

A Pup's Tale: Factors Predicting Success in Dog-Owner Relationships

(Ethics Approval Number: HEC21006)

The following researchers will be conducting the study:

Role	Name	Organisation
Principal Investigator	Prof. Pauleen Bennett	Department of Psychology and Counselling, La Trobe University Bendigo
Associate Investigator	Dr. Tiffani Howell	Department of Psychology and Counselling, La Trobe University Bendigo
Associate Investigator	Dr. Matthew Ruby	Department of Psychology and Counselling, La Trobe University Albury-Wodonga
Student Investigator	Jessica Dawson	Department of Psychology and Counselling, La Trobe University Bendigo
Research funder	This research is supported by La Trobe University.	

1. What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study investigating the development of puppies and their relationship with their owner across the first few years of the puppy's life. The relationship between dogs and their owners is an important one. Research has identified several factors that could impact the bond between dog and owner, such as owner personality, dog behaviour, and dog-owner interactions. In this project, we are seeking to track owners and their dogs from puppyhood to adulthood to see if these factors predict a successful dog-owner relationship. This study forms the first phase of the project, and you will be invited to participate in the later phases at the end of this questionnaire.

2. Do I have to participate?

Being part of this study is voluntary. If you want to be part of the study, we ask that you read the information below carefully. You can read the information below and decide at the end if you do not want to participate. If you decide not to participate this won't affect your relationship with La Trobe University.

3. Who is being asked to participate?

We are asking for participants who:

- Have recently obtained a puppy who is currently aged 14 weeks or younger;
- are at least 18 years old; and
- are proficient in written English.

4. What will I be asked to do?

If you want to take part in the first part of this study, we will ask you to provide consent at the bottom of this page by clicking "I agree, start questionnaire". You will then be taken to an online questionnaire that will ask questions such as your living circumstances, where and how you obtained your puppy, and questions about their temperament and behaviour. The questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes for you to complete.

At the end of the questionnaire, you will be asked whether you would like to continue your participation by being contacted via email to complete additional questionnaires as your puppy grows until they are approximately 2 years of age, or until you opt-out of the study. The follow-up questionnaires will take you approximately 10-15 minutes each to complete and there will be 6 in total.

5. What are the benefits?

By taking part in this study, you will improve scientific understanding of the development of puppies and their relationship with their owner(s). By doing this research, we hope to identify factors impacting successful dog-owner relationships to inform best practice for owners, breeders and other pet professionals.

6. What are the risks?

With any study there are (1) risks we know about, (2) risks we don't know about, and (3) risks we don't expect. There may be a risk for minor negative emotions or psychological discomfort due to some questions on the survey. Due to social distancing people may rely more heavily on their pets for emotional support (especially if they have no family around) and recalling emotive memories may have stronger effects in the current COVID situation than they would have in normal circumstances. If you experience something that you aren't sure about, please contact us immediately so we can discuss the best way to manage your concerns.

Name/Organisation	Position	Telephone	Email
Prof. Pauleen Bennett	Principal Investigator	+61 3 5444 7460	puptales@latrobe.edu.au

7. What will happen to information about me?

By clicking on the 'I agree, start questionnaire' button, this tells us you want to take part in the study. Information provided by you may be included in a thesis, presentation and published in journals.

You are not required to provide your email address in order to complete this survey. If you choose not to, your responses to this first survey will be completely anonymous. If you decide to continue your participation after completing this questionnaire, you will be asked to provide your email address and we will send you an email inviting you to complete a different survey every four weeks.

We will **collect, store, and publish** information about you in ways that will not reveal who you are. If you provide your email address to participate in the subsequent phases of the project, your data will be linked via your email address until the study is completed. When the study is completed, we will collate your linked data via a unique identifier and remove your email address from all associated documents and data prior to analyses. We will **keep** your information for at least five (5) years after the project is completed and may either keep it indefinitely or destroy it after this time. While we retain your data, it may be used by members of our research group for other related studies. Upon completion of the study, the **fully anonymised data set may be posted to a data repository, such as the Open Science Framework**.

The storage, transfer and destruction of your data will be undertaken in accordance with the [Research Data Management Policy](https://policies.latrobe.edu.au/document/view.php?id=106/) <https://policies.latrobe.edu.au/document/view.php?id=106/>.

The personal information you provide will be handled in accordance with applicable privacy laws. Subject to any exceptions in relevant laws, you have the right to access and correct your personal information by contacting the research team.

8. What if I was referred by my puppy's breeder? Will they get to see my information and responses?

No. If you were referred to this study by your puppy's breeder, you can select an option at the end of the questionnaire that will send your breeder an email alert to complete a questionnaire where they can provide additional information about your puppy's health, temperament and behaviour before you brought them home. This provides us with a fuller picture of your puppy and the factors that may influence their development. Your responses will remain completely confidential and, apart from your puppy's name, at no time will your breeder receive **any** information you have provided to us in this or any future questionnaire in this study. Similarly, you will not receive any information your breeder has provided about your puppy or their breeding practices in general.

9. Will I hear about the results of the study?

You can request to know about the results of the project by email at the end of the final questionnaire. At this time, you will be able to click a box at the end of the questionnaire and provide an email address for this purpose.

10. What if I change my mind?

If you no longer want to complete the questionnaire, simply close the web browser. You can withdraw at any time prior to submitting your data. If you provide email address at the end of the questionnaire, you may email the research team (puptales@latrobe.edu.au) to have your responses withdrawn within four (4) weeks of completing the questionnaire. If

you do not provide your email address at the end of the questionnaire, your participation cannot be withdrawn as we are unable to link who you are with your responses.

Your decision to withdraw at any point will **not** affect your relationship with La Trobe University.

11. Who can I contact for questions or if I want more information?

If you would like to speak to us, please use the contact details below:

Name/Organisation	Position	Telephone	Email
Pauleen Bennett	Principle Supervisor	+61 3 5444 7460	puptales@latrobe.edu.au

12. What if I have a complaint?

If you have a complaint about any part of this study, please contact:

Ethics Reference Number	Position	Telephone	Email
HEC21006	Senior Research Ethics Officer	+61 3 9479 1443	humanethics@latrobe.edu.au