



## DEVELOPMENT OF BREED PREFERENCE INDEX FOR PURE-BRED DOGS

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**ABSTRACT** A study was carried out to assess the preference of the dog owners for different breeds of dogs, the factors influencing breed preference by the dog owners and to develop a Breed Preference Index (BPI). It was found that the most preferred breed of dog in Puducherry was Labrador retriever, followed by Doberman pinscher, German Shepherd Dog, Beagle, Boxer, Dachshund, Mastiff, English Cocker Spaniel, Pug, Great Dane, Golden retriever and Pomeranian. The major factors that influenced breed preference were activeness, general appearance, size and utility. Activeness was the first factor for preference in breeds like German Shepherd Dog, Pug and Spitz, whereas general appearance was the main factor for preference in Labrador and Great Dane. Utility as a guard dog formed the main factor for preferring Doberman. Size mattered in Dachshund; which was the main reason for preferring the breed. The other factors that influenced the preference of dogs were coat, good with children, easy to handle, cost, ears and eyes; though at a low level.

**KEYWORDS :** Pet dogs, Pure - bred, Preference

Owning<sup>1</sup> a dog is a lifetime commitment and responsibility. A breed of dog should be chosen that suits the home and lifestyle of the dog owner. Responsible pet ownership results in a rewarding life for the pets and its human family. This not only required total commitment to maintain optimal health of the dog, but also a commitment for selecting an appropriate companion dog and raising it in a fashion that reduced the probability of undesirable aggressive responses<sup>1</sup>. It was reported that about 42 per cent of the dog owners reared medium and small sized breeds like German Shepherd Dog, Labrador and Dachshund in Central Kerala<sup>2</sup>. In Nagpur, 28 per cent of dog owners reared German Shepherd Dog, followed by 16 per cent Great Dane and remaining 20 per cent were other breeds<sup>2</sup>. This indicated that 44 per cent of dog owners preferred German Shepherd Dog and Great Dane mainly because of the size of dog which was used for guarding. In a study conducted in three different cities (Delhi, Jaipur and Bareilly) of Northern India, it was observed that nine major breeds of dogs were reared<sup>3</sup>. This included Spitz (19.2 per cent), German Shepherd Dog (18 per cent), Labrador (8.3 per cent), Doberman (6.1 per cent) and Pomeranian (4.0 per cent). The majority of the dogs were mongrel (28 per cent). The data reflected the growing fondness of pet owners in Northern India to own a dog belonging to recognized breeds, as 72 per cent of the owners were having dogs of specific breeds.

#### MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study was undertaken in 2016 in the Union Territory of Puducherry with an objective to study and assess the factors influencing breed preference by the dog owners in Puducherry region and to develop a Breed Preference Index (BPI) to understand the preference of the dog owners to a specific breed of dog and the purpose for which the dog is being reared / adopted / purchase.

The methodology included selection of the locale, selection of sample, pilot study, data collection, preparation of Breed Preference Index and analysis of data.

A total of 347 dog owners who owned 484 dogs (selected from Puducherry Municipality and TVCC, RIVER) formed the population size for this study. Based on the proportion of the respondents owning different breeds, a sample of 150 respondents was arrived at who owned 164 dogs through random sampling (Table 1).

Primary data for the study was collected through interview schedule and observation made at the owner's premises. The preference of individual owner for the specific breed was ascertained on a four point scale of preference index by adopting the idea of<sup>4</sup> Each dog owner was asked to mention four breeds of dogs according to their order of preference irrespective of the breed they were presently rearing. These breeds of dogs that were preferred by 150 dog owners were ranked on a

four point continuum scale as Very much preferred (4 points), Much preferred (3 points), Preferred (2 points) and Least preferred (1 point). The score was calculated for each breed, after which the Breed Preference Index (BPI) was derived with the formula:

$$\text{BPI} = \frac{\text{Score obtained by each breed}}{\text{Maximum score possible}} \times 100$$

The preference of 150 dog owners for different breeds of dogs was then ranked according to the Breed Preference Index (BPI), irrespective of the breed they were rearing presently. Each dog owner was then asked to mention the reasons as to why they selected the breed of dog they are presently rearing. The reasons for preferring the breed of dog that is being reared was enumerated and the frequency was calculated. The reasons for selecting the breed of dog were then ranked based on the frequency obtained breed-wise. This was done only with owners having dogs that were purchased (the dogs that were gifted and adopted were not taken into consideration for enumerating the factors influencing breed preference).

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The preference of 150 dog owners for different breeds of dogs according to the Breed Preference Index (BPI), irrespective of the breed they were rearing presently and the factors that influenced the preference of the breed they are presently rearing is given in Tables 3. From the study it was found that the most preferred breed of dog in Puducherry region was Labrador Retriever followed by Doberman, German Shepherd Dog, Beagle, Boxer, Dachshund, Mastiff, English Cocker Spaniel, Pug, Great Dane, Golden retriever and Pomeranian (Table 2). Of the 150 dog owners, 62 per cent were rearing dogs of their preference, whereas 38 per cent were not able to rear the breed of their preference due to factors that include cost of the dog, maintenance cost, availability and influence from family and friends.

#### Factors influencing breed preference

Each dog owner was asked to mention parameters / reasons as to why they selected the breed of dog they were presently rearing. The reasons for preferring the breed of dog being reared was enumerated and the frequency was calculated. The reasons for selecting the breed of dog were then ranked based on the frequency obtained breed-wise. This was done only with owners having dogs that were purchased (the dogs that were gifted and adopted were not taken into consideration for enumerating the factors influencing breed preference).

#### Factors influencing breed preference in Labrador

Out of 64 Labrador dogs, only 43 were actually purchased. The factors

influencing the preference for Labrador breed of dog are enumerated in Table 2. It is inferred from the above table that General appearance (24.42 per cent), Activeness (23.26 per cent), Body size (19.19 per cent) and Coat (13.95 per cent) were the major reasons provided for preferring Labrador breed. The two lowest ranked reasons were Easy to handle (0.58 per cent) and Character of eyes (0.58 per cent). Utility as companion (7.56 per cent), Good with children (6.39 per cent), Ears (2.33 per cent) and Cost (1.74 per cent) were the other parameters considered by the dog owners of Puducherry region for selecting Labrador breed of dog.

**Factors influencing breed preference in Spitz**

Out of 29 Spitz, only 16 were actually purchased. The factors influencing the preference for Spitz breed of dog are enumerated in Table 2. It is inferred from the table that Activeness (23.43 per cent), General appearance (18.75 per cent), Body size (17.19 per cent) and Coat (12.5 per cent) were the major reasons provided for preferring Spitz breed. The two lowest ranked reasons were Cost (1.56 per cent), per cent and Ear type (1.56 per cent). Utility as companion (10.93 per cent), Easy to handle (7.81 per cent), Good with children (6.25 per cent) were the other parameters considered by the dog owners of Puducherry region for selecting Spitz breed of dog.

**Factors influencing breed preference in Pug**

Out of 21 Pug dogs, only 17 were actually purchased. The factors influencing the preference for Pug breed of dog are enumerated in Table 2. It is inferred from the above table that Activeness (25 per cent), Body size (19.12 per cent), Good with children (14.71 per cent) and Coat (14.71 per cent) were the major reasons provided by dog owners for preferring Pug breed. The lowest ranked reason was Ear type (2.94 per cent). General appearance (8.82 per cent), Easy to handle (8.82 per cent), Utility as companion (5.88 per cent), were the other parameters considered by the dog owners of Puducherry region for selecting Pug breed of dog.

**Factors influencing breed preference in German Shepherd Dog**

Out of 16 German Shepherd Dogs, only 13 were actually purchased. The factors influencing the preference for GSD breed of dog are enumerated in Table 2. It could be inferred from the above table that Activeness (26.92 per cent), General appearance (23.08 per cent), Body size (17.31 per cent) and Coat (13.46 per cent) were the major reasons provided by dog owners for preferring German Shepherd Dog breed. The lowest ranked reason was Eye type (1.92 per cent). Utility as guard dog (9.62 per cent) and Good with children (7.69 per cent) were the other parameters considered by the dog owners of Puducherry region for selecting GSD breed of dog.

**Factors influencing breed preference in Doberman**

All the Doberman dogs (n=9) in the study were actually purchased. The factors influencing the preference for Doberman breed of dog are enumerated in Table 2. It could be inferred from the above table that Utility (27.78 per cent), General appearance (22.22 per cent), Activeness (19.44 per cent) and Body size (16.66 per cent) were the major reasons provided by dog owners for preferring Doberman breed. The lowest ranked reason was Good with children (2.78 per cent). Coat (5.56 per cent) and Cost (5.56 per cent) were the other parameters considered by the dog owners of Puducherry region for selecting Doberman breed of dog.

**Factors influencing breed preference in Great Dane**

All the Great Dane dogs (n=7) in the study were actually purchased. The factors influencing the preference for Great Dane breed of dog are enumerated in Table 2. It could be inferred from the above table that General appearance (25 per cent), Activeness (21.43 per cent), Body size (17.86 per cent) and Coat (14.29 per cent) were the major reasons provided by dog owners for preferring Great Dane breed. The lowest ranked reason was Easy to handle (3.57 per cent). Cost (10.71 per cent) and Good with children (7.14 per cent) were the other parameters considered by the dog owners of Puducherry region for selecting Great Dane breed of dog.

**Factors influencing breed preference in Dachshund**

All the Dachshund dogs (n=6) in the study were actually purchased. The factors influencing the preference for Dachshund breed of dog are enumerated in Table 2. It could be inferred from the above table that Body size (25 per cent), General appearance (25 per cent), Activeness (20.83 per cent) and Coat (8.33 per cent) were the major reasons provided by dog owners for preferring Dachshund breed. The lowest ranked reason was Utility (4.17 per cent). Good with children (8.33 per cent), Easy to handle (4.17 per cent) and Cost (4.17 per cent) were the other parameters considered by the dog owners of Puducherry region for selecting Dachshund breed of dog.

**CONCLUSION**

The major factors that influenced breed preference were activeness, general appearance, size and utility. Activeness was the first factor for preference in breeds like German Shepherd Dog, Pug and Spitz, whereas general appearance was the main factor for preference in Labrador and Great Dane. Utility as guard dog formed the main factor for preferring Doberman. Size mattered in Dachshund which was the main reason for preferring the breed. The other factors that influenced the preference of dogs were coat, good with children, easy to handle, cost, ears and eyes; though at a low level.

**Table 1. Proportionate population sampling for the study**

Sl. No.	Breed	Population size		Percentage	Sample Size	
		No. of dogs	No. of owners		No. of owners	No. of dogs
1	Labrador	146	140	40	60	64
2	Spitz	88	56	16	24	29
3	Pug	76	44	13	20	21
4	German Shepherd Dog	45	30	9	14	16
5	Doberman	43	20	6	9	10
6	Great Dane	34	14	4	7	8
7	Dachshund	20	13	4	6	6
8	Rottweiler	9	8		1	1
9	Boxer	5	4		1	1
10	Dalmatian	5	5		1	1
11	Lhasa Apso	3	3		1	1
12	Golden Retriever	2	2	8% %%	1	1
13	Shih Tzu	2	2		1	1
14	Chippiparai	2	1		1	1
15	Cocker Spaniel	2	2		1	1
16	Miniature Pinscher	1	1		1	1
17	Rajapalayam	1	1		1	1
	Total	484	347	100	150	164

**Table 2. Preference of dog breeds by owners**

n = 150

Rank	Breed	Score	BPI
1	Labrador retriever	154	25.67
2	Doberman pinscher	83	13.83
3	German Shepherd Dog	79	13.17
4	Beagle	76	12.67
5	Boxer	40	06.67
6	Dachshund	32	05.33
7	Mastiff	29	04.83
8	English Cocker Spaniel	27	04.50
9	Pug	25	04.17
10	Great Dane	23	03.83
11	Golden retriever	17	02.83
12	Pomeranian	15	02.50
	Total	600	

**Table 3. Major factors influencing breed preference**

n=121

Sl. No.	Parameter	Score	Percentage	Breeds
1	Activeness	120	24.79	GSD Pug Spitz Chippiparai Rajapalayam Dalmatian Rottweiler
2	General Appearance	109	22.52	Labrador retriever Great Dane Boxer Lhasa Apso Golden Retriever Cocker Spaniel
3	Size	91	18.80	Dachshund Shih Tzu Miniature pinscher
5	Utility	40	08.26	Doberman pinscher

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