

## Knowledge Regarding Pet Therapy for Reducing Selected Psychological Problems among Geriatric Clients

**Dayananda Bittenahalli Omkarappa**

*Associate Professor, HOD, Department of Psychiatric Nursing, Kempegowda College of Nursing, Bangalore, India*

*E-mail: bodayananda@gmail.com*

### Abstract

**Background and objectives:** The older age group will be greater risk for depression, anxiety disorders and substance abuse etc... Health professionals will be challenged to design strategies that address the higher prevalence of psychological problems with in this aging population. Pet therapy is becoming popular for treating psychological problems. Older people are more likely to maintain good mental health, if appropriate health education services are provided. Therefore the investigator planned to conduct the study to assess the knowledge regarding pet therapy for reducing selected psychological problems among geriatric clients with a view to develop an information guide sheet.

**Methods:** A descriptive survey design with purposive sampling was used to collect the data from 100 geriatric clients who are residing at Bangalore. Data was collected using a structured interview schedule.

**Statistical analysis used:** Data were analyzed using Statistical package for the social Sciences software package (Version 16).

**Results:** The overall mean knowledge score regarding pet therapy was 50.94% with the SD 4.53 and 10% of respondents had adequate knowledge, 46% had moderate knowledge and 44% had inadequate knowledge regarding pet therapy.

**Conclusion:** The overall finding showed that the geriatric clients in general do not possess adequate knowledge regarding pet therapy for reducing psychological problems.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Depression, Pet therapy and Old age

### INTRODUCTION

Old may be gold, but going by the condition of the elderly in our country, it is hard to say that old age is golden age. In India the elderly with 7.7 per cent of total population face a number of psychological problems such as depression, dementia, delirium, sleep disorders, anxiety disorders, alcohol abuse and suicide[1]. Several psychosocial predisposing factors affects the older people to develop mental disorders. Some of the risk factors such as loss of social roles, loss of autonomy, the deaths of friends & relatives, declining health, increased isolation, financial constraints, decreased cognitive functioning and confinement to bed because of physical illness can affect the

elders physical and mental health[2]. Successful psychological aging is reflected in the older person's ability to adapt to physical, social and emotional losses and to achieve contentment, serenity, and life satisfactions [3]. Health education services are integral aspects to helping older adults to lead high quality lives throughout their expanded life span [4].

The man animal bond has existed since time immemorial and has always been a beautiful one. Modern human would be genetically predisposed to keep and derive comfort from animals. Very large populations of them have the habit to keep one or more companion animals. The lonely isolated older person gains a great

deal from having a living, moving animal on the lap, or sliding over his feet; petting the soft fur of a puppy; hugging and kissing a cute, loveable pet [5]. Several studies reported that pets can aid relaxation, lowers ones blood pressure, promote healing and prolong life. Pets can help a person to cope with stressful events, prevent loneliness, decrease depression, improve activities of daily living and increase social interaction [6]. The studies have shown that people with pets have fewer minor health problems, require fewer visits to the doctor and less medication and have fewer risk factors for heart disease, such as high blood pressure or cholesterol level [7].

Psychological problem accounts for major chronic problem among geriatric people. Depression is particularly prevalent ranging from 30-40% of cases, Anxiety disorder accounts for 10-20% cases, alcohol abuse 5% to 10% cases, and suicide 2 to 5% cases and others [8]. A study was conducted on knowledge and subjective experience regarding psychological problems among geriatric client shows that more than half (53.8%) agreed that they felt more stressed due to ageing and 51.6% felt that ageing has had a negative effect on their emotional state [9].

Stasi MF et.al., (2004) conducted a study to evaluate the effect of pet therapy on institutionalized elderly patients in long term care shows that, patients with animal interaction had reduced depressive symptoms and a significant decrease in blood pressure values[10]. Pets provide unconditional non-judgmental love and affection, which can be the perfect antidote for a depressed mood or a stressful situation. The role of animals in human healing process still requires more research [11] hence the investigator felt that there is a need to assess the knowledge regarding

pet therapy and planned to provide information guide sheet regarding pet therapy to reduce psychological problems among geriatric clients.

### **THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To assess the knowledge regarding pet therapy for reducing selected psychological problems among geriatric clients.
2. To find out the association between levels of knowledge regarding pet therapy for reducing selected psychological problems with selected demographic variables.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A cross sectional descriptive Survey research design was adopted for the present study. The purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data from 100 geriatric clients who are residing at Bangalore urban from January to April 2010. Data was collected using a structured interview schedule. Structured interview schedule consists of 36 questions related to knowledge on pet therapy for reducing selected psychological problems. The items included on Psychological problems of old age, history and meaning of pet therapy, Types of pets involved in pet therapy, beneficiaries of pet therapy, Benefits and disadvantages of pet therapy and boon for elderly. Each question in the structured interview schedule had four options, one being the right answer and carried one mark. The total score allotted for questions was 36. A total score of 28 & above are classified as adequate knowledge, score of 18 to 27 are classified as moderate knowledge and below 18 are classified as inadequate knowledge.

### **Statistical analysis**

Data were analyzed using Statistical package for the social Sciences software package (Version 16), and results were presented in table form.

**RESULTS**

In the present study, 42% of respondents were in the age group of 60-65 years, 26% were in the age group of 66-70 years, 58% were male and 42% were female. Among the study participants 56% were Hindus, 24% were Muslims, Out of 100 geriatrics 72% were married, and 28% were widow/er. 38% are retired, 22% are house wife, With regard to income status 32% had nil income and 22% of them had income less than Rs 5000 per month. Regarding family status 62% were belongs to joint families, and 38% of them belong to nuclear family. Related to educational status 22% had no formal education, and 20% of them had high school. With regard to source of information 52% were got the information through news paper and 50% of them are not having pets at home.

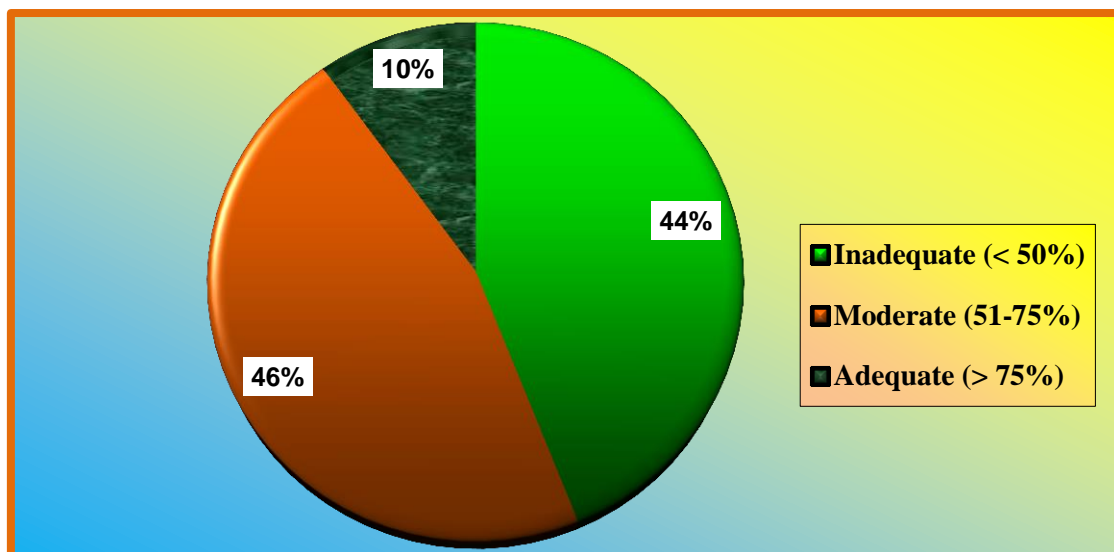
The highest mean knowledge of respondents found in the aspect of types of pets involved in pet therapy (78%)

followed by Psychological Problems of old age (54.40%), History and meaning of pet therapy (47.20%), Boon for elderly (47.11%), Benefits and disadvantages of pet therapy (44.86%) and the least mean knowledge score (39.60%) found in the aspect of beneficiaries of pet therapy. The overall mean knowledge score of respondents were found to be 50.94% with the SD 4.53 (Table1). Further the results revealed that only 10% of respondents had adequate knowledge, 46% had moderate knowledge and 44% had inadequate knowledge (figure 1). There was a significant association exists between age, education status and availability of pets with knowledge of respondents at the level  $p < 0.05$ . The other demographic variables such as gender, religion, marital status, occupation, income and type of family with knowledge level of respondents had no significant association between ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table: 1.** overall Mean Knowledge of Respondents regarding Pet therapy for reducing psychological problems

**n=100**

No.	Knowledge Aspects	State-ments	Max. Score	Range Score	Knowledge Score		
					Mean	Mean (%)	SD
I	Psychological Problems of old age	5	5	1-4	2.72	54.40	0.948
II	History and meaning of pet therapy	5	5	1-4	2.36	47.20	0.942
III	Types of pets involved in pet therapy	5	5	3-5	3.90	78.00	0.789
IV	Beneficiaries of pet therapy	5	5	0-4	1.98	39.60	1.02
V	Benefits and disadvantages of pet therapy	7	7	0-6	3.14	44.86	1.498
VI	Boon for elderly	9	9	1-8	4.24	47.11	1.779
	Combined	36	36	10-29	18.34	50.94	4.53



*Fig: 1. Classification of Respondents by level of Knowledge regarding Pet therapy for reducing psychological problems*

## DISCUSSION

The present study shows that most of geriatric clients had inadequate knowledge regarding pet therapy for reducing selected psychological problems. The study is supported by Knight S, Edwards V (2008) who conducted a study to assess the knowledge of aging populations on physical, psychological, and social benefits associated with human-dog interactions. The mean knowledge score was below 49% and suggested that the benefits of dog ownership should be promoted among the elderly and acknowledged by relevant agencies [12]. Kanamori M, Suzuki M, Tanaka M (2005) conducted a study on learning needs regarding improvement of quality of life by using a pet shows that knowledge deficit [13]. The findings of this study are at par with the findings of Zasloff RL, Kidd AH. (2008) who assessed the knowledge of 50 single women found that 60 % of the women had knowledge deficits regarding benefits of pet ownership [14].

The present study results showed that majority (50%) of the respondents were not having pets at home, 24% of the respondents having dog at home, 16% of

the respondents having both dog and cat at home and 10% of the respondents having only cat. The findings are consistent with findings of Downes M, Canty MJ, More SJ (2009) conducted a study to describe the demography of the pet dog and cat populations on the island of Ireland. The results showed that, 35.6% of households in Ireland have one or more pet dogs and 10.4% of households have one or more pet cats [15]. The findings are also consistent with findings of Schäfer T, Merkl J, Klemm E, Wichmann HE, Ring J (2008) who tested the association of allergies in humans and their pets. The v study finding inferred that, pets were kept in 48.0% of the households (cats 26.1%, dogs 20.1%, and rodents 9.7%)[16].

## CONCLUSION

The study throws significant light on the knowledge of the geriatric clients regarding pet therapy for reducing psychological problems and deliberates the importance of awareness programme regarding pet therapy. The study is also a helpful to develop an information guide sheet on benefits of pet therapy for reducing psychological problems among elderly population.

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