

**EFFECTS OF DOG THERAPY ON THE SOCIALIZATION SKILLS
OF A CHILD WITH AUTISM**

An Undergraduate Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i.
CHAPTER I	1
Introduction	1 - 3
Theoretical/Conceptual Framework	3 - 4
Scope and Limitations	4 - 5
Statement of the Problem	5
Significance of the Study	6
Definition of Terms	7 - 9
CHAPTER II	10
Review of Related Literature	
1. What is Dog Therapy?	10 - 12
1.1 Definition/ other name	

1.2 History: when, where, and how it started?	
1.3 Characteristics Dogs used in therapy	13
2. Socialization and Human Interaction	13 - 14
2.1 Companion Animals/ Pets	14 - 16
3. Beneficial Effects of Dog Therapy with Autism	16 - 17
4. Dog Therapy in the Philippines	17 - 18
5. Synthesis	19
CHAPTER III	
Methodology	
Research Design	19 - 20
Research Subject	20 - 21
Research Instrument	21
Research Procedure	22 - 23
CHAPTER IV	24
Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data	24 - 30
Chapter V	31
Summary	31 - 32
Findings	32 - 33
Conclusion	33 - 34

Recommendation	34 - 35
Bibliography	36 - 38
Appendix A	39
Appendix B	40 - 42
Appendix C	43 - 45



ABSTRACT

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Statement of the Problem:

This study sought to determine the effects of dog therapy on a child with autism as part of his improvement in relation to his social interaction. In particular, the question below was investigated:

1. What are the socialization scores of the subject before the onset of Dog therapy (baseline observation) and during the Dog therapy intervention (treatment condition) in terms of the following:

a. eye contact b. physical contact c. verbal communication

Scope and Limitations:

This study focused on the effect of dog therapy as an intervention in behavior modification of a child with autism, particularly in the child's socialization skills such as ability to maintain eye contact for a long period of time, to increase physical contact, and to develop verbal communication.

Since the researchers used only one subject in this experimental study, the conclusions of dog therapy on the socialization skills of a child with autism was limited only to the subject and will not represent the general population of children with autism.

Methodology:

In order to determine the effect of dog therapy in the socialization skills of a child, the researchers used a Small N Multiple baseline experiment using AB design which refers to the order of conditions of the experiment. A (the baseline condition: socialization skills of a child with autism) comes first followed by B (the Dog therapy).

The A-B design is the simplest experimental design in which the target behavior is clearly stated and both A & B phases are carried to measure. A refers to that baseline phase in the

socialization skills of the child with autism which will be the baseline phase during the occurrence of the target behavior is monitored; B phase will be the dog therapy and it is the treatment variable (Mayer & Hansen, 2006). The child with autism is the subject which was observed in the study. The treatment used is Dog Therapy.

Conclusions:

1. The researchers conclude that dog therapy improves the socialization scores of the child in terms of eye contact. The child can maintain eye contact for a longer period of time. He lessens the behavior of avoiding or ignoring people's gaze. He becomes less distractive and he initiate eye contact. This only shows that dog therapy has improved Peter's eye contact.
2. The researchers conclude that dog therapy improves the socialization scores of the child in terms of physical contact. The child touches the dog most of the time and he initiates play with the dog by giving some commands. He also hugs the dog once in a while. This only shows that Peter's physical contact has improved with the intervention of dog therapy.
3. The researchers conclude that dog therapy improves the socialization scores of the child in terms of verbal communication. The child can communicate to his teacher and to the researchers by expressing himself. He shows improvement on his

communication by echo talking and info talking to him which show that there is an improvement with Peter's verbal communication in terms of giving of commands to the dog.

4. The researchers conclude that dog therapy improves both the physical and mental well – being of the child with autism by spending time with the dog.
5. The researchers also conclude that dog therapy can make the child more attentive, cooperative and more focused during the intervention.

Recommendations:

1. To parents, they should understand the situation of their child by giving and expressing their care, support and love. They need to appreciate the importance of time that behavior modification among special children will take a great amount of time. Allowing their children with autism to undergo dog therapy can help their children develop their socialization skills. A precise description of therapy dog behavior when at work is also important so that the parents' expectations are reasonable.
2. Special education schools interested with dog therapy intervention need to make sure that they choose an experienced dog trainer or handler who can help evaluate a

dog's potential as a therapy dog. Consistent dog therapy sessions, continued exposure to new situations, and adequate time are all factors that will influence the success of dog therapy for special children.

3. Dog handlers and therapists need to be properly educated to recognize signs of stress or distress in their dogs in order to minimize the risk between the dog and the special child and to have a successful partnership with therapy dogs.
4. The future researchers should gain more ideas to have deeper understanding and thorough research about dog therapy that would help them in making more research about this study and a child with autism. That future researcher should have more subjects and longer experimental period that could lead them to more significant results.
5. To families especially with those having children with disabilities, the researchers recommend that they own a dog as their pet at home for dogs provide non – judgemental company and unwavering loyalty.