

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF FREE-ROAMING DOGS IN JALAN PERDANA GRIYA, JIMBARAN, BALI**PERSEPSI WARGA TERHADAP ANJING BERKELIARAN BEBAS DI JALAN PERDANA GRIYA, JIMBARAN, BALI****Milan Noviyanto , I Ketut Catur Wiguna***

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Abstract

Free-roaming dogs in residential areas may create concerns related to community safety, public health, and animal welfare. This exploratory qualitative descriptive study examined residents' perceptions of free-roaming dogs in Jalan Perdana Griya, Jimbaran, Bali. Data were collected through a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to ten residents who had observed or encountered free-roaming dogs in the neighborhood. The written responses were analyzed by repeated reading, assigning initial codes to meaningful statements, grouping related codes into categories, developing descriptive themes, and summarizing recurring response patterns using simple descriptive frequencies. The analysis showed that respondents commonly reported seeing free-roaming dogs in shared residential spaces, preferred to keep a safe distance when encountering them, expressed concern about bites and possible disease transmission, suggested contacting competent parties when dogs appeared sick or aggressive, and mentioned responsible ownership, vaccination, sterilization, and community awareness as possible preventive actions. These findings indicate that residents perceived free-roaming dogs as both a safety concern and an animal welfare issue. Because the study was limited to ten respondents from one residential area, the findings should be interpreted as an exploratory description of local perceptions rather than as evidence of dog population size or causal factors.

Keywords: animal welfare, free-roaming dogs, open-ended questionnaire, qualitative descriptive study, residents' perceptions

Abstrak

Anjing yang berkeliaran bebas di lingkungan permukiman dapat menimbulkan kekhawatiran terkait keselamatan warga, kesehatan masyarakat, dan kesejahteraan hewan. Penelitian ini merupakan studi deskriptif kualitatif eksploratoris yang mengkaji persepsi warga terhadap anjing berkeliaran bebas di Jalan Perdana Griya, Jimbaran, Bali. Data dikumpulkan melalui

kuesioner terbuka semi-terstruktur yang disebarakan melalui *Google Forms* kepada sepuluh warga yang pernah melihat atau berinteraksi dengan anjing berkeliaran bebas di lingkungan tersebut. Respons tertulis responden dianalisis melalui pembacaan berulang, pemberian kode awal pada pernyataan bermakna, pengelompokan kode yang serupa ke dalam kategori, penyusunan tema deskriptif, dan peringkasan pola jawaban menggunakan frekuensi deskriptif sederhana. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa responden umumnya melaporkan keberadaan anjing berkeliaran bebas di ruang bersama permukiman, memilih menjaga jarak saat bertemu anjing, mengkhawatirkan gigitan dan kemungkinan penularan penyakit, menyarankan pelaporan kepada pihak yang berkompeten ketika anjing tampak sakit atau agresif, serta menyebut kepemilikan hewan yang bertanggung jawab, vaksinasi, sterilisasi, dan edukasi warga sebagai tindakan pencegahan yang mungkin dilakukan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa warga memandang anjing berkeliaran bebas sebagai persoalan keselamatan sekaligus kesejahteraan hewan. Karena penelitian ini terbatas pada sepuluh responden dari satu kawasan permukiman, temuan perlu dipahami sebagai deskripsi eksploratoris mengenai persepsi lokal, bukan sebagai bukti ukuran populasi anjing atau faktor penyebab secara kausal.

Kata kunci: anjing berkeliaran bebas, kesejahteraan hewan, kuesioner terbuka, persepsi warga, studi deskriptif kualitatif

INTRODUCTION

Free-roaming dogs are an important concern in residential areas because their presence may be related to community safety, public health, and animal welfare. The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) defines free-roaming dogs as dogs that are not under direct human supervision or control, including both owned and unowned dogs (WOAH, 2024). This distinction is important because dogs found in public residential spaces are not always completely ownerless. Some may be loosely owned, temporarily unsupervised, or moving freely around the neighborhood. For residents, however, the immediate issue is often practical: whether the dog is safe, whether it may bite, whether it may carry disease, and who should be contacted if the dog appears sick, injured, or aggressive.

The issue is relevant to veterinary public health because dog bites are closely associated with rabies prevention. WOAH (2024) reports that dog bites and scratches are responsible for 99% of human rabies cases globally, while prevention requires dog vaccination, bite prevention, access to post-exposure prophylaxis, surveillance, and community awareness. In Bali, rabies control remains closely linked to dog vaccination coverage and the challenge of reaching free-roaming dogs. Arief *et al.* (2017) found that free-roaming owned dogs in Bali were more likely to be unvaccinated than confined dogs, while Widyastuti *et al.* (2015) showed that rabies control in Bali is also connected to community practices and local sociocultural relationships between people and dogs. This shows that the presence of free-roaming dogs in residential areas is not only a neighborhood nuisance, but also a matter connected to public health and veterinary control efforts.

Community involvement is also important in dog welfare and rabies control. Utami *et al.* (2019), in their evaluation of a community-based dog welfare and rabies project in Sanur, Bali, reported that local community engagement helped improve dog vaccination coverage, reduce visible welfare problems, and decrease roaming dog density in the project area. These findings suggest that residents' perceptions and everyday responses matter because community members are often the first people to observe dogs in residential streets, recognize possible risks, and decide whether to avoid, report, help, or ignore the animal.

Previous studies and international guidance have discussed responsible dog ownership, vaccination, sterilization, humane handling, and community-based dog population

management (Smith *et al.*, 2019; Utami *et al.*, 2019; WOAHA, 2024). However, the present study focuses on a narrower local issue. In Jalan Perdana Griya, Jimbaran, Bali, there is limited documented information on how residents perceive free-roaming dogs, what they usually do when encountering them, what concerns they identify, and what practical responses they suggest. This local descriptive gap is important because any community-level response should be informed by how residents understand and experience the issue in their daily environment.

Based on this background, this study aimed to describe residents' perceptions of free-roaming dogs in Jalan Perdana Griya, Jimbaran, Bali. Specifically, it explored where residents reported seeing free-roaming dogs, how they responded during encounters, what concerns they expressed, and what actions they suggested for improving neighborhood safety and animal welfare. This study was positioned as an exploratory qualitative descriptive study based on open-ended questionnaire responses from ten residents. Therefore, the findings are intended to provide a preliminary description of local perceptions, not to estimate dog population size, measure rabies risk, or establish causal explanations for the presence of free-roaming dogs.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research design

This study used an exploratory qualitative descriptive design to describe residents' perceptions, concerns, and suggested responses regarding free-roaming dogs in a residential area. This design was appropriate because the study aimed to present a direct description of participants' written responses rather than to measure dog population size, test causal relationships, or develop a new theory (Sandelowski, 2000).

Study Site and Participants

The study was conducted in Jalan Perdana Griya, Jimbaran, Kecamatan Kuta Selatan, Kabupaten Badung, Bali, Indonesia (8°48'11.41" S, 115°10'46.76" E; -8.803169, 115.179656). The coordinates indicate the central point of the residential study area and do not refer to any respondent's private residence. This location was selected because free-roaming dogs had been observed in shared residential spaces and had become a practical concern for some residents. The study involved ten respondents who lived in or were familiar with the area and had observed or encountered free-roaming dogs. Respondents were selected purposively.

The questionnaire did not collect detailed demographic data such as age, gender, education, occupation, length of residence, dog ownership status, or previous dog-bite experience. Therefore, the findings could not be compared across respondent characteristics and should be interpreted as exploratory local perceptions.

Data Collection

Data were collected from October to November 2025 using a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The questionnaire asked about where and when free-roaming dogs were usually seen, how respondents reacted when encountering them, what safety concerns they had, who should be contacted when a dog appeared sick or aggressive, how the increase of stray or free-roaming dogs could be prevented, and whether respondents felt afraid when close to such dogs. The questionnaire guide is presented in Table 1.

Ethical Considerations

Before analysis, all respondent names were removed and replaced with codes P1 to P10 to protect confidentiality. Participation was based on voluntary completion and submission of the questionnaire. The study did not involve animal handling, clinical procedures, biological

sampling, experimental intervention, or sensitive clinical data. Therefore, the ethical risk was considered minimal. The absence of formal ethical approval and limited consent documentation are acknowledged as methodological limitations.

Data Analysis

The written responses were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach supported by thematic coding. Thematic analysis is useful for identifying and reporting patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved repeated reading of responses, identification of meaningful statements, assignment of initial codes, grouping of similar codes into categories, development of descriptive themes, and summarization of recurring response patterns using simple descriptive frequencies.

The coding process was primarily inductive because the codes and categories were developed from respondents' written answers. The deductive element was limited to the discussion stage, where the findings were related to literature on free-roaming dogs, rabies prevention, and responsible dog ownership. An example of the coding process is presented in Table 2.

Trustworthiness and Limitations

Trustworthiness was supported by repeated reading, use of respondent quotations, transparent coding examples, and separation between descriptive findings and broader interpretation, following qualitative reporting principles that emphasize transparency in context, sampling, data collection, analysis, and links between findings and evidence (O'Brien *et al.*, 2014). However, the study was limited by its small sample size, use of written Google Forms responses, absence of follow-up probing, lack of demographic data, and absence of direct dog population counts, veterinary examination, official bite records, or formal complaint data. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory local perceptions rather than generalizable evidence about dog population size, rabies risk, or causal factors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis was based on ten open-ended questionnaire responses. Respondents were coded as P1 to P10 to protect confidentiality. The findings are presented as descriptive themes supported by respondent quotations, coding categories, and simple descriptive frequencies. A summary of the main response patterns and their frequencies is presented in Table 3. Because the data were collected through written questionnaire responses, the results should be interpreted as exploratory patterns in residents' responses rather than as in-depth interview findings.

Theme 1: Free-roaming dogs were observed in shared residential spaces

Most respondents described free-roaming dogs as being seen in public or shared spaces around the neighborhood. Seven of ten respondents explicitly mentioned streets, roads, alleys, or the surrounding neighborhood as common locations. For example, P1 stated, "I usually see them in the streets or neighbours at mornings and nights," while P2 simply wrote, "On the street." P4 also reported that dogs were seen "Around the street, mostly in the morning." These responses suggest that the issue was experienced as part of residents' daily movement through shared residential spaces.

Several respondents also associated the presence of dogs with specific environmental features. Five respondents mentioned places such as street vendors, food stalls, trash cans, empty buildings, or vacant lots. P7 stated that dogs were seen "on the main road and near trash cans, mostly in the evening," while P9 reported seeing them "near food stalls or empty buildings

during noon to look for shade.” These responses indicate that residents linked the presence of free-roaming dogs with places where food, shelter, shade, or open space might be available.

Theme 2: Residents commonly used non-contact responses during encounters

The most common immediate response was to avoid direct contact with the dog. Seven of ten respondents mentioned keeping distance, staying calm, avoiding eye contact, walking away, ignoring the dog, or remaining alert. P4 wrote, “I keep a distance and stay aware.” Similarly, P8 stated, “Walk away quickly and avoid making direct eye contact.” P1 described a cautious response by suggesting that residents should “stay calm, assess the dog’s behavior from a safe distance, and, if safe, check for an ID tag.”

However, not all responses were avoidance-based. Three respondents mentioned giving food, being kind to the dog, or trying to adopt or help the dog. P3 wrote, “I usually try to be kind and give them food.” while P6 stated that residents could “try to adopt, give them food, or choose to do nothing.” This shows that residents’ responses varied from cautious avoidance to more direct helping behavior.

Theme 3: Fear was linked to perceived risk, but it was not universal

Eight respondents answered the question about whether they felt scared when close to a stray or free-roaming dog. Five of these eight respondents expressed fear or conditional fear. P8 gave the clearest safety-related response: “Yes, I am afraid of being bitten because they look unpredictable.” P9 stated that they felt scared “if they gather in groups,” while P7 wrote, “Not really, unless they look aggressive or start barking.” These responses show that fear was not always directed at all free-roaming dogs, but was often linked to perceived aggression, group behavior, barking, or unpredictability.

Two respondents reported that they were not afraid. P6 wrote, “No, I am not afraid. I like stray dogs, especially puppies,” and P10 stated, “No, I like dogs so I don’t feel scared.” These responses suggest that perceptions of risk varied among respondents. However, because the questionnaire did not collect demographic information or dog ownership status, this study could not examine why some respondents felt afraid while others did not.

Theme 4: Respondents preferred reporting sick or aggressive dogs to competent parties

All ten respondents mentioned some form of external assistance when asked who should be contacted if a dog appeared sick or aggressive. The suggested contacts included animal control, police, veterinarians, animal welfare organizations, local authorities, community leaders, rescue centers, shelters, and pet care centers. P1 wrote that residents should contact “local animal control or the police,” while P2 mentioned “dokter hewan” or a veterinarian. P3 and P8 referred to “BAWA or similar organizations,” and P10 suggested the “nearest animal shelter or vet clinic.”

This pattern indicates that respondents generally recognized that sick or aggressive dogs required handling by people or institutions perceived as more competent than ordinary residents. The responses also show that respondents did not suggest harming the dog as the main solution. Instead, most responses pointed toward reporting or seeking assistance.

Theme 5: Prevention was associated with sterilization, adoption, responsible ownership, and community action

Respondents suggested several preventive actions. Five of ten respondents mentioned sterilization, spaying, neutering, or mass sterilization as a way to reduce the number of stray or free-roaming dogs. P3 wrote “Sterilization,” while P7 suggested “mass sterilization programs by the government.” P9 similarly stated that the government should provide “free sterilization

clinics for local communities.”

Five respondents also mentioned adoption, caring for dogs, or encouraging people to adopt instead of buying dogs. P4 suggested “making a program about adopting stray dogs,” while P10 recommended encouraging “adoption instead of buying dogs from breeders.” In addition, several respondents mentioned responsible ownership, rules to prevent owned dogs from roaming, waste management, street lighting, warning signs, and emergency contact numbers.

When asked why stray or free-roaming dogs still exist in residential areas, eight respondents gave an answer. These responses should be interpreted as perceived explanations rather than proven causes. Three respondents associated the issue with irresponsible ownership, abandonment, or owners allowing dogs to roam. P7 wrote, “People keep abandoning their pets when they don’t want them anymore or can’t afford them.” P9 stated that “dogs breed very fast and some owners are still irresponsible about letting them free.” Four respondents mentioned cost, limited funding, or insufficient resources. P3 wrote that “People still do not sterilize their dogs, mostly because it costs money,” while P10 stated that welfare programs “don’t have enough funding to cover all areas effectively.”

Overall, the findings show that respondents perceived free-roaming dogs as a local issue involving shared residential spaces, cautious everyday responses, concern about bites or aggressive behavior, reliance on competent parties for sick or aggressive dogs, and preventive ideas related to sterilization, adoption, responsible ownership, and community-level action.

Discussion

This study explored residents’ perceptions of free-roaming dogs in Jalan Perdana Griya, Jimbaran, Bali, based on ten open-ended questionnaire responses. The findings show that respondents commonly perceived free-roaming dogs as part of everyday residential life, especially in shared spaces such as streets, main roads, alleys, areas near food stalls, trash cans, empty buildings, and vacant lots. This finding should not be interpreted as evidence of dog population size or roaming patterns, because the study did not conduct direct dog counts or systematic observation. Instead, it shows that respondents experienced free-roaming dogs as a visible issue in their daily environment. This is consistent with the definition of free-roaming dogs as dogs that are not under direct human supervision or control, whether owned or unowned (WOAH, 2024).

The most common immediate response was non-contact behavior, such as keeping distance, staying alert, avoiding eye contact, walking away, or ignoring the dog. This response appears to be related to perceived safety risk rather than hostility toward dogs. Several respondents explained that fear was conditional, especially when dogs looked aggressive, barked, gathered in groups, or appeared unpredictable. This finding is relevant to veterinary public health because dog bites are closely linked to rabies prevention. WHO (2024) states that dog bites and scratches account for most human rabies cases globally, and that prevention requires dog vaccination, bite prevention, access to post-exposure prophylaxis, surveillance, and community awareness. In Bali, Arief *et al.* (2017) also showed that rabies control depends on maintaining dog vaccination coverage, including among free-roaming dogs. Therefore, residents’ cautious responses can be understood as practical safety behavior in situations where dog ownership, vaccination status, and health condition are unclear.

Respondents also tended to suggest contacting competent parties when a dog appeared sick or aggressive. All ten respondents mentioned some form of external assistance, including animal control, police, veterinarians, animal welfare organizations, local authorities, rescue centers, shelters, or pet care centers. This indicates that respondents recognized the limits of individual

action and preferred assistance from parties considered more capable of handling sick or aggressive dogs. The finding is consistent with dog population management guidance, which emphasizes that public health, safety, animal welfare, responsible ownership, and cooperation among relevant stakeholders are interconnected in managing free-roaming dog issues (WOAH, 2024).

Preventive suggestions from respondents included sterilization, adoption, responsible ownership, waste management, warning signs, emergency contacts, and community education. These suggestions should be interpreted as local perceptions and proposed actions, not as evidence that these measures have already been implemented or proven effective in the study area. However, they are consistent with broader recommendations for humane dog population management, which include vaccination, reproduction control, responsible ownership, identification, environmental management, and community participation (ICAM Coalition, 2019; WOA, 2024). In Bali, Utami *et al.* (2019) reported that community-based dog welfare and rabies control efforts in Sanur were associated with improvements in vaccination coverage, dog welfare indicators, and community participation, although implementation challenges remained.

Several respondents perceived irresponsible ownership, abandonment, uncontrolled breeding, cost, or limited resources as possible reasons why stray or free-roaming dogs continue to exist in residential areas. These responses are important because they show how residents interpret the issue. This interpretation is also relevant to the Indonesian context, where studies on rabies control have shown that the uptake of control measures depends not only on program availability, but also on dog-owner participation and behavior (Wera *et al.*, 2015). However, this study cannot confirm these factors as actual causes because it did not measure ownership practices, household behavior, dog reproduction, veterinary service access, or program funding.

Overall, the findings suggest that respondents viewed free-roaming dogs as both a safety concern and an animal welfare concern. Their responses were not limited to fear or avoidance, but also included reporting, adoption, sterilization, and responsible ownership. The contribution of this study is modest but practical: it provides an exploratory description of how a small group of residents perceived and responded to free-roaming dogs in one residential area. Future studies should involve larger samples, demographic data, direct dog population observation, bite-report data, and interviews with residents, local authorities, veterinarians, and animal welfare organizations to better understand the issue.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This exploratory qualitative descriptive study described residents' perceptions of free-roaming dogs in Jalan Perdana Griya, Jimbaran, Kecamatan Kuta Selatan, Kabupaten Badung, Bali, Indonesia. Based on ten open-ended questionnaire responses, respondents commonly reported seeing free-roaming dogs in shared residential spaces and tended to respond by keeping distance, staying alert, avoiding contact, or walking away. Fear was mainly linked to perceived aggression, barking, group behavior, unpredictability, and possible bites. Respondents preferred that sick or aggressive dogs be handled by competent parties, such as veterinarians, animal welfare organizations, shelters, local authorities, or animal control. They also suggested sterilization, adoption, responsible ownership, waste management, warning signs, emergency contacts, and community education as possible preventive actions. Because this study was limited to ten written responses from one residential area, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory local perceptions, not as evidence of dog population size, rabies risk, vaccination coverage, ownership behavior, or causal factors.

Suggestions

Based on respondents' answers, the residential community may prepare simple guidance for handling encounters with free-roaming dogs, including keeping a safe distance, avoiding provocation, reporting bites immediately, and contacting competent parties when dogs appear sick or aggressive. Community-level actions may also include promoting responsible ownership, sharing information about sterilization and vaccination, encouraging adoption, improving waste management, adding warning signs in frequently reported areas, and preparing emergency contact numbers. Future studies should involve more respondents, collect demographic information, conduct direct observation of free-roaming dogs, and include available bite reports, complaint records, or input from veterinarians, local authorities, and animal welfare organizations.

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Tables

Table 1. Semi-structured questionnaire guide

Research focus	Open-ended question
Dog visibility	Where and when do you usually see stray or free-roaming dogs in the neighborhood?
Resident response	What do you usually do when you encounter a stray or free-roaming dog?
Neighborhood safety	What simple ideas do you have to make the neighborhood safer from stray or free-roaming dogs?
Reporting pathway	Who should be contacted if a dog appears sick or aggressive?
Prevention	What can residents or communities do to prevent the increase of stray or free-roaming dogs?
Perceived reasons	In your opinion, why do stray or free-roaming dogs still exist in residential areas?
Perceived fear	Do you feel scared when you are close to a stray or free-roaming dog? Why?

Table 2. Example of coding process

Respondent quotation	Initial code	Category	Descriptive theme
"I usually see them on the streets around the neighborhood in the morning and at night." (P1)	Seen in streets; morning and night	Visibility in shared spaces	Free-roaming dogs are observed in everyday residential spaces
"I keep a distance and stay aware." (P4)	Keeping distance; staying alert	Avoidance response	Residents use non-contact responses during encounters
"Yes, I am afraid of being bitten because they look unpredictable." (P8)	Fear of being bitten; unpredictable behavior	Safety concern	Fear is linked to perceived risk of bites
"If you see a sick or aggressive dog, you should contact local animal control or the police." (P1)	Contact animal control; contact police	Reporting pathway	Residents prefer competent assistance for sick or aggressive dogs
"Sterilization programs and responsible ownership education." (P1)	Sterilization; responsible ownership education	Preventive action	Prevention is associated with ownership responsibility and population control

Table 3. Simple descriptive frequencies of response patterns

Response pattern	Frequency
Mentioned streets, roads, alleys, or surrounding neighborhood as dog locations	7/10
Mentioned specific time of observation, such as morning, afternoon, evening, or night	6/10
Mentioned food stalls, vendors, trash cans, empty buildings, or vacant lots as dog locations	5/10
Mentioned keeping distance, staying calm, avoiding eye contact, walking away, ignoring, or staying alert	7/10
Mentioned giving food, being kind, adopting, or helping the dog	3/10
Expressed fear or conditional fear when close to stray or free-roaming dogs	5/8
Mentioned professional or authority-based reporting for sick or aggressive dogs	10/10
Mentioned sterilization, spaying, neutering, or mass sterilization as prevention	5/10
Mentioned adoption, caring for dogs, or adopting instead of buying as prevention	5/10
Mentioned irresponsible ownership, abandonment, or dogs being allowed to roam as perceived reasons	3/8
Mentioned cost, lack of funds, or limited resources as perceived reasons	4/8