‘Calm or Chaos’: Assessing the Human-Animal bond and its relationship in our lives

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to assess the human-animal bond and investigate the benefits animals have on our lives. The sample consisted of 135 pet owners, of which 45 were males and 90 were females. Quantitative analysis was used as the research method for this study. The findings indicated that dogs were the most popular choice of pet. Both males and females considered their pets to be members of their family with a higher percentage of females stated that their pets contribute to their happiness.

Introduction

The human animal bond is a dynamic relationship between people and animals in that each influences the psychological and physiological state of the other. Human animal interaction has profound physiological benefits. The human animal bond is defined by the American Veterinary Medical Association as “a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and other animals that is influenced by behaviours that are essential to the health and well-being of both. This includes, but is not limited to, emotional, psychological and psychical interactions of people, other animals and the environment”.

Method

For the purpose of this thesis two questionnaires were selected from Assessing the Human-Animal Bond, A Compendium of Actual Measures. The first questionnaire that was selected was by Prof Judith Siegel(1990), Human/Pet Relationships Measure, The second questionnaire that was selected was by Cindy Wilson, Ellen Netting and John New (1987), Pet Attitude Inventory. 135 individuals voluntarily participated in this research, all of which were pet owners. The population was selected from HSE employees and pet owners who attended the local veterinary hospital with their animals. 45 (33.3%) males and 90 (66.7%) females took part in the research. The study was a quantitative research design that used questionnaires to collect the data.

Results

135 participants answered the questionnaires of which 45 (25%) were male and 90 (75%) were female; the mean age for men was 39 years old and for females 35.6 years old. A higher percentage of males 31.3% than females 14.4% have cats. And more females 65.6% than males 42.2% have dogs. women 85.6% considered their pets to be members of their family compared to 71.1% of men. 78.9% of females compared to 51.1% of males stated their pets make them feel better when they are feeling unhappy/sad. 84.4% of females stated that their pets contribute to their happiness compared to 64.4% of males. A higher percentage of women 64.4% stated that their pets were extremely important to them compared to men 35.6%. A higher percentage of women 66.7% stated they were ‘very attached’ to their pets compared to 42.2% of men. A higher percentage of males 13.3% of males stated that they wanted a pet for protection.

Discussion

The literature review highlighted the many benefits animals have on our lives. For thousands of years they have provided comfort, support, companionship and unconditional love to humans. Furthermore, we have become too heavily rely on them as much as they rely on us. Pets provide meaningful social support for people, improving their lives. Moreover, people facing serious health challenges fare better with pets, also research suggests that pet owners are happier and healthier than non-owners. Pets play a significant supportive role, reducing depression and loneliness and providing companionship and a need for responsibility. For a number of individuals pet ownership is essential for them to live a healthy and productive life, animal assisted therapy has benefited many groups of people.

References