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## EVALUATING PUBLIC COMPLIANCE WITH WILDLIFE CONSERVATION LAW IN WUHAN, CHINA

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### **Abstract**

As a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 in mainland China, the governments expedite the legislation of the Wildlife Protection Law (WPL) by proposing a comprehensive prohibition on wildlife eating and trading in the latest WPL due to the potential association between the outbreak and wildlife. However, the prohibition could affect the current social-economic system, leading to a void of legislation due to the disobedience of laws in society. Public readiness toward the law has a strong relationship with expected obedience to it. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to assess the two components of the readiness knowledge about the law and the readiness toward the actions potentially contradicting the latest WPL. Another objective is to collect participants' opinions and reasons on whether they think the latest WPL is difficult to enforce. By selecting the epicenter Wuhan as a study site, voluntary response sampling was used to distribute the questionnaire online. The data obtained from 410 respondents show that the citizens in Wuhan have average knowledge about the latest WPL but are unaware of the definition of wildlife. Based on the Mann-Whitney test, the study found no significance between gender and knowledge, but it exists in all other comparisons. Moreover, the significance only exists between readiness scale and age groups. The difficulty in enforcing the latest WPL underlines the problems in enforcement, awareness, demand, and society aspect, while on the opposite, respondents highlight the lesson from the pandemic and belief in the governments. In conclusion, citizens in Wuhan show a medium readiness toward the latest WPL, which is vital to design optimal legislation.

**Keywords:** Wildlife Protection Law, Wildlife Trade, Knowledge, Readiness, Enforcement, Awareness

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the end of 2019, a mysterious pneumonia that sparked a dozen cases of infection in a very low profile in the central part of China, Wuhan, has been rapidly out of control and spread throughout the world at an unimaginable transmission speed (Baharuddin & Zuhairi, 2021; Huang et al., 2020). Furthermore, With the high capability to transmit from human to human, the virus now has a notorious name: COVID-19, which caused the total confirmed infection cases of more than 71 million and death tolls of 1,601,088 in aggregate globally as of December 12, 2020 (Worldometer, 2020). Apart from the readiness of professionals and scholars about the Wildlife Protection Law (WPL) among society, ordinary citizens from all walks of life, constitute the largest part of recipients of the law. Their readiness toward the law acts as an extent to which the law and relevant enforcement have an optic effect on society (Li, 2007).

Wuhan is an important transportation hub and one of the largest cities in central China. It is a very wealthy city that contributes prominently to China's GDP. The city's medical resources, including the number of hospital beds and specialized hospitals, are very rich. However, even such a not weak medical and health system was still overwhelmed when the epidemic hit and was on the verge of collapse (Siwen, 2020).

As the center of the pandemic, the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market of Wuhan drew the attention of the world and put the illegal wildlife trade under the spotlight. Almost all of the wildlife trade in the market served as raw materials in human's kitchen, including bat, which has been identified as the potential host of COVID-19 (Peng et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020), snake, and some very precious wild animals, such as pangolin, which is also on the suspect list of intermediate hosts of coronavirus (Zhang et al., 2020).

Before the modern concept of wildlife protection was brought to China from overseas, the traditional belief held by Chinese people widely was that wildlife is a major source of food and medicine (Zhang et al., 2008). Until the early 1980s, hunting activity was legally permitted in China due to the desperate demand for foreign currency of the government in the impoverished period when the whole nation was suffering from overwhelming social unrest (the Cultural Revolution) and the breakdown of domestic economic production. Admittedly, the government earned millions of dollars in replacement of biodiversity. For example, Qinghai province opened the gate for foreign hunters to enjoy the natural reserve game in 1987, and the population of musk deer plunged from about 3 million in the 1950s to less than 1 million within 30 years under the flag of legal hunting for the valuable musk (CWE, 1989). Since the first edition of the Wildlife Preservation Law issued in 1989 came into force, such rampant hunting was officially banned by the Chinese government, but the effectiveness of the law for protecting wildlife is always doubted by the public.

Therefore, the study objective is: 1) to assess the citizens' knowledge level about the implementation of the latest WPL and the basic legal system of the People's Republic of China, 2) to analyze the reasons given by respondents about the enforcement of the latest WPL, and 3) to assess the level of readiness among the people for the anticipated implementation of important legislation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

About 80 studies were chosen out of hundreds throughout the systematic literature review. The literature ranges from qualitative studies of legislative analysis and epidemic records to quantitative studies of environmental awareness or animal protection attitudes. Qualitative studies were used to identify the progression of the WPL in mainland China and the significant change in mainland China's society and economics, while quantitative studies highlighting the relationship between environmental law and environmental awareness, attitude, and knowledge, especially in the wildlife protection sector, were compared to the current study in the data analysis section.

A report from the administrative department that found 17,000 Himalayan ibex skins and 1,100 kg of shahtoosh in the first decade after WPL was published. This figure shamed the WPL and questioned its legitimacy and efficacy. The law punishes and imprisons violators, but WPL's principles of "breeding, domestication, and utilization" and "equivocation of law" in legislation limit its utility. For 30 years, Chinese academics, biologists, and environmentalists have demanded WPL modification. McBeath (2006) noted that many legislative council members lack the biological and ecological expertise to implement scientific WPLs. After three years of study and consultation on the first revised WPL, the Chinese government suggested the second edition in 2016. Public readiness was crucial to this amazing success in China's legislative history, notwithstanding a few intractable issues like tiger and bear farm permits (Li, 2007).

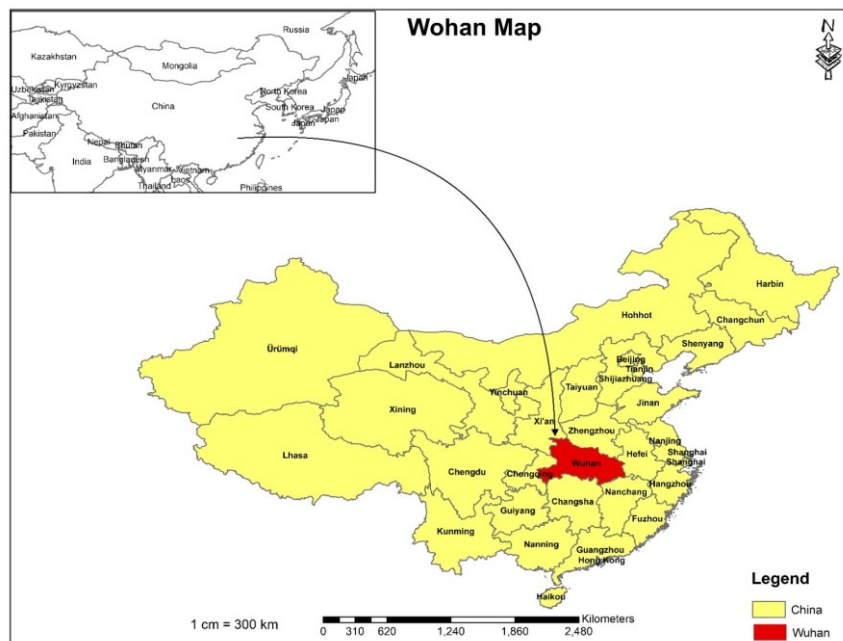
Moreover, 70% of Chinese respondents believed pangolin pieces may treat skin and wound problems (Wildaid, 2019). However, pangolins are not as medically useful as people think. In his "Bencao Gangmu" (Compendium of Materia Medica), Ming dynasty sage Li Shizhen warned that eating pangolin could cause persistent diarrhea. This compilation also advises against eating wild animals like bats, snakes, and boars, which are still a secret recipe in many Chinese kitchens but are thought to spread infectious diseases like the current COVID-19 pandemic (A. et al., 2011; Rosni & Zainol, 2022). Chinese people have strong convictions because their forefathers condone wild animal medicine.

The Chinese government bans all illegal wildlife trade in the country and corrects the anachronistic habit of Chinese people eating wild animals in response to public demand for wildlife trade control measures. In February, the National People's Congress produced a file (The Decision) to reflect the

government's decision (National People's Congress, 2020). The file urges all societal groups to participate in education, campaign, and guidance to improve citizens' readiness to protect ecosystems and enforce the WPL. Except for actual punishment of illegal hunting and trafficking, law enforcement depends on public readiness (Copper, 2007).

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Wuhan is located in the center of China's hinterland, in the eastern part of Hubei Province, at the intersection of the Yangtze River and the Han River. It is a national historical and cultural city, the central city and the only sub-provincial city in central China, and an important industrial base, science and education base and comprehensive transportation in the country, is also the capital of Hubei Province. The geographical location is 113°41'~115°05' east longitude and 29°58'~31°22' north latitude. The city's land area is 8569.15 square kilometers. The construction area is 885.11 square kilometers. At the end of 2021, the city's permanent population was 13.6489 million (WuHan.China, 2022). According to the data from the Statistic Bureau of Wuhan (2019), 11.2 million population lives in the city.



**Figure 1:** The map of Wuhan

To determine the total sample size of the population in Wuhan, the formula for calculating the sample size devised by (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) was

applied for the determination of the amount of questionnaire that was allocated. To ensure an adequate sample size in Wuhan, 450 questionnaires were distributed, exceeding the minimum requirement of 385 respondents. An additional 65 sets were allocated to account for potential invalid or non-responsive responses.

The study comprises four sections. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, hukou (a government-issued sheet indicating legal domicile), education, and employment. The second section assessed knowledge about the Wildlife Protection Law (WPL) and related topics through eight objective questions. These questions covered legislative processes, WPL implementation, amendments, and the definition of wildlife. The third section examined respondents' attitudes and readiness towards the latest WPL contents with six Likert-scale questions. The final section featured an open-ended qualitative question to gather subjective opinions on challenges related to law execution in China.

## **Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument**

### ***Validity***

The questionnaire used for data collection was subjected to several stages of validation and reliability check. At the outset of data collection, the draft was sent to five validators based on their expertise either in legal system or sociology contributed for quality checking. Based on the respective expertise either in the legal system or sociology, validators contributed a few suggestions in terms of the specific term-using, the appropriate sequence of questions, and even the alternative customary word-using in mainland China, which otherwise could have evoked confusion on the question.

### ***Reliability***

A pilot study can be defined as a “small study” to test research protocols, data collection instruments, and other research techniques in preparation for a larger study to reveal the internal consistency of the project (Hassan et al., 2006). A pilot study with 75 participants was conducted prior to formal data collection, and the participants were more than the reasonable minimum of 30 respondents from the population (Johanson & Brooks, 2010). Cronbach's Alpha test was used to check the reliability of Likert-scale questions in Section 3, indicating the acceptable quality for the internal consistency of questions (Alpha = .709).

## **Data Collection**

Data collection in Wuhan involved random selection of respondents through WeChat's platform for voluntary response sampling. Tencent distributed the online survey to potential respondents with WeChat accounts through the public "Tencent questionnaire" account. Automated target selection matched researcher

preferences with WeChat user data. Using a "location preference" screening condition, the study ensured that participants were from Wuhan. It was optional for respondents to complete the questionnaire. For efficient quantitative data collection, the survey primarily employed closed-ended questions, such as Likert scales, and multiple-choice questions to assess respondents' knowledge. All data collected were kept strictly confidential and used for research purposes only.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data are made of the value of data in the form of numbers associated with the unique value for each of them. The quantifiable data from Likert-scale questions and objective questions can be used for mathematical calculations and statistics, and the questions on the attitude-revealing part can be made based on these mathematical derivations.

The interval data gained from Section 2 are perfectly appropriate to the mean-based comparison approaches. However, the ordinal data obtained from Section 3, which are composed of a ranking scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) about different statements, are used to assess the potential readiness of the participants toward a certain influence brought by the latest WPL. The responses of this section were transformed into a 5-point Likert scale and assigned with numeric values from 1 to 5. The median of each question assessed readiness for the newest Wildlife Protection Law through quantitative data analysis. Cross-tabulation in Excel and SPSS revealed variable correlations. Sequencing variables by scale (ordinal, nominal, interval) was crucial before data entry. Mean, percentage, and frequency were utilized to process data. In Section 2's knowledge scale, Mann-Whitney U-test and Kruskal-Wallis H-test were used to assess factors' effects on characteristics. When data were not regularly distributed, except interval data scales, non-parametric tests were utilized.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Demographic Information**

About 59.3% of the respondents are male, and the rest are female. As for the age distribution among the respondents, 19.5% of the respondents aged between 26 and 40 years old, and 78.3% of the respondents are in the range of 18–25 years old. With regard to education, over 90% of the respondents graduated from university or above. Among that, people with bachelor's degree covered the largest portion, up to 54.1%, compared to those with college diploma (27.3%), which is relatively lower than the bachelor's degree in China's education system, though both are generally called "university students". The master's degree holders comprised 9.8% of the total respondents, and PhD holders contributed to the lowest share with only 1.7%. Meanwhile, others (below college diploma) accounted for 7.1% of those educational survey.

The Chinese government categorizes its citizens roughly into two groups: one is urban, while another is non-urban. This sorting method has been widely known as hukou, which defines the holders of hukou based on their address or the place where they were born in order to restrict the migration of the population and to allocate resources more effectively and wisely (official declaration). The study did not find a significant difference between the percentage of both groups (urban (54.4%) versus non-urban (45.1%)). Most of the respondents (56.8%) are students in campus, which explains the reason for the majority (42.2%) of the respondents who have yet to receive any income. Subsequently, 26.7% of the respondents worked at private or foreign companies, while 17.1% are employed in the state-owned or government-owned sector, or as civil servants. Except for those without income, 32% made yearly earning less than 60,000 yuan (8,919 dollars). 16.1% of the respondents have income in the range of 60,000–99,999 (14,865 dollars), while only 10% of the respondents received more than 100,000 yuan annually.

### **Knowledge of Regulatory Protection of Wildlife**

More than half (51%) of the respondents answered that they seldom heard The Decision despite the frequent media reports about The Decision and the unique epicenter where the respondents are living, whereas the rest (49%) acknowledged that they had heard The Decision frequently. Only two-fifths of the respondents expressed their concern about the latest term of forbidding wildlife-dinning, which is expected to be the crucial topic of the revised WPL. Other options, including a complete prohibition on trading, hunting, and breeding wildlife, though sound legit, are neither priority of the revised WPL nor any actual prescription according to the current articles of WPL, and 17.7% answered that they did not know about the central point of the revised law.

However, this finding shows that a lot of Chinese people are apathetic about the new rule and do not want to learn about it or study the article that they are supposed to enforce. It shows that the main concept of law has always been much more peripheral in Chinese mentality than in Western countries, with most Chinese individuals' mindset regarding any social problem being lawless (Harris, 2014).

Only a small portion of the respondents answered the question “which branch is in charge of legislation regarding WPL” correctly (12.7%). More than half of the respondents chose the answer “I do not know” (55.1%), and the rest selected the wrong answers. In addition, there is almost a doubled correct rate (21%) in the question “which branch is in charge of enforcement regarding WPL”, yet the option “I do not know” still occupied the majority of responses (53.9%).

Slightly more than one-third of the respondents selected the right answer to the question intended to know people's basic knowledge about the

definition of wildlife in terms of the WPL. Interestingly enough, for the wild animal options which were purposely manipulated with the terms “captive breeding”, only a little fraction of the respondents chose these options (4.4% and 3.4%, respectively), while for the animal without the terms, almost half (49.3%) of the respondents thought it is categorized as wildlife. However, given the definition of the WPL, wildlife means the animals live and thrive in the wild regardless of captive breeding. Likewise, 31.2% of the respondents answered correctly to the question of the justification of the wildlife-eating action, and the rest chose wrongly due to restricted comprehension of the definition of wildlife. For the definition of “national protected wildlife”, 46.8% of the respondents selected the right answer, which is the highest proportion among all questions regarding knowledge about the WPL. Finally, the last question in this section also shows that most of the respondents (30.7%) knew what sort of action is illegal, higher than the percentage of the other four options. The items on knowledge can be further classified into provisions and access related to the WPL, basic knowledge of legislative work, and the definitions of WPL.

#### **Association of Sociodemographic Factors with Knowledge**

A Mann-Whitney test was conducted to compare the knowledge level of the male and female respondents. There was no significant difference in scores for the male and female respondents ( $U = 20881.5, p = .606$ ). These statistics infer that gender does not have an effect on the level of knowledge about the WPL. In contrast, there was a significant difference in scores for the respondents from urban and non-urban areas ( $U = 17,765.0, p = .013$ ). These data suggest that hukou (birthplace) has an obvious effect on the level of knowledge about the WPL. Given the responses from the question “whether you have heard “The Decision” or not”, these data also demonstrated a significant difference in scores for those answering “always” and those stating “seldom” ( $U = 18,634.5, p = .042$ ), which implies that the level of knowledge depends on the extent to which people tend to concern about “The Decision”. Kruskal-Wallis H-test between subjects was conducted to identify the effect of age on the level of knowledge of the WPL. Four categories (1: 18–25, 2: 26–40, 3: 41–60, and 4: above 60) were used to sort all respondents according to their age. In the test,  $p < .05$  for the four age categories ( $\chi^2(3) = 13.004, p = .005$ ), with a mean rank knowledge score of 197.2 for 18–25, 240.46 for 26–40, 227.19 for 41–60, and 49 for above 60. There is a statistically significant effect of age on the level of knowledge. Based on these findings, a hint of similarity was identified with a study that found a significant difference that only arose from half of all age categories with the knowledge of pangolin protection (Ariffin & Nan, 2018). Another Kruskal-Wallis H-test was conducted to examine the effect of employment on the knowledge of the WPL. The respondents' employment was classified into four categories: Category 1) college students; Category 2) civil servants; Category 3) employment in the state-



owned sector, and Category 4) employment in the private sector. There is a statistically significant difference between employment and level of knowledge, as proven by the test ( $\chi^2(3) = 9.685, p = 0.021$ ), with a mean rank knowledge score of 194.02 for college students, 194.46 for civil servants, 252.20 for the state-owned sector, and 221.53 for the private sector. Likewise, in the educational background, the Kruskal-Wallis H-test also shows the significance with knowledge level ( $\chi^2(4) = 10.331, p = 0.035$ ), with a mean rank knowledge score of 187.53 for college diploma, 214.95 for bachelor's degree, 234.05 for master's degree, 199.14 for PhD, and 164.72 for others.

Although knowledge and understanding of environmental law always play a vital role in people's attitude and acceptance toward the law, the execution and public compliance with the law are also indispensable in wildlife protection. In the wake of the relationship between gender and knowledge level on the WPL, this study discovered no significant disparity between male and female respondents. However, previous research found that female respondents illustrate stronger concern about environmental affairs (Czech et al., 2001).

With regard to the hukou (birthplace), a study also found a significant difference between non-residents and residents in the wildlife conservation zone (Guzman et al., 2020). This research reinforces the argument that people who live in conservation zones adjacent to a wide variety of wildlife do not necessarily have higher awareness or knowledge level than those living far away from those zones. People's willingness to access the latest information on regulation also affects their knowledge level, and the question "have you heard of The Decision" cannot be waived by the explanation of the problem in accessing the information when the respondents have handphone to answer the questionnaire. In addition, this study also found a significant disparity between age groups and employment groups. Interestingly, the current study shows that civil servants who have the strongest bond to the government do not have a significant difference in the level of knowledge about the WPL from other employments.

### **Readiness on Compliance with Proposed Provisions**

Compliance is hard to achieve if the new law proscribes customary activities a lot. Traditional Chinese medication, which comprises a lot of animal-related prescriptions, is broadly recognized as a competent alternative to contemporary medical science in the Chinese community. Additionally, several types of animals always appear in Chinese recipes, such as bear's paw and stewed snake, which are also thought of as good health supplement. The major content of The Decision is to enforce comprehensive prohibition on animal-eating, thus is undoubtedly against the traditional medicine or bizarre food for gourmands using animals or their parts. A certain degree of disturbance in society is expected to be in place by promoting The Decision. Nonetheless, a lack of public compliance and readiness will surely make the rules impractical (Keane et al., 2008). The extent

to which people are ready to comply with the latest WPL affects its enforcement. In the current study, the respondents were asked about their readiness to obey the proposed WPL by rating the scale from 1 to 5 on how much they agree with the statements given.

**Table 1:** Readiness scale

Statements	Median
I am very confident in the transparency of the enforcement against illegal activities.	4.00
I can refrain from any purchase of commodity made up of wildlife.	5.00
I do not believe in the special medical value of products made up of wildlife.	3.00
I do not believe in the unique nourishment of food made up of wildlife.	3.00
I can totally refrain from consuming any kind of wildlife for food.	5.00
I am aware of the potential impacts of the new law on my life very well.	3.00

Where 1 is the most negative scale (strongly disagree) and 5 is the most positive scale (strongly agree). Thus, the higher the mean score, the more the respondents are ready to embrace the proposed WPL. In Table 1, the results show that the respondents are ready to obey the law regarding provisions against purchasing commodities made up of wildlife or its parts and consuming wildlife for food, while for the potential impact brought by the law, it attains the lowest score with only 3, meaning that they actually do not know how the proposed WPL will change their life. The results of the medical value and nourishment of wildlife are in the lowest scale 3 (neutral), indicating that the respondents also have a vague realization about the utilization of wildlife. The transparency of enforcement against illegal activities achieved a score of 4, higher than the neutral scale and almost achieving the agreed scale. Above all, despite the roughly neutral attitude toward some aspects of the law, the respondents overall show positive readiness to the proposed WPL.

### **Readiness in Sociodemographic Factors**

To compare readiness toward compliance with the proposed WPL, Mann-Whitney U-test was performed to identify the difference between gender. There was no significant difference in the scores for males and females ( $U = 18,369.0$ ,  $p = .102$ ), suggesting that gender does not have a significant effect on the readiness toward the new law's enforcement. Likewise, in another statistic of the sample, the test was run to detect disparity between hukou, and no significant difference was observed among the respondents born in urban and non-urban areas ( $U = 19,063.0$ ,  $p = .186$ ). Finally, for the question “have you heard about The Decision”, the t-test shows a significant difference between those who have heard a lot and those who chose “hardly heard about that” with  $U = 15,186.5$ ,  $p = .00$ . These results indicate that the motivation to follow law-related news has an effect on the readiness toward the new legislation.

The Kruskal-Wallis H-test was used to compare the difference between the mean of collections. Firstly, for age and readiness, four identical age

categories with the one used in the knowledge section were compared with the scales. The results show a significant difference among the ages ( $\chi^2(3) = 9.422$ ,  $p = .024$ ), with a mean rank readiness scale of 198.56 for 18–25, 231.24 for 26–40, 260.63 for 41–60, and 66.25 for above 60. Next, it was also applied to compare the effect of employment on the respondents' readiness toward the new law. However, the results of  $\chi^2(3) = 5.055$ ,  $p = .171$  with a mean rank readiness scale of 197.83 for college students, 196.61 for civil servants, 243.68 for the state-owned sector, and 214.81 for the private sector do not show any significant difference on the four categories. Finally, the difference between the respondents' educational background and their readiness is worth to be examined. Nonetheless, the results also show no significant difference between educational background and readiness for the five categories (college, bachelor, master, PhD, and others);  $\chi^2(4) = 1.600$ ,  $p = .809$ , with a mean rank readiness scale of 205.22 for college students, 209.14 for bachelor's degree, 204.60 for master's degree, 163.29 for PhD, and 190.10 for others.

Overall, this study found that the respondents are roughly ready for the enforcement of the proposed WPL with the mean slightly below or higher than the neutral position to the contents of the law. Among those sociodemographic factors, age is the only one with a significant effect on the respondents' readiness toward the enforcement of the new law. In addition, the motivation to know about the new law is another factor affecting respondents' readiness toward the new law. However, by comparing the questions in the knowledge section and in the readiness section, it was found that the respondents who rated 4 and 5 in “completely refusing wildlife-eating” (101 respondents agreed and 256 respondents strongly agreed) stated that they can stay away from eating wildlife, and only 37 and 70 respondents chose the right answer in the question asking to differentiate the action of eating wildlife, respectively. Likewise, by comparing the scale statement of “completely refusing purchase of wildlife product” and the question asking to differentiate the type of wildlife, the result shows that for those selecting 4 and 5, only 35 out of 105 and 104 out of 269 respondents chose the right answer, respectively. Both findings imply that respondents with a high level of readiness toward the enforcement of the proposed WPL do not necessarily have enough knowledge about the law.

### **Reasons from the Respondents about the Enforcement of the Latest WPL**

This section is set up to explicate reasons given by the respondents why they think the proposed WPL is difficult or easy to comply with, and whether the proposed WPL is difficult to execute or not. From the results, 14 respondents answered, “I do not know”, “I am not clear”, and “Wu” (no opinion), and thus were excluded from qualitative coding. Meanwhile, 124 respondents left clear text with a positive view on the compliance and enforcement of the proposed WPL, whereas most of the respondents (272) expressed worries and concerns about the new law.

By following certain steps, similar words and phrases were extracted from the answers and were used to constitute themes. Theoretical constructs, such as Enforcement and Awareness, were then concluded from similar themes before the final theoretical narratives were carried out (I and II) (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

**Table 2:** Repeating reasons for the enforcement of the latest WPL

<b>I Think the Latest WPL is Difficult to Enforce</b>	<b>I Think the Latest WPL is not Difficult to Enforce</b>
Lack of resources, transparency, and penalty affect the enforcement of the new law. The new law is hard to enforce in all corners of China due to its massive population and land. Illegal wildlife trade in black markets is always hidden from official's view.	People's awareness of wildlife protection is rising after the pandemic. People will stop eating wildlife because of the realization of the harm. The government will impose stricter enforcement after the pandemic.
People do not acquire an awareness of wildlife protection yet. Every single person has different awareness of law and wildlife protection.	The government will enforce the law completely in each case. People will comply with the law closely in each case.
There must be a corresponding supply due to the huge demand for wildlife products. Substantial profit of illegal wildlife trade makes people risk attempting to commit crimes.	
People still possess the inveterate habit of eating animals even after the pandemic. Wealthy people are eager to boast about their status by consuming wildlife products.	

In Table 2, two types of theoretical narratives are the law is difficult to enforce and the law is not difficult to enforce, which are extracted from the reasons given by the respondents: Shi (the enforcement will meet difficulties) and Fou (the enforcement will not meet difficulties). The keywords in the responses constitute the theoretical constructs, for example, Zhi fa li du (enforcement), Ren ming yi shi (awareness), and Mei you mai mai jiu mei you sha hai (no trades no kills, demand), where these repeating ideas brought up different themes. A review of the data also found that those who think there are difficulties in enforcing the new law tended to give detailed reasons, while those who think there is no difficulty were likely to give only Fou without giving any specific reasons.

Based on the main reasons obtained from raw responses, the participants mentioned a wider variety of reasons about the difficulty in enforcement of the latest WPL than the reasons about no difficulty in

enforcement. In the enforcement part, the participants are concerned about the problem hidden in the transparency and weaknesses of the current enforcement of the WPL. Formerly, wildlife was regarded as a natural resource decades ago, serving the purpose of utilization by humans due to the unique demand for wildlife. Thus, it is not strange that the WPL contains provisions compromising its enforcement per se because the concept of utilizing wildlife has been rooted in their mind. Consequently, in the demand part, the respondents have a pessimistic attitude toward the expected enforcement of the latest WPL. If the demand exists in the market, the supply shall arise from anywhere regardless of the legality, and the hardened illegal trade of wildlife is normally concealed from supervision and public view. In the awareness part, the participants expressed varying thoughts of awareness of wildlife protection among individuals, which could act as a main reason that holds back the understanding of the law and hinder effective enforcement. In the society part, people expressed a similar concern as in the awareness part, claiming that the deep-seated habits of Chinese citizens contradict the purpose of the latest WPL.

On the other hand, those respondents who thought that the enforcement of the latest WPL is not difficult to achieve did not explain it in detail, and instead, most of the answers highlighted the situation of COVID-19 and simple faith in the law and the government. Some of them expressed that the tough lesson from the pandemic will enhance the people's awareness of protecting wildlife, and the government will impose stricter measures against illegal wildlife trade and govern people's behavior.

## **CONCLUSION**

Legislation plays a vital law in protecting wildlife and human health in China. The scheduled WPL is about to compose unprecedented prohibitions on wildlife eating, and this new law could cause a profound impact on society. Citizens' knowledge and readiness toward the law are the indispensable elements the lawmakers should consider. However, regular promotion of knowledge of wildlife and relevant laws should be conducted periodically in university campuses due to the unexpectedly lower level of knowledge about the WPL. In addition, in the readiness part, the participants show lower readiness based on the neutral scale chosen regarding the special medical value and unique nourishment of wildlife. These long-standing beliefs in the specialty of wildlife have become an important part of Chinese tradition, which also contribute to inveterate animal-eating habits among Chinese citizens. The current pandemic could convince a part of people to alter their minds, although a complete transformation in the realization of citizens needs a long time, waiting for the increase of average education level and the formation of a society with rules and laws.

Finally, the results suggest that both knowledge level and readiness among Chinese society toward the new law are at medium levels, giving the

government a promising signal on the projected enforcement. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of space for the government to improve the feasibility of the law and the confidence of citizens in China's legal system.

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