

## **The Psychological Underpinnings of Malaysian Chinese Aversion to Cats: A Qualitative Study**

### **Abstract**

This qualitative study explores the psychological underpinnings of cat aversion amongst Chinese individuals. Aversion towards cats has previously been found to be associated with subsequent animal abuse, and may even contribute to aggression towards humans. Eight Malaysian Chinese participated in semi-structured interviews detailing their experiences of aversion and/or phobia of cats. Interviewees' experiences were framed through a social constructivist perspective, acknowledging that such experiences interact with contextual and cultural norms in shaping their aversion towards cats. The accounts were analyzed via thematic analysis. Results illustrate that aversion of cats is strongly associated with emotions of fear and dislike, together with perceptions that cats are evil, disgusting and disloyal. Intrapersonal influences such as past experiences appear to have minimal influence while interpersonal and cultural norms appeared to be significant influences of cat aversion. Chinese aversion towards cats may be due to perceived negative associations of cat characteristics, namely, uncleanliness and disloyalty.

**Key words: Cats, Ailurophobia, Aversion, Emotions, Chinese**

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