

Understanding the impact of dog ownership on autistic adults: implications for mental health and suicide prevention

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Table S1. Activities described to impact on life satisfaction

Well-being outcome	Most frequent subthemes (≥5% mentions) and the most common activity within that subtheme
Increase in life satisfaction (21 mentions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">°Exercise with the dog (4; 19.0%)°Dog shows good behaviour, training skills (3; 14.3%)°Training the dog, doing agility, scent work (3; 14.3%)°Tactile interactions initiated by the owner or unclear (3; 14.3%)°Having/raising the dog (2; 9.5%)°Close dog-owner interactions (2; 9.5%)°Tactile interactions initiated by the dog (2; 9.5%)
Decrease in life satisfaction (0 mentions)	No activity has been reported to decrease life satisfaction

Table S2. Characteristics of the 36 participants and their dogs

Category	n	%	Category	n	%
Sex			Anxiety (GAD-7)		
<i>Female</i>	18	50.0%	<i>No symptoms</i>	1	2.8%
<i>Male</i>	18	50.0%	<i>Minimal</i>	2	5.6%
Age (in years)			<i>Mild</i>	15	41.7%
18-24	5	13.9%	<i>Moderate</i>	7	19.4%
25-34	14	38.9%	<i>Severe</i>	11	30.6%
35-44	7	19.4%	Number of dogs owned		
45-54	6	16.7%	1	23	63.9%
55-54	3	8.3%	2	8	22.2%
65-74	1	2.8%	3 or more	5	13.9%
Location in the UK			Sex of the dog*		
<i>England</i>			<i>Female</i>	20	55.6%
<i>East Midlands</i>	4	11.1%	<i>Male</i>	23	63.9%
<i>East of England</i>	2	5.6%	Age of the dog*		
<i>Greater London</i>	5	13.9%	<i>Below 12 months</i>	3	8.3%
<i>North East England</i>	1	2.8%	1-3 years	16	44.4%
<i>North West England</i>	5	13.9%	4-6 years	12	33.3%
<i>South East England</i>	5	13.9%	7-9 years	13	36.1%
<i>South West England</i>	6	16.7%	10 or more years	5	13.9%
<i>West Midlands</i>	2	5.6%	Length of dog ownership*		
<i>Scotland</i>	3	8.3%	<i>Below 12 months</i>	4	11.1%
<i>Wales</i>	3	8.3%	1-3 years	19	52.8%
Expertise in dog-related field			4-6 years	14	38.9%
<i>Yes, e.g., training, behaviour</i>	6	16.7%	7-9 years	7	19.4%
<i>No</i>	30	83.3%	10 or more years	4	11.1%
Depression (PHQ-9):			Reason for acquiring dog*		
<i>No symptoms</i>	0	0.0%	<i>Autism service dog</i>	6	16.7%
<i>Minimal</i>	7	19.4%	<i>Other: pet, company, sport</i>	34	94.4%
<i>Mild</i>	12	33.3%	Size of the dog*		
<i>Moderate</i>	9	25.0%	<i>Small</i>	8	22.2%
<i>Moderately severe</i>	5	13.9%	<i>Medium</i>	24	66.7%
<i>Severe</i>	3	8.3%	<i>Large</i>	9	25.0%

* % exceeds 100% in these categories as the 'n' is the number of participants, not dogs.

Interview guide/script

Welcome (5 min)

- Hello _____. Thank you for joining this interview!
- My name is Ana Maria Barcelos, I am a PhD student at the University of Lincoln.
- As you saw on the information sheet, we are investigating how dog ownership impacts on the well-being of autistic dog owners.
- Today we will talk about the activities you and your dog do and how they influence your mental health.
- The meeting will be audio recorded, but all the information you share here will be anonymised so you don't need to worry about being honest with us.
- Your Amazon voucher will be sent to you via email after this session.
- Feel free to use the toilet during our conversation or ask for a break at any point. Our interview should take around 30 minutes.
- You are unique and your opinion is very important to the research.
- There is no right or wrong, feel free to share your experiences as a dog owner.
- The consent form is already signed. Do you have any question before we start?
- Start audio recording.

Explanation about what you mean by direct and indirect dog-related activities - PPT slides (2 min)

Any questions?

Explanation about the four aspects of hedonic well-being and life satisfaction - PPT slides (3 min)

Any questions?

Exercise 1 (10 min):

Now, I would like you to think about **the four most important dog-related activities to these aspects of well-being (your feelings and your life satisfaction)**. You can write the activities and their well-being outcomes on a piece of paper to help you organise your ideas

*Remind them that they can talk about both direct and indirect activities, and about positive and negative activities, there are no limitations.

*Ask additional questions to clarify the activity/well-being outcome described by the participant

Explanation about the six elements of eudaimonic well-being - PPT slides (3min)

Any questions?

Exercise 2 (10 min):

Now, we will do something similar to the first exercise, but now I would like you to think about these new elements of well-being. Can you think about **the four most important dog-related activities associated with one or more elements**? You can write the activities and well-being outcomes on a piece of paper if that helps.

*Remind them that they can talk about both direct and indirect activities, and about positive and negative activities, there are no limitations.

*Ask additional questions to clarify the activity/well-being outcome described by the participant

Thank you and further information (2 min)

- It was a pleasure to meet you.
- Thank you again for joining this study.
- We had a very nice discussion about dog-related activities and well-being.
- I am very happy with the information you provided, I am sure it will be very useful to our research.
- I will send you the Amazon voucher via email in a few minutes.
- Do you have any question before we finish the call?
- Bye. Have a lovely day.