

Abstract

The present study was an empirical investigation of the effect of pet interaction on stress reduction and positive mood enhancement among pet-owners and non-owners. Sample of pet-owners ($n = 90$) and non-owners ($n = 90$) was taken from University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore. Both, male and female participants were included. On the basis of identified criteria, participants were divided among four experimental groups (dog interaction – pet owner; cat interaction – pet-owner; dog interaction – non-owner; and cat interaction – non-owner) and control group (reading magazines). The instruments used were Short Stress State Questionnaire (Helton, 2004), Brief Mood Introspection Scale (Mayer & Gaschke, 1988) and Pet Interaction Observation Checklist. Data was statistically analyzed by Pearson Product Moment Correlation, one way Analysis of Variance and Independent Sample t-test. A significant negative relationship of stress was found with pleasant mood. In addition, reduction in stress and increase in positive mood was found for both pet-owners and non-owners for the pet interaction groups as compared to control groups. However, no significant differences were found between the dog interaction group and cat interaction group for both, pet owners and non-owners. Moreover, pet-owners had lower scores on stress and higher scores on mood after pet interaction as compared to non-owners. Nonsignificant differences were found between men and women for stress and mood among pet-owners and non-owners. Lastly, it was shown that individuals who interacted with pets for more than five minutes had lower scores on worry and higher scores on pleasant mood as compared to those who interacted for five minutes or less. The findings have implication for Animal Assisted Therapy for psychological well-being.