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The Relationship between Empathy and Personality in Undergraduate Students' Attitudes toward Nonhuman Animals



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Abstract

[Abstract The majority of research investigating beliefs toward nonhuman animals has focused on vivisection or utilized populations with clear views on animal issues (e.g., animal rights activists). Minimal research has been conducted on what personality factors influence a nonclinical or nonadjudicated population's beliefs about the treatment of animals. The purpose of the present study was to examine the role of empathy and personality traits in attitudes about the treatment of animals in 241 undergraduate students. Results indicated that those with high levels of empathy held more positive attitudes toward animals and more negative beliefs about animal cruelty than those with low levels of empathy. Some differences in participants' specific attitudes toward animals were found. Limitations and implications for future research are reviewed., Abstract The majority of research investigating beliefs toward nonhuman animals has focused on vivisection or utilized populations with clear views on animal issues (e.g., animal rights activists). Minimal research has been conducted on what personality factors influence a nonclinical or nonadjudicated population's beliefs about the treatment of animals. The purpose of the present study was to examine the role of empathy and personality traits in attitudes about the treatment of animals in 241 undergraduate students. Results indicated that those with high levels of empathy held more positive attitudes toward animals and more negative beliefs about animal cruelty than those with low levels of empathy. Some differences in participants' specific attitudes toward animals were found. Limitations and implications for future research are reviewed.]