

EXPLORING THE IDEOLOGY OF VEGANISM- A PERPETUAL STUDY

Abstract

Veganism is often viewed as simply a dietary choice, centred around the avoidance of animal products in food. However, it encompasses a much broader set of values, beliefs, and practices that extend beyond the plate. This paper seeks to explore the multidimensional aspects of veganism, including its ethical, environmental, cultural, and social justice dimensions. Through a review of existing literature and interviews with vegans from diverse backgrounds, this study examines the ways in which veganism intersects with various domains of life, including health, politics, economics, and spirituality.

First, the ethical dimension of veganism is explored, with a focus on the moral considerations that motivate individuals to adopt a vegan lifestyle. This includes the rejection of animal exploitation and cruelty, and the embrace of compassion and empathy as core values. Second, the environmental dimension of veganism is discussed, highlighting the role of animal agriculture in climate change, deforestation, and water depletion. The potential benefits of a shift to plant-based diets for the environment are also explored. Third, the cultural dimension of veganism is examined, including the diverse historical, religious, and philosophical traditions that have influenced the development of veganism as a social movement. Fourth, the social justice dimension of veganism is explored, highlighting the ways in which it intersects with issues of food access, food security, and income inequality. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the challenges and opportunities of promoting veganism as a multidimensional lifestyle choice, and the potential for greater social and

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environmental transformation through its adoption. Overall, this study demonstrates that veganism is more than just a food choice, but a complex and multifaceted movement that encompasses a wide range of values and practices.

Keywords: Vegan, Spirituality, Social Movement, Climate Change

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Veganism is a movement that extends beyond food choices and encompasses a tapestry of values, beliefs, and practices. It comprises several dimensions, including ethical, environmental, cultural, and social justice aspects. The ethical dimension of veganism is anchored in the rejection of animal exploitation and cruelty and the embrace of compassion and empathy as fundamental principles. The environmental dimension recognizes animal agriculture's significant contribution to climate change, deforestation, and water depletion, making a shift towards plant-based diets essential. The cultural dimension of veganism is influenced by various historical, religious, and philosophical traditions and interwoven with social movements such as environmentalism, feminism, and anti-racism. The social justice dimension of veganism addresses food access, food security, and income inequality, offering a way to promote greater equality in food distribution, reduce the impact of food production on marginalized communities, and advocate for fair trade and labour practices.

Overall, veganism represents a paradigm shift in how we relate to animals, the environment, and each other. It embodies a set of values, beliefs, and practices that have the potential to transform society and create a more sustainable and just future. By rejecting animal exploitation and cruelty, embracing compassion and empathy, recognizing the interconnectedness of all life on the planet, and addressing issues of social justice, veganism offers a path towards a more ethical, equitable, and sustainable world.

II. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The topic of veganism is of utmost importance in today's world, given the many challenges we face. The impact of animal agriculture on the environment, human health, and animal welfare cannot be ignored. As such, the promotion of plant-based diets and the adoption of veganism has become increasingly critical for creating a sustainable and just future.

Firstly, the environmental impact of animal agriculture is staggering. It contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, and deforestation, among other issues. By embracing veganism, we can reduce our carbon footprint, conserve water resources, and mitigate the impact of food production on the natural world.

Secondly, the health benefits of plant-based diets are well-documented. Veganism can help prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, and can also promote better digestive health and weight management.

Thirdly, veganism aligns with the principles of animal welfare, promoting a more ethical and humane treatment of animals. This is particularly important in light of the widespread mistreatment of animals in the food industry.

Fourthly, veganism has cultural and social justice dimensions, recognizing the diversity of cultural practices and promoting equality in food access, security, and distribution.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study by **Hodson et al. (2013)** explored the relationship between meat consumption, empathy, and psychological distress. The findings indicated that individuals with higher empathy levels experienced more distress after witnessing animal suffering and were more likely to show a reduction in meat consumption or consider vegetarian or vegan diets.

Research by **Bastian, Loughnan, and Haslam (2012)** investigated the impact of cognitive dissonance on attitudes towards animal cruelty. The study found that when individuals were made aware of the inherent cruelty in animal agriculture, they experienced cognitive dissonance, which significantly influenced their attitudes and behaviours towards animal products, potentially leading to a shift towards vegan or vegetarian diets.

The ethical case for veganism is often centred around animal welfare concerns. The industrial farming practices used to produce animal products can cause immense suffering to animals, including confinement, mutilation, and premature death. Research studies have documented the psychological and physiological distress experienced by animals in these settings (**Grandin, 2015**). The treatment of animals in agriculture is also a reflection of social norms and values and may contribute to desensitization to violence and suffering in society (**Hodson et al., 2013**).

The production and consumption of animal products can also have a significant impact on the environment, contributing to deforestation, water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and other forms of environmental degradation (**Garnett, 2014**). The negative effects of animal agriculture on the environment have been well-documented and reducing meat consumption has been identified as a key strategy for mitigating the negative effects of climate change (**Ritchie & Roser, 2017**).

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess awareness and attitudes of respondents regarding veganism.
2. To examine motivations for veganism among respondents.
3. To assess perceptions of animal Agriculture among respondents

V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework presented below aims to provide a systematic approach for studying veganism and its ethical implications. It identifies key components and their relationships to explore the multifaceted aspects of veganism, including ethical considerations, motivations, decision-making processes, and potential outcomes. Ethical considerations form a crucial aspect of veganism, encompassing concerns about animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and human health. These ethical dimensions provide the moral foundation and motivations behind the decision to adopt a vegan lifestyle. Motivations represent the underlying reasons why individuals choose to adopt a vegan lifestyle. These motivations can include ethical concerns, personal health, environmental awareness, social justice, or cultural and religious beliefs. Understanding these motivations is essential for comprehending the driving forces behind individuals' decisions to embrace veganism. Decision-making processes involve the cognitive and affective processes

individuals go through when considering and adopting a vegan lifestyle. This component encompasses moral reasoning, cognitive dissonance, information processing, social influences, and the evaluation of perceived benefits and barriers. It also includes the role of personal values, societal norms, and information sources in shaping individuals' decision-making processes. The outcomes component focuses on the effects and impacts of adopting a vegan lifestyle. This can include physical health outcomes, mental well-being, environmental impact, and social and cultural consequences. Additionally, it involves exploring potential trade-offs and challenges that individuals may encounter when adopting a vegan lifestyle.

VI. VEGANISM AND ETHICS

Ethical veganism is a lifestyle and philosophical stance that goes beyond dietary choices. It is rooted in the fundamental belief that all sentient beings deserve to be treated with compassion and respect, and it extends this principle to animals, the environment, and human welfare. Ethical vegans make conscious decisions to abstain from the use and exploitation of animals for food, clothing, entertainment, and other purposes. This write-up delves into the core principles and arguments behind ethical veganism, exploring its moral foundations and the broader implications it holds for individuals, animals, and the planet.

Animal Welfare:

At the heart of ethical veganism lies a deep concern for animal welfare. Ethical vegans reject the notion that animals should be used as commodities or subjected to unnecessary harm and suffering. They recognize that animals possess the capacity to experience pain, pleasure, and a range of emotions. By embracing a vegan lifestyle, individuals demonstrate their commitment to minimizing harm and promoting the well-being of animals, advocating for their inherent right to life, freedom, and autonomy.

- 1. Environmental Sustainability:** Ethical veganism is closely intertwined with environmental sustainability. Animal agriculture, particularly industrial farming, is a major contributor to deforestation, water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and biodiversity loss. By choosing a plant-based diet, ethical vegans reduce their ecological footprint, as plant-based food production generally requires fewer natural resources, emits fewer greenhouse gases, and causes less habitat destruction compared to animal agriculture. Embracing veganism can contribute to mitigating climate change, preserving ecosystems, and promoting a more sustainable future for the planet.
- 2. Global Food Security and Resource Allocation:** Ethical vegans recognize the significant impact that animal agriculture has on global food security and resource allocation. Livestock farming consumes vast amounts of land, water, and feed crops, which could be redirected towards sustainable plant-based agriculture to address the challenge of feeding a growing global population. By shifting to a vegan lifestyle, individuals can support a more equitable distribution of resources, ensuring access to sufficient and nutritious food for all while reducing the strain on our finite resources.
- 3. Health and Well-being:** Ethical vegans understand that a well-planned vegan diet can provide all the necessary nutrients for optimal health and well-being. Scientific research has shown that a plant-based diet, when properly balanced, can help prevent and manage chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and certain types of cancer. By

adopting a vegan lifestyle, individuals prioritize their own health and advocate for a compassionate and sustainable approach to nutrition.

- 4. Social Justice and Intersectionality:** Ethical veganism recognizes the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression and advocates for social justice. It acknowledges that the exploitation of animals often intersects with other social justice issues, such as racial inequality, labour rights, and global poverty. Ethical vegans strive to address these interconnected systems of oppression by promoting inclusivity, diversity, and fairness in their advocacy efforts and recognizing the importance of fighting for justice for all beings, human and non-human alike.

VII. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF MEAT ON PEOPLE

The consumption of meat is deeply ingrained in many societies, but its connection to violence raises important psychological considerations. Exploring the psychological impacts of violence associated with meat production and the act of meat eating itself, and delving into the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, sheds light on how these aspects can influence individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and well-being.

- 1. Cognitive Dissonance:** The act of consuming meat can create cognitive dissonance in individuals who hold values of non-violence and compassion. When people become aware of the inherent violence and suffering involved in meat production, a psychological conflict arises between their desire to consume meat and their ethical concerns. This dissonance can lead to feelings of guilt, conflict, and moral distress, as individuals struggle to reconcile their beliefs with their behaviour.
- 2. Empathy and Desensitization:** Exposure to violence, even indirectly through the meat industry, can impact individuals' empathy and desensitize them to the suffering of animals. Repeated exposure to graphic images, narratives, or first-hand experiences of violence in the context of meat production can desensitize individuals, reducing their emotional responsiveness to the suffering of animals. This desensitization may extend beyond animals to affect empathy in other areas of life, potentially influencing interpersonal relationships and perceptions of violence in society.
- 3. Moral Disengagement:** Meat eating can be associated with various cognitive mechanisms that allow individuals to morally disengage from the violent acts involved. People may employ strategies such as justification, distortion of consequences, and displacement of responsibility to distance themselves from the violence inherent in meat production. This moral disengagement mechanism helps individuals protect their self-image and maintain consistency with their actions, thereby reducing the psychological discomfort associated with their dietary choices.
- 4. Identity and Social Norms:** Meat eating is often deeply intertwined with cultural, social, and personal identities. The social norms and expectations surrounding meat consumption can exert significant psychological pressure on individuals. Deviating from these norms may lead to social ostracism, ridicule, or feelings of exclusion. The psychological impact of this pressure can create resistance to change, making it challenging for individuals to align their behaviours with their ethical beliefs.

5. **Psychological Well-being:** The psychological impacts of violence and meat eating can extend to individuals' overall well-being. Conflicting values and the internal struggle caused by cognitive dissonance can contribute to stress, anxiety, and decreased life satisfaction. However, transitioning to a more aligned and ethical dietary choice, such as adopting a plant-based diet, has been associated with improved psychological well-being, including reduced stress levels and increased feelings of compassion and connectedness.

The psychological impact of animal slaughter and violence is not limited to the workers, however. Research has shown that children who are exposed to violence towards animals may be more likely to exhibit aggressive and violent behaviour themselves. Animal cruelty has also been linked to a higher risk of other forms of violence, including domestic violence and child abuse.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Various statistical and analytical methods have been used in the study, namely the features of google forms and Microsoft excel. In this study, self-administered questionnaires have been used to collect primary data. A pilot study was conducted to test the appropriateness of the questionnaire and nature of responses obtained. The questionnaires were mailed to people of the age bracket (18-25) of selected metro cities. The questionnaire was framed to measure participants' awareness and attitude towards veganism and perception of animal agriculture. The questions were self-explanatory and close ended, convenient sampling was done.

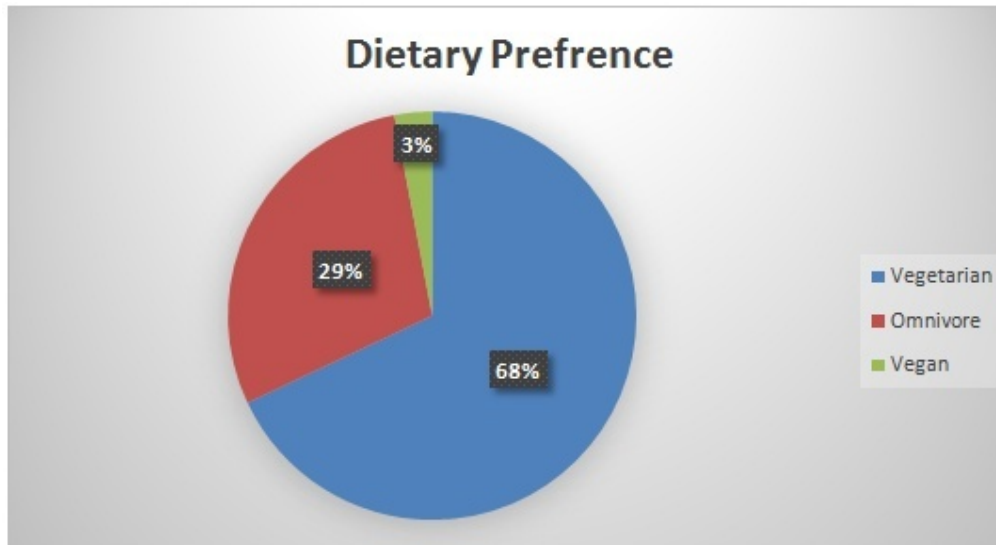
In this study several papers have been analysed and the online reservoir of articles have been thoroughly browsed to obtain secondary data to provide a clearer understanding of the topic, 503 respondents were selected.

IX. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Gender		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	313	62.2%
Female	190	37.8%
Total	503	100

Source: Developed for Research

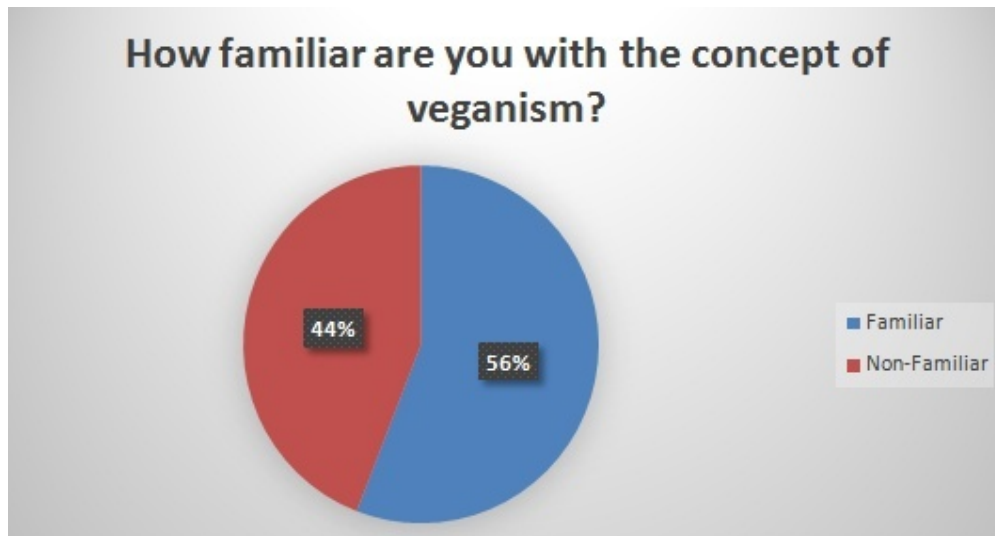
Table 1 portrays that majority of the respondents were males which consist of 62.2% while the minority was female which consist of 37.8%.



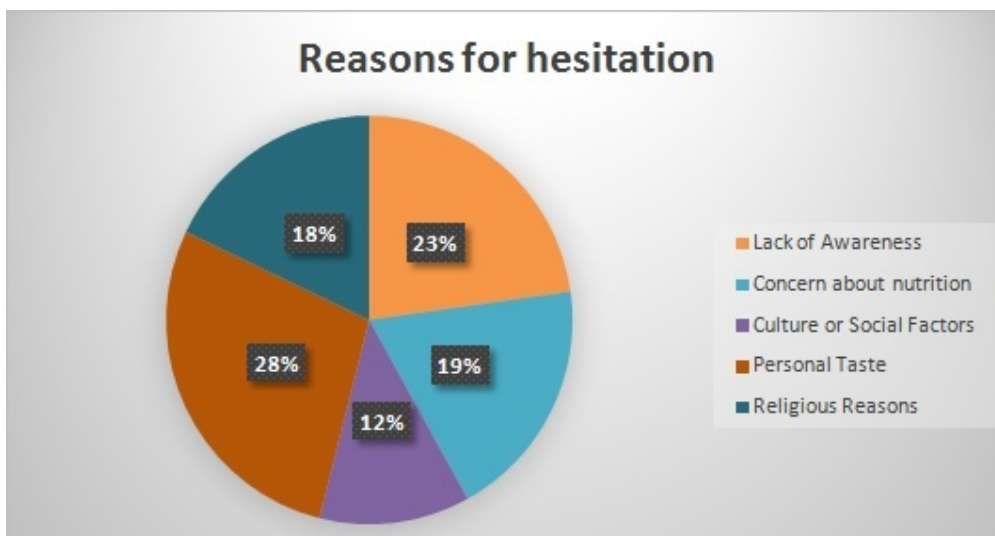
Out of the 503 responses 146(29%) were omnivores, 342(68%) were vegetarian and a mere 15(3%) were vegan.



Out of 503 respondents 362 were aware of the violence associated with food production and 141 were clueless. This suggests that a significant portion of the surveyed individuals had knowledge or awareness of the potential connection between animal agriculture and violence. It is encouraging to see a considerable level of awareness on this issue, as understanding the implications of food production can contribute to informed decision-making and potentially drive changes towards more compassionate and sustainable food choices.



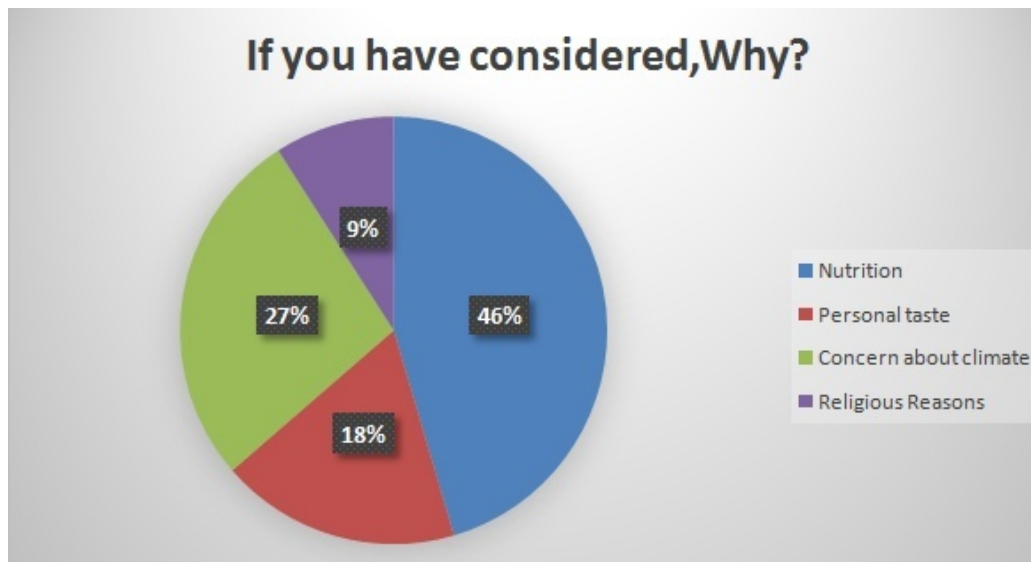
With 489 out of 503 respondents being able to accurately define what veganism entails, it is evident that this philosophy has gained significant traction. Most of them knew veganism extends beyond mere dietary changes; it also means abstaining from using products derived from animals, such as leather, fur, wool, and cosmetics tested on animals.



The dominant reason was found to be personal taste, followed by lack of awareness. It is understandable that personal taste plays a significant role in people's dietary choices. Food preferences can be deeply ingrained and vary widely among individuals. Transitioning to a vegan diet may require adjusting one's palate and exploring new flavours and ingredients. However, it is worth noting that personal taste is not a fixed attribute and can evolve over time. Trying new plant-based foods and exploring different cooking methods can open up a world of delicious and satisfying vegan options.

While personal taste is an important consideration, it is also essential to weigh it against the ethical, environmental, and health implications of food choices. Understanding the impact of animal agriculture on animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and personal

well-being can prompt individuals to re-evaluate their dietary preferences and make more informed decisions.



The above graph shows that a significant percentage of people who considered going vegan was due to health reasons and nutrition, this data is a bit concerning because such people wouldn't think twice before transitioning to a different diet just for health purposes. It is very important to understand that people should center their veganism around concern for climate.

X. VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN STATISTICS IN INDIA

While it is challenging to determine the exact percentage of vegetarians in a country due to variations in surveys and data collection methods, India does have a substantial vegetarian population. According to various studies and surveys, the proportion of vegetarians in India ranges from about 20% to 30% of the total population. This percentage still represents a large number of people due to India's massive population size.

It is worth noting that vegetarianism is not homogenous across the country. Some regions in India have a higher prevalence of vegetarianism, particularly in states like Gujarat and Rajasthan, where vegetarian cuisine is deeply rooted in cultural and religious practices. However, other parts of India, particularly in the north-eastern states and coastal regions, have a higher consumption of meat and fish.

Regarding veganism, while it is not as widespread as vegetarianism in India, it has been gaining popularity in recent years. The number of vegans in India is increasing, driven by concerns for animal welfare, health, and environmental sustainability. Vegan options and plant-based alternatives are becoming more accessible in urban areas, and awareness about veganism is spreading.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Education and Awareness

- Implement comprehensive educational programs that highlight the benefits of veganism and the detrimental effects of animal agriculture.
- Integrate vegan-friendly curricula into schools and universities, promoting a holistic understanding of food systems, ethics, and environmental conservation.
- Collaborate with influential figures, celebrities, and social media influencers to raise awareness about the benefits of veganism and reach a broader audience.

2. Policy Changes and Government Support

- Advocate for policy changes that prioritize plant-based alternatives and support the growth of the vegan industry.
- Implement stricter regulations on animal agriculture, including animal welfare standards, environmental impact assessments, and restrictions on factory farming practices.
- Introduce subsidies and incentives to promote the production and consumption of plant-based foods, making them more accessible and affordable.

3. Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems

- Support and invest in regenerative and sustainable farming practices, such as organic agriculture, permaculture, and agroforestry.
- Encourage the development of innovative technologies for plant-based alternatives, such as lab-grown meats and plant-based proteins, to provide viable alternatives to animal products.
- Foster collaborations between farmers, researchers, and entrepreneurs to facilitate the transition towards sustainable and cruelty-free food systems.

4. Collaboration and Community Engagement

- Encourage community initiatives, such as local vegan meetups, cooking classes, and food festivals, to foster a sense of belonging and support for individuals transitioning to a vegan lifestyle.
- Establish partnerships with restaurants, cafes, and food services to increase the availability and variety of vegan options, making plant-based choices more accessible to the general public.
- Collaborate with healthcare professionals to promote the health benefits of a vegan diet and ensure accurate and up-to-date nutritional information is readily available.

5. Research and Development

- Allocate funding for research on plant-based nutrition, sustainable agriculture, and the environmental impacts of animal agriculture.
- Support scientific studies comparing the effectiveness of vegan diets in various contexts, including health outcomes, environmental impact, and resource efficiency.

- Encourage innovation in the food industry by investing in research and development of plant-based alternatives, improving taste, texture, and affordability.

XII. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Sample size could be larger.
2. People from diverse background should also be researched.
3. More towns and cities could also be included.

XIII. CONCLUSION

By implementing these recommendations, we can collectively work towards creating a more compassionate, sustainable, and healthier world. Embracing a vegan lifestyle not only benefits individuals by improving health outcomes, but also has far-reaching positive implications for the environment, animal welfare, and the future of our planet. Through education, policy changes, sustainable agriculture, community engagement, and research, we can pave the way for a global transition towards veganism.

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