

Canine-Animal Assisted Therapy Specific Reduce The Prevalence of Anxiety
and Depression for Adult Autism Spectrum Disorder?

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Introduction

As of 2019, research purposed further study is recommended regarding the efficacy of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) in reduction in stress-related outcomes in adults with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Current research has identified mental health issues related to stress are prevalent in adult population diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Therefore, the ASD adult population also has a high percentage experiencing depression and or anxiety diagnoses resulting from stress. According to one researcher “stress is strongly associated with depression and anxiety” (Vreeburg et al. 2010 p. 342). This paper will discuss the clinically significant effects of Animal Assistance Therapy (AAT) specific to canines to reduce stress related issues and increase efficacy of social awareness along with communication skills in adult population with a diagnosis of ASD.

The research question regarding this article is as stated, “To the best of our knowledge, this is the first randomized controlled trial that demonstrated benefits of an intervention involving therapy dogs in adults with ASD. Because of its clinically relevant effects and remarkable adherence. AAT can be regarded as a promising therapy for stress-related outcomes in this population. More research is needed on the effects of AAT in the ASD population and with larger sample sizes”. (Wijker, Leontjevas, Spek, & Eender-Slegers, 2020, p. 2162).

The purpose of this research proposal is to establish the effects of canine assisted therapy regarding adults with stress-related depression and anxiety in autism spectrum disorder

population. This research proposal paper intends to address the efficacy outcomes of canine AAT regarding reduction of stress among the adult autistic population.

This research question is important regarding treatment outcomes with adult client(s) diagnosed with ASD. “Premature morality and poor health outcomes” (Slavich 2016) are additional concerns regarding health long term. Interventions currently that focus on stress-related treatments for adult ASD have been limited.

The research design that would best assist proposal question is Descriptive field design due to the natural nature of AAT interactions between human and animal experience. Data that will be produced is qualitative, i.e., researcher observation and self-report. The strategy of inquiry that best fits with this research is qualitative in nature. Researchers’ hypothesis that Canine AAT will reduce stress and depression in adults with ASD. “It has been hypothesized that in therapeutic settings, animals act as social catalysts, causing patients to become more willing to communicate with their social environment which in turn facilitates improvements in social interaction and communication” (Gabriels et al. 2015). This research will contribute to the field of counseling by recognizing AAT is a viable intervention that counselors can add to treatment plans for client(s) with ASD with or without stress-related depression and or anxiety. To enhance the trustworthiness of the data more research is required with a larger sample size.

Mathew 8:8, “Lord I am not worthy for you to enter under my roof but only say the word and my soul shall be healed”. I say this every Sunday at Mass together with the congregation in preparation to receive Holy Eucharist. How this prayer relates to this paper is that all Gods creation which includes animals among us on their own can not heal us. God created animals for us to have as companions that give us comfort and unconditional love. This prayer reminds me that the Lord God can heal if he is willing. He has but to say a word and it will be so. With

partnering with animals there is a bond that can not be explained and the healing begins but, God....

Reference

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