

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify differences in stress levels based on the perspective of people living in the United States regarding human-animal bonds, aiming to investigate gaps in human-animal bond implementation in the social work profession. Human-animal bonds are formed between animals and humans through natural or ongoing interactions. The researchers hypothesized implementation of human-animal bond into the social work field as a strength-based tool could aid clients therapeutically as a supplemental component towards an established treatment plan. Relying on memory and self-report, the researchers found statistically significant differences in stress levels correlated to human-animal bonds and stress levels. Participants who had companion pets experienced lower stress levels after bonding with their companion pets, and reported an increase of stress levels if they did not have companion pets. This research identifies key areas on the implementation of human-animal bond interventions lacking in social work practice. Universities and institutions could be interested in the data collected from the research for the consideration of applying the subject of human-animal bond as an interdisciplinary study in social work programs. Such application could include elective courses in the universities, to better prepare students in applying systematic approaches into the field.

PURPOSE

- To observe the relationship between Human-Animal-Bonds (HAB) and stress levels for people who have companion pets.
- The goal is to apply animal assisted therapy into social work practice, advance rights for emotional support animals, and to advocate for animal well-being, with the intent of integrating HAB into social work profession and studies.

METHODS

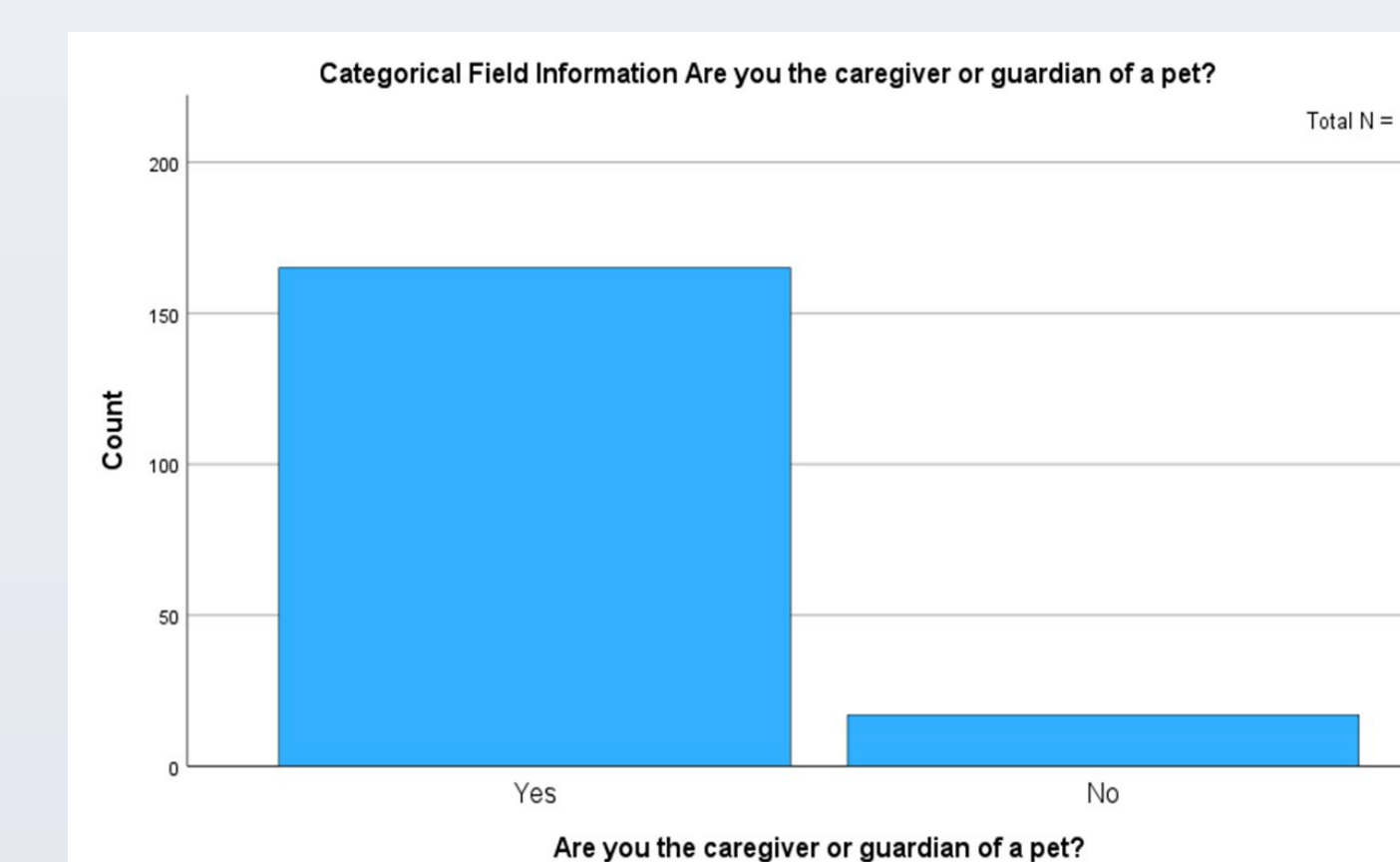
- Online survey: 20 questions on stress levels= Likert scale format: very low, low, average, high or very high, which will be expressed as quantitative data of 1-5 levels.
- Participants recruited using convenience and snowball sampling. shared online/email/social media platform/text message/flyer handouts- QR code for quick scanning
- Survey Monkey data was imported to SPSS=A Mann-Whitney U test was performed

Participants

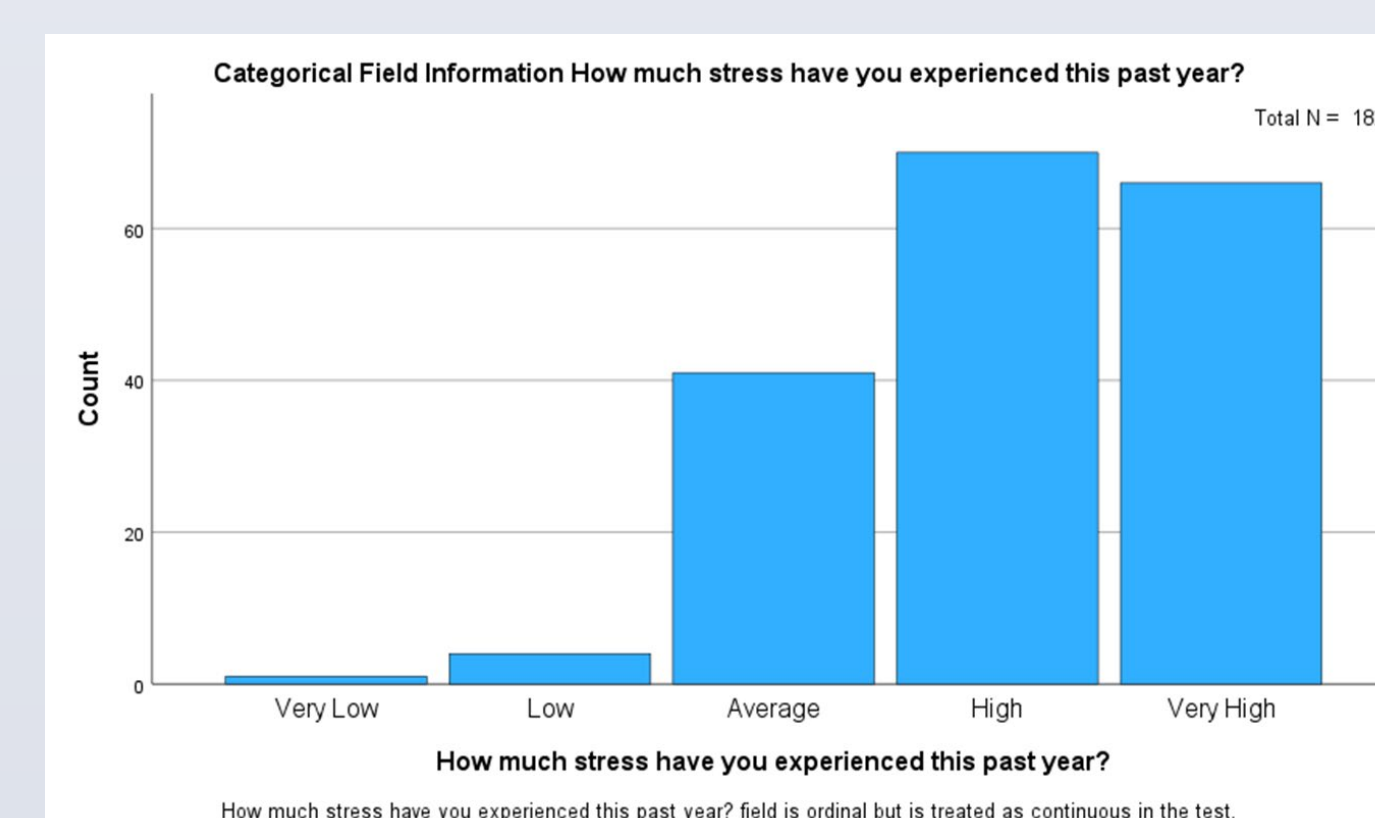
- Adults 18 and over who currently reside in the United States.
- Self Report: relied on memory and perspective

182 participants

166 care givers of companion pets
17 do not have companion pets



RESULTS



Hypothesis Test Summary			
Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. ^{a,b}	Decision
1 The distribution of How much stress have you experienced this past year? is the same across categories of Are you the caregiver or guardian of a pet?.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.235	Retain the null hypothesis.

a. The significance level is .050.
b. Asymptotic significance is displayed.

The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the stress levels of people who had companion pets and those who didn't

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very Low	2	1.2	1.2	1.2
Low	6	3.6	3.7	4.9
Average	53	31.9	32.3	37.2
High	75	45.2	45.7	82.9
Very High	28	16.9	17.1	100.0
Total	164	98.8	100.0	
Missing System	2	1.2		
Total	166	100.0		

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very Low	37	22.3	22.3	22.3
Low	70	42.2	42.2	64.5
Average	49	29.5	29.5	94.0
High	8	4.8	4.8	98.8
Very High	2	1.2	1.2	100.0
Total	166	100.0	100.0	

Significant percentage of people who did have companion pets reported a perceived lower stress level after they bonded with their companion pets.

71% of people pets felt they would have a higher stress level if they did not have their companion pets.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Average	12	7.2	7.2	7.2
High	36	21.7	21.7	28.9
Very High	118	71.1	71.1	100.0
Total	166	100.0	100.0	

DISCUSSION

- HAB is not for everyone, but for those who had companion pets, social workers could integrate it as strengths base therapeutic practice
- Half of the participants who has companion pets reported that they receive very high positive feelings after the bonded with their companion pets.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Very Low	1	.6	.6	.6
Low	1	.6	.6	1.2
Average	17	10.2	10.3	11.5
High	63	38.0	38.2	49.7
Very High	83	50.0	50.3	100.0
Total	165	99.4	100.0	
Missing System	1	.6		
Total	166	100.0		

LIMITATIONS

- Surveys availability-without internet access: homeless, low SES, language barriers.
- Biased/Skewed sample.
- Time restrictions
- Researchers did not find established questionnaire, therefore created own

FURTHER STUDIES

- Investigate the amount of non-official emotional support animals, and lack of support for this classification.
- HAB is not for everyone, but for those who had companion pets, social workers could integrate it as strengths base therapeutic practice
- Emerging HAB integration into interdisciplinary systems could include social workers in veterinary hospitals, critical care systems, counseling services and schools.

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