The Subjectivity for Companion Animals of Nursing Students

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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 grades 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 essential data on applying animal-assisted therapy in clinical practice and nursing education.

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 idea of partnership [1]. Companion owners regard their animals not as objects but as distinct persons who can share affectionate relationships as subjects like close friends or relatives [2].

Simple interventions using animals to establish a trusting relationship between the patient and the therapist in the healthcare field can increase the patient's response, give pleasure, foster the treatment environment, and help him contact and maintain reality [3]. Also, because self-esteem is increased, sociality develops by positively interacting with others with positive expectations [4]. In general, animal-assisted therapy can provide physiological effects and pleasures such as reduced cardiac dysfunction, reduced blood pressure, etc., and have the mental impact of reducing loneliness and increasing 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 conducted on using companion animals as an assistant therapy to improve sociality and emotional intelligence. According to these studies, animal-assisted therapy can cure the loneliness of the elderly [6], and it is also effective in raising children's

sociality [7]. In addition, interaction with companion animals increases kindness and empathy for others, stress is resolved, and socialization is 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 primary data necessary to confirm the possibility of application of animal-assisted therapy in clinical practice.

1.2. Purpose of study

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

1) The 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 the study

This study aimed to identify the subjective perception of companion animals in nursing students who experienced companion animals after reviewing the literature, media data, and previous studies on companion animals.

2.2. Q population and Q sample selection

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 to extract a comprehensive statement on the effect on companion animals. 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 the study

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

thereby creating a spontaneous definition of the companion animal by each individual. Data from 25 O.O. College of Nursing students were collected using the Q card. The time required for one subject to complete the Q classification was 30-45 minutes. The distribution of the Q sample was classified from strong positive to strong negative in order of importance to the subjects' opinions. The statements on companion animals (Q1) were classified on a 12-point scale. Afterward, 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 Eigenvalue of 1.0 or more, 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 primary factor analysis by the QUANL PC program. The QUANL PC program analyzed the data.

2.5. Ethical considerations for the subject

After volunteer consent was obtained from the subjects before the study, we explained to the subjects 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 data analysis process and coded with Q sorting.

3. Result of the 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 (S.D.)	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 must be guaranteed by arranging laws.	10.00(1.095)	1.45
Factor 2 (N=12)	33	Life-long education should be implemented for 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	A companion animal's death feels like a family member's loss.	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 believe they can make a financial investment in raising their 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 has

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 objects. People can express their emotions. Because it is a life like a person, the protection law for pet animals, including companion animals, should be revised and enacted. Thus, the second type was named the 'Social Infrastructure Type'.

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

The first type in this study was the '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 spending money on companion animals is a waste of money. They do not care about the advantages and disadvantages of raising a companion animal. They accept it as a family.

The second type was the 'social infrastructure type.' They think it is essential to ensure the welfare and rights of companion animals by 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. They said that raising a companion animal alleviates loneliness, makes them feel responsible, and reduces stress.

Recently, studies have been carried out that show that raising a companion animal is physically and mentally beneficial to patients and the vulnerable class in a community. Direct animal care might cause problems such as infection, so 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 essential 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 nursing students considered companion animals 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 increasing the companion animal. This subjectivity study could be used as primary data for clinical and community animal-assisted therapy, which has recently become interesting. 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 primary 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. It provided the primary 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 developing individualized clinical education plans for new 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.

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