

# Owner's Perceptions and Experiences with Cat Behavior and Care: A Survey

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## Abstract

This is a quantitative observational and survey research study of social interactions between domestic cats and humans in their home environment. Only statistically analysed data is included, and hypotheses are tested. In other situations, observational data has been paired with subjective judgements of the animals' character and owner personality qualities acquired independently by the owners to help interpret the data. All of the social interactions between cats and humans detailed here imply that the animals were socialised with people as kittens. Such socialised cats exhibit "friendliness to humans," which affects human attachment to the cat. People can sense the visual and aural behavioural characteristics needed to communicate and engage with other cats, and the cats use them while engaging with them. The initiation and initiator of social interactions between cats and humans have been demonstrated to influence both the duration of the interaction phase and the total interaction time in the relationship. Compliance with the partner's interactional "wishes" is positively associated between cats and humans in all human cat dyads studied. Cats do not spontaneously choose one gender or age cohort of people, but the humans in those cohorts behave differently from the cats, causing the latter to react differently. The dyadic interaction pattern has also been demonstrated to differ between men and women, as well as between older and younger people. Nonetheless, cats not just their presence but also their behavior alter human moods, and human mood differences have been found to affect cat behavior. Finally, owners' thoughts and experiences contribute to positive relationships and care for their cats.

**Keywords:** behavior, owners, perception, interaction, experience

## INTRODUCTION:

Small carnivorous mammals include the house cat (*Felis catus*). It is the only domesticated species in the Felidae family, and to distinguish it from the other wild members of the family, it is referred to as the domestic cat or house cat. Although they can be farm cats or feral cats, who wander freely and shun human contact, cats are also widely kept as house pets. Domestic cats are prized by people for their sociability and rodent-killing abilities. Around 60 cat breeds are recognized by several cat registries.

Similar to other felid species, cats have strong, flexible bodies, quick reflexes, keen teeth, and retractable claws that are ideal for hunting small prey like mice and rats. It has good night vision and a keen sense of smell. Cat communication includes meowing, purring, trilling, hissing, snarling, and grunting, as well as cat-specific body language. The cat is a social creature, but it hunts by itself. It is a crepuscular predator,

meaning that dawn and dusk are when it is most active. It can hear mouse and other small mammal sounds that are too faint or high-pitched for human ears. Hormones are both produced and detected by it.

The domestic cat, *Felis catus*, which is commonly kept as a pet and can be found in great numbers in the wild, is the same species that is employed in laboratory research. In order to match their carnivorous diet, cats are highly specialized, clever mammals that have evolved a number of morphological modifications. (Bradshaw 1992 review). As a result, a cat sees the world differently than we do. Because they hunt by sight at night, they have better vision than we do and are more sensitive to sudden movements. However, they are unable to see in great detail or tell the difference between different color tones. (1992, Bradshaw). They are incredibly sensitive to the ultrasonic frequencies utilized by rodents for communication and hunting by sound as well. Although touch predominates in the final moments of murder, their keen sense of smell aids them in finding prey. The vomeronasal organ, a second olfactory system, is employed for both food selection and social interaction.

Sebaceous glands can be found all over the body, but they are most common on the head, in the peri-anal area, and in the spaces between the fingers. Scratching is a marking behavior that leaves visual and olfactory signals, contributes to the maintenance of the claws, and releases fragrance from the interdigital glands. (1905 Rochlitz).

Olfactory signaling can be influenced by physical rubbing against objects, the deposition of urine and feces, and other factors. Cats can exchange fragrance profiles by allorubbing, which is when they rub up against one another and entwine their tails.

Domestic cats typically weigh between 2 and 5 kg. Males weigh substantially more than females. There are breed variances; American Ragdolls or Maine Coons can weigh three times as much as the average, whilst the little Singapura weighs only 2 - 3 kg. Domestic cats that are well-cared for can expect to live for approximately 12 years on average, with many cats living into their twenties.

Cats can live in a wide range of population densities. The density of feral cat colonies ranges from 1 to 2000/km. et al. 1982; Izawa 1984; Izawa Kerby and Macdonald 1988). The social system adopted by feral cats is based on the allocation and accessibility of items. The residence is extensive. Males are often significantly larger than females when breeding. Their home range sizes are determined by both food supplies and social variables.

Male home ranges cover many breeding female territories. Females' home ranges are determined by their needs for shelter and food for themselves and any dependent young. When cats must rely only on hunting for survival, they are frequently solitary because their prey is unlikely to be plentiful enough to support a social group. Cats' home ranges may overlap if food is abundant but unevenly distributed, albeit they would rarely hunt in the same place at the same time.

Social groupings arise where food is locally concentrated, usually as a result of human activity (Kerby & Macdonald 1988). These are mostly matrilineal groups made up of related females and their offspring (including immature males). The number of the groupings varies widely, and it appears that food

availability, kitten mortality from a variety of viral diseases, and human extinction are the primary determinants. Females tolerate other members of the group but actively defend their shared core area (which houses their den and primary source of food) against outsiders. Their hostility rises when there are young kittens in the neighborhood. This restriction on outsiders makes female migration across communities difficult. When males are 2 or 3 years old, they tend to disperse away from their mother's home range. They first avoid all other cats, but as they age and grow stronger, they will challenge other males for female access. Mature males are only loosely linked with any group, but in places where females dwell in groups, an individual male may concentrate his mating attempts inside a single group.

**Table 1.1 Standard biological data for the cat (after Hurni & Rossbach 1987).**

Parameter	Value
Age of replacement of deciduous dentition (months)	3.5 – 6
Life expectancy (years)	9 – 14 (over 20 have been recorded)
Body weight:	
Female (non-breeding) Kg	3 – 4
Male	3 – 7 Birth (g) 110 ± 20
Respiration rate (/min)	16 – 40
Volume (ml)	12 – 15 (0.3 – 0.4l/min)
Arterial blood pressure (mmHg)	120/75 pH 7.35
Blood volume:	
Total (ml/kg body weight)	75
Maximum single sample (ml/kg body weight)	7
Pulse rate (/min)	150 – 200 (range 120 – 220)
Body temperature (° C)	38 – 39.5
Dental formulae	
Deciduous	2 (I 3 3 C 1 1 Pm 3 2 ) = 26
Permanent	2(I 3 3 C 1 1 Pm 3 2 M 1 1 ) = 30
Estrous cycle (days)	14 (an ovular)
Gestation (days)	65.5 ± 1.7
Litter size	3 – 6 (range 1 – 10)
Lactation (weeks)	7
Weaning (weeks)	4 – 7

### Indian Scenario

There is a prevalent misunderstanding that Indians loathe cats for a variety of reasons. Some attribute this antipathy to cultural and religious convictions, while others relate it to practical factors such as hygiene and safety.

For starters, Indians' aversion to cats may be influenced by their cultural and religious beliefs. Cows, monkeys, and other animals are revered in Hinduism, India's primary religion, but cats are not considered sacred or essential. Furthermore, certain ancient Indian books, such as the Manu Smriti, a Hindu law book,

claim that cats are unclean animals that should be avoided. As a result, some Indians may view cats with distrust or apathy.

Another reason people dislike cats could be related to hygiene. India has a large population as well as a high number of stray animals. Stray cats can spread diseases and are frequently seen as dirty. Some people may be allergic to cats, which contributes to their hate. Cats are also known to scratch and bite, which can result in infections or injuries and a negative attachment to the animal.

Finally, when it comes to cats, children's safety is a concern. Outside play is widespread in some parts of India, and stray animals such as dogs and cats can be deadly. To avoid any potential danger, parents should dissuade their children from engaging with cats. Furthermore, cats are considered to be independent creatures that may not respond to commands, making it difficult to keep them under control near children. Despite these justifications, it's crucial to note that not all Indians despise cats. There are currently 19 different varieties of cats in India, and 6 out of 10 Indians own a pet, according to recent reports from the website [Cat in India: spfjz.gdassurances.com.et.al](http://Cat.in.India:spfjz.gdassurances.com.et.al). Pet ownership is on the rise, and many people are starting to keep cats as pets. This change in attitudes towards cats may be related to a change in cultural and societal norms since people are now more open to keeping other species of animals as pets.

In India, there were about two million domestic cats as pets in 2018, and by the end of 2023, it was anticipated that there would be about two and a half million. Pet food sales in India rose from about 139 million dollars in 2014 to about 285 million dollars in 2018, thanks to the country's growing pet population. The researcher was more motivated to conduct this study with the following objectives in mind because of her love for cats.

- To determine the percentage of families in north Gulbarga City that possess cats.
- To find out if the owner is familiar with their pet cat.
- To understand the differences in behavior between a domestic cat and a Persian cat.

## Material and Method

### STUDY AREA

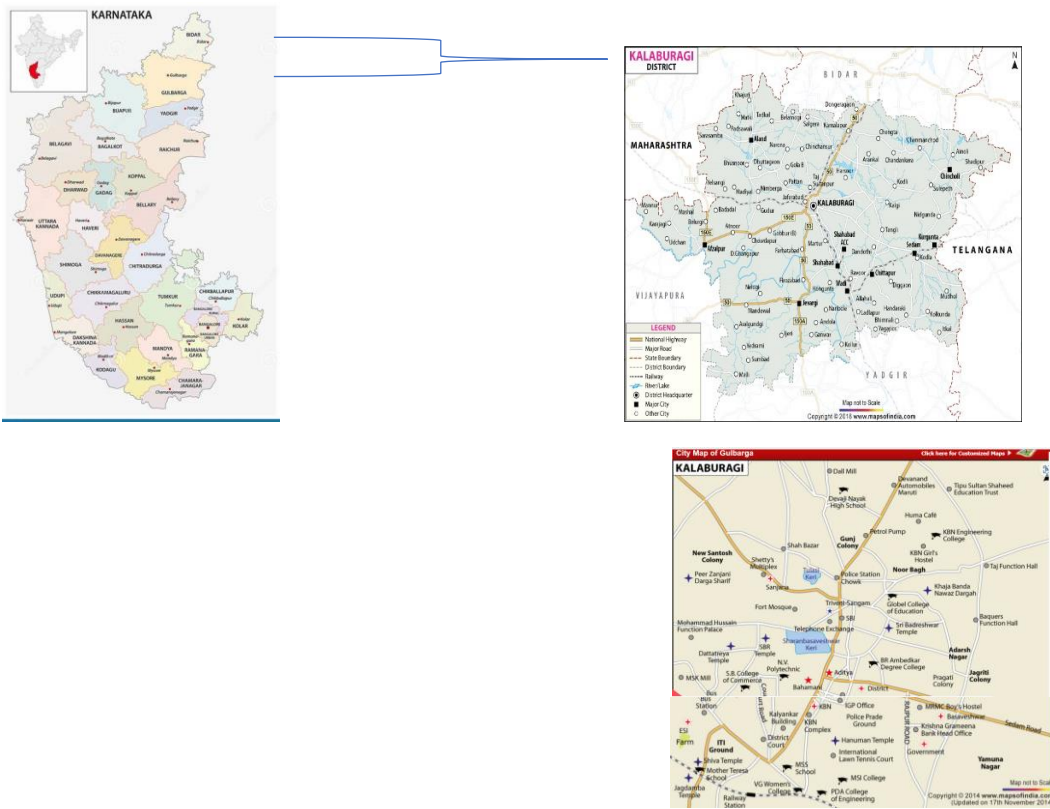
Gulbarga is situated in Karnataka, India, its geographical coordinates are **17° 20' 0" North, 76° 50' 0" East** and its original name is Gulbarga (officially Kalaburagi) is a city in the Indian state of Karnataka, India (Fig.1). It is the administrative headquarters of the Gulbarga District and a major city in the North Karnataka region. Gulbarga is 623 km north of the state capital of Bangalore and 220 km from Hyderabad. Previously it was part of Hyderabad State, it was incorporated into a newly formed Mysore State (now known as Karnataka) through the States Reorganization Act in 1956. It is a rapidly urbanizing city that comes under the Gulbarga Metropolitan area. The city is well known for its many places of architectural, historical, and religious importance. It is called one of the Sufi cities having famous religious places, like Khwaja Banda Nawaz Dargah and Ladle Mashak in Aland taluk of Gulbarga District.

Gulbarga district has undergone Jurisdictional changes after the 2001 Census as the new district Yadgir was created by bifurcating three taluks viz., Shahpur, Shorapur, and Yadgir from the erstwhile Gulbarga district. Gulbarga is the second largest district in the state with a total area of 10954 sq. km. Gulbarga

district with a total population of 25, 66,326 stands at 5th place in the State. The district has a density of 234 and it holds 20th place in the State. Gulbarga district accounts for 4.2 percent of the total population of the State and holds the 5th rank in the State. With a decadal growth rate of 18.0 percent, it ranks 5th in the State in terms of decadal growth rate. The district with a Sex ratio of 971 holds the 24th rank in the State. The district with a Sex ratio of 943 among the child population in the age group 0-6 holds the 25th rank in the State.

The proportion of the child population (0-6 age group) is 14.2 percent in the district and holds the 6th rank in the State. The district has the fourth lowest literacy rate of 64.9 percent in the State. The male literacy rate in the district is 74.4 percent and the female literacy rate is 55.1 percent. The Scheduled Caste population contributes 25.3 percent to the district’s total population, which is the third highest in the state. The primary goal of this exploratory study was to uncover the viewpoints of a broad group of cat owners in the city who use a variety of husbandry practices. A diversity survey was undertaken from March 2022 to March 2023 to accomplish this. A target of 300 families with cats as pets was identified. The researcher's interactions with the households to observe pet status and to assess the owner's understanding of their pet's behavior.

Figure 1. Location of the site on the map.



A survey method where we collect and analyze data from a group of people. A questionnaire is a specific tool used for collecting the data.

Self-administered questionnaires based on cat ecology with the help of an expert veterinarian are prepared by the researcher because it is easy to implement and inexpensive, allowing deeper insights.

Personal interaction and observation were made by the researcher with nearly 300 families. Where only 84 families are cat owners.

**Results and Discussion**

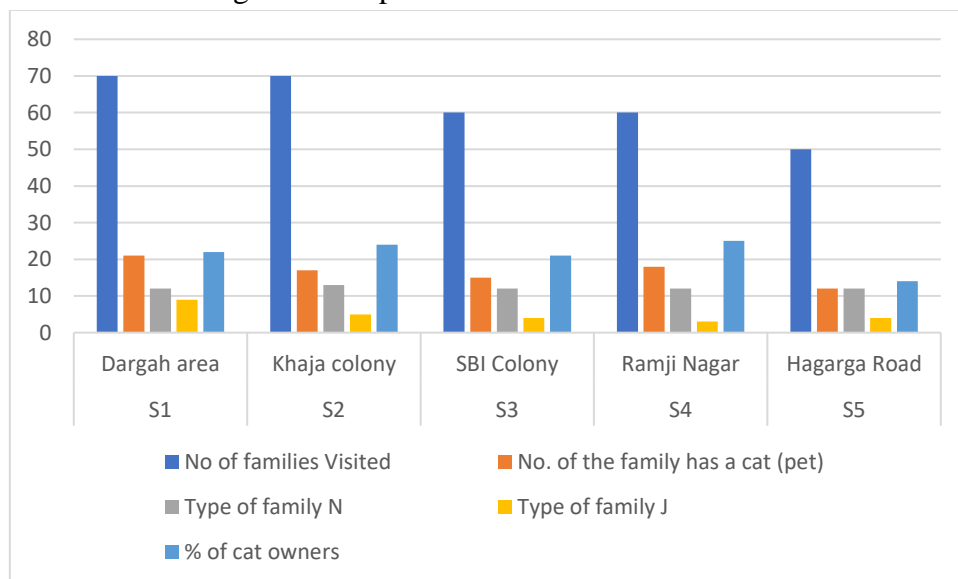
The domestic cat *Felis catus* employed in laboratories is the same species that is often maintained as a companion animal and can be found in large numbers in the wild. Cats are sophisticated, highly specialized mammals that have acquired a variety of morphological adaptations and sensory capacities to suit their solely carnivorous lifestyle (Bradshaw 1992).

Information was gathered from 84 families, (Table 2) of which 34.4% are joint families and 65.6% are nuclear families. Income has a significant impact on whether a family decides to keep a pet. In the survey, 29% of the families had an annual income of more than \$30,000. These families chose to keep a Persian cat as a pet, which required them to buy cat food, and a litter box, and to take their pet to the vet for vaccinations.

Table 1: demographic details of the family visit

Study sites		No of families Visited	No. of the family has a cat (pet)	Type of family		% of cat owners
				N	J	
S1	Dargah area	70	21	12	09	22
S2	Khaja colony	70	17	13	05	24
S3	SBI Colony	60	15	12	04	21
S4	Ramji Nagar	60	18	12	03	25
S5	Hagarga Road	50	12	12	04	14

Figure 2: Graphic details of visited families.



The income of the family and the type of Cat breed they acquired found a positive relationship in the study. Domestic cats were the pet of choice for 71.2% of the families in the study who owned pets. Most people agreed that this cat didn't need special food. Even families with limited resources kept domestic cats as pets.

### **Training and Feeding Habits of the Pet.**

Interestingly, out of the 84 families who owned a cat, only 37% reported that their cat was strictly an indoor pet. The majority of cats were allowed to roam outside, with 23% being indoor/outdoor cats and 40% being outdoor-only cats. When it came to feeding their feline friends, the most popular choice was dry food, with 38% of respondents reporting that they primarily fed their cat kibble. Wet food was the second most popular choice at 36%, while only 26% of respondents reported feeding their cat a raw or homemade diet. Owning a cat is a gendered experience in North Kalaburagi, with females overwhelmingly taking on the responsibility of caring for these pets. However, when it comes to how these cats are cared for and fed, there is more diversity in choices among owners.

### **Owners' perception towards their pet**

Respondents' interaction with their cat found that having a cat around the house alone, as well as having interactions with it, can significantly lower a person's negative moods, such as anxiety, depression, and introversion. However, when the cat approaches the depressed owner, she accepts the cat's invitation to interact, which affects the human's mood. The depressed owner initiates fewer encounters with the cat. The cat also modifies its behavior while near the human, vocalizing more frequently with the person and more frequently rubbing its head and flank on that person. The cat affects more mood subscales in women than in men, and it affects them more severely.

The findings suggest that people between the ages of 15 and 25 interacted significantly more with their cats (79.1%), but that older people interacted significantly more frequently (18.8%).

For children, pets can provide companionship and self-assurance, among other things. With a focus on adolescent loneliness and companion animals, a conceptual model of companion animal attachment contributions was created, which included aspects of caregiving, providing a secure foundation and haven, as well as closeness seeking and separation anxiety when the animal was not present.

### **Animal Conservation and its Values Among the Owners**

The researcher wants to determine if the inhabitants of this area understand animal conservation and its values. Where do they obtain their pets?

Results obtained that 56% of folks obtained their cats from friends. 20% pick from the street, and only 9% of families purchase from breeders, whereas 15% buy their pets from shops at pet stores.

Which breed and why?

In the sample families, many explanations are given. like for their fur, softness, and adorable appearance, which includes their clearly distinguishing flat noses, woolly, color-rich coats, and affectionate personalities. They are wonderful lap cats and love attention. They are composed, submissive, and in general at ease and sociable when meeting new people.

Domestic cats can lead an active hunting lifestyle, with low-slung bodies, finely sculpted heads, long tails, and specialized fangs and claws. Domestic cats are quick and nimble creatures that can easily climb and jump. They are known for their hunting prowess and are natural predators, using it to catch small prey like mice and birds. Domestic cats are known for their affectionate and playful personalities, even though they are predators. They enjoy playing with toys and can frequently keep themselves occupied for long periods. Additionally, highly intelligent, domestic cats can be taught to carry out a variety of tricks and tasks. In general, domestic cats make wonderful pets that provide their owners with joy and companionship.

### **Pets Health Care**

A veterinarian should check even healthy cats at least once, ideally twice, a year. More frequent visits might be required if your cat is older or already has a health issue. Physical examinations can find abdominal tumors, enlarged lymph nodes, skin tumors, heart murmurs, or skipped heartbeats. They will spot organs that may point to systemic diseases, such as enlarged or contracted kidneys, liver, or spleen. Your cat's visual ability can be determined by looking at its eyes. If she is arthritic and in need of painkillers, an orthopedic examination can determine this. Her skin and coat will be examined by a dermatologist who will determine whether flea and tick control is necessary or identify any skin infections (bacterial, fungal, or parasitic). Hair loss could be a sign of a systemic illness. Owners' observation of their pet's home life will give veterinarians an overall idea of their health status.

Changes in your cat's demeanor may occur so gradually that you are not aware of them until you are asked specific questions. Does your cat have a good appetite and regular bowel movements? Does she strain to urinate? Does she limp? Is she slow to rise when lying down? Does she ever seem short of breath, cough, or sneeze? Is she itchy? Does she drink a lot?

The results for 69.7% of the owners who responded to 'Don't know' shows that owners are not taking care of their pets and do not have a keen observation. The other part of 30.3% of owners responds 'Yes' as they have a Persian cat as their pet which needs to be taking special care of their health.

Data collected shows that 77.4% of owners are not aware of the health problems faced by their pets. 22.6% of Persian cat owners know their pets and they get vaccinated for it.

### **Social Behaviors of their Pet**

It can often be challenging to understand cat behavior. Cats don't often give off body language signs, so you need to be vigilant and aware of what to look out for. Cats are sometimes perceived as being aloof, but in reality, they are solitary creatures who only interact with people when it suits them. Since independence is part of their character, this explains a lot of their behavior. You can start to comprehend your cat's behavior by being knowledgeable about the meanings behind your cat's body language and voice clues.

The cat has a nuanced set of facial expressions, vocalizations, tail, and body postures that it uses to communicate its feelings and intentions. These different signals are used to widen, narrow, or preserve social distance. One unique social behavior entails.

### **Conclusion**

The main factor affecting a cat's welfare is the carer or the owner. While interacting with other cats or animals is beneficial and enjoyable for the cat, it cannot replace human attention. Taking good care of a pet can provide humans with significant benefits as well. Every day, cats and their owners should be allowed to socialize during times that are not necessary for routine caretaking tasks (like feeding). It is more likely for a cat to reply to its owner the more they respond to it, and interactions started by the cat tend to go on longer than those started by the owner (Turner, 1995). While some cats might prefer not to be touched, groomed, or handled, others might.



The owner must not only like cats but also be aware of cat behaviors to give the pet proper care. This information can be found in a variety of places, including books and other printed materials, websites, veterinarian offices, animal behaviorists, and animal rescue organizations. Due to the possibility of some material being debatable, inaccurate, or contradictory, novice owners will need advice from reliable sources.

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