

Example of research paper on frequent interaction with pets improves mood and lea...

[Experience](#), [Happiness](#)



Frequent Interaction with Pets Improves Mood and Leads To Better Health

Studies of pet ownerships have found out that owning a pet leads to reduced levels of depression and increased levels of psychological being (Baker and Woen, 2008). However, according to Robb (1983) there are studies that seem to argue that pets have no benefit to humans. Due to this controversy the need to conduct further research on this issue arises. The research proposed hereby seeks to bring to reconcile the findings of these conflicting findings. The aims of this study are to find out the correlation between pet ownership and health, the correlation between happiness and general health, and the correlation between being around pets and happiness. The research questions for this study will be what is the relationship between pet ownership and owner's health, is there a relationship between happiness and general health, and does pet companionship have a beneficial effect on the happiness levels of the owner? One of the greatest limitations of this study is that the participants will be identified individually rather than being picked randomly

It is estimated that two-thirds of American households own at least one pet. Pets enjoy from our warmth and care, but these pets also take good care of us. A growing body of research seems to suggest that pet ownership improves the mood of the owner which translates to positive health outcomes. Many studies have examined the contribution of pets to human psychological well-being (Serpell 1991; Friedman et al, 1980). Other studies have focused on the effect of pet companionship on stressful life events such

as grief, illness and homelessness (Baker and Woen, 2008). These studies have concluded that pet ownership reduces pain, improves health, lowers blood pressure and reduces anxiety. Other studies have examined the new aspect of human-animal relationship, that of the compatibility between pets and owners (Serpell, 1991). This study will re-examine the relationship between pet ownership and owner's health and happiness.

Various studies indicate that pets actually have health benefits to their owners. Barker and Woen (2008) conducted a review of research conducted before 1980, on the benefits of human-companion interaction. The studies in the review focused on the benefits of owning a pet or interacting with companion animals that are not owned by the subject. Barker and Woen (2008) reviewed controlled studies that concluded that indeed, there are health benefits of interacting with companion animals. The benefits of pet ownership on aspects of human health and behavior were examined well in a study conducted by Serpell (1991). The study involved 71 participants. A control of 26 subjects without pets was used to compare the outcomes of the study. The study found that the dog owners exhibited statistically significant changes in health and behavior. The control groups did not exhibit changes and as such the study established that indeed pet acquisition has positive effects on human health and behavior. However, these findings conflict with findings of a similar study conducted by Friedman, Katcher, Lynch, and Thomas (1980) which found the beneficial effect of pet ownership on human health is inconclusive. Friedman and his teams' findings were supported by other studies that have concluded that there is no relationship between pet

ownership and health (Parslow & Jorm, 2003).

None of the studies examined the relationship between pet ownership and general mood. However, there is general feeling that pets provide their owners with physical contact and comfort leading to increased levels of happiness. Pets also serve as external attention focus and that's why they are used in nursing homes to alleviate suffering. Indeed, Serpell (1991) suggests that usage of pets in nursing homes has been associated with a greater than 50% reduction in health care costs. It could also be argued that since pets help in reducing depression, in retrospect, pet ownership leads to happiness and alleviation of bad mood. From a similar point, since it has been suggested that pet owners fare better than those without the unconditional love bond from pets in terms of feeling good and secure, again it could be argued that pet ownership is associated with higher levels of positive mood and consequently, better health outcomes. However, there is need to conduct a systemic research to confirm these general feelings and that's why this research is important.

Scientists have also investigated how companion animals affect happiness of the owners. In such one study involving a thousand participants, it was found out that animal companionship leads to greater happiness for owners (Serpell, 1991). But how does happiness contribute to better health outcomes? A review of more than 160 studies found out that happy people tend to live longer and experience better health than their unhappy peers (Diener & Chan, 2011). This could be argued to mean that because pet owners have increased levels of happiness, they tend to live longer than their peers who do not have pets. This study will be evaluating if indeed pet

companionship improves the quality of life of the owner, thereby bringing in health benefits.

Method

Participants

All demographics of participants sampled were from Radford University under grads ranging in ages from 15-50, race and gender. The participants were currently enrolled in a psychology course at the university and volunteered to participate via the SONA system which is a research management software program, but most are introduction to psychology students. Students received one credit of extra credit for participating in certain classes. In total, 150 participants were interviewed.

Materials

The surveys were created by the author and consisted of questions about interaction with pets, happiness and health. Self administered Questionnaires (Appendices A, B, and C) were used to collect data from the participants. Many of the questions were open ended where participants fill in the blank.

Procedure

This study employs qualitative and quantitative methods to avoid sampling error and bias. The survey was completed online, using the Radford University SONA system. Before entering the survey, students were briefed about the survey and were assured that with an introductory text to assure them that their participation was voluntary, that they could leave at any time

and the results were confidential. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning each individual's data an identification number. Students were then given time to complete the survey. After the students completed the survey, they were given the ending speech, which thanked them for their participation; if they had any questions and made sure they had contact information in case they needed to communicate with the researcher. The survey took about 10-15 minutes to complete on average. The participants were from Radford University and self administered questionnaire was used. The study is experimental where there is a control group made up of those who have no pets and the study group, made up of pet owners. The statistics between the two are compared for the conclusion.

References

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Appendix A

Appendix 1: PET

QUESTIONNAIRE

General information

Participant's name:

Participant's Age:

Participant's sex:

Do you have a pet? _____

What type of a pet do you have? _____

For how long have you been with the pet? _____

Why do you own the pet? _____

Appendix B: HAPPINESS

QUESTIONNAIRE

General information

Participant's name:

Participant's Age:

Participant's sex:

Do you feel happy when you are accompanied by your pet?

Are you satisfied with life and why?

Does having a pet contribute to your overall wellbeing?

Do you think having a pet contributes to high positive and low negative affect? _____

Do you think those who do not have pets feel happier without them?

In what way has having a pet positively or negatively affected your general mood including levels of happiness?

How would you feel if your pet passed away?

How would you react if someone stole your pet?

Would recommend people suffering from loneliness and depressed people to buy a pet? _____

Appendix C: HEALTH

QUESTIONNAIRE

General information

Participant's name:

Participant's Age:

Participant's sex:

Do you walk around with your pet?

How has walking around with you pet increased your levels of physical well-being and overall health?

Do you feel happy that you have a pet?

Do you think you would be happier if you didn't have the pet?

What aspects of your life do you think have improved after buying the pet?

Do you think being happy as a result of owning a pet in any way affects your general health?
