The Effectiveness of Dogs as Companions and as Therapists

Fall Literature Review Thesis Proposal
Abstract

Background: Due to intimate interaction between humans and animals, human–animal bonds formed, leading to the domestication of the dog. While originally used as alarm signals for any potential danger, the relationship between humans and dog expanded to include a field of several other functions of the dog. As a result of the dogs’ relatability, dogs were not only kept as pets, bred for shows, and trained for hunting, but they are also used for the mental wellbeing of humans in the fields of companionship and therapy. Method: PsychInfo will be the main source for articles along with bibliographies from these relevant sources in the area of dog companionship and dog therapy in the fields of dog therapy in hospitals, schools, college campuses, the elderly, and pain management. Results: reporting of any common themes found in the human–dog interactions across all fields, and any other smaller themes. Reporting of any benefits or nonbenefits.

Introduction

• The interaction between humans and dogs has gone back many generations to when our early ancestors and wolves started interacting. As wolves and humans became more and more accustomed to each other’s company, a human–animal bond started to form (Hines, 2003, p. 7).

• Humans and dogs are both members of social groups, in which socialization is an essential part of everyday life. Once the human–animal bond grew stronger, humans domesticated dogs for various uses. Domestication was enabled due to the social compatibility, unlike other species of animals.
• While dogs were domesticated primarily for hunting and protection against other predators, the domestication of dogs has spread and formed other categories: various pedigrees for pet shows, seeing – eye dogs, pets, and mental and physical therapy.

• A number of studies have shown that interaction with dogs in pet ownership and therapy reduces stress (Barker et. al., 2010, p. 80).

• Additionally, interaction with dogs and forming a human – animal bond has shown to have cardiovascular benefits during and before stress (Campo, Uchino, 2013, p. 237).

• Companionship humans receive from dogs has become so embedded in their daily lifestyle that the love extends as far as considering dogs as part of the family (Crawford, Worsham, & Swinehart, 2006, p. 98).

• Since dogs have become so beneficial as stress relievers, the therapeutic aspect of dogs has lead to more healthcare facilities providing animal assisted therapy (AAT) to their patients (Ernst, 2014, p. 1).


**Literature Review**

1) Dog therapy

   a) **College campuses**


   b) **Classrooms**


c) In hospitals, dentists, doctors office


d) The elderly


e) Physical Pain management


2) Companionship


3) **Dog – human interaction in other countries**


**Summary and Discussion**

A summary of all the key findings of each section in the literature review will be stated. If any common themes are found, they will be discussed in this section. Additionally, if any implications for any of the findings are noticable they will be analyzed and explained. In contrast, if any future research posibilities are eminent they will be discussed in this section. The same treatment will be given to any current and ongoing research that may lead in a positive direction.