

An Analytical Study of Animal Welfare Organizations in Pakistan

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Received on: 06-01-2025

Accepted on: 09-02-2025

Abstract

This study examines the role, impact, and challenges faced by animal welfare organizations in Pakistan. Despite religious and ethical frameworks advocating kindness toward animals, the country continues to experience widespread animal neglect and abuse due to limited public awareness, outdated legislation, and lack of institutional support. Through an analytical review of key organizations—including the ACF Animal Rescue, Pakistan Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), Todd's Welfare Society (TWS), and Islamabad Animal Rescue—this paper evaluates their contributions in areas such as rescue operations, community outreach, sterilization programs, and advocacy. The study highlights persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, minimal government collaboration, and weak legal enforcement. Findings suggest that while these organizations have significantly improved animal welfare conditions in urban centers, broader change requires legislative reform, increased public engagement, and stronger partnerships between the state and civil society. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy enhancement and strategic initiatives to strengthen animal welfare infrastructure in Pakistan.

Keywords: Analytical, Study, Animal, Welfare, Organization, Pakistan

Introduction

Animal welfare is an essential yet often overlooked aspect of societal development, particularly in developing countries. In Pakistan, the concept of animal rights and welfare is still in a nascent stage. Despite constitutional mandates and religious teachings promoting compassion toward animals, practical implementation remains weak. This study aims to analyze the roles, challenges, and effectiveness of animal welfare organizations in Pakistan. Animal welfare is an integral component of a compassionate and civilized society. Globally, the recognition of animal rights has evolved to include not only the prevention of cruelty but also the promotion of overall well-being of animals. In Pakistan, however, animal welfare remains a largely marginalized and under-addressed issue. Despite religious teachings in Islam that emphasize kindness to animals and the presence of colonial-era legislation such as the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1890*, instances of abuse, neglect, and inhumane treatment of animals, particularly strays and working animals—persist throughout the country. Animal welfare is a key indicator of social development and moral responsibility within any nation. While the global discourse around animal rights has gained momentum,

Pakistan continues to lag in ensuring humane treatment of animals. The country has limited institutional mechanisms for animal protection, despite religious, ethical, and cultural imperatives that promote kindness and responsibility toward animals (Khan, Iqbal, & Farooq, 2022). The foundational legal framework for animal welfare in Pakistan, the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1890*, is a relic of the colonial era and has only undergone minor amendments over time (Ali & Mushtaq, 2023). Enforcement of animal welfare laws remains weak due to lack of prioritization, inadequate funding, and low public awareness. As a result, widespread cases of abuse, neglect, and cruelty, particularly toward stray and working animals, are frequently observed in both urban and rural areas (Shaikh & Niazi, 2021).

In response to the state's inaction, civil society organizations have stepped in to address the growing crisis. Non-governmental animal welfare organizations, such as the ACF Animal Rescue in Karachi, PAWS in Islamabad, and Todd's Welfare Society in Lahore, have become central actors in animal rescue, veterinary treatment, sterilization programs, and public awareness campaigns (Ahmed & Raza, 2020). These organizations rely heavily on community support and digital platforms to mobilize resources, advocate for policy reforms, and educate the public. This study aims to critically examine the role, operational challenges, and contributions of these animal welfare organizations in Pakistan. Through an analytical lens, it explores how these entities function within a socio-legal environment that often undermines their mission, while also offering recommendations to enhance their sustainability and reach.

Literature Review

The literature on animal welfare in Pakistan, though limited, provides a foundation for understanding the socio-legal and ethical landscape surrounding the issue. Khan et al. (2022) explored the Islamic perspective on animal rights and highlighted the disparity between theological principles and everyday practices. Their research indicated that while Islam strongly advocates for compassion toward animals, this ethos has not translated into widespread societal norms or institutional practices in Pakistan.

Legal scholars, such as Ali and Mushtaq (2023), have analyzed the structural limitations of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*. They argue that the Act's outdated provisions—such as minimal fines and lack of prosecution—render it ineffective in deterring abuse. Moreover, they emphasize the absence of implementation frameworks and trained personnel as major barriers to enforcement. Empirical studies have shed light on the operational aspects of NGOs working in this field. Ahmed and Raza (2020), in their evaluation of Todd's Welfare Society's Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) initiative, demonstrated how localized interventions can reduce stray populations and improve public health outcomes, though scaling such programs remains a significant challenge. Similarly, reports by the ACF Animal Rescue (2023) indicate that digital advocacy and mobile veterinary units have improved rescue rates and community engagement in Karachi.

Social perception studies, such as those by Shaikh and Niazi (2021), point to deeply rooted misconceptions about animals, especially strays. These societal attitudes contribute to systemic neglect and often result in violent treatment of animals. Public education, therefore, emerges as a key area of focus for long-term change. In comparison, international literature provides successful case studies from other developing countries. The World Animal

Protection (2021) report showcases effective models in India and Kenya where partnerships between governments and NGOs have led to the development of sustainable animal welfare policies. These comparative frameworks highlight both the potential and the gaps in Pakistan's animal welfare ecosystem.

Overview of Animal Welfare in Pakistan

Pakistan has a long-standing cultural and religious history of compassion toward animals. Islamic teachings advocate kindness to animals, yet the gap between doctrine and practice is stark. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1890 (amended in 2023), remains the primary legal framework for animal protection, but enforcement is sporadic and underfunded (Khan et al., 2022). The state of animal welfare in Pakistan presents a complex picture shaped by historical, legal, cultural, and socio-economic factors. While religious and ethical frameworks advocate compassion and care toward animals, the practical reality reflects systemic neglect and insufficient institutional mechanisms. Pakistan, a predominantly Muslim country, inherits a rich tradition of animal kindness rooted in Islamic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized humane treatment of all living beings, and various Hadiths encourage feeding, sheltering, and protecting animals (Khan, Iqbal, & Farooq, 2022). However, the translation of these moral directives into actionable policies and public attitudes remains limited. The primary legislation governing animal rights in Pakistan is the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1890*, originally enacted under British colonial rule. Though an amendment was made in 2023 to increase penalties and expand the definition of cruelty, the Act still lacks comprehensive protections, enforcement mechanisms, and administrative clarity (Ali & Mushtaq, 2023). Furthermore, there is no national-level authority exclusively mandated with monitoring and implementing animal welfare standards. Most urban centers in Pakistan face recurring issues related to stray animals, particularly dogs and cats. Stray populations are often subject to inhumane culling methods such as poisoning or shooting, typically conducted by municipal authorities under the pretext of public safety and disease control (Shaikh & Niazi, 2021). These methods not only raise ethical concerns but also prove ineffective in the long term. In contrast, scientific approaches such as the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) method have shown more humane and sustainable outcomes when applied by non-governmental organizations (Ahmed & Raza, 2020).

Moreover, animals used in labor—such as donkeys, horses, and oxen—are frequently subjected to overwork, malnourishment, and inadequate medical care. Reports by animal welfare groups such as Brooke Pakistan indicate that working animals often suffer from untreated injuries, poor nutrition, and abusive handling, especially in rural and peri-urban areas (Brooke Pakistan, 2022). Wildlife and zoo animals also face challenges due to insufficient regulation and poor management. Numerous investigations have exposed dire conditions in state-run zoos, where animals live in cramped enclosures, without proper diets, veterinary supervision, or enrichment activities (WWF Pakistan, 2021). The closure of Islamabad's Marghazar Zoo in 2020, following the internationally publicized case of Kaavan the elephant, highlighted the urgent need for reform in zoo management practices. Despite these challenges, there has been growing momentum in civil society, driven by social media awareness campaigns, grassroots activism, and the emergence of animal welfare organizations. These groups provide medical care, rescue services, sterilization programs,

and advocacy for policy reforms. However, in the absence of meaningful state collaboration and consistent public support, their impact remains localized and under-resourced.

Key Animal Welfare Organizations in Pakistan

In the absence of robust state-driven mechanisms for animal protection, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as frontline actors in promoting animal welfare in Pakistan. These organizations have taken on responsibilities ranging from rescue and rehabilitation to advocacy and public education. Operating largely in urban centers, they offer critical services in a highly underserved sector. This section highlights some of the most prominent animal welfare organizations in Pakistan and analyzes their roles, strategies, and challenges.

1. ACF Animal Rescue (Karachi)

Founded in 2013 by animal rights activist Ayesha Chundrigar, ACF Animal Rescue is one of the most well-known and active animal welfare organizations in Pakistan. Based in Karachi, the organization operates a shelter for over 500 animals, including injured strays, abused working animals, and abandoned pets. ACF provides medical treatment, rehabilitation, and permanent sanctuary for animals that cannot be re-released (ACF Animal Rescue, 2023). It also runs a mobile clinic for outreach in underserved areas and advocates for humane alternatives to culling, such as sterilization programs and community education.

2. Pakistan Animal Welfare Society (PAWS)

PAWS, founded in 2004, functions as a volunteer-driven organization focusing on awareness, rescue coordination, and animal welfare advocacy. PAWS has a strong digital presence and uses social media to mobilize support for injured or abused animals and to promote responsible pet ownership (PAWS Pakistan, 2022). While it does not operate a shelter, PAWS collaborates with private veterinarians, fosters, and rescue groups to coordinate aid. The organization is also vocal about the need for updated animal protection laws and has contributed to policy dialogues at the national level.

3. Todd's Welfare Society (TWS, Lahore)

TWS was established in Lahore in 2016 and has since grown into a key player in stray animal rescue and sterilization efforts. The organization is named after a rescued dog and runs programs that include medical treatment, adoption drives, and Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) projects to manage the stray dog population in humane and sustainable ways (Ahmed & Raza, 2020). TWS also conducts educational sessions in schools and communities to foster compassion toward animals and counter harmful myths.

4. Islamabad Animal Rescue (IAR)

IAR is a relatively newer organization based in the capital city, with a focus on emergency rescues, foster-based adoptions, and treatment of stray animals. It also campaigns against illegal wildlife trade and animal abuse in pet markets. The organization collaborates with veterinarians and volunteers to provide aid in cases of accidents or abuse (Shaikh & Niazi, 2021). IAR's advocacy work has included petitions to improve zoo conditions and ban the use of animals in circuses.

5. Edhi Animal Home (Nationwide)

The Edhi Foundation, one of Pakistan's largest humanitarian organizations, also includes an animal rescue wing. Edhi Animal Home shelters injured or abandoned animals and provides

basic medical treatment, although its capacity is limited due to its broader humanitarian focus (Edhi Foundation, 2022). Still, its inclusion of animal welfare reflects a holistic approach to humanitarianism. These organizations play an indispensable role in Pakistan's animal welfare ecosystem. However, their impact is constrained by limited funding, lack of state support, and deeply ingrained societal misconceptions. Despite these hurdles, their work has led to increased public awareness and incremental policy discussions, laying the groundwork for broader systemic change.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the operational dynamics, challenges, and impact of animal welfare organizations in Pakistan. The methodological framework is based on document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and case study approaches to gain comprehensive insights into both institutional operations and broader socio-legal contexts.

1. Research Design

A qualitative approach was chosen for its capacity to capture detailed, context-rich data and to explore complex social phenomena that quantitative methods might overlook (Creswell, 2013). The study focuses on descriptive and analytical evaluation rather than statistical generalization.

2. Data Collection Methods

a) Document Analysis

Primary and secondary documents were reviewed, including annual reports, policy briefs, and press releases from animal welfare organizations such as ACF Animal Rescue, PAWS Pakistan, Todd's Welfare Society (TWS), and Brooke Pakistan. Legislative texts such as the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1890* and its amendments were also examined. In addition, news articles, journal publications, and NGO publications were analyzed to contextualize challenges and public perceptions.

b) Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 10 stakeholders, including organization founders, veterinarians, volunteers, and policymakers. The interviews were conducted via telephone and video conferencing due to logistical and time constraints. The interviews focused on areas such as organizational goals, operational barriers, public engagement, and recommendations for systemic improvements. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation from key animal welfare organizations and relevant government bodies.

c) Case Studies

Three organizations—ACF Animal Rescue (Karachi), Todd's Welfare Society (Lahore), and Islamabad Animal Rescue (IAR)—were selected for in-depth case studies. These cases were chosen for their visibility, organizational diversity, and geographical distribution. Data collected included organizational structure, outreach programs, funding models, and public engagement strategies.

3. Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was employed to interpret the qualitative data collected through documents and interviews.

5. Limitations

This study is limited by its small sample size and urban-centric focus, which may not fully represent conditions in rural or tribal regions of Pakistan. Additionally, time constraints limited longitudinal analysis of organizational impact.

Challenges Faced by Animal Welfare Organizations in Pakistan

Despite their vital contributions, animal welfare organizations in Pakistan operate under considerable constraints that limit their reach and effectiveness. These challenges are multifaceted, including financial, legal, social, and institutional barriers that reflect a broader neglect of animal rights in the country's governance and cultural fabric.

1. Limited Funding and Resource Constraints

The most pressing challenge is the chronic lack of funding. Most animal welfare organizations rely on donations, volunteer labor, and small-scale fundraising efforts to sustain their operations (Ahmed & Raza, 2020). Without consistent financial support from the government or corporate sector, these organizations often struggle to cover the costs of shelter maintenance, veterinary care, rescue transport, and staff salaries. This financial instability restricts their ability to scale up services or expand to rural and underserved areas.

2. Weak Legal Framework and Enforcement

Although Pakistan has a legal framework for animal protection in the form of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1890*, it remains outdated and largely unenforced. Amendments in recent years have modestly increased penalties, but the lack of implementation mechanisms, trained personnel, and regulatory oversight renders the law ineffective in curbing cruelty (Ali & Mushtaq, 2023). Furthermore, few police officers or municipal authorities are trained or mandated to intervene in animal abuse cases, making legal recourse extremely difficult for NGOs.

3. Public Misconceptions and Cultural Attitudes

Cultural beliefs and social norms often hinder animal welfare initiatives. In many communities, stray animals—especially dogs—are seen as threats or nuisances rather than sentient beings deserving of compassion. Misconceptions about diseases, religious misinterpretations, and general apathy contribute to the mistreatment or neglect of animals (Shaikh & Niazi, 2021). This hostile public perception not only leads to abuse but also makes it difficult for organizations to gain support for sterilization drives, adoption programs, or awareness campaigns.

4. Lack of Government Collaboration

There is minimal coordination between animal welfare organizations and government agencies. Municipal authorities often conduct inhumane culling operations rather than collaborating with NGOs on scientific population control strategies like Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). According to reports from ACF Animal Rescue (2023), multiple attempts to engage city authorities in Karachi for humane stray dog management have failed due to bureaucratic inertia and lack of political will.

5. Inadequate Veterinary Infrastructure

Access to quality veterinary services is another major limitation. There is a shortage of skilled veterinarians willing to work with street animals or in low-income urban and rural areas. This forces NGOs to either train their own staff at great expense or operate without the necessary medical expertise for critical cases (Brooke Pakistan, 2022). Additionally, the

absence of animal ambulances, diagnostic labs, and surgical facilities further complicates emergency care and treatment.

6. Mental Health Burnout Among Rescuers

Animal rescue work is physically and emotionally demanding. Many volunteers and staff members report burnout, secondary trauma, and feelings of helplessness, especially when dealing with severe abuse cases or high mortality rates (Khan et al., 2022). Without institutional support systems or psychological counseling, staff well-being becomes an under-addressed issue that affects organizational sustainability.

Challenges Faced by Animal Welfare Organizations

Despite their commendable work, these organizations face numerous obstacles:

- **Lack of Public Awareness:** Many Pakistanis view stray animals as pests rather than sentient beings. Superstitions and misconceptions often lead to abuse and neglect (Shaikh & Niazi, 2021).
- **Inadequate Funding:** Most NGOs are donor-dependent. Sustained operations, especially during economic downturns, become increasingly difficult.
- **Legal Limitations:** The outdated Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act lacks robust enforcement mechanisms, and penalties are minimal (Ali & Mushtaq, 2023).
- **Governmental Apathy:** There is limited governmental collaboration, with few state-sponsored shelters or welfare campaigns.

Impact and Progress

Despite the challenges, animal welfare organizations have made a significant impact:

- Thousands of animals have been rescued, rehabilitated, and adopted.
- Rabies vaccination and sterilization campaigns have reduced disease spread in urban slums (TWS, 2022).
- Increased media coverage and social media advocacy have led to growing public interest and empathy.

Recommendations

1. **Policy Reform:** Modernize the existing legal framework and ensure strict penalties for cruelty.
2. **State-NGO Collaboration:** Encourage public-private partnerships to expand services and shelters.
3. **Education Campaigns:** Incorporate animal welfare education in schools and community centers.
4. **Veterinary Support:** Increase access to affordable veterinary care across rural and urban areas.

Conclusion

Animal welfare organizations in Pakistan play a crucial role in bridging the gap left by governmental neglect. Although their efforts are commendable, significant structural reforms, legal updates, and public engagement are necessary to ensure long-term and sustainable animal welfare practices.

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