

# COVID-19 and Pet Attachment

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## Abstract

Pet-attachment among the pet owners total 91 those were admitted in a government hospital for COVID-19 was studied in two wards, one ward was for patients with mild symptoms and other ward was for moderate symptoms, the researcher talked to the patients on intercom from where she could see them also and asked two questions from them, do you have a pet, yes or no and do you miss your pet, very strongly, strongly, sometimes, occasionally, and never? It was assumed that the pet attachment may vary due to the nature of symptoms and related ailment stress among pet owners in the two wards? The findings revealed that pet owners remembered possession of their pets similarly( $r=.012$ ,  $p<.001$ ) in both wards( $r=-.016$ ,  $p<.001$ ) with strongly correlated remembering. It emerged that stressful situations do not effect pet attachment and pet attachment continues in mild and moderate levels of stress. The study provided useful information about pet-attachment in stressful situations.

## Introduction

Pet attachment is like a friendship between the pet and owner. Different people experience this attachment differently and this difference is visible in their emotions behaviors and personality. The human animal bond between the owner and the pet is based upon, “proximity seeking, safe haven, secure base, and separation distress” (Zilcha-Mano, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2011). Pet attachment affects the owners’ emotional aspects (Garritty, Stallones, Marx & Johnson, 1989). Pets generate attachment (Kurdek, 2008). Pet presence for owners is related with the life goals and physiological aspects (Zilcha-Mano, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012a). Pet attachment is related with comfort (Sable, 2013). Pets signify various social relational aspects (Kurdek, 2009a).

Attachment can cause depressive symptoms (Kobak, Sudler & Gamble, 1991) but secure attachment enhances intimacy (Grabill & Kerns, 2000) moreover it was found that securely attached individuals have less conflicts in their relations (Saferstein, Neimeyer & Hagans, 2005).

Bowlby (1969, 1973) in (Simpson & Rholes, 2012) has pointed out that attachment styles effect our behaviors, emotions and feelings. Isolation from other people is also related with attachment behavior because attachment is related with our survivability and it helps to reduce anxiety and stress. Proximity of attachment figure object is also related with positive emotions (Simpson & Rholes, 2012).

Pandemic COVID-19 is a health emergency (PLOS Medicine Editors, 2020) that 21<sup>st</sup> century is experiencing. COVID-19 is an infectious disease (Masters, 2006). A large number of people have died due to it. This virus belongs to the coronaviridae family of viruses (De Groot, et al, 2011) and RNA groups of viruses (Wagner, et al, 1999). Its most recent ancestors were found in 8000 BCA (Wertheim, 2013). The word Corona is a Latin word meaning ‘crown’ its structure is spherical or pleomorphic with bulbous surface projections (Goldsmith, et al 2004). The average diameter of the virus is .125 nm (Neuman, et al, 2006).

In 1930 this virus was found in chickens (Fabricant, 1998). In 1960 this disease was found among human beings (Kahn & McIntosh, 2005). The early studies reported its seven kinds, four with less severe symptoms

including “HCoV-OC43” (Vabret, et al, 2003), “HCoV-HKU1” (Esper, et al, 2006), “HCoV-229E” ( Bonavia, et al, 2003) and “HCoV-NL63” (Arden, et al, 2005) and three with server symptoms including “MERS-CoV” (Haagmans, et al, 2016), “SARS-CoV” (Bosch, et al, 2004) and “SARS-CoV-2” (van Doremalen, et al, 2020). A relationship was found between “SARS-CoV-2” and the COVID-19 the ongoing pandemic (Panda, et al, 2020). WHO observed it in Dec 31, 2019 in ‘China’s Hubei province’ labeled as, ”pneumonia of unknown etiology” (Cascella, et al, 2020), Wuhan later become the center of the pandemic (Peng, et al, 2020). Cascella, et al, (2020) have reported details about pandemic medical emergency in China.

Hospitalizing with COVID-19 in the ongoing situation simply is a life threatening situation because no treatment is available for the disease in other words this situation reflects highly stressful situation if infected with the disease. To test that how do a highly stress situation effects pet attachment present study was conducted?

## Method and Procedure

The medical doctors looking after two COVID-19 patients’ wards in a government hospital assisted the study for the collection of data. Total 91 COVID-19 patients (Table-1) those were placed in the two wards and were having pets were studied. The first ward was for patients with ‘mild symptoms’ and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ward was for patients with ‘moderate symptoms’ of COVID-19. It was assumed that the COVID-19 patients’ pet attachment may vary due to the severity of stress levels of their ailment experiences in mild and moderate wards? The researcher with all safety measures, without physical contact with patients in both wards on an intercom from where she could see the patients after the informed consent of their caregivers asked two questions from all the patients. Question number one, do you have a pet? The next question was, do you miss your pet, very strongly, strongly, sometimes, occasionally, and never?

## Results

The findings revealed that pet owners remembered possession of their pets similarly( $r=.012$ ,  $p< .001$ ) in both wards( $r=-.016$ , $p< .001$ ) with strongly correlated remembering.

## Conclusions and Recommendation

It came in light that stressful situations do not effect pet attachment and pet attachment continues similarly in mild and moderate levels of stress. The study provided useful information about pet-attachment in stressful situations.

**Table 1-0**

Frequency and percentage of participants (N=81)

| Demographic variable | <i>f</i> | %    |
|----------------------|----------|------|
| Gender               |          |      |
| Male                 | 59       | 72.8 |
| Female               | 22       | 27.2 |
| Mild and moderate    |          |      |
| Mild                 | 41       | 50.6 |
| Moderate             | 40       | 49.4 |

The table shows frequency and percentage of participants with respect to gender and on mild and moderate level. Male individuals ( $f= 59$ , 72.8 %) were greater in number as compared to female individuals ( $f= 22$ , 27.2%). Individuals on mild level ( $f= 41$ , 50.6 %) are greater in number as compare to moderate level ( $f= 40$ , 49.4%).

**Table 1-1**

Pearson correlation among study variables (N=81)

| Variables          | 1 | 2      | 3     |
|--------------------|---|--------|-------|
| Remember your pets | - | -.279* | .012  |
| Have pets          |   | -      | -.016 |
| Mild and moderate  |   |        | -     |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table shows Pearson correlation among study variables. The findings revealed that pet owners remembered possession of their pets similarly ( $r=.012, p<.001$ ) in both wards ( $r=-.016, p<.001$ ) with strongly correlated remembering.

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