

# Do copy cats really exist? New study shows that cats may reflect their owner's personality

February 26 2019, by Elizabeth Allen

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Ginger tabby cat. Credit: Public domain

Cat owners' personalities may be influencing the behaviour of their pets, new research suggests.

Research carried out by the University of Lincoln and Nottingham Trent University investigated the relationship between the different personalities of cat owners and the behaviour and [wellbeing](#) of their furry friends.

The findings suggest that, just as a parent's personality can affect the personality of a child, the same may be true for a cat and their owner.

The research involved surveying more than 3,000 predominantly UK-based cat owners. As part of the study, the researchers asked questions about owners' personalities, as well as their cat's behaviour, health and lifestyle.

The results showed similar findings to previous research conducted on parent-child relationships. For example, human personality studies have shown that the trait neuroticism is strongly linked with negative outcomes for a child. These include poorer physical and mental health, as well as generally lower quality of life. This new study found a parallel, with higher levels of neuroticism in [cat owners](#) perhaps leading to the negative wellbeing of their pets.

It was also found that owners who scored higher on the neuroticism scale were more likely to report their [cats](#) as having a 'behavioural problem,' displaying more aggressive and anxious/fearful behavioural styles and more stress-related sickness behaviours, as well as having an ongoing medical condition and being overweight.

Owner personality traits were also found to correlate more positively with various lifestyle, [behaviour](#) and welfare parameters.

For example, higher owner conscientiousness was associated with the cat displaying less anxious, aggressive and avoidant behavioural styles.

Dr. Lauren Finka, postdoctoral researcher in [animal welfare](#) in Nottingham Trent University's School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences, worked on the research while studying at Lincoln and co-authored the study with Professor Daniel Mills, Professor of Veterinary Behavioural Medicine at the University of Lincoln.

Dr. Finka said: "Many owners consider their pets as a family member, forming close social bonds with them. It's therefore no wonder our pets could be affected by the way we interact with and manage them, and that both these factors are in turn influenced by our personality differences.

"The majority of owners want to provide the best care for their cats, and these results highlight how influential our own personality can be on the wellbeing of our pets."

Previous studies have found that greater parental neuroticism scores are generally associated with less positive wellbeing outcomes for children, whilst agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and extraversion are associated with more positive parenting styles and child welfare.

The research concluded that owners' personality traits may be integral to the wellbeing of our pets, similar to that of parent-child relationship.

The full paper, titled "Owner [personality](#) and the wellbeing of their cats share parallels with the parent-child relationship," is published in the scientific journal *PLOS ONE*

**More information:** Lauren R. Finka et al. Owner personality and the wellbeing of their cats share parallels with the parent-child relationship, *PLOS ONE* (2019). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0211862](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0211862)

Provided by University of Lincoln

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