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Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Ms Unnati G Hunjan (Registration Number: 1850095), PhD scholar at the School of Social Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore will defend her PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at 10.30 am in Room No. 044, Ground Floor, R & D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru - 560029.

Title of the Thesis	:	**Animal-Assisted Therapy: Effect on Neuropsychological Functioning, Depression and Emotion Regulation**
Discipline	:	**Psychology**
External Examiner (Outside Karnataka)	:	**Dr Annalakshmi Narayanan** Professor and Head Department of Psychology Bharathiar University Coimbatore - 641 046 Tamil Nadu
External Examiner (Within Karnataka)	:	**Dr Jamuna Rajeswaran** Professor Department of Clinical Psychology NIMHANS, Hosur Road Bengaluru – 560029 Karnataka
Supervisor	:	**Dr Jayasankara Reddy K** Professor Department of Psychology School of Social Sciences CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Bengaluru - 560029 Karnataka

The members of the Research Advisory Committee of the Scholar, the faculty members of the Department and the School, interested experts and research scholars of all the branches of research are cordially invited to attend this open viva-voce examination.

Registrar

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 06 September 2023

ABSTRACT

The mere presence of a dog in a therapeutic setup is known to bring about positive outcomes, so when incorporated into therapy, dogs can bring multifarious benefits that are not entirely tapped upon. There also exist cultural differences in the perception towards and acceptance of animals which limits the generalisability of western literature. This research aimed to study the effect of animal-assisted therapy, with therapy dogs, on depression, emotional regulation and neuropsychological functioning of individuals. A pretest-posttest experimental research design was used wherein 42 participants were matched and randomly divided into experimental and control groups. Both the groups received therapeutic interventions once a week, for 45 minutes, over a period of 2 months, however, only the experimental group received animal-assisted therapy. Beck Depression Inventory-II, Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale and NIMHANS Neuropsychology Battery were used to gauge the level of depression, emotion regulation and neuropsychological functioning before and after the intervention.

The findings reveal that both the experimental and control group saw a significant improvement in their level of depression and emotion regulation, however, only the experimental group showed a significant improvement in all the measured domains of neuropsychological functioning. No significant changes were observed in the domains of neuropsychological functioning of the control group. The results help validate the animal-assisted therapy interventions provided to improve the individuals' neuropsychological functioning, and emotion regulation and alleviate depression. Further implications are identified and discussed as per the results.

Keywords: animal-assisted therapy, neuropsychological functioning, depression, emotion regulation, therapy dog

Publications:

1. **Hunjan, U. G.**, & Reddy, J. (2020). Why companion animals are beneficial during COVID-19 pandemic. Journal of Patient Experience, 7(4), 430-432.
2. **Hunjan, U. G.**, & Reddy, J. (2023). Impact of Animal-Assisted Therapy on Depression, Memory, Attention, and Emotion Regulation - accepted for publication in Human Research in Rehabilitation Volume 13, Issue 1, 2023
3. **Hunjan, U. G.** (2021). Efficacy of AAT for Psychoneuroimmunology, Cognitive Neuropsychology and Resilience in Clinical Settings. Resilience, Psychoneuroimmunology, Neuropsychology: Applications in Clinical Settings, 247
4. Jayasankara Reddy, **K., Hunjan, U.**, & Jha, P. (2021). Brain-Based Learning Method: Opportunities and Challenges. Neuro-Systemic Applications in Learning, 295-307.
5. Reddy, J., & **Hunjan, U. G.** (2019). A neurobiological perspective on psychological stress. European Journal of Medical and Health Sciences, 1(2).
6. Reddy, K. J., Menon, K. R., & **Hunjan, U. G.** (2018). Neurobiological aspects of violent and criminal behaviour: deficits in frontal lobe function and neurotransmitters 1. International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences, 13(1), 44.
7. Reddy, K. J., **Hunjan, U.** & Ramesh, A. (2020). Culturally Competent Practice in Psychological Assessment. International Journal of Asia Pacific School Psychology, 98-102