**Factors Leading Humans to Cruelty towards Other Humans and Animals**

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**Abstract**

In the United States, animal cruelty has become a common issue. Similarly, “The Lucky Body” by Kyle Coma-Thomson has deeply addressed human cruelty. This raises concerns on why people engage in cruelty. Understanding the drivers of cruelty can help the society minimise or eradicate such cases. This study compares the events and characters in the story “The Lucky Body” with the cases of animal cruelty to explore the drivers. The findings highlight selfishness, lack of empathy and jealousy as primary drivers and legal loopholes  as catalysts. Public awareness and amendment of related laws to cover justice loopholes can help counter this issue. More research on legal loopholes is necessary to ensure the necessary amendments are adopted and implemented effectively.

*Keywords*: violence, cruelty, mental health, psychological disorders, animal cruelty laws

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**Introduction**

In the short story, “The Lucky Body,” Kyle Coma-Thomson expounds on violence and cruelty. The story narrates how a group of violent people shoot an innocent stranger and dismantle the body with no remorse. This story resonates with the rising cases of animal cruelty in the United States. Wolf (2012) notes that in the United States, approximately 10 million animals die from cruelty or abuse annually. However, it is unclear as to what factors push humans to subject animals to cruelty. Investigating the driving factors can help minimize such cases. The prevalence of human and animal cruelty in society reflects underlying psychological disorders.

**Selfishness**

Coma-Thomson stresses on self interests as the primary cause of cruelty. He notes that the people murdered the man to satisfy their interests. “They spotted one day and followed for three blocks and admiring it made plans to eventually snatch it off the streets and mine it for what they imagined was its hidden gold..” (Coma-Thomson, 2013). Similarly, some people use cruelty against animals as a way to soothe their egos. Hoffer et al., (2018) notes that for some people, exerting power over an animal can be a way to express control. This  reflects deeper psychological issues such as low self esteem.

**Lack of Empathy**

The detailed narration of how the body is dismantled shows lack of empathy. After shooting the man, the murderers “cut its throat with a scaling knife…pinched its nostrils and funnelled sulphuric acid into its mouth…yanking the body's toenails out with a set of pliers..” (Coma-Thomson 2013). This lack of empathy is also common in animal cruelty cases considering that statistics show that 71 % of domestic violence victims reported that their abuser also targeted pets and pet abuse occurred in 88 % of the families under supervision for physical abuse of their children (Hoffer et al., 2018). Animal cruelty is to some extent driven by the offenders inability or disregard to understanding and sharing their feelings and those of others.

**Jealousy**

“The Lucky Body” suggests that cruelty could be driven by jealousy. Individuals may be violent or cruel towards others and animals for having what they don't have. Coma-Thomson (2013) describes the victim as a handsome man who seemed to be well mannered and well educated. He also adds that the offenders. Based on their behaviour and how they dismantled the man, their appearance and personality could have been the opposite of the man. Like in the story, some people in the society are often cruel towards animals that are well taken care of. In mid April 2024, a 19 year old man was arrested  after he was allegedly caught on video killing several animals in Texas (Ruiz 2024). Jealousy reflects insecurities.

**Extremity of Cruelty**

The less time the offenders used to dismantle the body and completely damage it stresses the extremity of cruelty. According to the story, the offenders took thirty seconds to apply mortal damage to the body. Notably, this was done using a pipe, a tire iron and a crowbar (Coma-Thomson, 2013). This is also common in animal cruelty cases as the commonly used cruelty objects include chains and ropes, collars, weapons such as knives and guns, poison and  toxic substances, and fighting paraphernalia (Hoffer et al , 2024). Besides,common cases of animal cruelty include simple activities such as neglect, physical abuse, psychological abuse and abandonment. It does not require much to expose animals to violence and cruelty.

**Role of the Criminal Justice System**

Coma-Thomson uses the story to expose the failure of the justice system in holding violent and cruel offenders accountable. Towards the end of the story he describes how different the body was after the cruelty such that the offenders could hardly be held accountable if they could not remember how it looked when they met the man. Unaccountability is also common in animal cruelty cases. Wolf (2012) notes that due to inconsistent animal cruelty laws from state to state, there are gaps in animal legal protection making it challenging to prosecute offenders. Besides, animal cruelty cases are often given lower priority leading to delayed or insufficient investigations. The government and other stakeholders should make amendments to cover these gaps to ensure justice and accountability.

**Cruelty as a Personal Issue**

Coma-Thomson uses women to show that cruelty is not universal. Contrary to the offenders, women admire and adore the man. Notably, some women loved the body for its many perfections and gentleness with which it was inhabited. Coma-Thomson (2013) notes that women considered  the  body’s avalanche worth fighting for. Like these women, there are people who adore and take care of animals. For instance, most pet owners in the United States and beyond provide shelter, food, and medical and emotional care to their pets and treat them as a member of their family rather than an animal (Hoffer et al., 2018). Creating public awareness and guiding the public to emulate this attitude can help minimize or eradicate animal cruelty.

**Role of the Victims**

Came-Thomson also explores the innocence of the victims of violence and cruelty. In the story, the victim is described as a calm and gentle person. Notably, the man was possibly well mannered and his body was kind to women. Besides, when the offenders met the victim, he was relaxed, calm, and boyish, and was waving at someone indicating that he was friendly (Coma-Thomson 2013). Similarly, most animals that are violence and cruelty victims are rarely violent or hostile. In some cases, offenders lure animals who are friendly to them before torturing or killing them (Hoffer et al., 2018). This rules out claims that offenders subject  animals to violence or cruelty as a form of self defence.

**Conclusion**

Violence and cruelty towards people and animals reflect selfishness and psychological disorders among the offenders. Based on Coma-Thomson’s “The Lucky Body” and evidence on animal cruelty in the United States, most violence and cruelty cases are driven by self interests, lack of empathy, and jealousy. These factors are both drivers and symptoms of psychological issues. The problem is further enhanced by availability of cruelty objects and inefficient laws and legal procedures to protect humans and  animals and hold the offenders accountable. Although critics may defend cruelty as a self defence mechanism, both the story and the evidence from real world scenarios prove that the victims are often calm and friendly. The society and the government should enhance public awareness and amend laws to cover legal loopholes that constrain protection of people and animals against cruelty and hinder the justice system from holding offenders accountable.

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