Are emotionally intelligent people more attached to their pets?

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How well do you understand emotions?

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and harness emotions adaptively in the self and in others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Who is most attached to their pet?

The notion that pets have personalities and strong connections with people is a popular belief; however this area of cross-species psychological research remains largely underdeveloped. One intriguing study found that people who are more skilled at understanding and interpreting emotions reported having deeper connections with their pet(s) (Mehta & Gosling, 2008).

Hypothesis

H1: There is a difference in pet attachment levels within males and within females.

H2: The more emotionally intelligent a person is, the more attached they will feel to their pet(s).

Methods

Participants:

74 Oregon State University undergraduate students participated in this study. The participants took a survey via Qualtrics, which included the following three scales:

Assessment of Pet Attachment:

Lexington Pet Attachment Scale measured the level of attachment the participant has to their pet(s).

Assessments of Human Emotional Intelligence:

The Situational Test of Emotional Understanding (STEU) measures how well people can determine the proper emotion to express in certain situations.

The Situational Test of Emotional Management (STEM) measures how well people can control their emotions in particular situations.

Graph 1:

Types of Pets Owned

Graph 2:

Combined Emotional Intelligence Scores (STEM + STEU)

Graph 3:

Gender Differences in Pet Attachment

Results

Discussion

We predicted people high on emotional intelligence would report being more attached to their animal companions. The question of whether human-animal relationships are unique or just an extension of the phenomena occurring within human-human relationships has yet to be determined. Studies such as this allow us to compare and contrast the psychology of relationships within and across species, along with the varying levels of such relationships among men and women. It also has the potential to provide insights about how having an animal companion can increase in our health and well-being.

Acknowledgments

Thank you Sara Begley for your contributions to this project.

References


