

Horse Riders/Owners Perceptions and Knowledge of Training Aids and Training Techniques

Introduction

- ❖ There is a rising concern for welfare and misconceptions regarding correct knowledge and the appropriate use of equine training aids and training techniques.
- ❖ There is an insufficient amount of support and research regarding the impact training aids have on a horse's welfare and behaviour (Williams, 2020).
- ❖ Dyson (2017) states there are wide gaps in horse owner and rider knowledge about reducing the risk of injury when using training aids such as draw reins, side reins, and a Pessoa.
- ❖ Therefore, additional research and studies need to be carried out to further understand the impact on equine biomechanics.

Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- ❖ To determine and understand horse owners' and rider's attributes, beliefs, and opinions regarding training aids, techniques, and current practices.



Objectives:

- ❖ Identify rider knowledge and perceptions of training techniques,
- ❖ Identify rider knowledge and perceptions of training aids,
- ❖ Determine the factors that influence the choice of training techniques and training aids,
- ❖ Investigate links between training and welfare issues.

Literature Review

Training aids

- ❖ Training aids have been introduced for all types of riders and become popular for equestrians such as trainers, leisure riders, and competition riders.
- ❖ Despite the manufacturers claiming the benefits they have on performance, there has been an insufficient number of studies to show impacts training aids have on horses' health, performance, and welfare (Williams, 2020; Horseman *et al.*, 2016).
- ❖ Hockenhull and Creighton (2013) stated if training aids are misused or used inappropriately it can be harmful and unpleasant for the horse. Additionally, they stated this as an area for further research and can have a detrimental effect on the horse's welfare (Hockenhull, 2013).

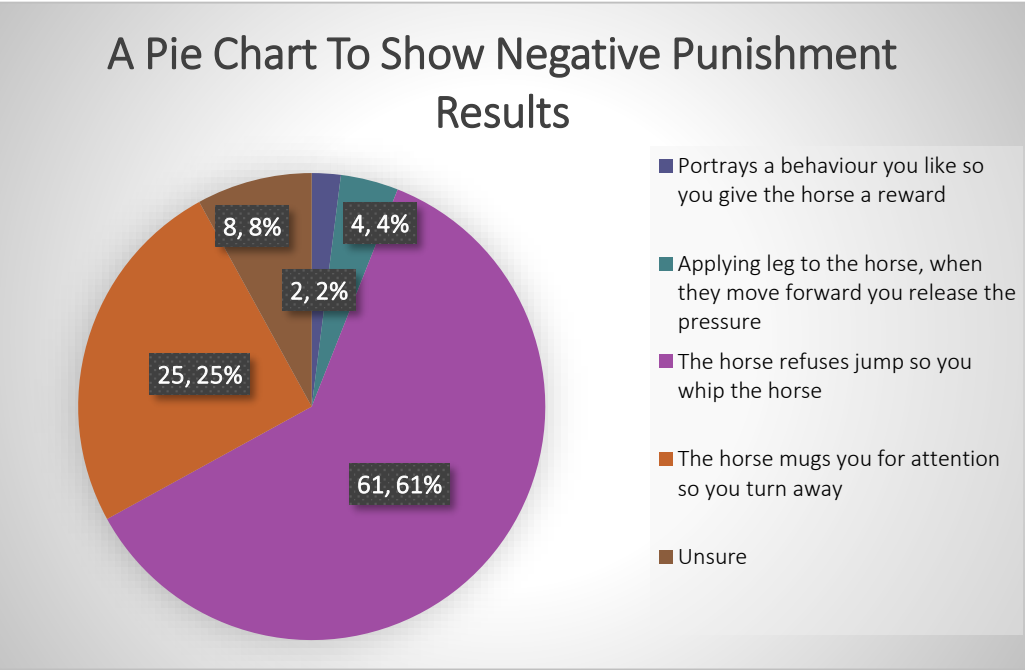
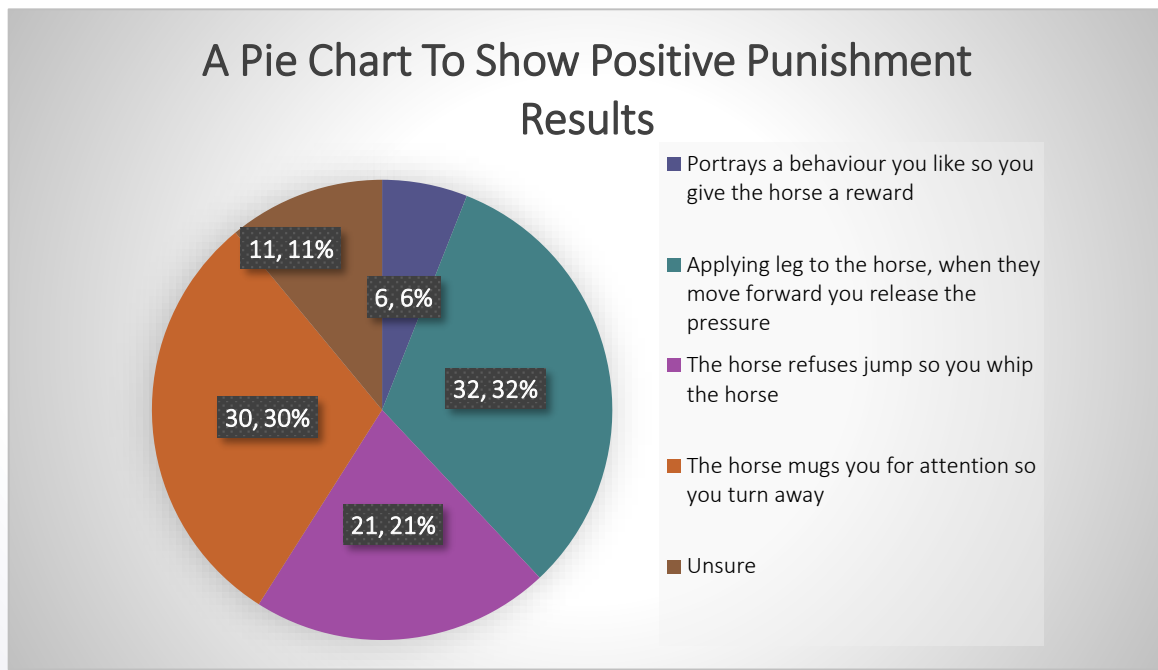
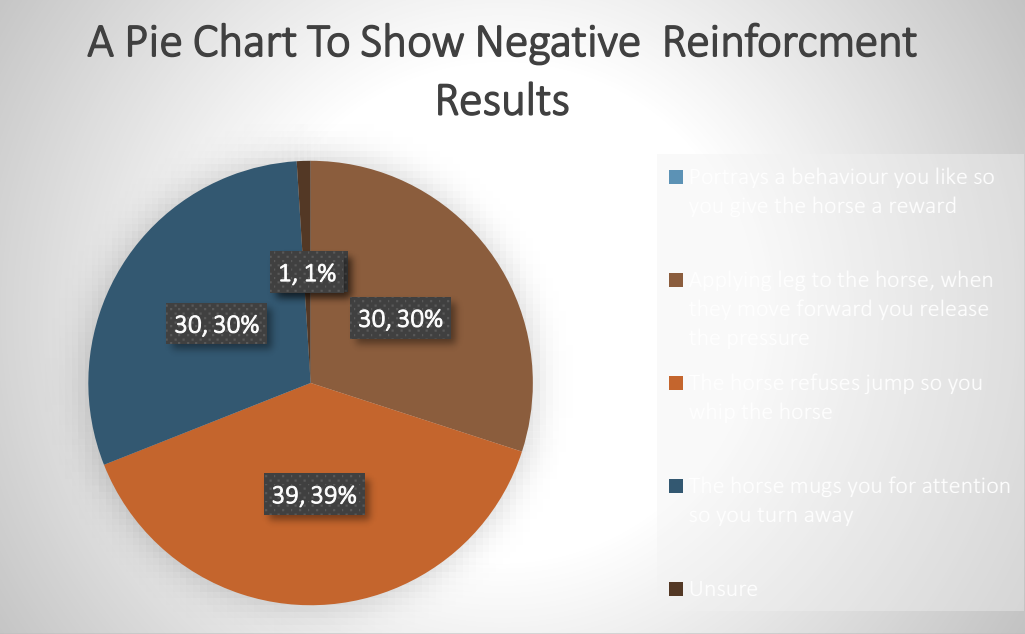
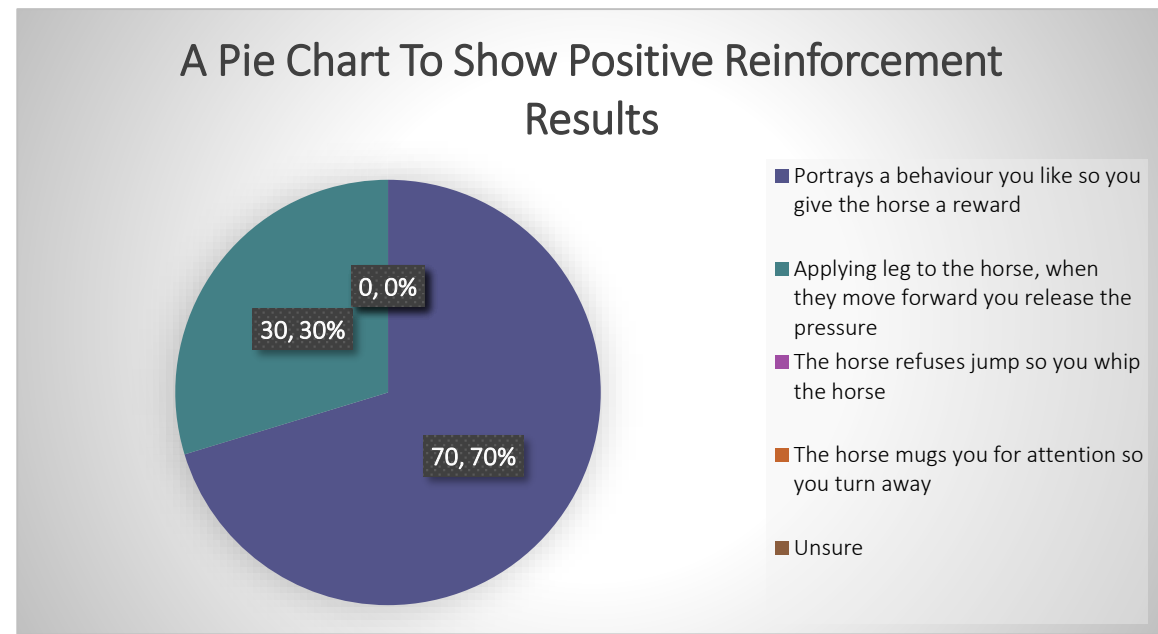
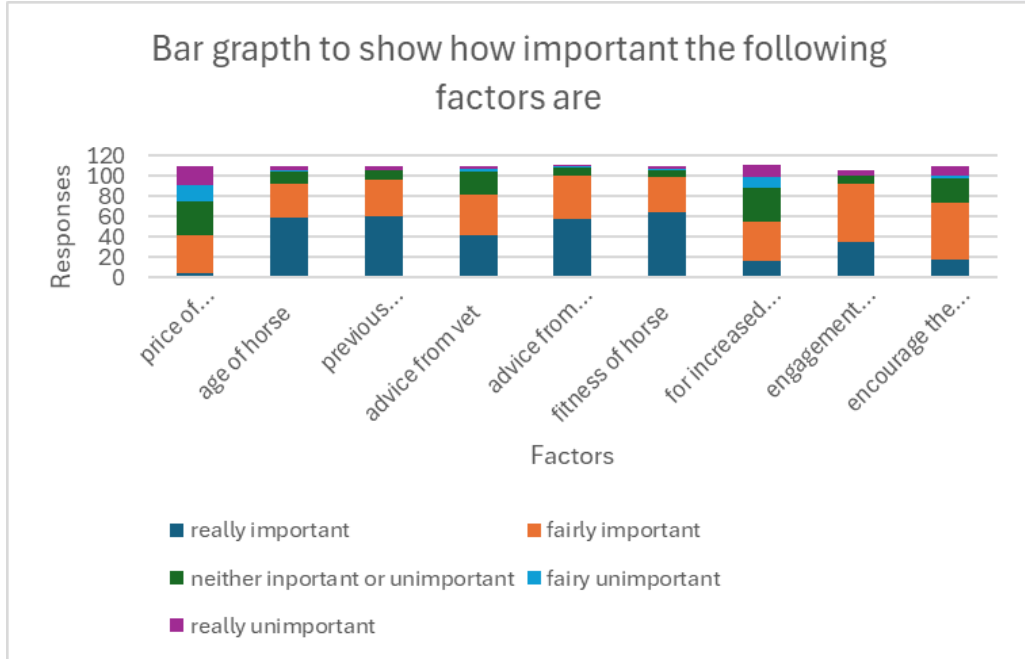
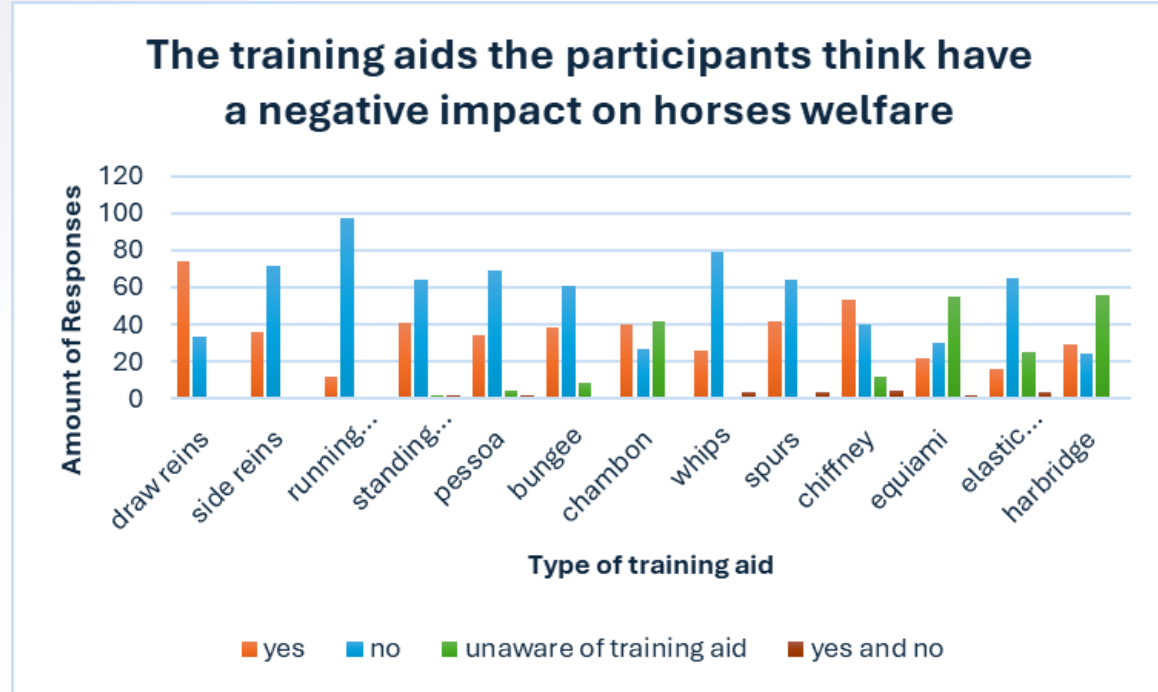
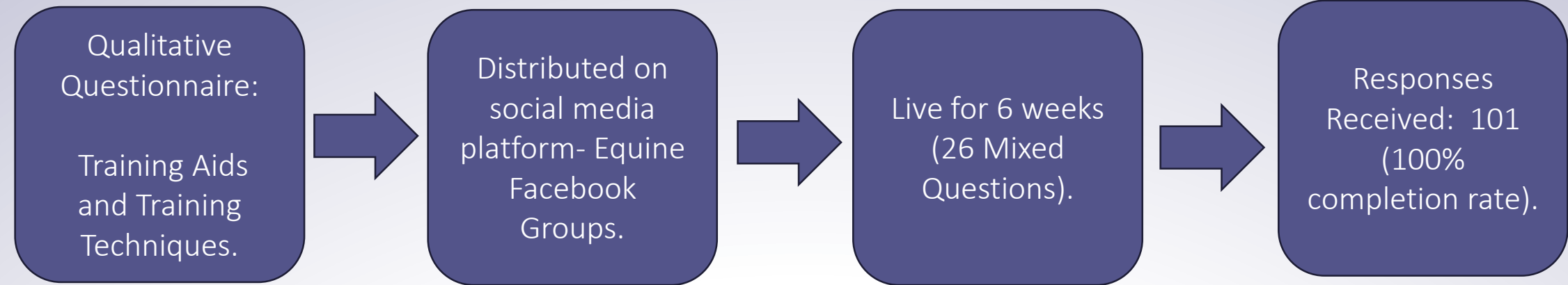
Training Techniques

	Reinforcement (Increase / maintain behavior)	Punishment (Decrease behavior)
Positive (add stimulus)	Add pleasant stimulus to Increase / maintain behavior	Add aversive stimulus to Decrease behavior
Negative (remove stimulus)	Remove aversive stimulus to Increase / maintain behavior	Remove pleasant stimulus to Decrease behavior

Dunning Kruger Effect

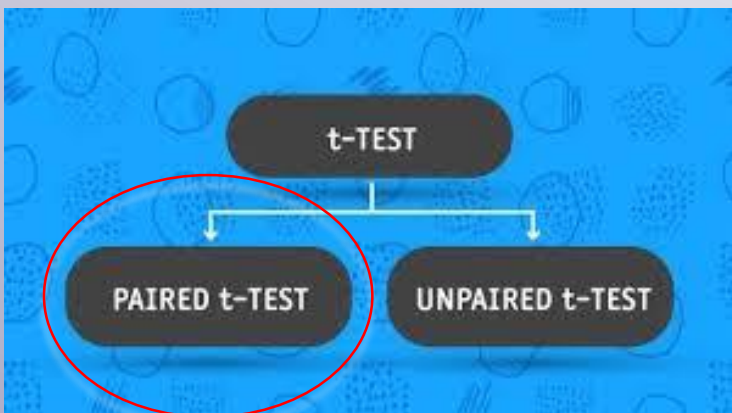
- ❖ The Dunning-Kruger effect relates to a theory concerning cognitive bias where individuals overestimate their own knowledge and ability in a certain subject (Hollingsworth, 2021).
- ❖ Murray (2015) carried out a knowledge and perception survey on equine nutrition and concluded that over 6000 participants scored themselves higher than their actual knowledge.
- ❖ Marlin *et al* (2018) conducted the first study related to the equine population and the Dunning-Kruger effect. Results showed that equestrians had an 'inflated' confidence regarding their knowledge of the subject.

Methodology



Statistical Analysis

- ❖ A paired T-Test was carried out to identify knowledge and perceptions of training aids and training techniques.
- ❖ The participants were asked to rate their current knowledge and understanding of equine training aids as a percentage on a scale of 1-100 in question 5.
- ❖ The paired T-Test showed that the participants level of perceived and actual knowledge was different (Perceived mean = 64.98, SD = 16.73) to (Actual mean = 59.50, SD = 16.23) (paired t-test, t101=2.30, P>0.05).



Paired T-Test and CI: perceived, actual

Descriptive Statistics				
Sample	N	Mean	StDev	SE Mean
perceived	101	64.98	16.73	1.66
actual	101	59.50	16.23	1.61

Estimation for Paired Difference

95% CI for			
Mean	StDev	SE Mean	μ difference
5.48	23.96	2.38	(0.75, 10.20)

μ difference: mean of (perceived - actual)

Test

Null hypothesis	H0: μ difference = 0
Alternative hypothesis	H1: μ difference $\neq$ 0
T-Value	P-Value
2.30	0.024

Discussion

- ❖ Equine training methods and equipment has been a controversial and debatable topic within the equine industry.
- ❖ The responses received highlighted several participants had a detailed understanding of different training methods and equipment; however, it was emphasised that there were limited knowledge and misconceptions, suggesting there is educational issues regarding equine training methods and equipment.
- ❖ This study revealed 52 participants scored their knowledge higher than their actual score in the questionnaire, 38 participants scored higher than what they perceived their knowledge to be, and 11 participants scored the same on their perception and knowledge.
- ❖ This result supports previous research- Murray (2015) who concluded that 6000 participants scored their knowledge regarding nutrition higher than their actual score. Moreover, this supports Marlin *et al.*, (2018)'s statement and implying the need for further research on the Dunning Kruger Effect for equestrians regarding welfare and management. This further suggests that there is a gap in knowledge for equestrians, horse riders and horse owners in connection with training aids and training techniques.
- ❖ It has been stated that research on training aids and device is lacking and evidence is mostly anecdotal, further research needs to look more specifically into the science behind the training aid and how this affects the horse (Goodwin *et al.*, 2009).
- ❖ There is generally a misconception between positive and negative reinforcement.
- ❖ There is a lack of resources available for riders and horse owners regarding positive and negative reinforcement which can lead to the risk of misuse of the learning theory and have a detrimental effect on the horse's welfare.

Limitations

- ❖ Sample size.
- ❖ Data Collection (time).
- ❖ Researcher Bias.
- ❖ Length of Questionnaire.



Future Recommendations

- ❖ Further exploration and education needed for using training equipment.
- ❖ Recognising limited knowledge and encouraging education.
- ❖ Encouraging change from traditional methods.
- ❖ Make owners aware of impact incorrect use of training aids can have on the horse.

Conclusion

- ❖ There is a discrepancy between perceived and actual knowledge between rider and horse owners in the equine industry.
- ❖ Results showed rider/horse owners believed they knew more surrounding equine training aids and techniques than was known on the knowledge questionnaire.
- ❖ There is still a high level of unknown information regarding how a training aid and how incorrect training techniques impacts the horse.
- ❖ The equine industry generally needs to be aware that education regarding equine training aids and training techniques is lacking and equine training methods and equipment has been a controversial and debatable topic.
- ❖ There is a lack of resources available, a lack of understanding or anecdotal evidence and need for additional research surrounding the science behind the training aid and how this affects the horse.

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