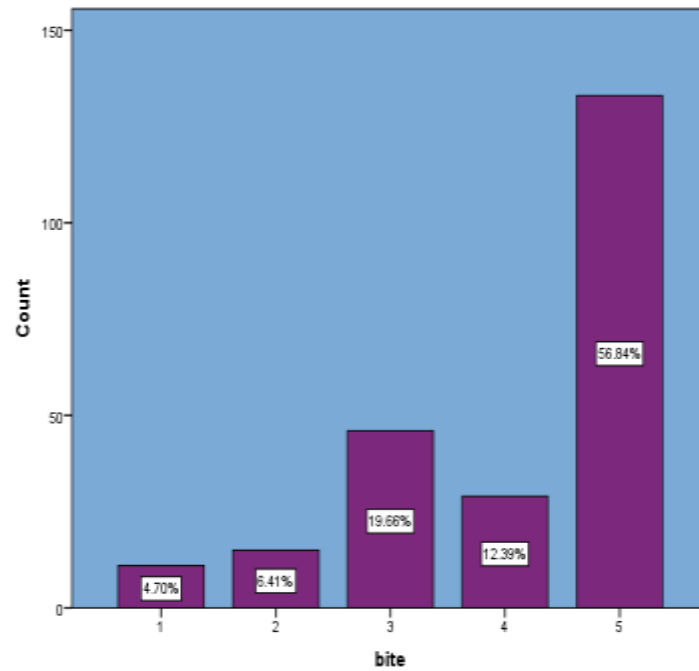
Legend: Fig 8: shows the importance of breed to respondents



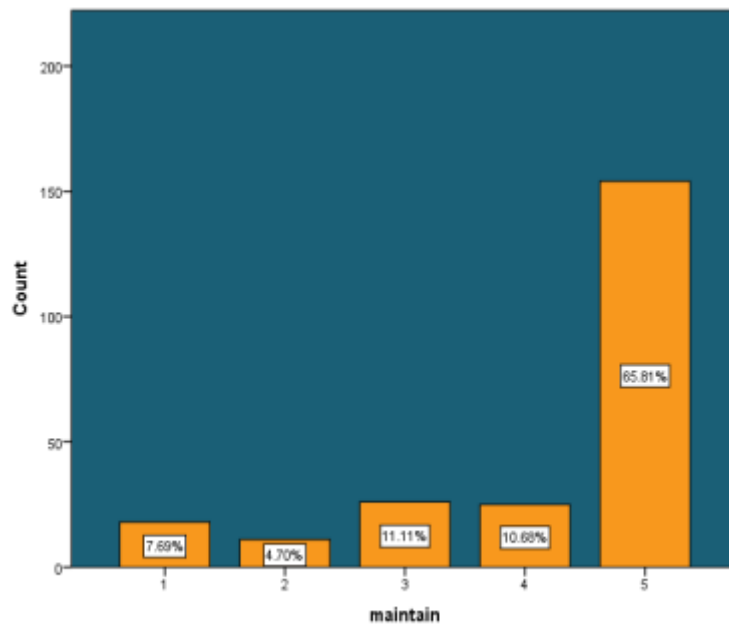
Legend: Fig 9: shows the response distribution for the statement "pedigree dogs are better behaved than Indian mongrels."



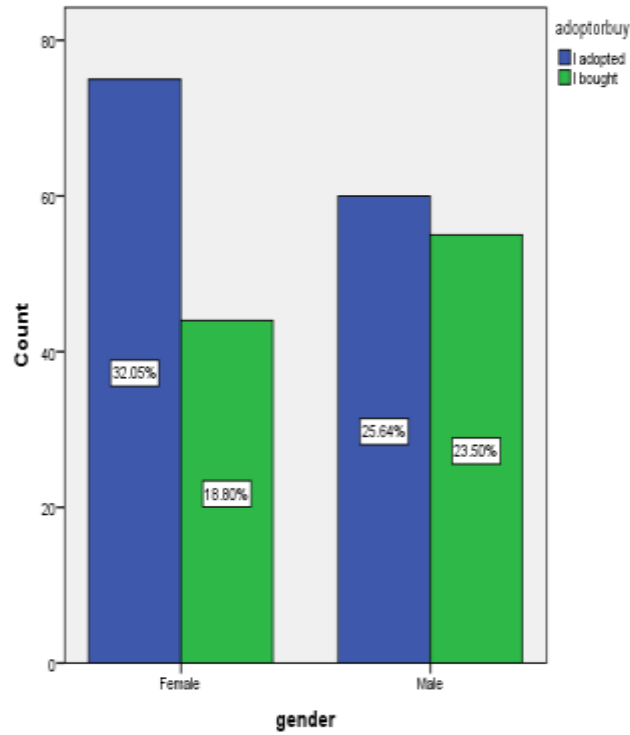
Legend: Fig 10: shows the response distribution for the statement "pedigree dogs are better looking than Indian mongrels"



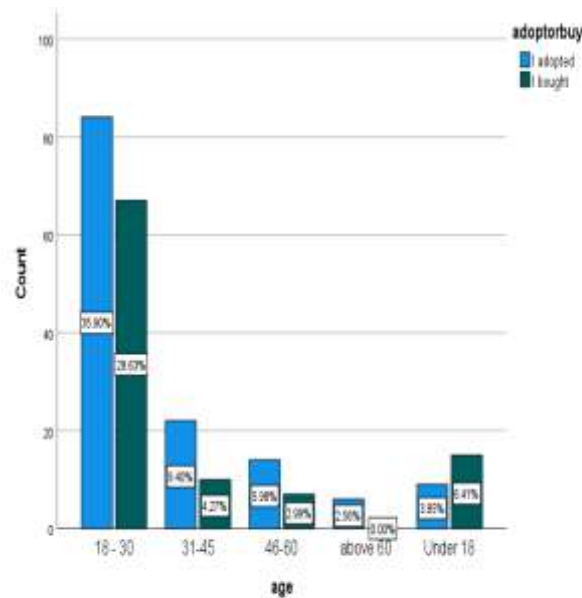
Legend: Fig 11: Response distribution for "Indian mongrels are more likely to bite compared to Pedigree dogs"



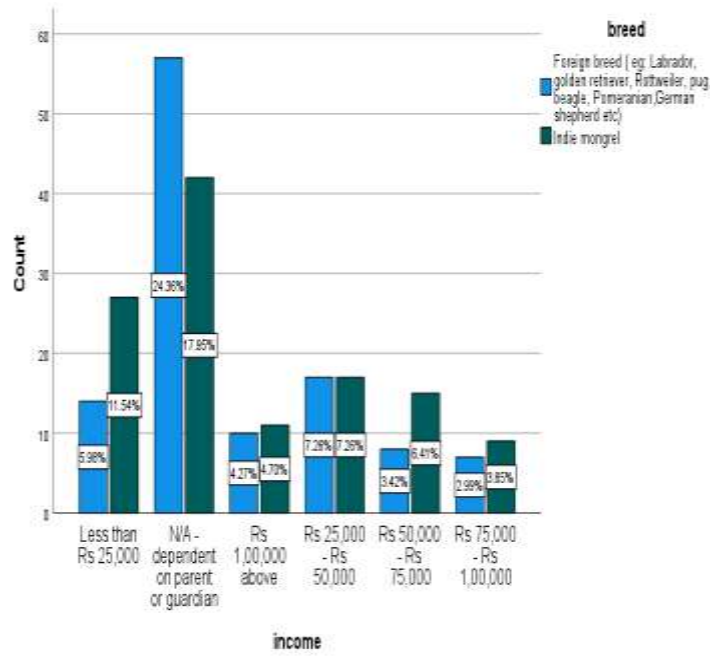
Legend: Fig 12: shows the response distribution for "Pedigree dogs are easier to maintain compared to Indian mongrels"



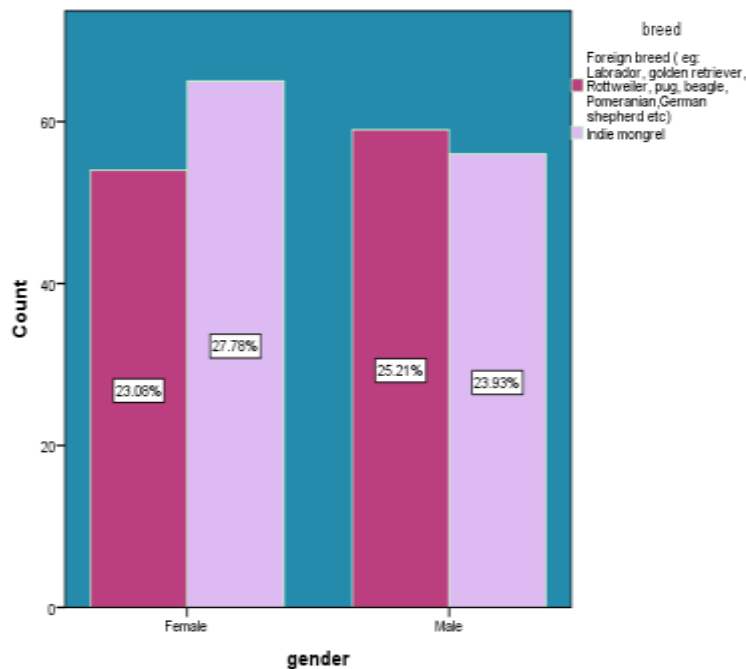
Legend: Fig 13: shows the relationship between the gender of respondents and their means of obtaining a dog.



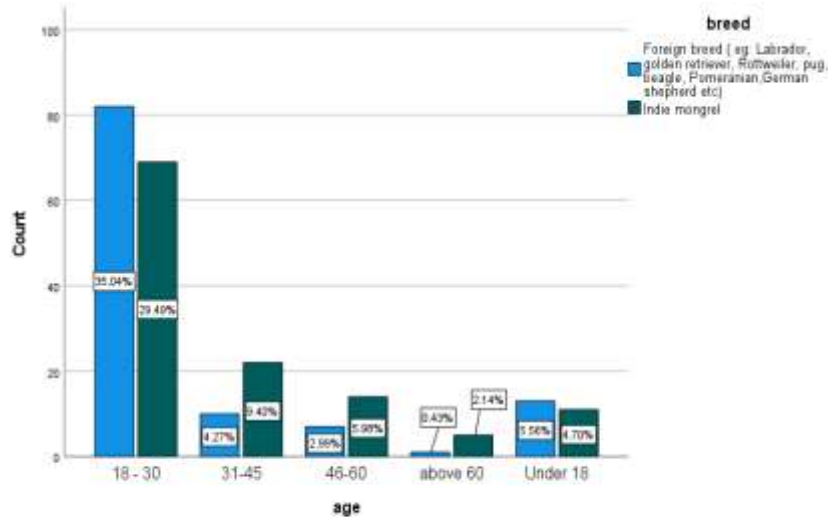
Legend: Fig 14: shows the relationship between age of respondent and the means of obtaining a dog.



Legend: Fig 15: shows the relationship between income of respondents and their choice of breed.



Legend: Fig 16: shows the relationship between gender of respondents and choice of breed.



Legend: Fig 17: shows the relationship between age of respondent and their choice of breed.

RESULTS

It is revealed that the percentage of male respondents are 49.15% and the percentage of female respondents are 50.85% (Fig:1)

It is revealed that 64.38% of the respondents were between the ages of 18 - 30, 13.73% of the respondents were between the ages of 31 - 40. 9.01% of the respondents were within the age group of 46 - 60, 2.58% displays the percentage of above 60 respondents and 10.30% of the respondents were under the age of 18.(Fig:2)

It is revealed that 17.52% of the respondents were earning less than 25000 rupees per month, 42.31% of the respondents were dependent on a parent or guardian for their livelihood, 8.97% of respondents who earn above 1,00,000 rupees per month, 14.53% of respondents earned between 25,000 rupees to 50,000 rupees per month, 9.83% of the respondents are earned between 50,000 rupees to 75,000 rupees every month and lastly, 6.84% of the respondents were rearing between 75,000 rupees - 1,00,000 rupees per month. (Fig: 3)

It is revealed that 51.71% of the respondents owned an Indian mongrel and 48.29% owned a foreign pedigree dog. (Fig: 4)

It is revealed that 57.69% of the total respondents have adopted their pet dog while 42.31% of the respondents have bought their pet dog. (Fig:5)

It is revealed that 10.68% of respondents declared that appearance was the most important factor followed by 5.56% chose the breed of the dog, 48.72% declared that character mattered the most and 0.43% indicated that price of the dog mattered the most. Lastly 34.62% declared that a rescue or adoptable nature of the dog mattered the most. (Fig :6) It is indicated that 21.37% of the respondents did not know if they bought their dog from a licensed breeder or not, 38.46% of the respondents adopted, 20.09% of the respondents bought their dog from a non licensed breeder and 20.09% of the respondents bought their dog from a licensed breeder.

(Fig:7) It is shown that 12.82% of the respondents strongly agreed to the given statement. 5.56% of the respondents who agreed, 17.09% of the respondents have taken a neutral stance, 14.53% of the respondents have disagreed with the statement and lastly 50.00% of the respondents have strongly disagreed. (Fig:8)

It is revealed that 4.07% of the respondents have strongly agreed to the statement given, Another 4.70% of the respondents have agreed, 15.30% of the respondents have taken a neutral stance, 16.24% of the respondents have disagreed with the given statement and 58.97% of the respondents have strongly disagreed. (Fig:9)

It is revealed that 8.12% of the respondents strongly agreed to the said statement. 6.14% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 21.79% of the respondents chose to remain neutral, 15.38% of the respondents disagreed with the statement and 48.29% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the given statement.(Fig:10) It is shown that 4.70% of respondents have strongly agreed to the said statement, 6.41% of the respondents have agreed, a total of 19.66% of respondents have chosen to remain neutral, 12.39% of respondents have disagreed with the statement and lastly 56.84% of the respondents have strongly disagreed with the statement(Fig:11) It is revealed that 7.69% of respondents strongly agreed to the statement, 4.70% agreed, 11.11% chose to remain neutral, 1.68% disagreed and 65.81% strongly disagreed.(Fig:12) It is shown that in the female category 32.05% of the total respondents adopted while 18.80% bought. In the male category, 25.64% of the total respondents who were male adopted while 23.50% bought their pet dog.(Fig:13) It is revealed that between the age bracket of 18-30, 35.90% of the total respondents had adopted and 28.63% had bought their dog. In the age bracket of 31-45, 9.40% have adopted and 4.27%. Have bought. In the 46-60 age bracket, 5.98% have adopted and 2.99% have bought. In the above 60 age category, 2.56% from the total respondents have adopted. In the under 18 category 3.85% of the respondents have adopted while 6.41% have bought their pet dog. (Fig:14) It is shown that In the less than 25,000 Rs per month category, 5.98% of the total respondents owned a foreign breed while 11.54% owned an Indie mongrel. In the dependent category 24.36% owned a pedigree dog and 17.95% owned an Indian mongrel dog. 4.27% owned a foreign breed while 4.70% owned an Indian mongrel in the Rs 1,00,000 above category. In the Rs 25,000 - Rs 50,000 category, 7.26% owned a foreign pedigree and the same percentage of respondents owned an Indian mongrel. 3.42% owned a Pedigree while 6.41% owned an Indian mongrel in the Rs 50,000 - Rs 75,000 per month category. Lastly in the Rs 75,000 - Rs 1,00,000 per month category, 2.99% of the respondents owned a pedigree and 3.85% owned an Indian mongrel dog. (Fig:15) It is revealed that 23.08% of the total respondents who were female, own a pedigree dog while 27.78% of the total respondents who were female own an Indian mongrel dog. In the male category, 25.21% of the respondents who are male own a foreign pedigree dog while 23.93% of respondents who are male own an Indian mongrel. (Fig:16) It is revealed that between the age groups of 18-30, 35.04% of the total respondents own a Pedigree dog while 29.49% own an Indie mongrel. In the age category of 31-45, 4.27% own a foreign breed while 9.40% own an Indian mongrel. Between the ages of 46-60 2.99% of. The respondents own. Foreign pedigree dog while 5.98% own an Indian mongrel. Above the age of 60 respondents have 0.43% owning a Foreign pedigree dog while 2.14% own an Indian mongrel. Lastly in the under 18 age category, 5.56% of the total respondents own a foreign Pedigree dog while 4.70% own an Indian mongrel. (Fig:17)

DISCUSSION

In figure 5, the results indicate that the majority of total respondents (57.69%) have adopted compared to 42.30% who bought their dog .The rise in proportion of adopted dog owners over store bought dog owners suggests a change of preference in the consumer's mindset. This could be because the awareness of consumers is much higher than before regarding the cruel practices involved in the dog breeding industry leading them to make more ethical choices. Secondly, adopted dogs usually cost less or come for free as opposed to store bought dogs that are accompanied with a heavy price tag. The recent ban on import of foreign pedigree dogs has caused massive inflation in the price range of a pedigree dog, this could also be a contributing factor in the shift of mindset in consumers. (Fig:5)

Figure 14 reveals that in the under 18 age category alone, the amount of store bought dog owners are higher than adopted dog owners as opposed to all the other categories where adopted owners are higher than the store bought dog owners. This difference of consumer preference in this age category alone could be due to several reasons. Firstly,

a consumer below the age of 18, isn't completely aware of all the information available regarding the pet market. This age group is highly susceptible to following popular market trends rather than making informed consumer choices. Secondly, this age group of respondents is majorly dependent upon their parent or guardian to satisfy their wants and needs therefore the expensive nature of the store bought dog doesn't bear relevance to their choices since they aren't monetarily making the purchase.(Fig :14)

In figure 17, as the age group increases there is a rise in Indian mongrel owners as opposed to foreign pedigree breed owners. This could be because, as the age of respondent increases, their financial and career commitments grow and therefore the time available for maintaining a pet dog diminishes, for this reason, they may choose to rear a dog that is easy to maintain. Secondly, the older age groups are far more knowledgeable about financial planning, considering that Pedigree dogs cost a lot more to buy and maintain, they would much likely prefer Indian mongrel which are easier to maintain and at most occasions come free of cost. (Fig:17) In figure 7, 20.09% of respondents didn't buy their dog from a licensed breeder while 21.37% didn't know if the breeder they bought from was licensed or not. It is illegal for breeders to sell without a breeding license and the results goes on to show how many illegal breeders continue to sell to buyers. The buyers may have bought from such breeders because they weren't aware of the license law. Secondly, unlicensed breeders sell their puppies for a much lower rate as opposed to licensed breeders, this could also encourage people to buy from unlicensed breeders.(Fig:7)

Limitations of the Study

A Convenient sampling method has been used in this study.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that a significant proportion of pet owners who own foreign pedigree dogs are still unaware whether they bought their dog from a licensed owner or not and some bought their dog from unlicensed breeders. This lays emphasis on the lack of regulation in the dog market and highlights the need for awareness programs that encourage responsible dog ownership in the public. It is also noticed that there is a change in consumer preferences, a lot more pet owners are now preferring to adopt instead of buying and the proportion of Indian mongrel owners are higher than pedigree dog owners.

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