

The Subjectivity for Companion Animals of Nursing Students

Sunyoung Jang

*Dept. of Nursing, Hanseo University, 46 Hanseol Ro, Haemi-myun, Seosan-si,
Chungcheongnam-do, 369-709, Korea
sjang@hanseo.ac.kr*

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to identify the subjectivity of companion animals that nursing students are aware of, to describe the characteristics by type, and to identify the typology of companion animals. The Q methodology was applied. 25 students in the 3rd and 4th grade who were enrolled in A College of Nursing and conducted the training were asked to classify 46 statements about companion animals. The collected data were analyzed using the QUANL PC program. As a result of this study, the nursing students' perception of companion animals was classified into three types. The types of subjectivity to companion animals are 'Protector Type', 'Social Foundation Type', and 'Type of Emphasis on Benefits'. The study provided basic data on the application of animal-assisted therapy in the clinical practice and nursing education.

Keywords: *Companion, Animal, Nursing, Student, Subjectivity, Q methodology*

1. Introduction

1.1. Necessity of study

In recent years, rather than use the term “the pet animal (the pet dog)”, we use “the companion animal (the companion dog)” as the one that lives together with us. This can be seen to change from the concept of ownership to the concept of partnership [1]. As a matter of fact, companion animal owners regard their animals not as mere objects, but as distinct persons who can share affectionate relationships as subjects like close friends or relatives [2].

Simple interventions using animals as a means of establishing a trusting relationship between the patient and the therapist in the health care field can increase the patient's response, give pleasure to him, foster the treatment environment, help him contact and maintain reality [3]. Also, because the self-esteem is increased, sociality develops by positively interacting with others with positive expectations [4]. In general, an animal-assisted therapy can provide physiological effects and pleasures such as reduced cardiac dysfunction, reduced blood pressure, etc. and has the mental effect of reducing the loneliness and increasing the social activities including the social effect that promotes harmony [5], and especially its use in the elderly has been shown to reduce loneliness [6].

Studies have also been carried out on the use of companion animals as an assistant therapy to improve sociality and emotional intelligence. According to these studies, the animal-assisted therapy can cure the loneliness of the elderly [6], and it was also effective in raising

Article history:

Received (October 2, 2017), Review Result (November 12, 2017), Accepted (December 22, 2017)

the sociality of children [7]. In addition, interaction with companion animals increases the kindness and empathy for others, and stress was resolved and socialization was promoted [8].

Therefore, this study will explore and classify the perception of companion animals that the pre-service nursing students have. By studying the characteristics and differences of the recognition types of companion animals, we will provide the basic data necessary to confirm the possibility of application of the animal-assisted therapy in the clinical practice.

1.2. Purpose of study

The purpose of the study is to identify the type of subjective awareness of the nursing students about companion animals and to identify the type characteristics by applying the Q method. And it is to provide information about the nursing students who start raising companion animals and to provide basic information on the strategies for educating them. The detailed purpose of this study is as follows.

- 1) Subjective perception of companion animals that the nursing students hold is typified.
- 2) The characteristics of the nursing students' perception of companion animals are analyzed and described.

2. Method of study

2.1. Design of study

The purpose of this study was to identify the type of subjective perception of companion animals in nursing students who experienced companion animals after reviewing literature, media data and previous studies on companion animals.

2.2. Q population and Q sample selection

To extract a comprehensive statement on the effect on companion animals, the Q population was derived from a review of domestic and foreign literature, an open questionnaire, and individual in-depth interviews focusing on current nursing students. Through this process, over 200 Q-populations from three domains were extracted, and in addition to that, by integrating the literature collected through the review of domestic and foreign literature, a total of 100 Q populations were extracted. After reviewing and revising the extracted Q samples, the final 46 samples with high discriminative power were selected.

2.3. Design of study

The Q-methodology is not a personal difference but a qualitative research that emphasizes individual inertia by emphasizing differences in meaning or importance within an individual, and it is based on the small sample doctrine that when a P sample grows, several people are biased on one factor and their characteristics are not clearly revealed[9]. The P sample consists of a total of 25 students who are expected to participate in the study after fully explaining the purpose of the study to the students enrolled in the nursing department.

2.4. Classification and data analysis method

The Q classification process is a process by which individuals who are selected as a P sample classify the statement of the Q sample as a forced normal distribution method, thereby creating a spontaneous definition of the companion animal by each individual. We collected

data by using the Q card for 25 students of OO College of Nursing. The time required for one subject to complete the Q classification was 30-45 minutes. The distribution of the Q sample was classified from the strong positive to the strong negative in order of the importance of the subjects' opinion. The statements on companion animals (Q1) were classified on a 12-point scale. Afterwards, the subjects were interviewed about the statements classified at the extremes. The Q factor analysis used the Principal Component Factor Analysis, varimax. The type classification was selected based on the Eigen value of 1.0 or more and the number of factors and the total explanatory variable. The collected data were scored from 1 to 15, with the conversion scores assigned to each, focused on the card distributed by the Q sample distribution table. The assigned conversion scores were coded in the Q sample order and processed by the main factor analysis by the QUANL PC program. Analysis of the data was done by the QUANL PC program.

2.5. Ethical considerations for the subject

After a volunteer consent was obtained from the subjects before the study, we explained to the subject that they could stop at any time during the study. To respect the rights of the subjects and ensure the confidentiality of the subject's privacy and information, all of the information collected through this study is treated as anonymous in the whole process of the data analysis and coded with Q sorting.

3. Result of study

The Q factor analysis of the subjectivity of companion animals using the QUANL pc program revealed three types.

Table 1. Q-statements on new nurse images type of representative items and Z-scores (N=25)

Factor	No	Description	Mean (SD)	Z-score
Factor 1 (N=6)	3	The companion animal makes people feel responsible.	9.50(2.074)	1.65
	14	The companion animal is a family member.	10.67(1.506)	1.62
	19	The rights of the companion animal by arranging laws must be guaranteed.	10.00(1.095)	1.45
Factor 2 (N=12)	33	Life-long education should be implemented from school-age children.	10.42(1.379)	2.01
	40	Those who abandon their companions must be provided with punishments.	10.25(1.658)	1.57
	30	The death of a companion animal feels like a loss of a family member.	9.75(1.712)	1.53
Factor 3 (N=7)	19	By preparing laws for companion animals, their rights should be guaranteed.	10.71(1.799)	1.93
	14	The companion animal is a family member.	10.86(1.069)	1.83

	2	The companion animal does not make us feel lonely.	9.86(1.952)	1.56
--	---	--	-------------	------

Protector Type: They think of companion animals as their family, so they hope some laws will be prepared to protect them, and they think they can make a financial investment in raising their own animals like raising their children. Thus, the first type was named ‘Protector Type’.

Social Infrastructure Type: The second type of subjects thought that some care was needed because it was not easy to manage things like hair even though recently, there have been a lot of news about life that is thought so trivial, such as abusing companion animals and companion animals will not be a big problem in hygiene if they are managed well. Also, companion animals should not be the target of human anger or treated as an object people can express their emotion to. Because it is a life like a person, the protection law of the pet animal including the companion animal should be revised and enacted. Thus, the second type was named ‘Social Infrastructure Type’.

Type of Emphasis on Benefits: They said that the companion animal is a family member and should be treated accordingly, and that they could experience the benefits they had while growing up with their family members like their brothers and sisters. Even though raising a companion animal depends on how well the owner looks after it, there are more advantages than disadvantages, and especially, it could be possible to play a role as a therapist who can be attentive to the feelings of modern people, they said. Thus, the second type was named ‘Type of Emphasis on Benefits’.

4. Discussion

As a result of this study, it was found that the subjectivity types for the companion animal recognized by the nursing students were ‘Protector Type’ as the first type, ‘Social Infrastructure Type’ as the second type, and ‘Type of Emphasis on Benefits’ as the third type, and we will discuss the characteristics of each type.

The first type in this study was ‘Protector Type’. It is natural to think of companion animals as a family, and they are perceived as siblings or children, who have to be cared for. Therefore, they don’t feel that it is a waste of money to spend money on companion animals. They do not care about the advantages and disadvantages of raising an companion animal. They just accept it as a family.

The second type was ‘social infrastructure type’. They think that it is important to ensure the welfare and rights of companion animals through taking legal measures for pet abuse and abandonment, which is a recent issue.

The third type was ‘Type of Emphasis on Benefits’. They perceive that companion animals have many advantages. Raising a companion animal alleviates loneliness, makes them feel responsible, and reduces stress, they said.

Recently, studies have been carried out that raising a companion animal is not only physically and mentally beneficial to patients as well as the vulnerable class in a community. Direct animal care might cause some problems such as infection, so the methods for utilizing robot pets are also emerging. In keeping with this, if these robot pets are applied to the clinical environment in the future and given that nurses are the closest people to the scene, it is important to understand their perception of animals.

This study investigated the subjective perception of the companion animals of the nursing students and divided it into three types. This study found that most of the nursing students

considered companion animals as family members. The characteristics of each type are as follows: considering the companion animal as a person to be cared for, considering the preparation of the social basis for raising the companion animal as a family first, and considering the advantages of raising the companion animal. This subjectivity study could be used as a basic data for clinical and community animal-assisted therapy that has recently become of interest. Furthermore, in the future, new and experienced nurses will be able to apply effective training methods for each type of animal-assisted therapy.

5. Conclusion

This study attempted to apply the Q methodology to provide the basic data necessary for the application and direction of animal-assisted therapy in clinical practice based on the subjective data exploring and analyzing the subjective perception of the companion animals of the nursing students. The result of this study was divided into three types. The types of companion animals recognized by the nursing students were ‘Protector Type’, ‘Social Infrastructure Type’, and ‘Type of Emphasis on Benefits’.

This study typified the subjectivity of the nursing students to companion animals and provided the basic data necessary for introducing or applying animal-assisted therapy in a clinical setting and a community in the future. It will also provide a theoretical basis for the development of individualized clinical education plans for new nurses and experienced nurses in the future.

Based on this study, further research will need to be conducted on how the experience and perception of raising a companion animal affect nursing choice and performance.

References

- [1] Y.M. Kim, “A study on the experience of child raising companion animals and family strength,” Ph.D. dissertation, Inha University, Inchoen, Korea, (2008)
- [2] B.S. Sharkin and D. Knox, “Pet loss: Issues and implications for the psychologist,” *Professional Psychology: Research & Practice*, vol.34, pp.414-421, (2003)
- [3] M. Synder, M.F. Tracy, and R. Lindquist, “Complementary alternative therapies in nursing 5ed,” Springer, (2006)
- [4] H. Lee, “Investigate how forstering pets affects a child’s empathy toward, and fondness for, pets,” M.S. thesis, Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Korea, (2001)
- [5] S.J. Brodie and F.C. Biley, “An exploration of the potential benefits of pet-facilitated therapy,” *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, vol.8, pp.329-337, (1999)
- [6] M.R. Banks and W.A. Banks, “The effects of animal-assisted therapy on loneliness in an elderly population in long-term care facilities,” *The Journal of Gerontology*, vol. 57A, no.7, pp.428-432, (2002)
- [7] S. Caprilli and A. Messeri, “Animal-assisted activity at a Meyer children’s hospital: A pilot study,” *Evidence-Based Complement Alternative Medicine*, vol.3, no.3, pp.379-383, (2006)
- [8] K. Henderson, “Beetles, beechnuts, and behavior: Using nature-based activities to develop social skills,” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Council for Exceptional Children, vol.97, pp.2-12, (1997)
- [9] S.M. Whang, S.W. You, J.Y. Kim, and R.G. Kim, “Consumer types and cultural consumption characteristics of Korean society: Who spends for what reasons?” *Journal of Human Subjectivity*, vol.13, pp.25-39, (2006)

This page is empty by intention.