ABSTRACT

What does it mean to say “I’m more of a dog-person than a cat-person” or vice versa? According to this research, you’re likely to be significantly more neurotic if you’re a dog-person, but you’re also likely to score significantly higher in empathy, irrespective of sex differences in empathy. Additionally, there is a significant association between your environment and identification as a cat-person or dog-person.

METHODS

Using a quantitative, quasi-experimental design, a snowball sample of 410 adults (46% male, 54% female) completed an online survey circulated via social media. The questionnaire accrued basic demographic information and self-report measures of Personality Trait and Empathy with a final pet-identification question. Respondents were told the survey investigated ‘personality and animal instinct’ so as to avoid response bias. They completed the Big Five (BFI) and 16-item Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ), and multiple choice demographic questions; sex, living environment [rural/urban/suburban], lifestyle [out of home for more than / less than 8 hours per day], whether they consider themselves to be a cat-person/dog-person/neutral and gave their age. A series of Independent t-tests, ANOVAs and a three-way cross-tab and Chi Square test statistically analysed 7 hypotheses for differences between IVs [Pet-preference groups] and DVs [Personality Trait scores, Empathy scores and Environment & Lifestyle status].

RESULTS

Hypotheses: 1) Dog-People will score higher on Extraversion and lower on Neuroticism than Cat-People. 2) Cat-People will score higher on Openness and lower on Agreeableness than Dog-People. 3) Dog-People will score higher on Conscientiousness than Cat-People. 4) Pet-People will score higher on Empathy than the neutral group. 5) Dog-People will score higher on Empathy than both Cat-People and Neither groups. 6) Females will score higher on Empathy than males. 7) There will be a significant association between self-identifying Cat-People and urban environment with lifestyles demanding absence from home of more than 8 hours per day.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study appeals to the merit of reproducibility in psychological science. A revision of emphasis from exclusive focus on novel research to robust reproducible findings enhances the rigour and yield of the scientific method. Novelty and certainty need not be mutually exclusive. Research can be designed for both. Since significance was detected in Neuroticism with approximations of mean score differences in the four other BFI traits, true effect sizes in personality trait if they stably exist may be unearthed with multiple replications. Moreover, since significant empathy differences were revealed herein this study suggests merit in novel exploration of attitudinal and value based differences between pet-identifiers. Interesting associations between pet-identification processes and the environment were also tentatively revealed. This poses exciting future investigation prospects for studying the abstraction and imaginative capacities of the person relative to their built and natural environment. Aggregations of robust data will facilitate firm conclusions.

REFERENCES