



ISSN (E): 2277-7695  
ISSN (P): 2349-8242  
NAAS Rating: 5.23  
TPI 2022; SP-11(4): 1939-1942  
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[www.thepharmajournal.com](http://www.thepharmajournal.com)  
Received: 12-02-2022  
Accepted: 15-03-2022

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## Profile of commercial dog breeders in Kerala

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#### Abstract

Commercial dog breeding in Kerala is a promising business that has the potential to eliminate youth unemployment and serve as a means of livelihood. However, the state lacks an authentic information on the profile of commercial dog breeders engaged in this business. In light of these facts, the present study was conducted to identify the socioeconomic and socio-personal profile characteristics of commercial dog breeders of Kerala. The study was conducted following ex-post facto research design on 60 commercial dog breeding units randomly selected from the Thrissur and Ernakulam districts of Kerala. The data collection was done using structured pre tested interview schedule. The findings of the commercial dog breeder profile revealed that all commercial dog breeders were men, with the majority being middle-aged and graduates. The majority of them were businessmen, followed by farmers and private employees. The significant majority of commercial dog breeders were married and had a nuclear family of no more than five individuals. In terms of housing, the majority of them own a home. Half of the commercial dog breeders has a medium level of annual income with 2,00,000 to 5,00,000 lakhs Rs, while 46.66 per cent had a high annual income of more than 5,00,000 Rs. The present study threw light on the general scenario on the commercial dog breeding units in Kerala, which shall act as a benchmark for further diversified research in this sector.

**Keywords:** demography, purebred, dog breeder

### 1. Introduction

Dogs were domesticated and socialised for a variety of reasons, making this interspecies teamwork one of the earliest animals-human interactions. This partnership shaped civilisation. Several research have attempted to explain the reasons behind this connection. The recent concept proposes that dogs and humans evolved together, resulting in a genetic propensity to strengthen cooperation and communication skills (Range *et al.*, 2015) [13]. Dogs are one of the most popular pets, especially in western countries, due to the benefits of human-dog contact. It's hard to estimate the number of dogs per household and the demand for puppies. The sources of a puppy are an important element that people consider before getting a dog since behavioural problems are reportedly more in dogs procured from puppy mills and backyard breeders. It may also be noted that there is a heavy dearth of information on commercial dog breeders.

As per the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Dog Breeding and Marketing) Rules, 2017, a breeder is "An individual or group of persons who own dogs of specific breeds for breeding and sale of dogs and pups, and includes boarding kennel operator, intermediate handler and trader". Commercial dog breeding in Kerala has of late becoming more rewarding because of the unprecedented historical event, the Covid-19 pandemic that has resulted in an escalated demand for puppies and shortage in supply of the same due to lockdown and work from home situation. This situation coupled with limited resources and daily supplies provided people with time for pet animals that provided them with multifarious advantages, including physical and psychological. Loneliness felt by the people around the country especially among adolescents and the elderly coupled with prevailing sense of insecurity in the country as well as the need to ensure security at cost effectively might have contributed to this surge in demand for puppies. Globally, the market of companion dogs has been growing and this has been accompanied by worldwide acknowledgement of dog breeders as profitable venture and as a reliable source of income. Due to restrictions on transport, the availability of puppies decreased and the prices shot up. Pet ownership can provide important companionship and also facilitate social connections, which may be particularly important in case of two socially isolated older adults. Many researchers have highlighted the importance of the dog owner's profile with in development of the dog's behaviour. Canine behaviours such as aggressiveness

and disobedience may be influenced by the number and diversity of family members as well as the kind of housing (Kobelt *et al.*, 2003; Bennett and Rohlf, 2007)<sup>[7, 2]</sup>. Kubinyi *et al.* (2009)<sup>[8]</sup> discovered that a dog's behaviour was affected by the owner's age, gender, education, previous experience with dogs, and the reason for keeping the dog. A thorough understanding of dog breeders' profile and choices will undoubtedly aid public health professionals in raising public awareness of zoonotic illnesses and their containment. This could also help people looking for a dog connect with veterinarians who can direct them to breeders who are passionate about producing healthy puppies. It's also crucial to understand the puppy's origins before purchasing it, as well as the characteristics of the breeding facility, because early experiences can have a long-term impact on the dog's behaviour. It is the scientific community's and professionals' responsibility to support the system.

## 2. Materials and methods

In order to study the commercial dog breeding units of Kerala, two districts, Thrissur and Ernakulam, were purposefully selected based on the fact that these districts have the highest number of purebred dog litters registered with the Kennel Club of India. A sample of 60 commercial dog breeders were selected randomly, from a sampling frame prepared by key informant's technique. Key informants included veterinarians, members of Kennel Club of India and commercial dog breeders. Separate sampling frame was constructed for each of these 2 districts. Simple random sampling was then used to select 30 respondents from Thrissur and 30 respondents Ernakulam District. The data collection was done using a well-structured pretested interview schedule through direct non participant observation in order to ensure the reliability of data. Overall, this questionnaire consisted of 22 mixed questions (multiple choice and open ended). The data were analysed using appropriate statistical methods.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Age

The findings of the study revealed that, majority of the commercial dog breeders under study were above forty years of age. As Middle-aged individuals have the wealth of expertise and enthusiasm. A productive human resource has enough time and energy to learn about commercial dog breeding, however, substantial efforts should be made to ensure that younger generations also are actively involved in commercial dog breeding sector. These findings are quite similar to those reported by Raghy (2017)<sup>[12]</sup> where majority of the pet owners were middle aged.

### 3.2 Gender

It was also noticed that there existed a complete male domination in commercial dog breeding ventures in these study areas. It may be due to the misunderstanding that the enterprise where more economical transactions are involved like commercial dog breeding ventures, where heavy capital investment and frequent transactions, are considered be suitable for males. Studies shows that the dogs of male dog owners were calmer than those of female dog owners (Kubinyi *et al.*, 2009)<sup>[8]</sup>. These findings were however in consonance with those of Raghy (2017)<sup>[12]</sup>, Demian *et al.* (2020)<sup>[4]</sup> and Das *et al.* (2021) who reported that majority of the dog breeders of Kerala and Odisha were male.

### 3.3 Educational status

Majority of the respondents (43.33 per cent) were graduate,

33.33 per cent had plus two or equivalent as their educational qualification, 11.66 per cent had passed SSLC (Secondary School Leaving Certificate), 8.33 per cent had high school as their qualification and only 3.33 per cent were professionals. Kerala is known for its successes in education, health, gender equality, social justice, and law and order, and boasts India's highest literacy rate. Similar findings were put forward by Demian *et al.* (2020)<sup>[4]</sup> that nearly half of the dog breeders in Kerala state had completed graduation while, 22.5 per cent had a qualification of plus two or its equivalent. Similar findings were also reported by Moliya (2019)<sup>[10]</sup>, Ishola *et al.* (2016)<sup>[5]</sup> who reported that majority of the dog breeders of Maharashtra, Nigeria were graduates.

### 3.4 Occupation

Nearly half of the respondents had business as their occupation. 28.33 per cent were private employees, 25 per cent did agriculture as a source of income. Only 3.33 per cent were government servants. In the study conducted by Sawaimul *et al.* (2009)<sup>[15]</sup> in Nagpur city of Maharashtra noticed that businessmen (38 per cent) were most interested in rearing dogs followed by government employees (16 per cent) and 12 per cent of teachers and students each. The study further reported that veterinary and medical professionals (10 per cent) have shown less interest in dog rearing.

### 3.5 Marital status

The majority of the responders (80 percent) were married, with only 20 per cent being unmarried. Moliya (2019)<sup>[10]</sup> observed similar findings, stating that married and male dog owners were more interested in dog ownership than unmarried dog owners. Gender, marital status, and the age of the dog, as well as size, acquisition age, and breed, were all identified to be strong predictors of prospective canine problematic behaviour (Pirrone *et al.*, 2015)<sup>[11]</sup>.

### 3.7 Family type

Regarding the family type, 58.33 per cent of the respondents had nuclear family with less than five members rest had joint family with more than five members. Similar findings were reported by Moliya (2019)<sup>[10]</sup> that many of the dog owners in Gujarat desired to remain as a nuclear family in order to manage their families in the most cost-effective manner possible. Canine behaviours such as aggressiveness and disobedience may be influenced by the number and diversity of family members as well as the kind of housing (Kobelt *et al.*, 2003; Bennett and Rohlf, 2007)<sup>[7, 2]</sup>.

### 3.6 Types of residence

Majority (65 per cent) of the respondents had own house, 20 per cent had own apartment, 13.33 per cent lived in rented individual house and 1.66 per cent lived in rented apartment. Commercial dog breeders with their own home or apartment had more purchasing power and flexibility in caring for their dogs than those who lived in rented housing. Furthermore, breeders do not need to be concerned about the anticipated risk of shipping a pet dog during the relocation of a rented house. Similar findings were reported by Sakshi (2015)<sup>[14]</sup> that majority of dog owners in Nagpur city lived in their own or rented homes (87.95 per cent).

### 3.8 Annual household income

Half of the respondents are having a medium level (Rs. 2,00,000 to 5,00,000) and 46.66 per cent are having high income (more than Rs. 5000000) while only 3.33 per cent have low annual income (less than Rs. 2000000). However, Sakshi (2015)<sup>[14]</sup> reported that, 30 per cent of the dog owners in Karnata had annual income of Rs. 1,00,000 to 2,00,000

followed by 50,000 to 1,00,000 (23.40 per cent), more than 2,00,000 (11.30 per cent) and less than 50,000.

### 3.10 Years of experience in dog breeding

More than half of the respondents (51.66 per cent) had above fifteen years of experience in dog breeding, 26.66 per cent had an experience of upto 10 years and 21.66 per cent had 10 to 15 years of experience. According to Sakshi (2015) [14], dog owners in Karnataka have an average of 11.2 years of dog-rearing experience. Kubinyi *et al.* (2009) [8] reported that previous experience with dog had detectable effects on a dog's behaviour.

### 3.9 Training exposure in dog breeding

Majority (68.33 per cent) of the respondents had not attended any trainings regarding dog management only 31.66 per cent had attended trainings regarding dog management. Lack of knowledge and information regarding welfare risks, practical

and theoretical knowledge in training dogs can act as the barriers to the adoption of humane training methods in dogs. Bimal *et al.* (2017) in a study on impact of training on level of knowledge of goat farmers in Kerala reported that trainings had positive effect on the level of knowledge gained by the farmers.

### 3.11 Location of kennel

Majority of the respondents' (58.33 per cent) kennel were located in urban areas whereas 41.66 per cent of the kennels were located at rural areas. In commercial dog breeding operations, the location of the kennel could be an essential aspect. Rural places are less competitive and more economical to start up, although urban areas may be closer to the materials need. Similar findings were reported by (Bhadesiya and Raval, 2014), who found that dog owners in Gujarat preferred to rear dogs in rural regions due to the lower cost of purchasing and raising dogs.

**Table 1:** Socio economic profile of commercial dog breeders

Parameter	Frequency	%
<b>Age</b>		
Below 40 years	19	31.66
40 – 60 years	31	51.66
Above 60 years	10	16.66
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	60	100
Female	0	0
<b>Educational status</b>		
High school	5	8.33
SSLC passed	7	11.66
Plus two/Equivalent	20	33.33
Graduate	26	43.33
Professional	2	3.33
<b>Occupation</b>		
Business	26	43.33
Government servant	2	3.33
Private employee	17	28.33
Agriculture	15	25
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	48	80
Unmarried	12	20
<b>Family type</b>		
Less than 5 members	35	58.33
5 or more members	25	41.66
<b>Type of residence</b>		
Own house	39	65
Own apartment	12	20
Rented individual house	8	13.33
Rented apartment	1	1.66
<b>Annual household income</b>		
below Rs. 20,00,00 annum	2	3.33
Rs. 20,00,00-50,00,00 per annum	30	50
above 50,00,00 per annum	28	46.66
<b>Years of experience in dog breeding</b>		
up to 10 years	16	26.66
10 - 15 years	13	21.66
above 15 years	31	51.66
<b>Training exposure in dog breeding</b>		
No trainings attended	41	68.33
Attended one or more training	19	31.66
No trainings attended	41	68.33
<b>Location of kennel</b>		
Rural	25	41.66
Urban	35	58.33

#### 4. Conclusions

The findings on the profile of commercial dog breeders revealed that majority were middle aged and all of them were male. Most of them were businessmen followed by those involved in agriculture, and private employees. Educational qualification of commercial dog breeders was towards the higher side with 43.33 per cent were graduate and 33.33 per cent of them reported that they had completed plus two or equivalent. Majority of the commercial dog breeders were married and having a nuclear type family with less than five members. Regarding the type of residence most of them own a house. Half of the commercial dog breeders has a medium level of annual income with 2,00,000 to 5,00,000 lakhs Rs, while 46.66 per cent had a high annual income of more than 5,00,000 Rs. The present study threw light on the general scenario on the commercial dog breeding units in Kerala, which shall act as a benchmark for further diversified research in this sector.

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