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Public concern for animal welfare and its correlation with ethical ideologies after coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in China

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Abstract

The outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) represents a major public health challenge and a serious threat to sustainable social development. A consideration of animal welfare is clearly justified, given the potential contribution of animals to the spread of the disease. The present study, therefore, sought to investigate the concern the Chinese people have for animal welfare (PCAW) and how their 'ethical ideology' (idealism and relativism) determines PCAW after COVID-19, through comparison with the same study, carried out in China in 2015. Our results demonstrated a significant improvement in Chinese PCAW after COVID-19. The adverse impact of COVID-19 may have resulted in a lowered idealism score and this decreased score served to neutralise significant correlations between idealism and PCAW, compared to the 2015 results. The global pandemic did not increase people's relativism score and a significant correlation was found between relativism and PCAW. Gender, age, educational level, public perception of animals after COVID-19, zoo and aquarium visiting were all shown to be predictor variables for PCAW. This study is one of the first to investigate Chinese PCAW after COVID-19 and can therefore provide knowledge that will potentially increase Chinese PCAW.

Keywords: animal welfare, China, COVID-19, culture, ethical idealism, ethical relativism