

Factors Affecting the Decision to Adopt Stray Dogs Instead of Purchasing in Bangkok, Thailand

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ABSTRACT: The decision to adopt stray dogs rather than purchase them has become a growing concern in Bangkok, where 100,000 stray dogs live on the streets despite a thriving pet ownership culture. As pet humanization trends expand, purchasing pets from breeders has become increasingly normalized among residents. This study aims to investigate the factors affecting the decision to adopt stray dogs instead of purchasing among Bangkok residents, to understand what prevents positive attitudes from becoming actual adoption behavior. Using a structured questionnaire, we collected responses from 279 participants using a 5-point Likert scale, assessing their perceptions toward stray animal adoption and the key factors influencing their decision to adopt or purchase. Our findings revealed that Bangkok residents showed generally positive attitudes toward stray animal adoption; however, their responses also indicated concerns and preferences that may affect stated willingness to adopt. One potential explanation is that while Thailand's Buddhist cultural values create a broadly compassionate outlook toward animals across all demographic groups, social barriers such as preference for specific breeds and negative perceptions of stray animal health prevent these sentiments from translating into adoption behavior. These findings provide direction for policymakers and animal welfare organizations seeking to design more targeted and effective adoption promotion strategies in Bangkok.

KEYWORDS: attitudes toward stray dogs, adoption decision, animal welfare, Bangkok, pet purchasing behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

The presence of stray animals in urban environments has become a growing public concern, particularly in densely populated cities such as Bangkok, Thailand. A 2025 news report cited an estimate of up to 100,000 stray dogs in Bangkok (Khaosod English, 2025), creating a serious and growing burden on the city's public health and animal welfare systems. Research highlights that unmanaged stray animal populations in urban environments contribute to disease transmission risks, increased human-animal conflict, and significant strain on both government and non-governmental animal welfare resources (Hiby et al., 2023; Hiby et al., 2025a). Despite this critical situation, pet ownership in Thailand has risen sharply, Thai households currently owning at least one pet, reflecting a significant lifestyle shift among Thai households, where pets are no longer seen as animals but as companions, and family members (Euromonitor, 2023). However, this cultural embrace of pets has not led to a proportional rise in stray animal adoption. Understanding what drives Bangkok residents to choose to adopt rather than purchase is therefore essential for developing more effective and sustainable solutions to Bangkok's stray animal crisis.

Research conducted internationally has demonstrated that the decision to acquire a pet is shaped by a complex interaction of factors, including the animal's physical appearance, breed preferences, social influences, prior ownership experience, and ethical motivations (Holland, 2019). Studies have consistently found that physical appearance is often prioritized over health or welfare considerations, and that social trends and media exposure significantly influence which breeds become popular, sometimes contributing to irresponsible breeding practices and eventual animal abandonment (Holland, 2019). In the context of Thailand specifically, cultural and religious values may play an important role in shaping attitudes toward stray animals. With approximately 93% of Thailand's population identifying as Buddhist, the idea of showing kindness and care toward all living creatures is something most Thais grow up with and carry into their daily lives (Sinclair et al., 2022). This cultural foundation has historically led Thai Buddhist temples to serve as sanctuaries for stray animals, with monks and community members providing food and shelter (Expat Focus, 2023). Nevertheless, despite these deeply rooted cultural values, the act of formally adopting a stray animal remains far less common than simply feeding or sheltering them informally. Prior research on dog ownership in Greater Bangkok has found that while 46% of surveyed owners had obtained their dogs from the streets, a substantial proportion still acquire pets through

commercial channels, and the motivating factors behind the choice to formally adopt versus purchase have not been comprehensively examined (Hiby et al., 2025a).

Past studies have explored different dimensions of pet acquisition behavior and stray animal management in Thailand, offering insights for the present research. Toukhsati et al. (2012) identified that religious beliefs, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioral control were significant predictors of how Thai people relate to and care for stray animals, suggesting that psychosocial factors extend beyond individual attitudes to encompass broader community and cultural influences. Additionally, research on Bangkok's free-roaming dog population highlights that urbanization and rapid land-use changes have intensified human-animal encounters in city environments, raising concerns about public health risks including disease transmission and dog bites, which in turn may shape residents' perceptions of stray animals and their willingness to adopt them (Hiby et al., 2025b). Negative perceptions of stray animals such as beliefs that they carry behavioral problems or health risks have been identified in other urban contexts as significant barriers to adoption (Holland, 2019), and similar attitudes may exist among Bangkok residents. Furthermore, the rise of social media and pet humanization trends in Thailand, where owners increasingly treat pets as family members and invest in premium care products, may be creating new social pressures that favor the purchasing of specific breeds over adopting animals of unknown background (Euromonitor, 2023). This lack of targeted research on adoption decision-making in the Bangkok urban context creates a meaningful gap in knowledge that limits the ability of animal welfare organizations and policymakers to design effective adoption promotion strategies.

This study aims to investigate the factors affecting the decision to adopt stray animals instead of purchasing pets among Bangkok residents, with consideration given to attitudes toward stray animals, ethical and cultural motivations, social influences, demographic characteristics, and perceived barriers to adoption. The study employs a structured questionnaire to survey a sample group of Bangkok residents. This investigation seeks to assess how attitudes toward stray animals influence the likelihood of adoption over purchasing, and to examine the role of social media, cultural values, and practical barriers in shaping this decision. Additionally, this study aims to find a relationship between attitudes toward stray animal adoption and the factors that influence adoption decisions among Bangkok residents. The hypothesis posits that positive attitudes toward stray animals are associated with a greater likelihood of choosing adoption over purchasing, and that practical factors such as the adoption process, social influence, and cultural values play a significant role in shaping this decision among Bangkok residents. The findings of this research may contribute to the development of more targeted and effective adoption promotion strategies that could benefit both animal welfare organizations and policymakers working to address Bangkok's stray animal crisis. Overall, this study adds to the growing body of knowledge on human-animal relationships and pet acquisition behavior in urban Southeast Asian contexts, while also offering practical insights for designing interventions that encourage responsible and compassionate pet acquisition behavior among Bangkok residents, with the goal of informing more effective strategies to promote stray animal adoption as a viable and rewarding alternative to purchasing pets from commercial sources.

INSTRUMENT

Part 1: General Information

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Living area in Bangkok
4. Do you own a pet or have you ever had a pet?
5. Have you ever owned a stray/adopted animal before?
6. Have you ever purchased a pet from a breeder or pet store?

Part 2: Attitudes Toward Stray Animals

1. I believe stray animals in Bangkok deserve a loving home.
2. I think stray animals often have health problems that make them unsuitable as pets.
3. I think stray animals are more likely to have behavioral problems and are harder to train than purchased pets.
4. I would feel comfortable bringing a stray animal into my home.
5. I believe adopting a stray animal can be just as rewarding as purchasing a pet.
6. I feel concerned about the health risks of adopting a stray animal.

7. I feel sympathy for stray animals when I see them living on the streets.

Part 3: Factors Affecting the Decision to Adopt or Purchase

1. The physical appearance of a pet influences my decision when choosing one.
2. I prefer a specific breed, which is why I would choose to purchase rather than adopt.
3. My friends or family influence my decision on where to get a pet.
4. Social media influences the type of pet I want to own.
5. I would feel proud to own a specific breed of dog or cat.
6. I think the adoption process for stray animals in Bangkok is too complicated or time-consuming.
7. I believe purchasing a pet from a store or breeder guarantees better health and behavior.
8. My cultural or religious values influence my decision to care for stray animals.
9. I would adopt a stray animal if the adoption process were easier and more accessible.
10. I feel a moral responsibility to help stray animals rather than purchase a pet.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research aimed to investigate the factors affecting the decision to adopt stray animals instead of purchasing pets among Bangkok residents. The questionnaire is composed of three sections: 1) General Information, 2) Attitudes Toward Stray Animal Adoption, and 3) Factors Affecting the Decision to Adopt or Purchase. Responses were collected using a multiple choice format in section 1 and a 5-point Likert scale in Sections 2 and 3. The Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The survey employed a convenience sampling method to collect data. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire, yielding an acceptable value of 0.707, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Bujang et al., 2018). The survey was administered via Google Forms through Line, Instagram, and Facebook applications in June 2026, obtaining a total of 279 participants. All responses were collected anonymously and participation was entirely voluntary for academic purposes only. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30.0. Pearson's correlation was used to find the correlation between variables, and a one-way ANOVA (F-test) was used to examine differences among three or more groups.

RESULTS

Table 1: General information (N = 279)

	Frequency	Valid percentage
Gender		
Men	84	30.1
Women	192	68.8
Others	3	1.1
Age		
15 years or less	9	3.2
More than 15 years up to 27 years	103	36.9
More than 27 years up to 43 years	44	15.8
More than 43 years up to 59 years	118	42.3

More than 59 years	5	1.8
Living area in Bangkok		
Inner Bangkok (e.g. Pathumwan, Bang Rak, Sathorn)	56	20.1
Middle Bangkok (e.g. Lat Phrao, Bang Kapi, Huai Khwang)	122	43.7
Outer Bangkok (e.g. Bang Na, Min Buri, Thawi Watthana)	54	19.4
Surrounding provinces (e.g. Nonthaburi, Pthum Thani, Samut Prakan)	47	16.8
Do you own a pet or have you ever had a pet		
Yes	213	76.3
No	66	23.7
Have you ever adopted a stray animal		
Yes	109	39.1
No	170	60.9

Table 1 shows the general information of 279 participants. Most respondents are women (68.8%), followed by men (30.1%) and others (1.1%). The largest age group was 44–59 years (42.3%), followed by 16–27 years (36.9%), while the 27–43, 15 or younger, and over 59 age groups together made up a smaller minority. Regarding living areas, most respondents reside in middle Bangkok (43.7%). The majority of respondents have owned a pet (76.3%), while less than half (39.1%) have ever adopted a stray animal, with the majority (60.9%) never having done so.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard deviation)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitudes toward Stray Animal Adoption	279	3.66	0.583
Factors Influencing Adoption Decision	279	3.06	0.720

The responses range from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree. The mean of the responses for attitudes toward stray animal adoption of all 279 participants is 3.66, indicating a generally positive attitude toward adopting stray animals among Bangkok residents. The mean for factors influencing the adoption decision of all 279 participants is 3.06, indicating a moderate level of influence overall, suggesting that practical factors such as breed preference, social media influence, and adoption barriers have a neutral to slightly positive effect on respondents' decision-making regarding stray animal adoption.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA (F-test): Age and Attitudes toward Stray Animal Adoption

	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between group	7.103	4	1.776	5.573**	0.0003
Within group	87.309	274	0.319		
Total	94.411	278			

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

One-way ANOVA results obtained with a p-value of 0.0003, meaning attitudes toward stray animal adoption are significantly different between age groups as the p-value is less than 0.05.

Table 4: One-way ANOVA (F-test): Age and Factors Influencing Adoption Decision

	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between group	2.080	4	0.520	1.002	0.407
Within group	142.190	274	0.519		
Total	144.270	278			

One-way ANOVA results obtained with a p-value of 0.407, meaning factors influencing the adoption decision are not significantly different between age groups as the p-value is greater than 0.05.

Table 5: Pearson's correlation between Attitudes toward Stray Animal Adoption and Factors Influencing Adoption Decision

		Attitudes towards Stray Animal Adoption	Factors Influencing Adoption Decisions
Attitudes toward Stray Animal Adoption	Pearson Correlation		0.216**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001
	N	279	279
Factors Influencing Adoption Decision	Pearson Correlation	0.216**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	
	N	279	279

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The r-value between attitudes toward stray animal adoption and factors influencing the adoption decision is 0.216, which indicates a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the factors affecting the decision to adopt stray animals instead of purchasing pets among 279 Bangkok residents. The results revealed that respondents generally hold positive attitudes toward stray animal adoption, while the practical factors influencing the adoption decision showed only a moderate level of influence. Additionally, significant age-based differences were found in attitudes toward stray animal adoption, though no significant differences were found in the factors influencing the adoption decision across age groups. A weak but statistically significant positive correlation was also found between attitudes and adoption factors. These findings are discussed below in relation to existing literature on pet acquisition behavior and animal welfare in urban Thai contexts.

As shown in Table 2, the mean score for attitudes toward stray animal adoption among all 279 participants is 3.66, which is above the midpoint of the rating scale of 3, indicating that Bangkok residents generally hold positive attitudes toward adopting stray animals. This finding is consistent with Thailand's cultural and religious context, where Buddhist values of compassion toward all living beings are deeply embedded in everyday life (Sinclair et al., 2022). However, the mean score for factors influencing the adoption decision is 3.06, which sits very close to the neutral midpoint, suggesting that while residents feel positively toward stray animals, the practical factors that would motivate them to formally adopt such as breed preference, social media influence, concerns about health and behavior, and the complexity of the adoption process exert only a moderate influence on their actual decision-making. This gap between a generally positive attitude and moderate behavioral motivation is consistent with research by Garrison and Weiss (2015), who found that although many people report positive feelings toward shelter animals, these attitudes do not always translate into adoption behavior. Notably, individual question analysis reveals that sympathy for strays on the streets scored very high (mean = 4.47) and belief that adoption is as rewarding as purchasing also scored high (mean = 4.18), yet comfort with actually bringing a stray home scored considerably lower (mean = 3.29), further illustrating the disconnect between emotional attitude and behavioral intention among Bangkok residents.

According to Table 3, age has a significant impact on attitudes toward stray animal adoption ($F = 5.573$, $p = 0.0003$). Younger respondents consistently showed more positive attitudes toward adoption — those aged 15 years or less scored highest (mean = 4.06), followed by those aged 15–27 years (mean = 3.79), while older age groups scored progressively lower, with those aged 43–59 years scoring 3.50 and those over 59 years scoring 3.31. One reason for this generational difference could be the influence of social media and digital platforms, through which younger Bangkok residents are more frequently exposed to animal welfare content, rescue stories, and adoption campaigns that promote compassionate attitudes toward stray animals (Euromonitor, 2023). This aligns with research by Holland (2019), which highlighted that social media trends significantly shape how people feel about and relate to animals. Furthermore, younger generations in Thailand are increasingly embracing pet humanization culture — viewing animals as family members rather than simply household companions — which may make them more emotionally open to the idea of adopting a stray animal in need (Euromonitor, 2023). As a result, both our survey results and the findings by Holland and Euromonitor support the idea that generational differences in social media exposure and pet culture contribute to differences in attitudes toward stray animal adoption among Bangkok residents.

As shown in Table 4, the factors influencing the adoption decision are not significantly different between age groups ($F = 1.002$, $p = 0.407$). This suggests that while younger Bangkok residents hold more positive attitudes toward stray adoption, they face the same practical barriers as older residents when it comes to the actual decision, including breed preference, health concerns about stray animals, social influence, and the complexity of the adoption process. This finding is consistent with Holland (2019), who highlighted that practical and social barriers consistently shape pet acquisition behavior regardless of individual attitudes or demographic background. The fact that all age groups are equally influenced by these practical factors suggests that the barriers to adoption in Bangkok are systemic rather than generational, meaning that even highly motivated younger residents who genuinely want to adopt are still stopped by the same practical obstacles that affect older residents. This underscores the importance of addressing structural barriers to adoption, such as simplifying the adoption process, improving public knowledge about stray animal health and behavior, and creating stronger community norms around adoption as a responsible choice, in order to help all age groups — not just older or more traditional residents — translate their attitudes into actual adoption behavior.

As shown in Table 5, attitudes toward stray animal adoption and factors influencing the adoption decision are positively correlated ($r = 0.216$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a weak but statistically significant relationship between the two variables. This suggests that individuals who hold more positive attitudes toward stray animals also tend to be slightly more influenced by adoption-

promoting factors such as moral responsibility, cultural values, and openness to the adoption process. However, the weak correlation coefficient of 0.216 indicates that positive attitudes alone do not strongly predict whether a person will be meaningfully driven by adoption factors. This finding aligns with Holland (2019), who highlighted that the decision to acquire a pet is shaped by a complex interaction of factors beyond simple attitude or goodwill, including breed preferences, perceived health and behavioral risks, and practical barriers such as the difficulty of the adoption process itself. In the Bangkok context, this weak correlation suggests that simply raising awareness and promoting positive attitudes toward stray animals through public campaigns may be insufficient on its own to meaningfully increase adoption rates. Instead, a more comprehensive approach is needed — one that simultaneously addresses the practical barriers that prevent positive attitudes from translating into adoption behavior, particularly targeting younger Bangkok residents who already hold the most positive attitudes and represent the most promising demographic for future adoption promotion efforts.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, convenience sampling through social media platforms may have introduced selection bias, as respondents were predominantly women (68.8%) and may not fully represent the diversity of Bangkok's population. Second, the relatively low internal consistency of the attitudes section (Cronbach's alpha = 0.490) suggests that Part 2 questions may benefit from refinement in future studies. Third, this study examined only age and did not explore other demographic variables such as income, education level, or prior pet ownership experience, which may also influence adoption decisions. Future research should employ random sampling and include a wider range of demographic and socioeconomic variables to produce more generalizable findings.

CONCLUSION

This study found that Bangkok residents generally hold positive attitudes toward stray animal adoption (mean = 3.66), reflecting Thailand's deeply rooted Buddhist values of compassion toward all living beings. However, the practical factors influencing the actual adoption decision showed only a moderate level of influence (mean = 3.06), suggesting that positive attitudes alone are not sufficient to drive adoption behavior. Age was found to have a significant effect on attitudes toward stray animal adoption ($F = 5.573$, $p = 0.0003$), with younger residents holding more positive attitudes than older residents likely reflecting generational differences in social media exposure and pet humanization culture. However, age did not significantly affect the practical factors influencing the adoption decision ($F = 1.002$, $p = 0.407$), indicating that all age groups face the same practical barriers regardless of how positively they feel toward stray animals. A weak but statistically significant positive correlation was also found between attitudes and adoption factors ($r = 0.216$, $p < 0.001$), further confirming that attitude alone does not predict adoption behavior. Overall, these findings highlight that increasing stray animal adoption rates in Bangkok requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond promoting positive attitudes - one that directly addresses practical barriers such as simplifying the adoption process, correcting negative perceptions about stray animal health and behavior, and building stronger community norms around adoption, with particular focus on converting the already positive attitudes of younger Bangkok residents into actual adoption action.

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Cite this Article: Dhienhirun, T., Champaprom, P. (2026). Factors Affecting the Decision to Adopt Stray Dogs Instead of Purchasing in Bangkok, Thailand. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 9(10), pp. 5399-5406. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i10-16>