

Cross-Cultural Comparison of Student Attitudes toward Snakes

Authors: Prokop, Pavol¹; Özel, Murat²; Uşak, Muhammet³

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Abstract:

There is an increasing amount of research focusing on the origin of the human fear of animals. However, other dimensions of human views of frightening animals have been largely neglected. This study investigated attitudes toward snakes. The Snake Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ), which consisted of 58 Likert-type items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$), was administered in a sample of students from two countries (Turkey and Slovakia). Students showed negative attitudes toward snakes, especially within the *Negativistic* and *Naturalistic* dimensions. Turkish students showed more positive *Scientistic* and *Naturalistic* attitudes than Slovakian students, and females showed more negative attitudes toward snakes than males. Although biology majors had more positive attitudes, compared with nonbiology majors, knowledge of snakes and beliefs about untrue myths were similar between these two subgroups. Our research indicates that fear of snakes negatively influences other attitudinal dimensions (especially naturalistic and scientific attitudes) although no students had been injured by a snake. Keeping various pets at home was associated with less fear of snakes. Nature protection actions should combine direct contact with these controversial animals with interventions against belief in untrue myths about snakes.

Keywords: [ANIMALS](#); [ATTITUDES](#); [KEEPING PETS](#); [MYTHS](#); [SNAKES](#)

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Affiliations: **1:** University of Trnava, Trnava, Slovakia Institute of Zoology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia **2:** Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey **3:** Dumlupinar University, Kutahya, Turkey