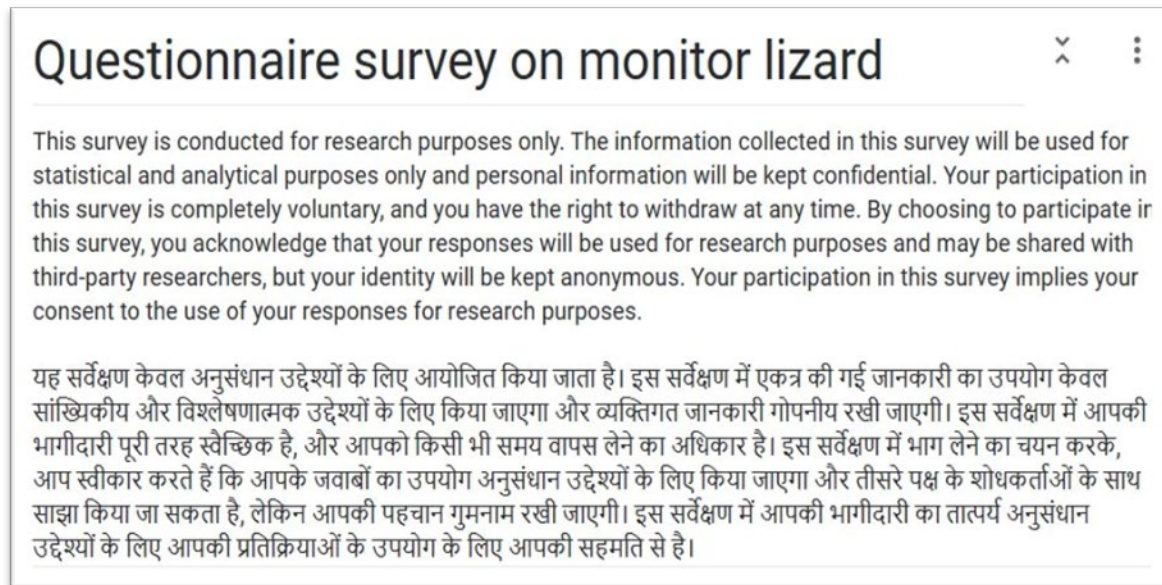


Project Update: July 2023

Progress during period:

The project has objective to record the traditional knowledge for Monitor lizards among local communities in Terai Arc Landscape, India. The Questionnaire survey is still ongoing however additionally I tried to record general view of citizens regarding monitor lizard. This was accomplished with the dissertation of one M.Sc. Forensic Science student Ms. Mansi Kumar. She joined me as my assistant/student to work on citizen view through her dissertation thesis entitled "Phyloforensics and community engagement to understand the trade of Bengal monitor lizards (*Varanus bengalensis*) in India". Our research question was to understand the perceptions and attitudes of the masses toward the Bengal Monitor Lizard and its conservation and look into the key knowledge gaps or misconceptions among local communities that need to be addressed through an awareness survey.

In order to examine public sentiments regarding Monitor lizards and conservation-related matters, we conducted a comprehensive online questionnaire survey utilizing Google Forms. Participants were unequivocally informed about the survey's objective, which was to gain insights into human perceptions of monitor lizards. The distribution of the questionnaire involved sharing a form link created via Google Forms. The collected responses were analyzed and visualized through the use of MS Excel, enabling the creation of informative graphs and charts.



The image shows a screenshot of a Google Form titled "Questionnaire survey on monitor lizard". The form contains a disclaimer in English and Hindi. The English text states: "This survey is conducted for research purposes only. The information collected in this survey will be used for statistical and analytical purposes only and personal information will be kept confidential. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time. By choosing to participate in this survey, you acknowledge that your responses will be used for research purposes and may be shared with third-party researchers, but your identity will be kept anonymous. Your participation in this survey implies your consent to the use of your responses for research purposes." The Hindi text below it says: "यह सर्वेक्षण केवल अनुसंधान उद्देश्यों के लिए आयोजित किया जाता है। इस सर्वेक्षण में एकत्र की गई जानकारी का उपयोग केवल सांख्यिकीय और विश्लेषणात्मक उद्देश्यों के लिए किया जाएगा और व्यक्तिगत जानकारी गोपनीय रखी जाएगी। इस सर्वेक्षण में आपकी भागीदारी पूरी तरह स्वैच्छिक है, और आपको किसी भी समय वापस लेने का अधिकार है। इस सर्वेक्षण में भाग लेने का चयन करके, आप स्वीकार करते हैं कि आपके जवाबों का उपयोग अनुसंधान उद्देश्यों के लिए किया जाएगा और तीसरे पक्ष के शोधकर्ताओं के साथ साझा किया जा सकता है, लेकिन आपकी पहचान गुमनाम रखी जाएगी। इस सर्वेक्षण में आपकी भागीदारी का तात्पर्य अनुसंधान उद्देश्यों के लिए आपकी प्रतिक्रियाओं के उपयोग के लिए आपकी सहमति से है।"

Fig1. Disclaimer incorporated in the online questionnaire survey.

Questionnaire designing

The survey utilized an extensive questionnaire consisting of 44 questions, organized into three sections. The initial section, named 'General Questions', encompassed 11 questions aimed at evaluating attitudes towards wild animals. The subsequent section, titled 'Questions on Monitor Lizard', comprised 23 questions focused on assessing

knowledge and awareness about Monitor Lizards. Furthermore, 10 questions were included to gather participants' personal information. A disclaimer was attached to ensure voluntary participation, granting participants the freedom to exit the questionnaire at any point.

Results: Insights from Survey Questionnaire

1. The questionnaire, which was available in both Hindi and English languages, received a strong response from a total of 182 individuals who expressed their interest in participating. The overwhelming majority of responses, specifically (n=162), were provided in English, while the remaining (n=20) responses were in Hindi.
2. In terms of gender distribution, (n=106) respondents identified as male participants, whereas (n=76) identified as female participants.
3. Regarding the geographical distribution, the majority of responses (n=180) were received from various states of India, while only responses (n=2) were from individuals of foreign origin. It is important to note that the questionnaire primarily focused on wildlife issues in India, leading to a lack of information in the responses from participants of foreign origin. This country-centric nature of the questionnaire influenced the participation and responses from international individuals hence excluded from the analysis.

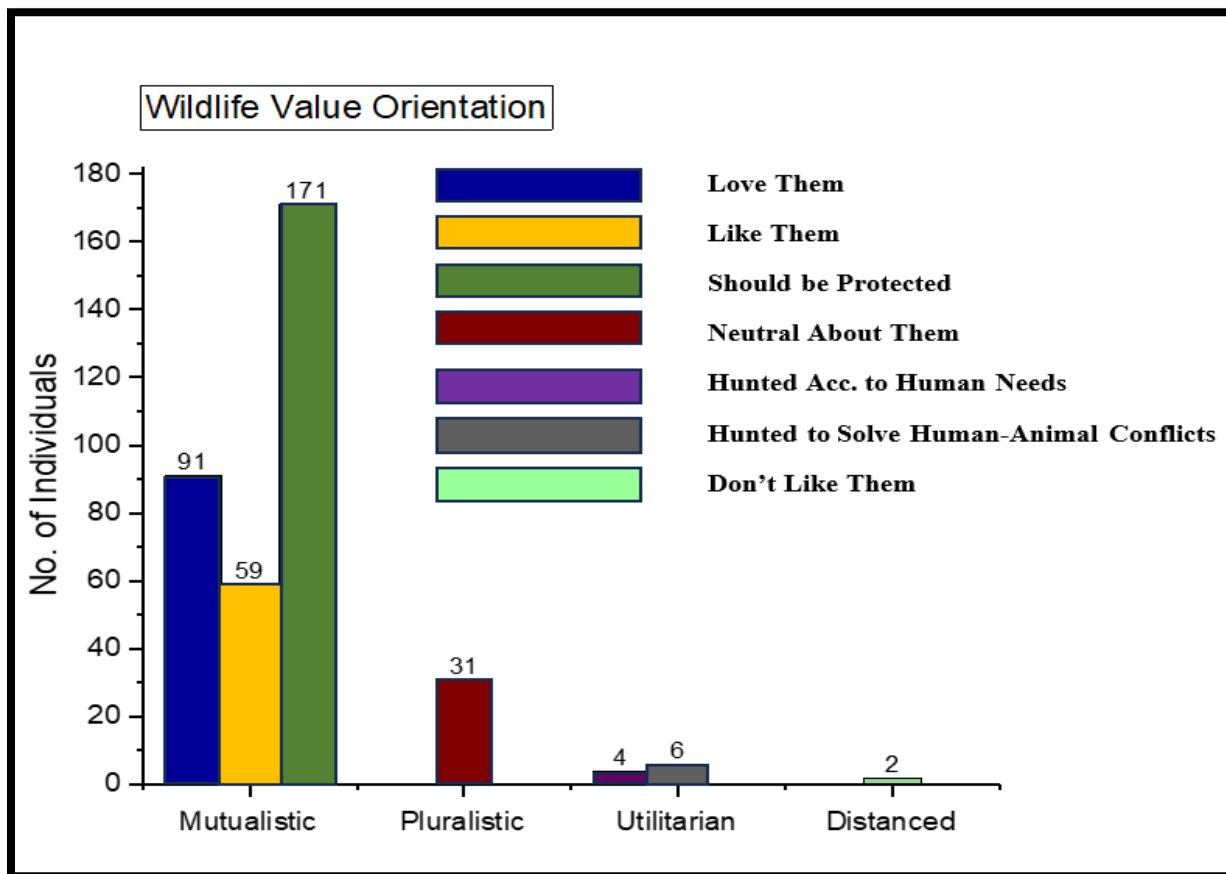


Fig2. Participants' wildlife value orientation

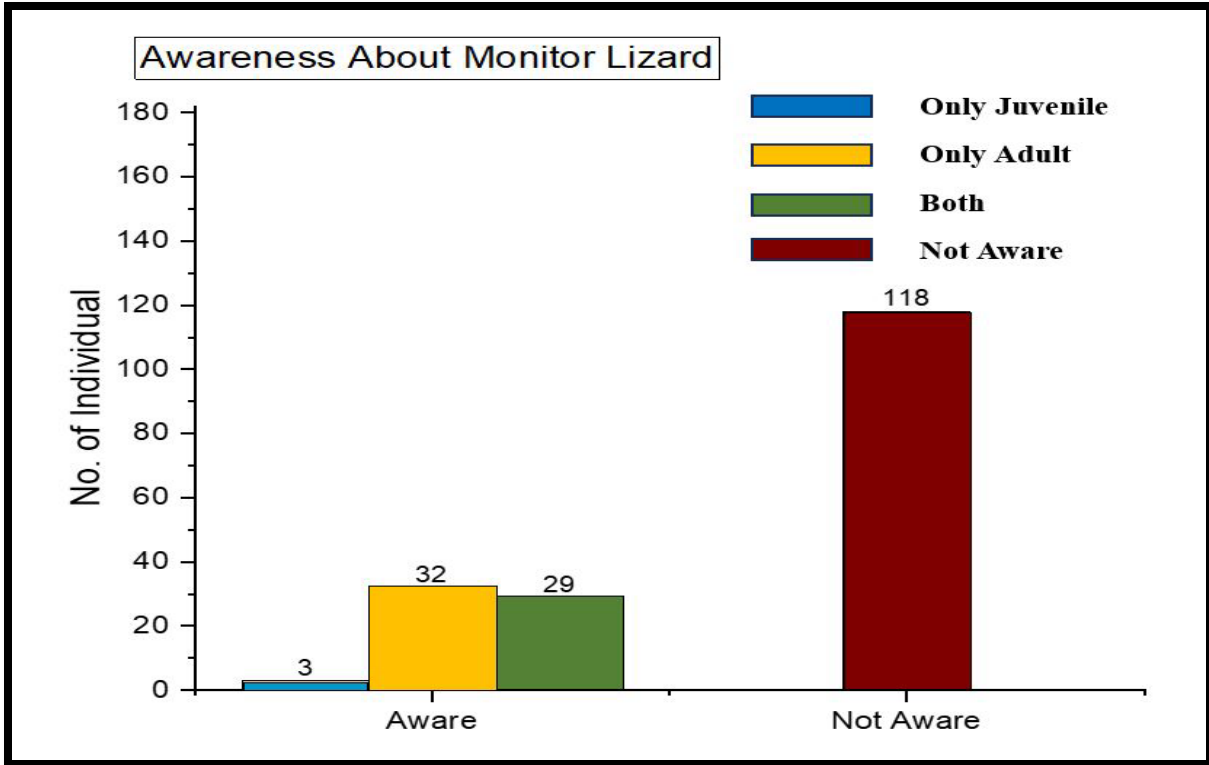


Fig3. Participants' level of awareness about monitor lizards, separately observed for juvenile and adult monitor lizard.

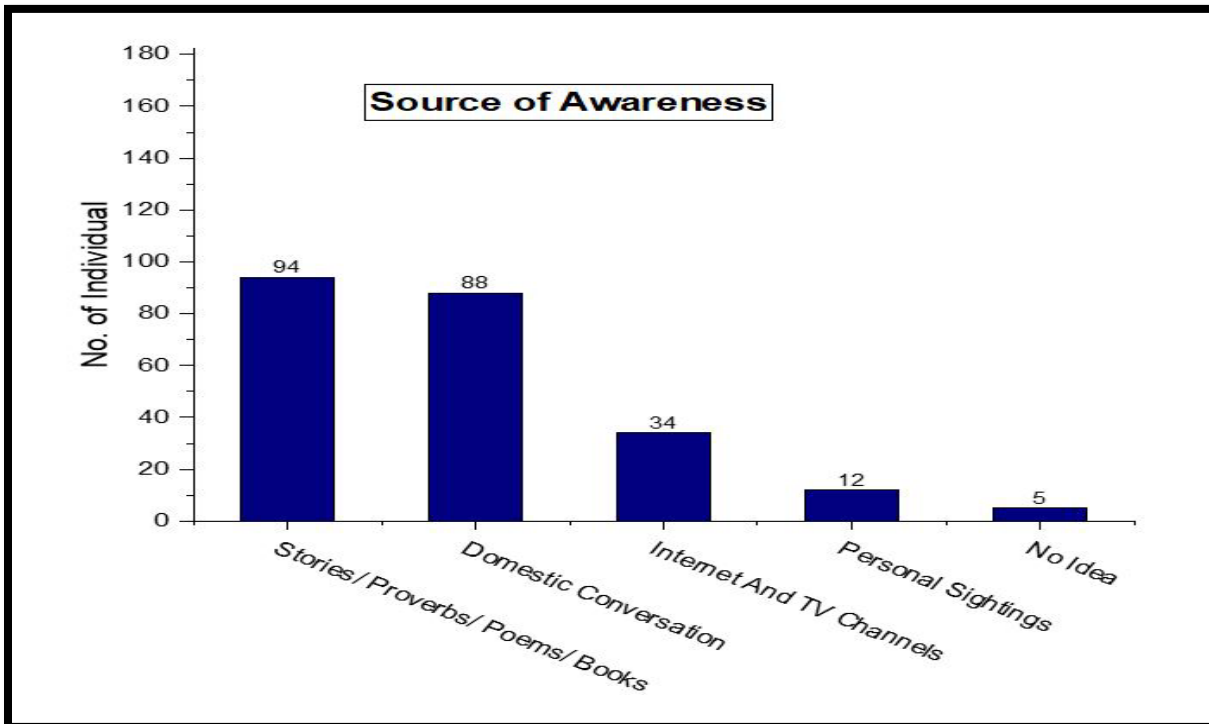


Fig4. Participants' source of awareness about monitor lizard

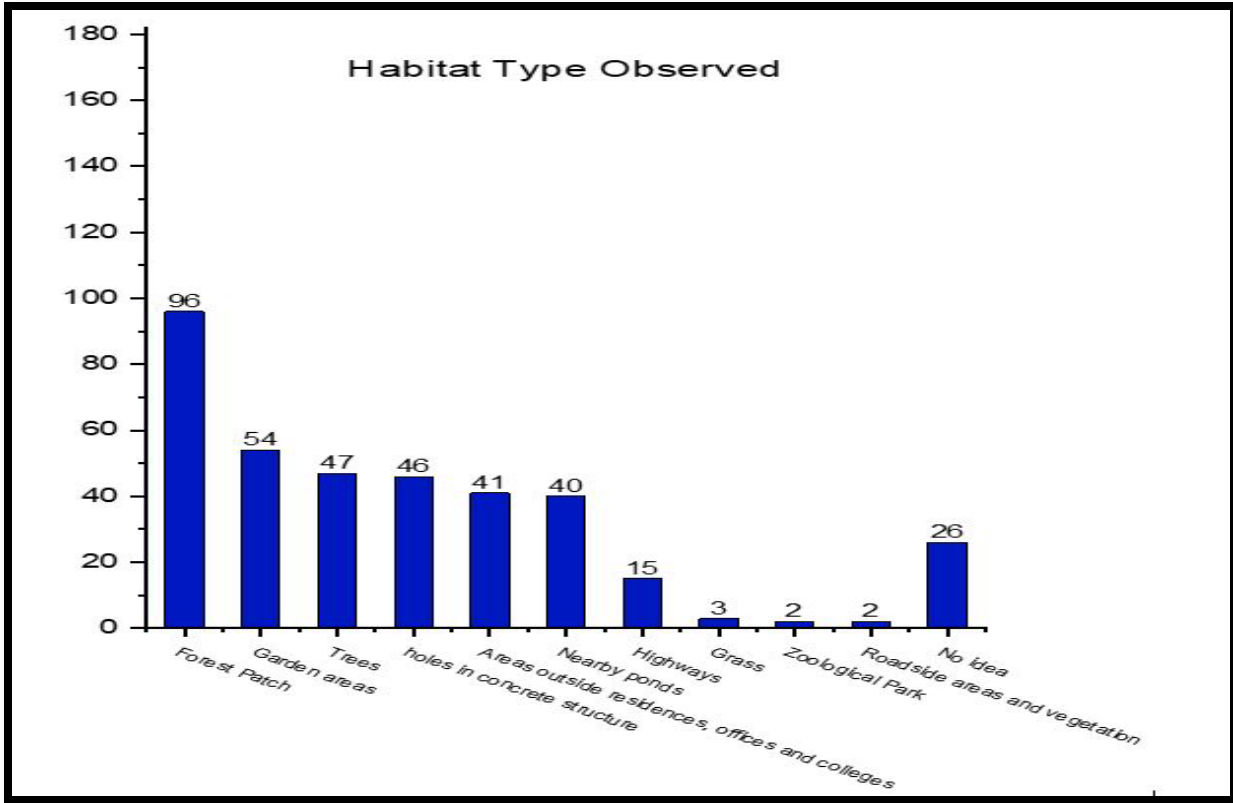


Fig5. Habitat type observed by participants.

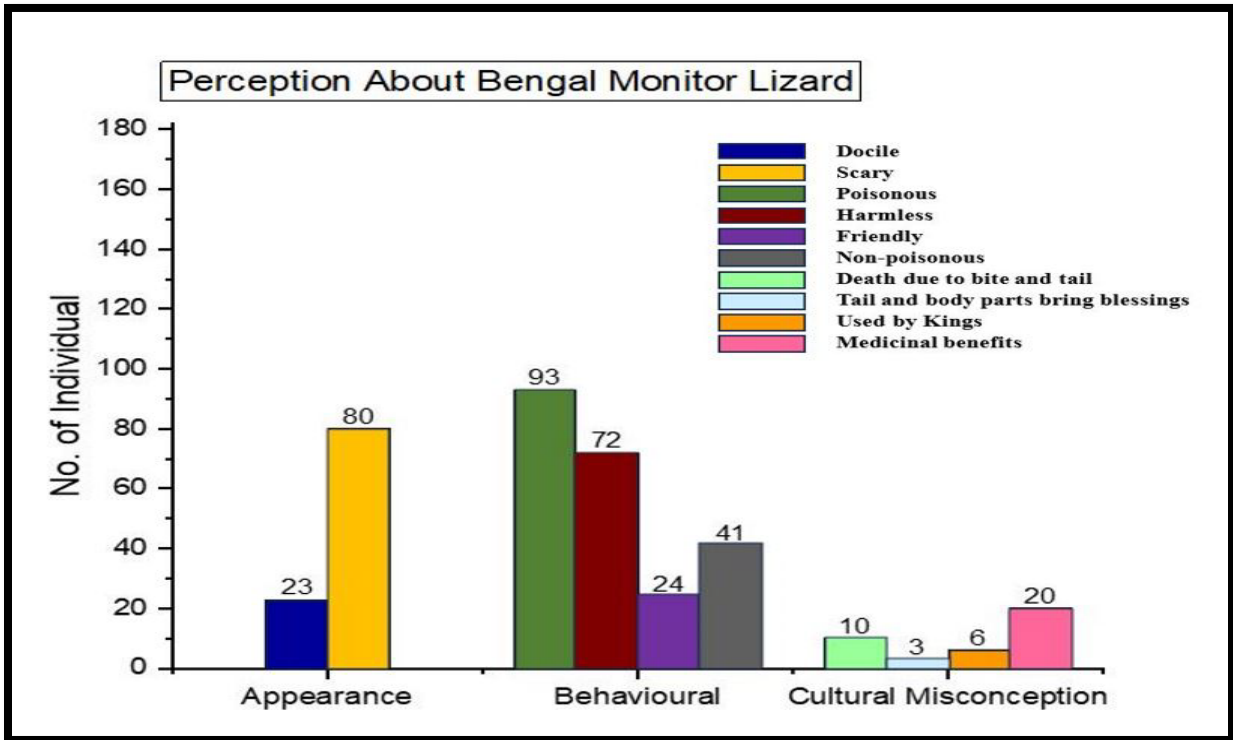


Fig6. Opinion of participants about appearance, behaviour, and cultural misconceptions regarding Bengal monitor lizard.

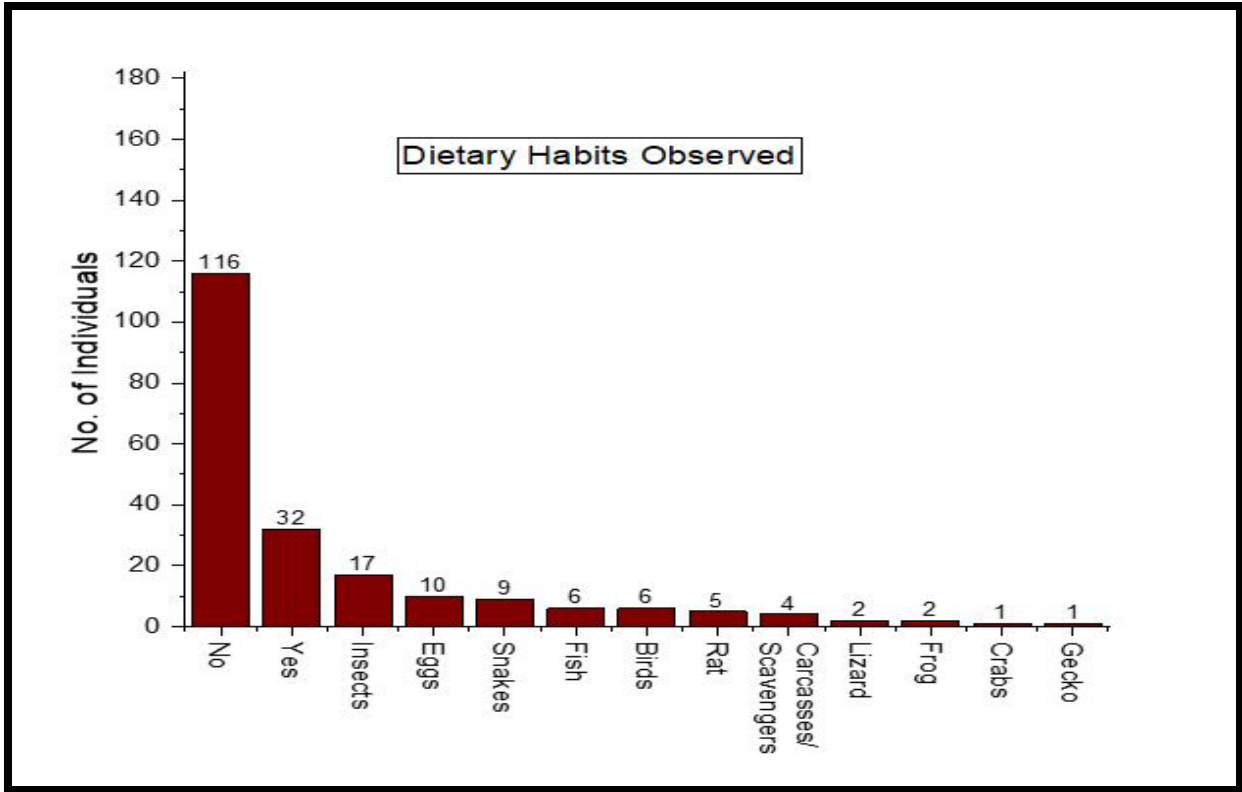


Fig7. Participants' knowledge about the dietary habits of Bengal monitor lizard.

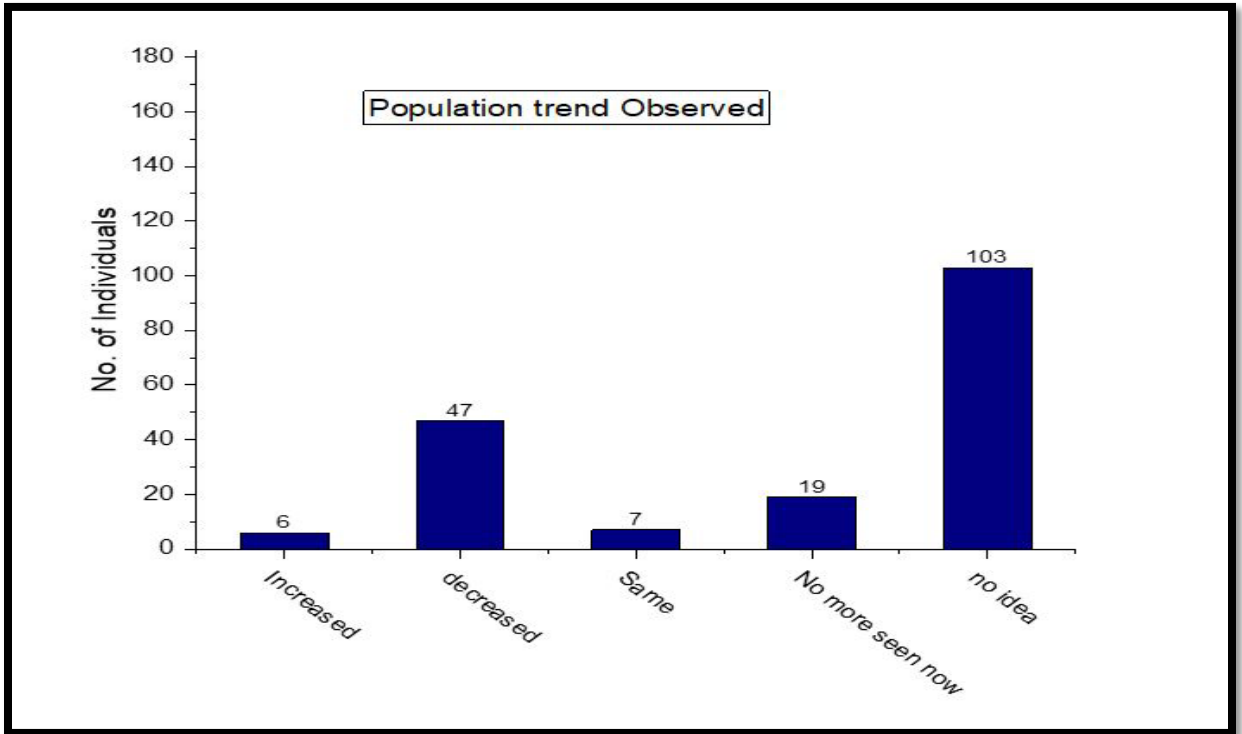


Fig8. Participant's knowledge regarding the occurrence of Bengal monitor lizards in their respective areas over the past decade

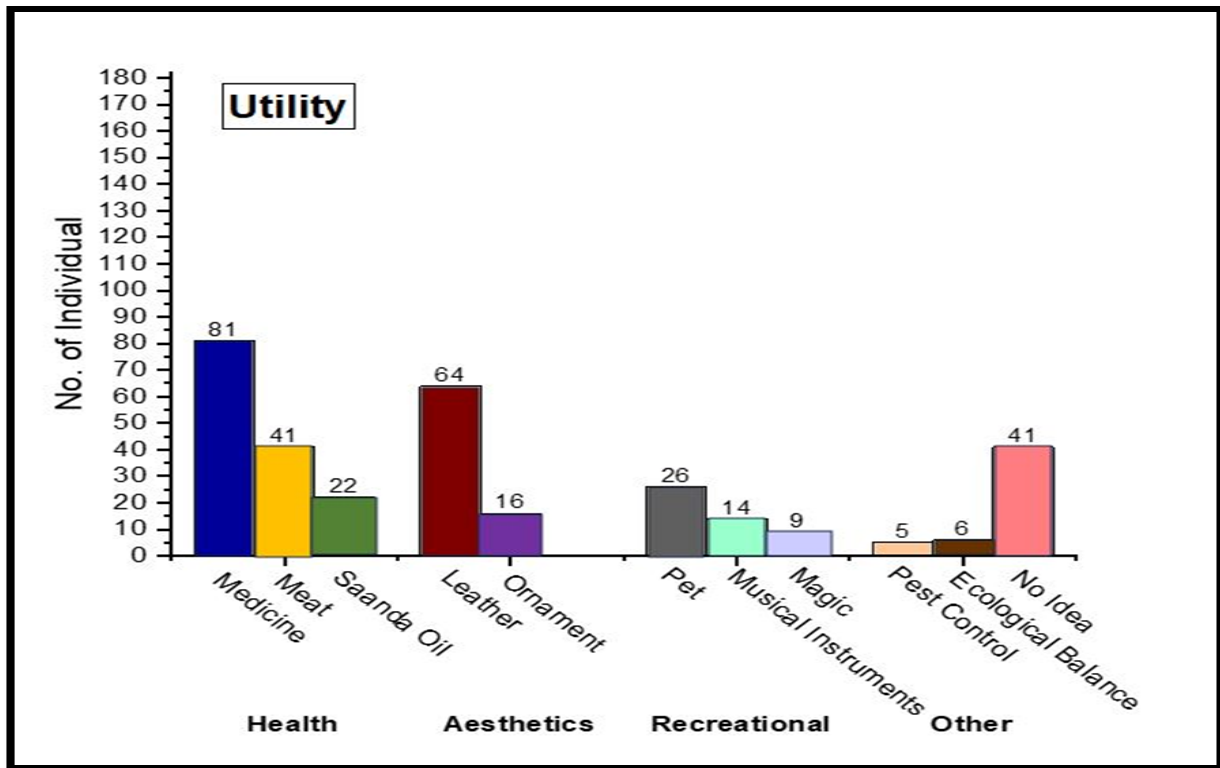


Fig9. Viewpoint of participants on the ways of utilization of Bengal monitor lizard by humans.

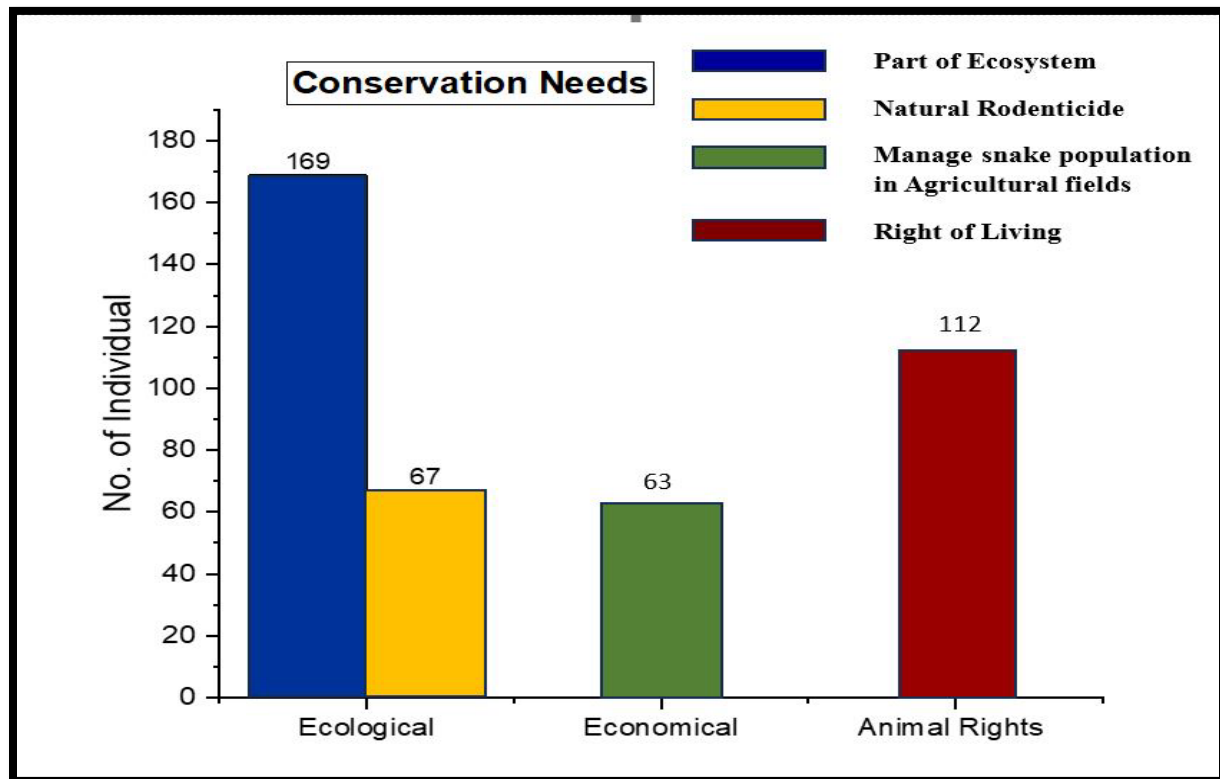


Fig10. Participants' views on conservation needs for Bengal monitor lizard.

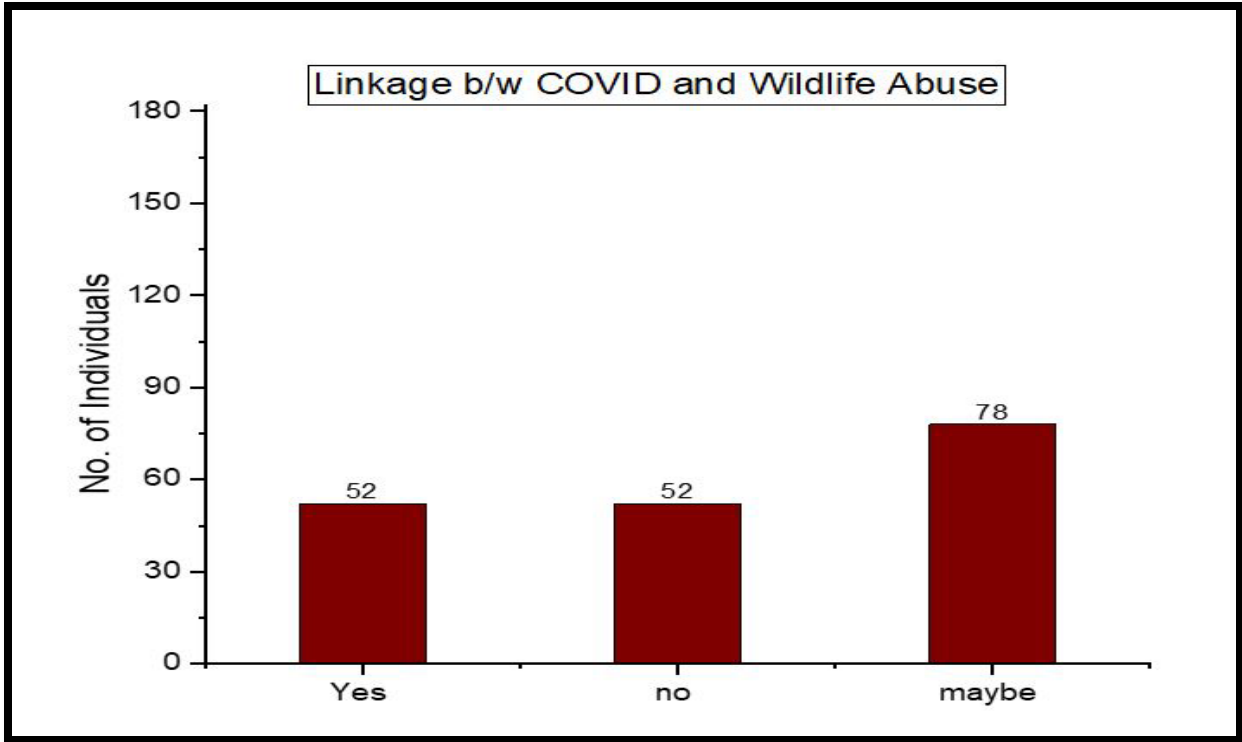


Fig11. Participants' views regarding the linkage of COVID and wildlife abuse.

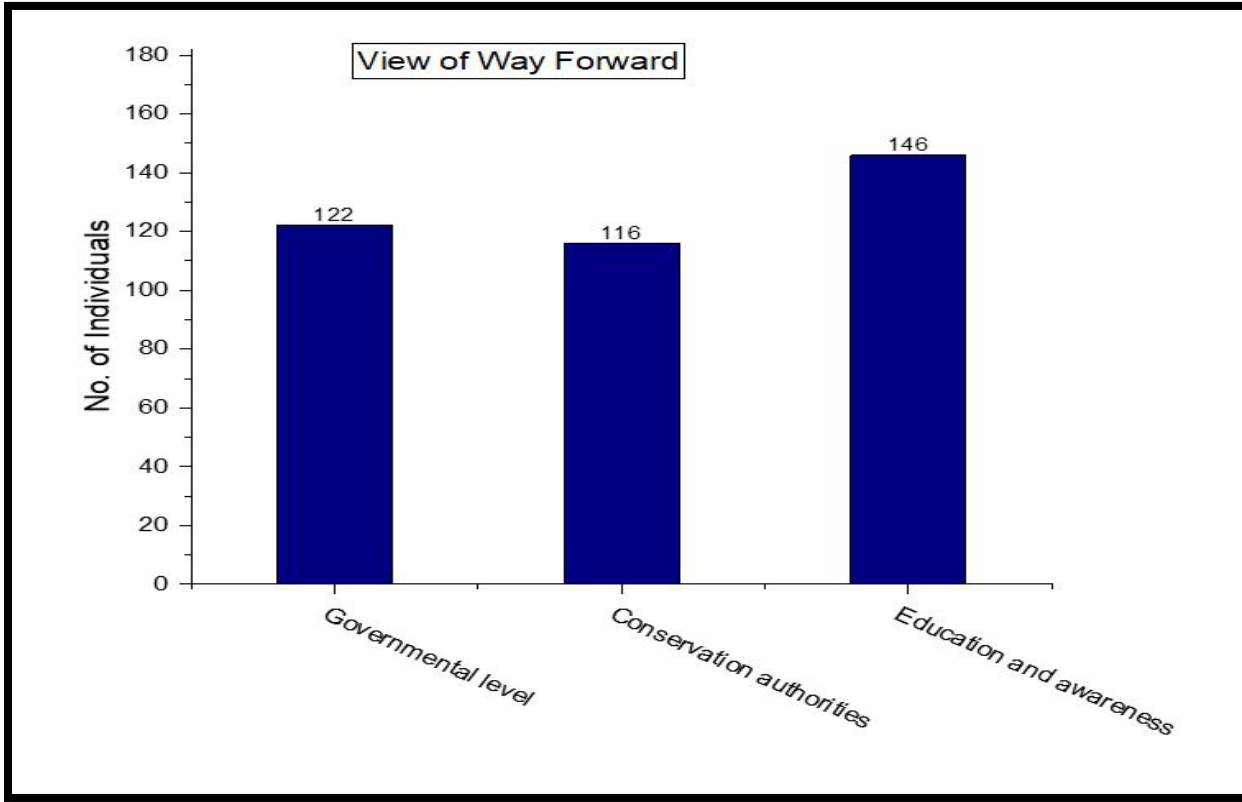


Fig12. Participants' opinion for policymakers