



Presenter: Joshleen Ayson

Session & Time: Poster_I / 11:00 to 12:00pm

Room: Guzman Lecture Hall

Discipline: Psychology, Visual Studies

Faculty Mentor: Afshin Gharib

Digital Portfolio URL:

Title: Pets and College Students: Companion /Service Animals and Well -Being and Depression, Anxiety and Stress

Abstract:

This study aims to explore how the effects of having or owning a companion pet will decrease anxiety, stress and depression levels while increasing well-being in college students. Evidence suggests that having a companion animal or animals on campus for college students has a significant beneficial effect on anxiety, stress and depression levels. Finding comfort in engaging with or owning a pet has given college students a form of relief from academic stress and social connectedness. Expanding on past research, including studies by Adams et al. (2017), Adams et al. (2017), Ellis et al. (2024), Joseph et al. (2019), Shiloh (2003) and Thelwell (2019) this study examines that positive impact of engaging or owning a pet. It is hypothesized that individuals who own or engage with a pet will experience a decrease in anxiety, depression and stress levels than those who do not own or engage with a pet. Participants from a small liberal arts college in California will be surveyed to assess how engaging with pets or

owning a companion pet affects college students' well-being, decrease depression levels, stress and anxiety levels and demographic details. The survey will be administered via email, taken online participants and will take an average of 15-20 minutes. Engaging with or owning a companion animal typically decreases anxiety, stress or depression levels although this may vary from person to person. Data collection will be utilized through five validated measures: The Brief State Trait – Anxiety Scale (ST-AS) (Berg, et. Al, 1998), Lexington Attachment to Pet Scale (LAPS) (Johnson et.al, 1992), Pet Relationship Scale (PRS) (Lago et.al, 1988), Mini Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (MDASS) (Monteiro et, al, 2023), it is expected that participants who report having a pet will report lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression, and those who have more positive interactions with pets will report the highest benefits on in terms of improvement in stress anxiety and depression. Those who do not will have higher reports of stress, anxiety and depression levels. If the results support the hypothesis the research will contribute a better and wider understanding of how engaging or owning a pet impacts a college students well-being, and mental illness.