

# PERSONALITY CHANGES OF MOTHER CAT AFTER THE DEATH OF OFFSPRING

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**Abstract:** The present study is an attempt to study the changes in behavioural characteristics of the mother cat due to death of offspring. The sample of this study are a Cat (4 years old) and Kitten (9 months old: 23.11.2017 - 24.08.2018) - were the part of a family. The study made use of the Naturalistic Observation Method to study the Behaviour. The findings revealed that the Death of the offspring led the mother cat to grief condition and the sudden loss affected daily life of the cat. Notable grief characteristics of the cat also discovered.

**Keywords:** Personality Changes, Animal Grief, Cat, Death of loved ones.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Human beings have long been curious about the mental life of the creatures who share the earth with us, and we have posed many questions regarding the existence of “consciousness” and similar processes in animals. Some of these questions are forever unanswerable, but modern experimentation has conclusively demonstrated that many animals possess senses and means of communication and orientation that we do not have (McGill, 1977). Comparative Psychology studies Animal Behaviour which is construed as a subtopic of Psychology. It researches Animal Behaviour in the context of what known about human psychology.

Comparative psychology refers to the scientific study of the behavior and mental processes of non-human animals, especially as these relate to the phylogenetic history, adaptive significance, and development of behavior (Dewsbury, 1978). Research in this area addresses many different issues, uses many different methods, and explores the behavior of many different species, from insects to primates (Papini, 2003).

Comparative psychology is sometimes assumed to emphasize cross-species comparisons, including those between humans and animals. However, some researchers feel that direct comparisons should not be the sole focus of comparative psychology and that intense focus on a single organism to understand its behavior is just as desirable; if not more so. Donald Dewsbury (1984) reviewed the works of several psychologists and their definitions and concluded that the object of comparative psychology is to establish principles of generality focusing on both proximate and ultimate causation.

A wide variety of species have been studied by comparative psychologists. However, a small number have dominated the scene. Ivan Pavlov's early work used dogs; although they have been the subject of occasional studies, since then they have not figured prominently. Increasing interest in the study of abnormal animal behavior has led to a return to the study of most kinds of domestic animal. Thorndike began his studies with cats, but American comparative psychologists quickly shifted to the more economical rat, which remained the almost invariable subject for the first half of the 20th century and continues to be used. Skinner introduced the use of pigeons, and so on.

Human emotions are gifts from their animal kin ancestors. It's undoubted that many animals experience rich and deep emotions. As humans have feelings, animals also. Among the different emotions that animals display clearly and unambiguously is grief (Bekof, 2008).

Little attention is paid to the subject of grieving in cats as they are often seen as independent animals that retain much of their 'wild' nature. But cats do exhibit behavioral changes after the loss of another cat and sometimes these can be difficult to understand. When animals are closely bonded they are more likely to be upset by the loss of their companion. Even cats that constantly fight can grieve the loss of a feuding partner (Signs That Your Cat, 2019). While no-one will ever know if a cat understands death, they certainly know that a fellow housemate is missing and that something has changed in the house. The owner's distress at the loss of a pet may also be communicated to the cat, adding to the confusion it may be feeling (Signs That Your Cat, 2019). American Society conducted a survey among 160 households and found that all pets that lost a companion were behaving normally within six months (Signs That Your Cat, 2019).

Here investigator's observation is trying to find the changes in behavioural characteristics of the mother cat after death of her offspring.

### ***Objectives***

1. To study the behavioural changes of Mother Cat who undergone emotional trauma due to death of offspring, by using Naturalistic Observation Method.
2. To discover grief characteristics of cat.

## **II. METHOD**

### ***Sample***

- (a) Cat - 4 years old
- (b) Kitten - 9 months old (23.11.2017 - 24.08.2018)

### ***Procedure***

The cat and kitten were the pets in a family. Investigator was an observer of their every action and studying the parent-child behaviours. In between at the age of 9 month, the kitten had undergone death. Investigators noticed the significant changes in mother cat. The behaviour of the Mother cat was closely observed one month and the changes were noted and came into conclusions. Three more observer's opinion also considered to get into conclusion.

## **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In the present study, the investigator observed two cats namely Poosy and Poopy (23.11.2017 - 24.08.2018) - mother and child respectively - under natural habitat or natural condition; were the part of a family. The results are based on the observations of Mother Cat, due to death of the kitten and one month thereafter. The Results discussed in two parts. To get a clear picture, depicting the Cat – Kitten relationship in first session and second session follows the behavioural changes of Mother cat after the death of its kitten.

### ***(i) Course of the Mother- Infant Relationship***

It has been developed feeding behaviour during the first days of life and extended till eight months. Feeding the neonate is an instinctive behaviour evoked by the pattern of stimuli provided by the nipple and areolar tissues of the breast when they are in contact with the mouth (Thorpe, 1956). But here the feeding behaviour extended till eight months, which is a rare case.

The mother always do licking and grooming of the child to clean or nurse and both of them each other do the same as to express their love. It is probably the basis of the learned attachment of the dam to the offspring; and if this is prevented, Cross (1946) says that there is evidence that the usual close link may not be formed. The mother tend to keep the child near her always-in part, to protect him and both of them together involves searching for prey as well as busy with catching the prey together. Mother and child appeared to enjoy hunting. Child also spend much time in interaction with mother and they often play with children in the family, swing together, furthermore; they were normally carried a great level of liberty in family. The mother and child is thus part of the family.

When giving some kind of food, Mother waits the food firstly to child and thereafter only takes her own share. When the Kitten engaged in naughty activities, mother will show warning behaviours like making sounds in a rough voice, make sounds on floor or try to catch him. This may changed soon by preventing child from that kind of actions and this type of

attachment extended till death of the child. They were unaffected by the other pet animals are present. Cats do not naturally “get along with” each other (Bradshaw, 2012). Against this view, there were complex interactions between the demands of the child and the behaviour of the mother. The attachment of the Mother Cat to young, and the young to mother, was intimate and specific.

***(ii) Death of the Child***

It was a sudden death. Mother had had a separation experience had depression of activity and recovered from it after 1 month, were more active. Children and adults in the family were also hard hit by the death of a treasured pet. The measures on which the depression index of Mother Cat is based are:

1. Lack of energy
2. Less sleep
3. Activity level decreased
4. Varied pitch in sound
5. Seem to be asleep all the time
6. Disinterest towards food
7. Absence of cleanliness and self care
8. Depressive motor movements
9. No searching for prey
10. Making strange sounds as an indication of distress
11. Lay down as the body weakened
12. Stand beside the swing where they spend their time together
13. Absence of producing the normal sound 'meowing' of cats.
14. Immobility of tail
15. No interaction with the family members
16. Always put the head down and looking to down
17. Not engage in play with children
18. The habit of visiting nearby places were disappeared and instead reserved in the home
19. Didn't reach to the disruption of other pet animals
20. When calls her name "Poosy", just lift the head and possess a sad look which convey through eyes.

Based on behavioural observations, it was found emotional behaviour were similar to that of humans. The cat responds in an extremely conspicuous manner to the sudden death of the child. Frustration was an important feature in the situation. It was occasionally shown sleepy, bored or restless. Mother responds to the child's disappearance primarily with depressed loco motor activities, with frequent crying and increased motionless.

Cats are very sensitive to stress. Even a small change to daily routine can be very stressful (Lorenz, 1970). Body language, the way the cat's gaze is directed etc. are indications of whether an animal may be experiencing sadness (Slater, 1999). It was seen that the cat always gaze to down while walking.

Cat's tail speaks their emotions to us (Diethier & Stellar, 1972). Tail is one of the most important part of cat's body, to indicate a variety of actions and reactions. The tail often denotes its mood and intentions (Hinde & Spencer, 1971). Cats the world over perform the “tail-up” signal, in which they raise their tails to the vertical when approaching other animals, and especially humans. For years this has been called a “greeting” signal – because it usually happens at the beginning of an interaction (Bradshaw, 2011). When the child dead, the cat showed less or no movement of her tail.

The mother was performed difference in response to death of the child. During the period of this study it was observed, normally friendly and outgoing cat started to reserved and generally avoided interacting with the family. She stood beside the swing but didn't attempt to swinging and never done it again after the death of the child. She also less interested in her daily meals and failed to empty her food dish as she used to early. On one occasion, when the observing investigator gave

some food, the mother exhibited conspicuous searching after the lost child. She visited one after another all of the places in which the child normally spend the time and continued this behaviour several days.

She stopped grooming herself at the same time, excessive vocalization often occurred during the night. The mother cat roam around the home "meowing" in low voice, as if trying to find her missing buddy. Losing child after so many months of unconditional love can be heart wrenching and excruciating. Thus, the death of loved one, whether for animal or human, is emotionally painful.

All these symptoms could indicate that the cat is depressed. This result is contradictory with the findings of Knaus (2012) who stated that Cats may or may not get depressed. If they do, they probably don't think about their condition. To a cat, nothing may be good or bad in the sense of human values. Humans are different. They have the power to think depressively. They also have the power to purge these cognitive distortions from their thoughts. They can address that issue anytime.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Death of the offspring led the mother cat to depressive conditions and the sudden loss affected daily life of the cat.

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