



# “Animals are my friends”: Exploring the relationship between animal companionship in childhood and moral concerns towards animals in adulthood.

## Authors

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## Literature Review

- ✓ Levels of speciesism: companion animals viewed as more valuable (family members) than farm animals (Caviola, 2019)
- ✓ Pets as ambassadors hypothesis (Paul & Serpell, 1993)
- ✓ Attachment is innate in children (Bowlby, 1982)
- ✓ Children show less levels of speciesism than adults (McGuire et al., 2023)
- ✓ Children’s relationship with companion animals can enhance empathy, compassion and kindness that continue into adulthood (Melson, 1990)

## Research Hypotheses

- ✓ H1: There will be a difference of moral concerns for different species of animals.
- ✓ H2: There will be a difference of moral concerns towards animals between participants (pet owners versus non-pet owners in childhood).
- ✓ H3: The intensity of the bond with an animal companion during childhood will correlate with moral concerns towards animals in adulthood.



## Research Question

How pet ownership, and more specifically attachment to an animal during childhood, could relate to differences of moral concerns towards different categories of animals ?

## Method & Design

### Research Design

H1: Moral Concerns for Animals Measure, within-subjects experimental design  
 H2: Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale, Between-subjects quasi-experimental design (pet owners)

H3: Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale and Moral Concerns for Animals Measure, within-subjects correlational design. (Additional measures for all participants: Animal Empathy Scale, Speciesism Scale).

### Participants

72 participants from 20 to 73 years old (M=40.36, SD=12.80)

### Data Collection & Analysis

Online self-report questionnaires  
 Quantitative statistical analysis

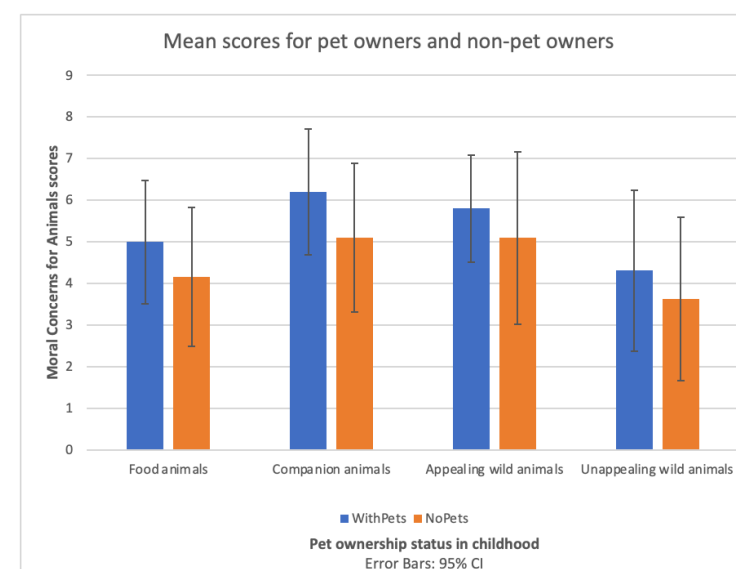
## Results & Discussion

### H1: Confirmed



Repeated measures ANOVA found a significant effect of animal categories on moral concerns. More specifically, people tend to have the highest level of moral concerns towards companion animals compared to food, appealing and unappealing wild animals.

### H2: Confirmed



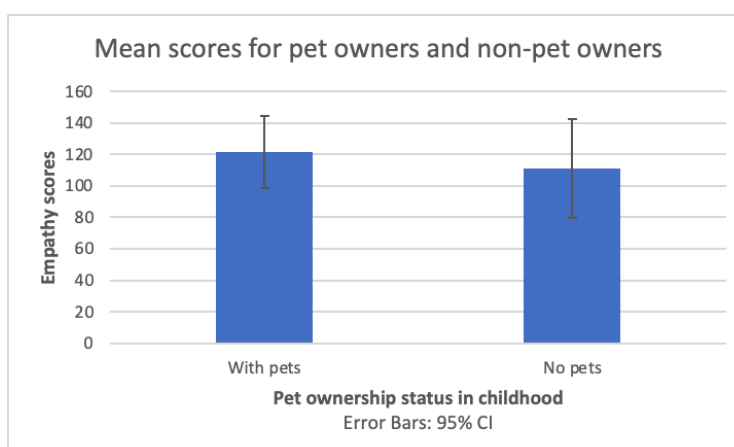
A 2x4 Mixed ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of pet ownership upon moral concerns.

### H3: Confirmed

	Food animal	Companion animal	Appealing wild animal	Unappealing wild animal
r = Pearson coefficient	.35	.45	.47	.39

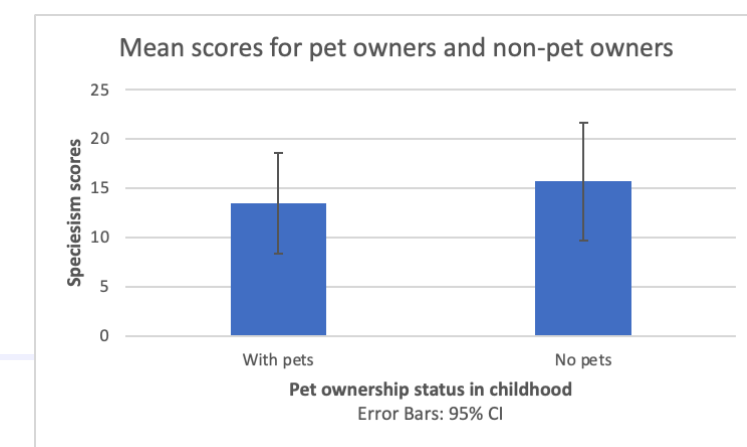
Pearson’s product moment correlation found a moderate, positive and significant relationship between attachment scores and moral concerns for all types of animals.

### Animal Empathy Measure



No difference of empathy in adulthood between pet owners and non-pet owners in childhood.

### Speciesism scale



No difference of speciesism in adulthood between pet owners and non-pet owners in childhood.

## Conclusion

- ✓ Greater moral concerns towards companion and attractive wild animals compared to food and unattractive wild animals.
- ✓ A strong attachment to pets during childhood lead to greater moral concerns towards all animals during adulthood.

## Limitations & Perspectives

- ✓ Interviews or questionnaires among children, instead of self-report questionnaires in adulthood, should be used for future research.
- ✓ Strong implications for educational programs: including pet welfare topics to the curriculum could redefine the relationship between humans and animals.

## References

- Caviola, L. (2019). *How We Value Animals: The Psychology of Speciesism*. [Published Doctoral Thesis]. University of Oxford.
- McGuire, L., Palmer, S. B., & Faber, N. S. (2022). The Development of Speciesism: Age-Related Differences in the Moral View of Animals. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 14(2), 228–237.
- Paul, E. S. & Serpell, J. A. (1993). Childhood Pet Keeping and Humane Attitudes in Young Adulthood. *Animal Welfare*, 2(4), 321-337.