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Attitude of scientists and students towards animal welfare in Haryana

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Abstract

Animal welfare and welfare management have recently risen to the forefront of the public's consciousness and political discourse. The methodology is based on the idea that animals ought to be treated as sentient creatures. The method in which animals are treated greatly depends on one's attitude towards animal welfare. Animal welfare's more recent elements are changing, and veterinary scientists have a significant impact on both animal productivity and welfare. About the attitudes of scientists and students towards animal welfare, no studies have been done in Haryana. So, an investigation was conducted in Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (LUVAS), Hisar, Haryana to assess the attitude favourableness of scientists and students towards animal welfare. Out of all the faculty members of LUVAS, a sample of 50 faculty members was chosen using simple lottery method. Similarly, a random sample of ten students from each class of the LUVAS (1–5 years) B.V.Sc. and A.H. programme was selected. The Animal Attitude Scale, created by Herzog *et al.*, was used to gauge the attitude (1991). It was found that both staff members and students generally had favourable attitude regarding animal welfare.

Keywords: Animal welfare, attitude, scientists, students, LUVAS

Introduction

The 'animal kingdom,' which includes humans, is a biological group. Humans everywhere appear to sense or intuit our closeness to and affinities with other animals, yet we also need to be separate from other creatures (Passariello, 1999) [15]. The landscape of human-animal relations has been significantly changed by developments that occurred in the 20th century. A significant reorientation of agriculture towards productivity goals was prompted by the hunger felt during and after the two World Wars and the desire to never again experience starvation (Boogaard *et al.* 2006) [3]. As a result, farm animal productivity experienced significant gains throughout the world in the second half of the 20th century. For species that are fed concentrated diets, many vast production techniques gave way to more industrialized containment systems (Fraser, 2001; 2005) [7, 8].

The industrialised nations also went through cultural shifts at this time, which included a greater focus on animals and a greater care for their quality of life (Fraser, 2001;2005) [7, 8]. The welfare of animals has been improved by regulatory measures implemented in several nations. Markets have subsequently reacted to the developing conceptions.

Both an evaluative and normative term, animal welfare encompasses both value judgements and ethical considerations (Vaarst and Alroe, 2012) [20]. The methods used in animal farming are anticipated to meet social standards for animal welfare. Animal welfare experts are expected to define objective and quantitative characteristics of an animal's welfare status under specific circumstances and to offer remedies to issues that society has identified. Yet, it is believed that many of the theories put forth and employed for study on animal welfare, particularly by scientists, only deal with a small portion of the problems that the general public or animal welfare organisations find to be of great importance (Fraser, 1995) [6]. On the other side, scientists have been depicted as being callous towards the treatment of animals and predisposed to discount the idea of animal consciousness (Blumberg and Wasserman, 1995) [2]. Animal welfare is scientifically proven to have significant impact on animal production (Hemsworth and Coleman, 2011) [13] and veterinary scientists have great influence on animal productivity as well as animal welfare.

Moreover, animal welfare knowledge is demanded of veterinarians in a broader sense than healthalone. There is a shortage of scientific data about scientists' attitudes towards animal welfare. The purpose of the current study was to examine the attitudes of faculty members and students enrolled in the B.V.Sc. and A.H. programme (1–5 years) at the Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Hisar.

Methodology

All the faculty members at LUVAS and students of B.V.Sc and A.H programme (1-5 years) were taken as universe of the sample for the study. A sample of 50 members was randomly chosen using simple lottery method and a random sample of ten students from each class of B.V.Sc and A.H programme (1-5 yrs) was drawn. A psychological object's attitude, according to Edwards and Kilpatrick, (1948) [4] can be either positive or negative. In addition to having a direct impact on future behavior, attitudes are learned via experience and facilitate quicker and more accurate interpretation of incoming information and decision-making (Baron and Byrne, 1991) [1]. In this study, attitude was defined as an individual's disposition, whether favourable or unfavourable, towards the psychological object of animal welfare. The attitude was measured using Animal Attitude Scale developed by Herzog *et al.* (1991) [11]. There were 20 statements in the scale and scoring was done based on a five point continuum i.e. strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with respective weightages of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for positive statements and weightages in reverse order for negative statements. The scores obtained by the respondents on each statement were added to get their attitude score. The minimum and maximum possible scores of attitude scale were 20 and 100, respectively. The data were collected with the help of pre-tested structured interview schedule.

Results and Discussion

The minimum score obtained by the respondents was 38 while the maximum score obtained was 80. Mean score of all the respondents was 65.29 (65.29 ± 7.93) indicating that a majority of them were having neutral to favourable

attitude towards animal welfare. Moreover mean scores of scientists and students were 65.48 ± 8.34 , 65.10 ± 7.47 , respectively with negligible difference. This indicates that the scientists and students perceive the idea of animal welfare in a similar way. Given the consistency, it seems that the respondents' views on animal welfare have cultural origins. It should be remembered that animals have always been respected and given a special position in Hindu tradition and culture. Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism all advocate for treating animals with care and compassion. In actuality, very few cultures have been so strongly associated with animals and trees as that of Indian religious beliefs.

Animals were cherished, cared for, and even worshipped by the ancient Indians because they understood that they had a right to coexist with humans. The animals were given the rank of gods and goddesses to impress upon the commoners their importance. They proclaimed that the Almighty incarnates in different animal guises. Several animals were chosen for the kings' and emperors' insignia. Many holidays were and still are held in a variety of animals' honour. Animals were made heroes in tales to instill a love of animals in young readers. The rulers offered them prominent positions in building and the arts. Every Hindu deity or goddess is depicted with an animal. Lord Shiva is depicted with a serpent around his neck and the bull "Nandi" at his feet. Lady Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and literacy, is depicted with a swan. Lord Krishna, who was a shepherd, is seen with a cow. Lord Rama is shown with monkeys. There was no need for animal welfare organizations because each home was an institution for animal care on its own. The culture and legacy were so rich, and kindness and compassion were the cornerstones of society. Perhaps the respondents see it (the animal welfare) to be no different from the values that they hold. This could be part of the reason why many respondents had neutral or positive attitudes regarding animal welfare. Human attitudes to animals are also indicative of empathy towards animals.

Further the respondents were categorized into three categories of attitude favourableness (i.e. less, moderately and strongly favourable) based on their total scores (Table 1). Further, more of scientists were lying in strongly favourable category.

Table 1: Classification of respondents on the basis of attitude scores

| S. No. | Attitude level | Students (n=50) | | Scientists (n=50) | | Total (n=100) | |
|--------|---------------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| | | F (%) | Mean Score | F (%) | Mean Score | F (%) | Mean Score |
| 1 | Less favourable (<55) | 6 (12) | 53.83 | 8 (16) | 50.75 | 14 (14) | 52.29 |
| 2 | Favourable (56-65) | 21 (42) | 60.95 | 9 (18) | 61.33 | 30 (30) | 61.14 |
| 3 | Strongly favourable (>65) | 23 (46) | 71.82 | 33 (66) | 70.18 | 56 (56) | 71.00 |

The differences between the three categories of the respondents based on attitude favourableness were statistically significant (Table 2). Further, more of scientists were lying in strongly favourable category as compared to students (Fig 1). On the other hand, the students were largely lying in medium and high category of attitude favourableness. On the whole, it can be seen that a large number of respondents were having favourable attitude towards animal welfare.

Prior to this, Heleski *et al.* (2004) [9] performed a national survey of animal science faculty in the USA and found that more than 90 percent of respondents agreed with the basic principles of animal welfare. There is a great deal of worry among the faculty at the veterinary college (Heleski and

Zanella, 2006) [10]. Some employees say that the positive outlook of veterinary scientists can be attributed to the fact that this profession gives them superior knowledge of and experience working with animals. For instance, many people think that currently having pleasant, non-consumptive connections with animals is often linked to having more care for their welfare (Hills 1993, Reading *et al.* 1999, Kafer *et al.* 1992, Serpell, 1996, 2004, Taylor and Signal, 2005) [12, 16, 14, 17, 18, 19]. On the other hand, others argue that participation in any animal-related activity (including those that involve consumption) was linked to higher knowledge levels, particularly if the activities were recreational (such as bird-watching, hunting, fishing, etc.) as opposed to professional (such as farming) (Ericsson and

Heberlein, 2003)^[5]. Overall, it can be said that the literature lacks agreement about the veterinarians' attitudes towards

animals, their welfare, and their and their underpinnings.

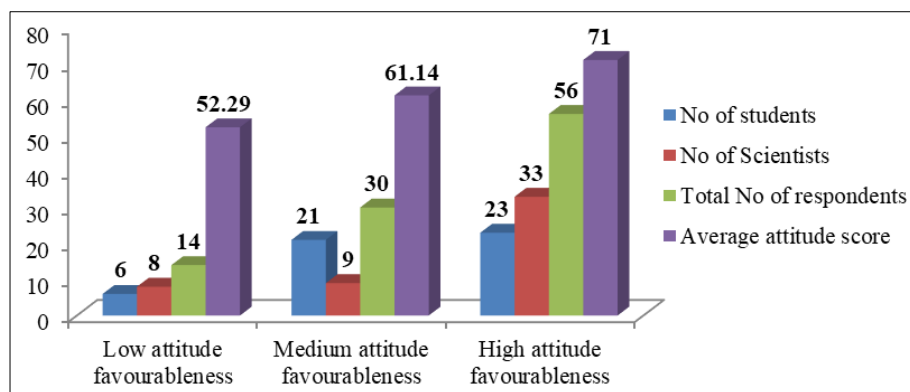


Fig 1: Diagram depicting the distribution of respondents across different categories of attitude favourableness.

Table 2: Comparison of respondents of different attitude favourableness categories using one way ANOVA.

| ANOVA: Single Factor (attitude level) | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| Source of Variation | SS | df | MS | F | P-value | F critical |
| Between Groups | 4716.938 | 2 | 2358.469 | 145.7466 | 5.93E-30 | 3.090187 |
| Within Groups | 1569.652 | 97 | 16.18198 | | | |
| Total | 6286.59 | 99 | | | | |

Conclusion

The complexity of human-animal relations is once again emphasised. Humans are capable of both liking and disliking animals. But as civilization advances, morals are quickly shifting away from violence. The respondents' overall attitudes towards animal welfare were determined to be positive. The landscape of human-animal relations will be considerably changed by the evolving concept and concern of human welfare in these quickly changing times. Persistent research is needed to better understand how people behave with animals. It is suggested that further studies to uncover the role of different cultural, individual and other factors should be undertaken.

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