

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The workplace of the new millennium introduces an environment that generates diverse and contradictory challenges for organisations and their employees. Essential to achieving success is the extent to which organisations are able to maintain optimal performance, together with commitment, morale, and well-being of their employees (Davies, 1999: 1). As a result, business managers are constantly searching for means and measures that would improve the quality of work, productivity, and performance levels of their employees, but would also enhance employee morale, commitment, and creativity, promote better work satisfaction, and create a supportive social climate and organisational culture.

The implementation of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a traditional and recognised policy that addresses these issues by means of identifying and resolving personal and work-related problems that adversely affect job performance through a programme of counselling, advice, and assistance (Davies, 2002: 2; Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 1999: 4). However, in modern life, where the human-animal bond is getting stronger and more important (Becker, 2002; PAWSitive InterAction, 2002: online; Paws for Health, 2001: online; Mzumara, 2000: online; Barker, 1999: online; MacCullam, 1992: online), another completely forward-thinking, innovative, extraordinary, and more controversial policy that may address these issues is the implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy (APPMA, 2001: online; Marshall, 2000: online; Mzumara, 2000: online; Marshall, 1999: online; Coolidge, 1998: online). It seems that the presence of pets in the workplace may assist managers in adding immeasurable value to their organisation through enhancing their employees' health and happiness, as well as the overall quality of life (McCullough, 2001: online; Shay & Shipley, 2001: online; Coolidge, 1998: online).

Consequently, the intention of this study is to explore the perceptions and opinions of South African employees to the presence of pets in the workplace to determine the possibility of implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy to enhance the outcomes of an EAP.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE CHOICE OF SUBJECT

The motivation for the study stems firstly from the limited information on the benefits of pets in the workplace, in contrast with the substantial volume of literature on the general health-enhancing effects of animals on humans.

The general idea of the health-enhancing benefits pets have on their human companions is not a new one. There are some empirical studies and literature that deal with the influence of the human-animal bond on the health of both humans and animals. Among these are the 1987 symposium (10-11 September) sponsored by the National Institute of Health (NIH) titled: *'The Health Benefits of Pets'* (online); literature produced by Baiocco (1997) regarding the role pets play in the psyche of pet owners; and Barker (1999) about the therapeutic aspects of the human-companion animal interaction; studies done by Odendaal and Meintjes (1999) regarding the physiological basis for positive human-companion animal interaction; as well as research done by Friedmann, Thomas, and Eddy (2000), exploring the relationships between pets and human health; and PAWSitive InterAction focusing on a scientific look at the human-animal bond (2002). Furthermore, studies of people and their dogs, cats, or other pets have been reported in numerous medical and psychiatric journals, with academic titles like *'The effect of pet therapy on the social behaviour of institutionalised Alzheimer's clients'*, *'Pet-human bonding: Results of a survey on health and well-being'*, and *'Presence of human friends and pet dogs as moderators of autonomic responses to stress in women'* (InteliHealth, 2001: online). In addition, the volume of scientific documentation supporting these studies and literature is growing rapidly.

Since the workplace has such high levels of stress, demands, pressures, and challenges, it seems like a natural progression to introduce pets to the workplace in order to put the benefits of the human-animal bond to work (Alvarado, 2001: online; Skoczek, 2001: online). Recent studies promoting the health-enhancing benefits of pets on the physical, emotional, and social health of their human companions have established that these benefits, including reduced blood pressure, lower stress levels, and improved overall emotional and physical health, also translate in a workplace environment (Alvarado, 2001: online). According to Wells and Perrine (2001: 85-86), many employees perceive the presence of pets in their workplace as positively affecting and benefiting employee health and organisational issues.

However, literature and studies regarding the benefits of pets in the workplace are very limited and focus mainly on the American population. Moreover, such information is completely lacking in the South African work environment. Therefore, taking into account the immeasurable value and benefits a pet-friendly workplace policy could add to an organisation,

the researcher found it imperative that underpinning investigations be conducted to explore the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in the South African work environment. Consequently, the present exploratory study is a significant contribution to the literature, especially in a South African context, but also internationally. The study fills a void in academic literature, in view of the general paucity of empirical studies and literature with this sort of focus. Furthermore, the study assists with the identification of innovative and motivating policy and practices that could benefit both the employee and the employer, as well as the organisation as a whole through enhancing employee health and well-being, increasing productivity, job performance, staff morale, and quality of work life, as well as reducing staff turnover and absenteeism rates.

Another motivation for the study stems from the researcher's personal interest in positive human-animal interaction. The researcher is employed in the field of EAP and is actively involved with cynopraxic dog training, which strives to improve the quality of life for both humans and dogs by helping to establish an interactive and harmonious relationship between humans and dogs (Lindsay, 2000: 390). The researcher, who has a sincere passion for animals, became aware of the concept of a pet-friendly workplace policy during her attendance of the Human-Animal Interaction course, MWT 865 (September 2001) as part of her studies in M.Soc.Sc (EAP) at the University of Pretoria. Being employed in the field of EAP, the researcher identified that most of the perceived benefits of a pet-friendly workplace policy could enhance the outcomes of an EAP. Consequently, the researcher developed an interest to establish whether the benefits of a pet-friendly workplace policy, as proved by 260 companies listed as Dog-Friendly Employers in the USA, Canada, England, and Israel (www.dogfriendly.com, 1 April 2003), are perceived to translate into a specific South African work environment. For that reason, the researcher aimed at doing groundbreaking research to include positive human-animal interaction in the field of EAP within the South African work environment.

Due to the unfamiliar and controversial nature of the topic, the researcher approached Independent Counselling and Advisory Services Ltd. (ICAS) for their assistance in finding an organisation that would be suitable for, and willing to participate in, the study. In her decision regarding an organisation in which to conduct this exploratory study, a crucial concern that was taken into account was the company's organisational culture. Allowing pets into the workplace is perceived as positively affecting employee health and organisational issues (Wells & Perrine, 2001: 85), as well as improving morale, contributing to a more creative work environment, and being an effective recruitment and retention tool (San Francisco SPCA, 2001: online). Therefore, firstly, it was important to choose an organisation with a culture that shows concern for its employees and their well-being, and, secondly, it was crucial to select an organisation with a culture that emphasises creativity and innovation.

The organisation identified and selected to participate in this study was Lowe Bull Calvert Pace (LBCP), a leading advertising company. Firstly, LBCP has a facility called the 'Oh Zone', which offers a variety of services aiming to take care of its employees by helping them deal with the stresses of life, including massages, counselling services, lifestyle assistance, beauty treatments, meditation, dry-cleaning on the premise, Pick 'n Pay on-line shopping delivered to the office and packed in the car, etc. Furthermore, LBCP seeks to attract and retain the best employees. Thus, LBCP invests in young, talented, and ambitious people, who are trained in everything from life skills to professional skills in order for them to enhance the value of the company and also to enhance their own value. Therefore, it is evident that LBCP displays a concern for its employees and their well-being.

Additionally, LBCP believes that every successful business is built upon creativity and that the most creative and most innovative company always wins. Ultimately, LBCP aims at being the best company in South Africa to work for; to be the most respected advertising agency in South Africa as judged by their peers and the marketing and business world; and to be one of the finest advertising groups in the world. Hence, it was apparent that LBCP emphasises creativity and innovation as a crucial aspect in the working environment.

For these reasons, LBCP was perceived to be a suitable organisation in which the study could be conducted, and it was accordingly chosen as the research population. The researcher is not employed by, and has no involvement with, the company, and relied solely on the assistance of the Managing Director and the Head of Strategy.

1.3 PROBLEM FORMULATION

A novel article by Wells and Perrine, *Critters in the Cube: Perceived Psychological and Organizational Effects of Pets in the Workplace* (2001), reveals that allowing pets into the workplace is perceived as positively affecting employee health and organisational issues (2001: 85). Unfortunately, not all companies appreciate the significance of allowing pets in the workplace in the same way. Some companies readily welcome pets into the working environment, while others have not yet realised the benefits of allowing pets in the workplace (DogFriendly.com, 2001: online).

In South Africa there is no literature or case studies available on pet-friendly workplaces. Therefore, this study aims at establishing whether the benefits of a pet-friendly workplace policy, as proved by 260 companies listed as Dog-Friendly Employers in the USA, Canada, England and

Israel (www.dogfriendly.com, 1 April 2003), are perceived to translate into a specific South African work environment - LBCP. This problem was addressed by exploring employees' perceptions and opinions on the subject of allowing pets into their workplace, and by identifying the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African work environment. Furthermore, the study aims at identifying problem issues that need consideration during actual policy formulation, as well as areas that need further research with regard to possible formulation of such a workplace policy.

Therefore, the following problem statement is addressed in the study:

There is currently no literature available on pet-friendly workplace policies in South Africa. It is also not clear whether positive human-animal interaction, in the form of a pet-friendly workplace policy, could be included in the field of EAPs within a South African work environment, as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP.

1.4 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 GOAL

The goal of this study is to explore the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African work environment as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP.

1.4.2 OBJECTIVES

In order to reach the aforementioned goal, focus is directed to the following objectives:

- Exploring the perceptions and opinions of employees from LBCP to the presence of pets in the workplace.
- Identifying the possible functions, benefits, and drawbacks of allowing pets in the workplace, as perceived by employees from LBCP.
- Identifying issues that need consideration during actual policy formulation (if the idea is found suitable by employees and management).
- Identifying areas that need further research with regard to possible formulation of such a workplace policy.
- Providing specific recommendations regarding formulating a pet-friendly workplace policy

in a specific South African work environment, i.e. LBCP.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION FOR THE STUDY

It was important to distinguish between hypotheses and research questions to determine which was to be utilised in this study. According to Baker (1994: 101), "... a hypothesis sets up a prediction to be tested, which is logically derived from the research question. The research question merely poses the subject of interest". De Vos (1998: 115-116) makes the following distinction between research questions and hypotheses: "Questions are posed about the nature of real situations, while hypotheses are statements about how things can be".

De Vos and Van Zyl (1998: 267-268) explain the research question as "...a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied" and that "sets the boundaries on what will be studied". According to them, the research question indicates what the study will be focusing on specifically, as well as what the researcher would like to know about the subject (De Vos & Van Zyl, 1998: 268).

The goal of this study is to explore (refer to paragraph 1.8: Research design, page 10). According to Reid and Smith (1981), in De Vos (1998: 116), there should be adequate information and knowledge to identify and define relevant variables for a study to justify the formulation of a hypothesis. Therefore, due to the fact that exploratory research is usually done on relatively unknown research topics (Mouton & Marais, 1990: 43), exploratory studies generally do not require stated hypotheses (De Vos & Fouché, 1998: 104; Royse, 1995: 28). For that reason, although De Vos (1998: 116) indicates that research questions are usually more relevant when the study is qualitative, and hypotheses when the study is quantitative, this study utilised a research question.

The following research question assisted as a point of departure for this study:

What is the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African context as a means to enhance the objectives of an EAP?

1.6 RESEARCH APPROACH

In social science research, it is important to distinguish between the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative methods can be utilised to count and correlate social and psychological phenomena, while qualitative research methods can be utilised to seek the essential character of these social and psychological phenomena. However, both research methods attempt to describe and explain social reality (Epstein, 1988: 185).

According to Mouton and Marais (1990: 155-156), the quantitative approach is more highly formalised, more explicitly controlled, its range is more exactly defined, and, in terms of the methods used, it relates to the physical sciences. Contrary to the quantitative approach, the procedures of the qualitative approach are not as strictly formalised, the scope is usually undefined, and a more philosophical mode of operation is adopted. Struwig and Stead (2001: 17) distinguish between the quantitative and qualitative approaches as follows: “Quantitative research is more structured than qualitative research in that sampling, research design, questionnaires and statistical methods are largely determined prior to the participants completing the questionnaires. In contrast, qualitative researchers are generally more flexible in that methods may be devised as the research progresses and are not necessarily planned a priori”. According to Epstein (1988: 187-188), quantitative research methods are usually utilised to test and validate predictive, cause-effect hypotheses about the social reality. On the other hand, qualitative methods are utilised to collect detailed descriptions of the social reality, which may serve as an end-in-itself, or may be used to generate hypotheses that could be tested quantitatively at a later stage.

Literature on quantitative and qualitative research methodologies generally suggests that qualitative methods are usually more suitable when entering an unfamiliar research subject in order to develop an initial understanding of something with the aim of generating hypotheses that may be tested through more formal research (Struwig & Stead, 2001: 19; Epstein, 1988: 195). In contrast, quantitative methods are generally more useful when there exists extensive prior knowledge of the research subject, in order to formulate testable hypotheses (Struwig & Stead, 2001: 19; Epstein, 1988: 196).

In spite of the literature, the researcher decided that the utilisation of a quantitative approach would best fit the nature of this specific topic due to the unfamiliarity of the concept and the limited scope of a mini-dissertation. A quantitative approach was more controlled and defined the range of the study more explicitly (Mouton & Marais, 1990: 155). As a result, it prevented the researcher from being overwhelmed by vast amounts of data and from losing focus of the goal and objectives of the study, which could easily have been a consequence of the flexibility of

qualitative research methods (Struwig & Stead, 2001: 17).

Therefore, in order to direct the study to the generation of essential 'need-to-know' information the researcher considered it important to:

- Collect data in a standardised manner,
- Measure data through identifying and focusing on specific variables that could be quantified through rating scales, frequency counts, or other means, and
- Analyse data by using statistical methods that are used to determine associations and differences between variables (Reid & Smith, 1981, in Fouché & De Vos, 1998: 71).

It is important, though, to note that the nature of the study is such that either a quantitative or a qualitative approach could have been utilised. A qualitative approach, such as focus groups, could have obtained valuable information about employees' personal feelings and perceptions regarding the presence of pets in the workplace. However, due to the fact that the topic is unknown to, and possibly controversial in a South African work environment, and could generate a vast amount of 'nice-to-know' information, the researcher adopted an approach that is more formalised and controlled. In addition, this study could be viewed as a pilot study for further research.

1.7 TYPE OF RESEARCH

In order to establish the type of research utilised in this study it is important to distinguish between basic research and applied research. According to Durrheim (1999: 40), the distinction between the types of research refers to the uses to which the research will be put. Likewise, De Vos, Schurink and Strydom (1998: 8) stipulate that the principle difference between basic and applied research studies is the distinction between theoretical results and practical results.

According to Hedrick, Bickman and Rog (1993: 2) the goal of basic research is to create new knowledge about how fundamental processes work. Thus, these authors suggest that the primary rationale for basic research is knowledge, *per se*, in order to expand the knowledge base. Similarly, Durrheim (1999: 40) suggests that the findings of basic research are generally used to advance the fundamental knowledge of the social world. "Knowledge of the world exists as general theories about how the world operates, and basic research is used to refute or support these theories" (Durrheim, 1999: 40). In the same way Tutty, Grinnell and Williams (1997:

52) consider the purpose of basic research to "...increase the theoretical knowledge in the belief that such knowledge will provide indirect benefit to all agencies and clients later on". Hedrick, Bickman and Rog (1993: 3) conclude that it is often anticipated that basic research findings will eventually assist with the solving of particular problems; however, such problem solving is not the immediate or driving goal of basic research.

In contrast with basic research, the findings of applied research have a practical implication (Durrheim, 1999: 40-41). Hedrick, Bickman and Rog (1993: 2-3) regard the goal of applied research as the development of information that intends to clarify, confront, or resolve an immediate societal problem by improving the understanding of that specific problem. Likewise, Durrheim (1999: 41) considers the aim of applied research as contributing towards "...practical issues of problem-solving, decision-making, policy analysis and community development". It is, however, important to note that applied research may result in new knowledge; but this is often on a more limited basis which is defined by the nature of the immediate problem (Hedrick, Bickman & Rog, 1993: 3).

According to Tutty, Grinnell and Williams (1997: 52) applied research studies are concerned with problems that must be solved to facilitate decision making at various levels, including line levels, managerial levels, or policy levels, in order to directly benefit a specific client system. As a result, in applied research, the findings of a study can only be generalised to the specific context under study with the aim of assisting decision-makers in making assumptions and drawing conclusions about the particular problems which are dealt with (Durrheim, 1999: 41).

In addition to the abovementioned types of research, Durrheim (1999: 42) refers to an alternative set of categories beyond the categories of basic and applied, as indicated by Alex Butchart from the Unisa Institute for Social and Health Sciences. These categories have been developed to distinguish between types of research in public health research, and the distinction represents the ways in which pragmatic and theoretical concerns operate at different levels. This standpoint considers all research to be action-oriented (therefore applied). However, it distinguishes between three different types:

- Fundamental research, which seeks to "...increase knowledge about questions of scientific significance that may lead to new technologies";
- Strategic research, which "generates knowledge about specific needs and problems (these include specific social conditions and systems) with a view to eventually solving or reducing the problem through further development and evaluation"; and
- Intervention development and evaluation research, which "create and assess intervention

technologies of all types” (Durrheim, 1999: 42).

Taking into account the above definitions and discussions of basic and applied research, as well as the additional categories of applied research, this study utilised applied research, more specifically, strategic research. As with strategic research, this study aimed to generate essential basic knowledge about the perceptions and opinions of employees in a specific social system to the presence of pets in the workplace. Although new knowledge was generated as a result of the study, knowledge advancement, *per se*, was not the primary rationale for conducting the study. In contrast with basic research, the study aims to contribute towards practical issues of problem-solving, decision-making, and policy analysis by investigating whether a pet-friendly workplace policy could be implemented as a means to enhance the outcomes of the EAP within this specific workplace context. The study also aims at identifying specific issues that need consideration during actual policy formulation through further research, development, and evaluation, as well as providing specific recommendations regarding formulating a pet-friendly workplace policy in this specific South African work environment.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

Durrheim (1999: 29) defines a research design as “...a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research”. Accordingly, this strategic framework functions as a plan that directs the research activity to ensure that reliable conclusions are achieved (Durrheim, 1999: 32). Similarly, Grinnell and Williams (1990: 138) view research designs as the total plan that is used to aid the researcher in answering the research questions, which includes decisions regarding the research question, what data will be required, from whom the data will be obtained, and the best way to gather the data.

According to Durrheim (1999: 39) and Mouton and Marais (1990: 42) the research goal indicates what the researcher wishes to attain in the study, and leads to three basic types of research designs. Grinnell and Williams (1990: 139) and Tutty, Grinnell and Williams (1997: 59) refer to the same classification of research designs by considering the level of knowledge concerning the research area, and consequently the types of questions that will be asked.

Accordingly, research designs can be categorised as follows:

- Exploratory designs are used to explore or to conduct preliminary investigations into a research area when it is relatively unknown and little knowledge exists (Struwig & Stead, 2001: 7; Durrheim, 1999: 39; Grinnell & Williams, 1990: 150). As a result, exploratory studies produce knowledge at only a low level of certainty (Tutty, Grinnell & Williams, 1997: 59).
- Descriptive designs seek accurate observation in an attempt to provide a complete and accurate description of phenomena or a situation by means of narrative-type descriptions, classification, or measuring relationships (Struwig & Stead, 2001: 8; Durrheim, 1999: 39-40). Descriptive studies begin with more knowledge and produce a substantial knowledge base in the research area, which is at a higher level of certainty (Tutty, Grinnell & Williams, 1997: 59).
- Explanatory designs intend to "...provide causal explanations of phenomena" (Durrheim, 1999: 39-40) through indicating causality between variables and events (Mouton & Marais, 1990: 45). Explanatory studies begin with a substantial amount of knowledge and, as a result, produce the most certain results in terms of causality (Tutty, Grinnell & Williams, 1997: 59).

This study utilises an exploratory research design. Exploratory studies establish the facts and gather new data to determine whether interesting patterns exist in the data (Mouton, 1996: 103). According to McMurtry (1997: 335), exploratory designs collect data with the aim of forming ideas and tentative theories about the research question. Likewise, Struwig and Stead (2001: 7) regard the major purpose of exploratory studies to develop and clarify ideas and to formulate questions and hypotheses. In addition, exploratory studies prepare the ground for more intensive and precise investigation later (Tutty, Grinnell & Williams, 1997: 59).

Hence, the motivation and purpose of this study coincide with the common purposes exploratory studies are most frequently done for, as stipulated by Babbie and Mouton (2001: 80):

- "To satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding",
- "To test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study",
- "To develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study",
- "To explicate the central concepts and constructs of a study",
- "To determine priorities for future research", and
- "To develop new hypotheses about an existing phenomenon". (Compare with Mouton & Marais, 1990: 43.)

Due to the fact that no research exists on the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African context, it was essential to gain insight into employees' perceptions and opinions about the presence of pets in the workplace. This enabled the researcher to test the feasibility of undertaking more extensive studies and to determine priorities for future research in this regard. As a result, this study attempts to conduct preliminary investigations into positive human-animal interaction in the field of EAP, in the form of a pet-friendly workplace policy, as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP. In retrospect the researcher acknowledges the fact that preliminary investigations cannot lead to the development of a policy in this regard, but that it could only lead to findings that could inform the possible enhancement of, and add value to an existing EAP policy.

It is important to note that this study was conducted as a survey research study. Survey research can be used to collect data at all three levels of design – exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory designs, as the level of knowledge about the research area determines the selection of the research design for a specific survey research study (McMurtry, 1997: 335).

An additional aspect that needs to be considered when selecting a research design for a survey study is the dimension of time. McMurtry (1997: 336) states that survey studies can be classified according to whether the variable will be measured once, with a cross-sectional design, or over a period of time, with a longitudinal design. "Cross-sectional designs use a 'snapshot' method of data collection to provide data that are specific to a particular point in time" (McMurtry, 1997: 336). According to the author survey studies based on cross-sectional designs could be associated with either exploratory research designs, or descriptive research designs, due to the fact that these studies provide data on the characteristics of a sample or population (McMurtry, 1997: 336). Due to the limited scope of a mini-dissertation, as well as time- and cost-factors, data for this study was collected once, with a cross-sectional design.

As a result, this study utilises an exploratory research design, more specifically, a cross-sectional design.

1.9 RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND STRATEGY

As mentioned before, this study uses survey research methodology as the research procedure. Survey research can be defined as "...a systematic way of collecting data by obtaining opinions or answers from selected respondents who represent the population of interest, or, occasionally, from an entire population" (McMurtry, 1997: 334). According to the author, survey

research can be designed and utilised to achieve a variety of ends. However all survey studies seek to collect data from many individuals with the purpose of understanding something about them as a whole. Therefore, “surveys can be used to collect data on facts about individuals separately and in organizations and communities, as well as data on their behaviors and unobservable variables such as attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and ethical standards” (McMurtry, 1997: 334-335).

The following figure represents the main steps in the survey research process: (Adapted from McMurtry, 1997: 334)

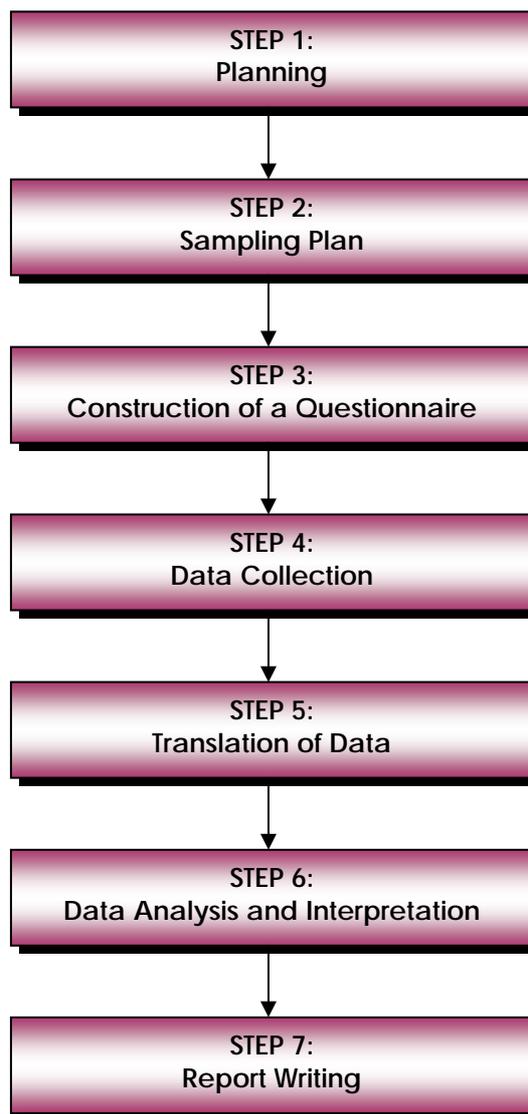


Figure 1 Steps in the survey research process

Step 1: Planning

This step consisted of the definition of the research problem area (refer to paragraph 1.3: Problem formulation, page 4); the definition of the research question (refer to paragraph 1.5: Research question for the study, page 6); operational definitions of key concepts (refer to paragraph 1.13: Definitions of key concepts, page 20-22); and the development of the survey design, which was designed to explore the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African work environment.

Step 2: Sampling plan

Refer to paragraph 1.11: Description of the research population, the perimeter of sample and sampling method, page 17.

Step 3: Construction of a questionnaire

This step was primarily concerned with the construction of a questionnaire as a survey instrument that allowed for the gathering of relevant primary data, which formed the basis of the analysis. This study utilised a semi-structured questionnaire as data gathering instrument for self-completion by the employees from LBCP. The questionnaire was designed consisting of both closed questions and open-ended questions. Amongst the structured questions, statements were formulated to address issues supporting the research objectives.

The questionnaire was short, comprising 5 pages, including the cover page, and was made up of three sections. Section A focused on demographics, Section B contained a number of open-ended questions, while Section C consisted of statements about pets in the workplace. It took approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to allow for self-completion directly in Microsoft Word.

Part of step 3 was the pre-testing, revision and finalisation of the questionnaire. Refer to paragraph 1.10.4: Pilot testing of the questionnaire, page 16.

Step 4: Data collection

Questionnaires were distributed electronically via e-mail to respondents. All responses were treated confidentially and analysis was done on aggregated data only.

This methodology was chosen as the best alternative solution taking into account cost and timing, taking advantage of the benefits of cost and speed of electronic communication.

Step 5: Translation of data

Responses were coded and data captured in SPSS, a statistical software package.

Step 6: Data analysis and interpretation

This step involved the analysis of the data. The first phase of data analysis produced basic descriptive statistics and frequency distributions (basic cross tabulations). A second phase of data analysis included relationship analysis and significance testing involving differences was also done to explain variation in the data. Where applicable and if it was possible, a third phase of data analysis included factor analysis.

Step 7: Report writing

The final step consisted of the actual writing of the report in the form of a mini-dissertation, which was submitted to the University of Pretoria for the requirements and purpose of obtaining a Masters Degree in Social Science (Employee Assistance Programme).

1.10 PILOT STUDY

The New Dictionary of Social Work (1995: 45) defines a pilot study as the “*process whereby the research design for a prospective survey is tested*”. Huysamen (1993), in Strydom (1998(a): 179), views the purpose of a pilot study to be “*an investigation of the feasibility of the planned project and to bring possible deficiencies in the measurement procedure to the fore*”. Consistent with the above, Strydom (1998(a): 182) regards the main purpose and value of the pilot study to be the improvement of the success and effectiveness of the study.

In this study, the pilot study consisted of a comprehensive literature study. The researcher also considered the feasibility of the study. Finally, a pilot test was conducted on potential subjects to pre-test the developed questionnaire. Although the researcher planned to consult with various experts in the field of human-animal interaction and EAPs, this was not done.

1.10.1 LITERATURE STUDY

When undertaking and executing a research project, a literature study is essential (Fouché & De Vos, 1998: 65). A literature study may have different purposes in different research projects, but it does have specific functions.

According to Arkava and Lane (1983: 25) a literature study has the following three functions:

- It exposes similar research done in the past;
- It provides better insight into the extent and complexity of the problem; and
- It justifies the researcher's subsequent steps, as well as the importance of the study.

As mentioned earlier, literature relating to allowing pets in the workplace is extremely limited internationally, and as far as could be determined, no literature exists within a South African work environment. There are empirical studies and academic literature that deal with the health-enhancing benefits pets have on their human companions in general, as well as in the specific target groups of the social work profession. In addition, some research has been done on the effect pets have in the workplace.

The literature study consisted of local, as well as international literature, to explore existing research done on the perceived benefits of allowing pets in the workplace. The search included the utilisation of books, textbooks, periodicals and journals, research reports and theses, published and unpublished. In addition, a main source of information was obtained from articles on the Internet.

1.10.2 CONSULTATION WITH EXPERTS

Although the researcher planned to consult with various experts in the field of human-animal interaction and EAPs, as well as a legal consultant and expert in canine aggression and the law, this was not done due to the fact that, in South Africa, there are no experts in the combined field of EAPs and human-animal interaction. In retrospect, though, the researcher acknowledges that she could have (and should have) consulted electronically with such experts abroad. The omission of consultation with experts is perceived as a lapse in this study.

1.10.3 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

For the sake of convenience, as well as the advantage of speed and the cost-saving element of e-mail communication, an electronic format of the questionnaire was designed to be completed directly in Microsoft Word. The questionnaire was accessible to all employees from LBCP, with clear and simple instructions on how to complete the questionnaire.

Therefore, taking into account the short duration of time it required to complete the questionnaire, the easy and accessible electronic format in which the questionnaire was to be

completed, the assurance of confidentiality, as well as the fact that the target population is well educated and that the topic creates interest, the response rate was expected to be high and the study feasible.

1.10.4 PILOT TESTING OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Singleton, Straits, Straits and McAllister (1988: 290), view the pilot testing of a measuring instrument as "...trying it out on a small number of persons having characteristics similar to those of the target group of respondents". The purpose of pilot testing the questionnaire is to identify any errors, ambiguous questions, questions that are difficult to answer, or questions that violate any rules of questionnaire construction (Babbie, 1998: 159). According to Hoinville, Jowell and associates (1978), in Strydom (1998(a): 183), pilot testing of the questionnaire is valuable for "...refining the wording, ordering, layout, filtering, and so on, and in helping to prune the questionnaire to a manageable length". Hence, the main value of conducting a pilot test is to modify the questionnaire prior to the main investigation. For that reason, in most cases the result will be an improved questionnaire and consequently, a more meaningful main investigation (Strydom, 1998(a): 183).

Consequently, the questionnaire was distributed to a small number of potential subjects - 3 people who were not part of the respondent group - to pilot test the developed questionnaire. In accordance with the advice given by Strydom (1998(a): 182-183), space was provided on the questionnaire for criticism or comments by the respondents, and the respondents were required to comment on the structure and length of the questionnaire. Any suggestions were evaluated and, where appropriate, the necessary changes were made to the questionnaire.

1.11 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION, THE PERIMETER OF SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

Seaberg (1988: 240) defines the population as "...the total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen... A population is the totality of persons, events, organizational units, case records, or other sampling units with which our research problem is concerned". However, Babbie (1998: 201) distinguishes between the terms population and study population. He defines population as "...the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements", whereas the study population is defined as the "...aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected".

In this study, the population consisted of all the employees employed by Lowe Bull Calvert Pace (LBCP). LBCP is an advertising company with 106 employees. The organisation consists of two offices nationally, the Head Office in Johannesburg with 76 employees, and the regional office in Cape Town with 30 employees. At present, LBCP does not have a 'pet-friendly' workplace policy in place.

According to Arkava and Lane (1983: 27), a sample is "...the element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study". Due to the nature of the research, all literate employees from LBCP were included in the sampling frame. No sampling method was used due to the fact that data was supposed to be collected from the entire population. Therefore, it was requested that questionnaires be sent to all 106 employees of LBCP.

1.12 ETHICAL ISSUES

Research was conducted in an ethical and moral fashion. The researcher complied with the ethical guidelines for conducting research, as stipulated by Strydom (1998(b): 25-34).

1.12.1 HARM TO RESPONDENTS

Data collected for this study was not about sensitive, intimate, or personal matters. As a result, the respondents should not have experienced any harm or discomfort in any form (physical, psychological, legal or social). However, the respondents were informed that they may withdraw from the research study at any stage of the investigation if they so wished.

1.12.2 INFORMED CONSENT

Respondents were thoroughly informed of the nature and goal of the research, the procedures that will be followed during the investigation, the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher. Adequate information was provided about the demands that the project would place on them in terms of time and activities required from the respondents, as well as disclosure of confidential information. Respondents were also informed that they were free to participate or to decline to participate or to withdraw from the research at any time.

Due to the fact that the questionnaires were e-mailed to all respondents, the above-mentioned information was provided in the covering letter of the questionnaire. Therefore, if the respondent completed and forwarded the questionnaire to the researcher, it was assumed that

informed consent was given. In addition, the researcher obtained appropriate approval from LBCP, as host organisation, prior to conducting any part of the research. (Letter of written permission is attached as Annexure A.)

1.12.3 DECEPTION OF RESPONDENTS

The researcher did not deceive or mislead the respondents in any way. The researcher did not withhold any information and did not provide any incorrect information to the respondents in order to ensure participation.

1.12.4 VIOLATION OF PRIVACY

Due to the fact that the questionnaires was distributed and collected via e-mail, the researcher was aware of the identity of the respondents (by means of their e-mail addresses). Although the questionnaire was not about sensitive, intimate, or personal matters, the researcher guaranteed that all questionnaires would be treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality during analysis and reporting, that no reference would be made to any respondent as an individual, and that responses would be presented in an aggregated format only. Furthermore, no raw data would be given to any third party outside the auspices of this academic study.

1.12.5 ACTIONS AND COMPETENCE OF RESEARCHER

The researcher has successfully completed the research methodology course, MWT 864, as part of her Masters Degree in Social Science (EAP), and is therefore competent and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed study.

1.12.6 COOPERATION WITH COLLABORATORS

The research project did not require a sponsor or co-worker.

1.12.7 RELEASE OR PUBLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented to the reading public in written form. The researcher compiled the report in an accurate, objective, clear, and unambiguous manner. The researcher ensured that the investigation proceeds correctly and formulated and conveyed all the essential information (including errors and shortcomings) clearly and unambiguously, so that misappropriation by and deception of the respondents, the general public and colleagues are

avoided or minimised. The researcher gave credit to all sources consulted and people who cooperated with the study.

After completion of the study a copy of the final research report will be made available to the company as a form of recognition and gratitude to the respondents for their participation. This will inform the respondents about the findings in an objective manner without offering too many details or impairing the principles of confidentiality. (Responses will only be presented in an aggregated format.)

1.12.8 RESTORATION OF RESPONDENTS

There was no need for debriefing sessions after the completion of the study due to the fact that the questions asked during the survey were not of a sensitive, intimate, or personal nature.

1.13 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.13.1 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Employee Assistance Professionals Association of South Africa (Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 1999: 4) gives the following formal definition for an EAP:

“A work-site-based programme designed to assist in the identification and resolution of productivity problems associated with employees impaired by personal concerns including, but not limited to: health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, drug, legal, emotional, stress, or other personal concerns which may adversely affect employee job performance”.

Davies (2002: 2) defines an EAP as “...an organised, systematic programme of counselling, advice and assistance operating within organisations, funded by the employer and designed to help employees with personal and work-related problems. The ultimate concern is with identifying, preventing and treating problems that adversely affect job performance” (Davies, 2002: 2).

For the purpose of this study, an EAP refers to:

A confidential support service available to employees, which assists them in the identification and resolution of personal and work-related problems, which may negatively affect their job performance.

1.13.2 PETS/COMPANION ANIMALS

Shoda (1997, in Van Heerden, 2001: 31) states that dogs and cats are usually viewed as representative of animals that are normally considered as pets. However, according to Shoda, the list of pets is highly diverse and can include a variety of animals, such as "...rabbits, bantams, canaries, parakeets, goldfish and tropical fish". Shoda acknowledges that pets that are raised with care and who share the owners' life, are recently more likely to be termed 'companion animals' (1997, in Van Heerden, 2001: 31-32).

Likewise, Serpell and Paul (1994: 129), view pets as "...animals that are kept primarily for social or emotional reasons rather than for economic purposes...". These authors also acknowledge the recent adoption of the term 'companion animal' as an alternative to 'pet'.

Although the researcher acknowledges and understands the recent adoption of the term 'companion animal', this study will still use the term 'pet' due to the fact that it is still the most commonly used term, known and understood by most people.

For the purpose of this study the researcher complies with the definition given by Van Heerden (2001: 32). Therefore, pets refer to:

Animals viewed as significant others in human beings' lives and with whom humans can positively interact with.

1.13.3 HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND

According to Stickney (1998: online) "...the human-animal bond involves the development of strong feelings for and psychological attachment to an animal". Furthermore, the author states that the human-animal bond can have beneficial effects, e.g., lowered blood pressure and extended life span. In accordance with the above, PAWSitive InterAction, stipulates that the human-animal bond refers to the "...strong positive interaction that exists between humans and animals - the special bond that actually enhances human quality of life. These benefits can be emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual - and are created when an animal's behaviour and actions cause us to laugh, a beloved pet welcomes us home, or an animal aids us in therapy" (www.pawsitiveinteraction.org, 12 April 2003).

For the purpose of this study, the human-animal bond refers to:

The strong psychological and emotional attachment to and positive interaction with animals, which forms a special bond that improves human quality of life - emotionally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually.

1.13.4 HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTION

According to Odendaal (1988, in Van Heerden, 2001: 26), human-animal interaction refers to the symbiotic relationship that exists between humans and animals. Van Heerden (2001: 26) views human-animal interaction as a dynamic process of mutual involvement, which results in the satisfaction of specific needs of both parties involved, i.e., the human as well as the animal.

For the purpose of this study the researcher complies with the definition given by Van Heerden (2001: 26). Therefore, human-animal interaction refers to:

Positive interaction between humans and pets (companion animals).

1.13.5 PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICY

The term 'policy' can have different meanings. According to Freeman and Pillay (1997: 33), policy, in its most basic form, "...is about goals, aims and visions and about plans of action adopted in relation to these goals". Nel (1998: 342) states the following regarding policies: "A

policy provides proof of commitment and of preparedness to declare views and attitudes and it sets limits of behaviour. It shows the intention of the parties involved to honour these declarations". Furthermore, Nel views the company policy as forming "...the basis for the development of all other processes and procedures that determine the conduct of workers and management in an organisation" (Nel, 1998: 342).

According to the researcher, the term 'pet-friendly' refers to the willing and enthusiastic acceptance and welcoming of pets into a specific environment.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a pet-friendly workplace policy refers to:

Rules, guidelines, and procedures that accept, welcome and regulate the presence of pets into the working environment, in order to benefit from the human-animal bond and interaction.

1.14 CONTENTS OF RESEARCH REPORT

The research report consists of four chapters. The following figure represents the chapters in the research report schematically.

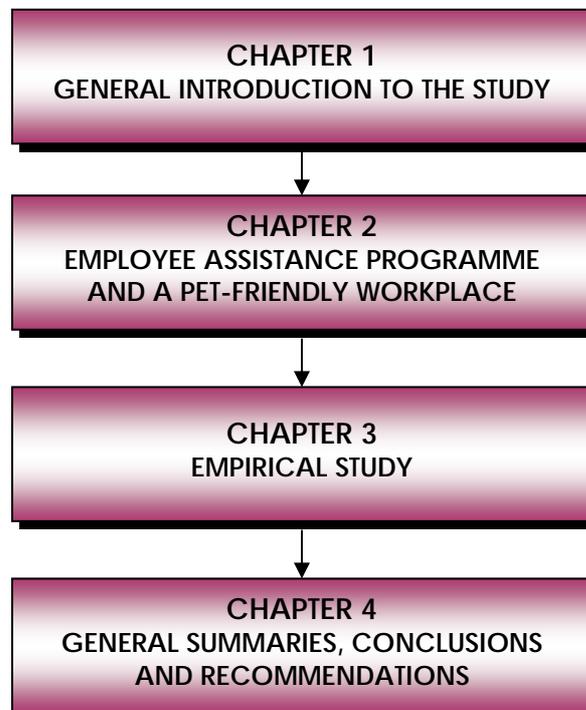


Figure 2 Chapters in the research report

1.15 SUMMARY

Employees and organisations of the new millennium exist in an environment that is extremely stressful, demanding and competitive, which ultimately affects the health and well-being of the individual employee, as well as the health and well-being of the organisation. Employers are also realising that employees are their most important assets and that the health and well-being of these employees play a critical role in the productivity, profitability and competitiveness of the organisation. Consequently, employers are constantly searching for means and measures that would enhance employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment in order to improve the productivity and performance levels of their employees, and in addition create a supportive social climate and organisational culture.

The implementation of an EAP is a long-established policy that promotes employee health and well-being, and as a result also enhances organisational issues, such as productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness. However, the implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy is becoming a new and innovative means of obtaining the same outcomes. Allowing pets in the workplace might be of significant importance to the field of employee assistance, as the general health-enhancing benefits of pets on the physical, emotional and social health of their human companions, are also experienced in a workplace environment. Consequently, the presence of pets in their workplace may positively affect and benefit employee health and organisational issues – outcomes aimed for by an EAP.

The goal of this study is to explore the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African work environment as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP. This study complies with a quantitative approach due to the unfamiliarity of the concept and the limited scope of a mini-dissertation. The study utilises applied research, in particular strategic research, as the aim was to generate basic knowledge about the perceptions and opinions of employees in a specific social system, to the presence of pets in the workplace, in order to contribute towards practical issues of problem-solving, decision-making, and policy analysis concerning the implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy.

An exploratory research design, more specifically, a cross-sectional design, was utilised, as it was essential to gain insight into the perceptions and opinions regarding the presence of pets in the workplace of a specific employee population. The possibility of including positive human-animal interaction in the field of employee assistance, as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP, was therefore explored. No sampling method was used due to the fact that data was collected from the entire population.

CHAPTER 2

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES AND PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Organisations of the new millennium exist in a highly competitive, challenging, and fast-changing working environment that include swift technological development, an accelerating pace of organisational change, and globalisation of the world economy. This compels employees to adapt to and cope with new ways of working. Employees are exposed to more intense workloads, stricter deadlines, longer working hours, less job security, and generally higher and more intense levels of stress and anxiety, which are accompanied by major health risks (Davies, 2003: 15; Senior & Reddy, 2002, in Senior, 2003: 15; Davies, 2002: 13). As a result, organisations' duty to take reasonable care of the emotional and social well-being of their employees, as well as maintaining the health of these employees, has become a growing priority in recent years (Davies, 2002: 13; World Health Organisation, 1999, in Senior, 2003: 15).

Senior (2003: 16) suggests that the greater than ever levels of stress that exist among employees, together with the growing recognition of the importance of managing psychosocial risks in limiting health care costs and improving organisational productivity, propose that promoting mental health and enhancing psychological well-being and resilience among employees are likely to become fundamental characteristics of the modern workplace. Employers could improve employee performance and consequently organisational productivity by promoting both healthier individuals and healthier work environments. As a result, employee health and well-being are linked to the general business goals of the organisation (Senior, 2003: 15).

According to Chu and Dwyer (2002, in Senior 2003: 15), more and more organisations across the world are implementing policies and programmes that promote the health and well-being of their employees, as well as improving their quality of life. Goetzel (2001, in Senior, 2003: 15) indicates that organisations implemented such policies in the past predominantly as it was seen as the right and moral thing to do – showing a concern for the employees, their health and well-being. However, in the present day, greater emphasis is placed on employee performance and organisational productivity (Goetzel, 2001, in Senior, 2003: 15) and there is an increasing recognition that the health and well-being of employees are critical predictors of long-term

productivity, profitability, and competitiveness (Pellegrin, 2002, in Senior, 2003: 15). It is therefore imperative that health and well-being be part and parcel of employees' jobs and that the workplace becomes a place that provides an environment that is stimulating and satisfying for its employees (Chu *et al.*, 1997, in Senior, 2003: 16).

Over the past several decades, Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) have been developed and established as an effective system utilised by organisations to address a range of performance related indicators, as well as employee health and well-being and overall organisational well-being (Davies, 2003: 14; Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 12-18; Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 1999: 4; Masi, 1994: 13). Another innovative, but unusual, policy implemented by some modern organisations to address these issues, is a pet-friendly workplace policy (Sawicki, 2004: online; Mzumara, 2000: online; Duffy, 1999: online; Marshall, 1999: online).

The aim of this chapter is to first give an overview of the state of mental health and the incidence of stress in the modern workplace. As mentioned earlier, the increasing demands and pressures placed on employees in the modern workplace, give rise to greater and more intense levels of stress and anxiety, which in turn have major risks for the psychosocial well-being and mental health of employees. Both EAPs and pet-friendly workplaces are measures that promote health and well-being, which ultimately enhance employee performance and overall organisational productivity. It is, therefore, important to have a general indication of the current state of mental health and the incidence of stress in the workplace. The chapter will then give an overview of the concept of EAPs, including the objectives, rationale and outcomes of EAPs. This will be followed by a discussion of the concept of a pet-friendly workplace, by first considering the human-animal relationship and general benefits of pets to the typical adult population, and then translating these benefits to the work environment. The chapter will conclude with the possible link between the outcomes of an EAP and the outcomes of a pet-friendly workplace policy, indicating that a pet-friendly workplace could enhance the outcomes of an EAP.

2.2 THE STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND THE INCIDENCE OF STRESS IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE

The workplace of the new millennium introduces an environment that creates diverse and contradictory challenges for organisations and their employees (Davies, 1999: 1), with deadlines, competitions, challenging time commitments, and other job-related pressures taking their toll on the minds and bodies of employees (Ruckert, 1987: 10). Therefore, "today it is commonplace to say that, for economically active people, stress is a part of everyday life."

Currently, it has become almost fashionable to be stressed emotionally and physically by the demands of the hard-driving organization, the challenging professional job, the dual-career partnership, the working mother or even the caring father role – to name but a few” (Berridge & Cooper, 1994: 7).

Research findings of the Health and Safety Executive concluded that in 2001 approximately 500 000 employees suffered from work-related stress or depression in the United Kingdom (Davies, 2002: 7), and that more or less 6.5 million sick days were taken as a result of stress every year (Davies, 2002: 9). According to a survey conducted by the Institute of Management in 1993 with almost 1000 managers (King, 1994: 38), the impact of stress levels in the present day is far-reaching. Approximately 70% of these managers said that work was a source of stress, with almost 81% experiencing personal anxieties about the conflicting demands of work. Eight in ten respondents stated that they did not find enough time to relax, while three-quarters reported that stress had a negative influence on their morale, personal effectiveness at work, and partner relationships. Seventy per cent claimed that stress adversely affected their overall health; with two-thirds suffering from disturbed sleep patterns (King, 1994: 38).

Findings from a 1993 Employment in Britain Survey (King, 1994: 38), suggested that managers were not the only ones experiencing such high levels of stresses and pressures. Thirty-one per cent of employee respondents reported that they experienced significant levels of stress as a result of their work life, and 54% claimed that their stress levels had increased over the last five years. According to Smith *et al.* (2000, in Davies, 2002: 7), 20% of a large representative working population sample in the United Kingdom reported ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ high levels of occupational stress. In the United States industry, approximately 550 million working days are lost annually to absenteeism, with an estimated 54% of these days being stress-related (Elkin & Rosch, 1990, in Davies, 2002: 9). Additionally, stress contributes to 85% of work-related accidents (Davies, 2002: 10).

Johnson and Indvik (1997, in Davies, 2002: 8) claim that more than 17.5 million adults suffer from clinical depression each year, and that in many cases it could be attributed to workplace stress. There is a growing body of research illustrating the negative impact and high cost of depression in the workplace (Senior, 2003: 9). A report published in 2000 by the International Labour Organisation (Davies, 2002: 7) indicates that clinical depression has become one of the most common illnesses in the US, affecting one in ten working age adults each year, and resulting in a loss of approximately 200 million working days annually. According to the same report, almost three out of ten employees in the United Kingdom experience mental health problems annually, and, in addition, various studies indicate that work-related stress and the illnesses it causes are common. Depression, in particular, is such a widespread problem that at any given time one in

every 20 working-aged Britons is experiencing major depression (Davies, 2002: 7). A 2001 study of the Yale School of Medicine, conducted by Druss *et al.* (Senior, 2003: 9), finds that depression has a substantial and persistent association with reduced productivity in the workplace.

According to the Depression and Anxiety Support Group (Davies, 2002: 8), stress-related illnesses are emerging as the main occupational disease in the current working environment of South Africa, with South African managers being the most stressed out executives in the world. To a certain extent, this is contributed to the fact that South Africans have to live and cope with high levels of violent crime and rapid socio-economic change over and above the normal everyday workplace stressors (Davies, 2002: 8). Furthermore, the Depression and Anxiety Support Group estimates that 15% of South Africans suffer from depression, a stress-related condition, in contrast to an international average of about 10% (Bisseker, 2000, in Davies, 2002: 8). In addition, Davies (2003: 14) claims that at any given time, one in every five employees experiences or suffers from problems - personal, physical, or practical - which are severe enough to distract them at work or cause some dysfunction, causing these employees to experience a 20% decrease in productivity.

Research indicates that emotional problems and stress negatively impact on the health and well-being of the individual employee and the organisation. Correlations have been documented and confirmed between stress and coronary heart disease, alcoholism, behavioural problems, job dissatisfaction and lost productivity (Davies, 2002: 12). In addition, work-related stress is costly to the organisation and the country. An estimated 10% to 15% of a country's GNP is lost due to stress-related absenteeism and turnover, while 30% to 40% of all sickness absence from work is due to mental and emotional disturbance. By means of new government legislation an increased number of employees are also beginning to litigate against their employers, relating to job-related stress (Davies, 2002: 12-13).

It is therefore understandable and crucial that policies and programmes that promote the health and well-being of employees be introduced into organisations in an attempt to ultimately attend to productivity and performance issues negatively impacting on the organisational well-being. An EAP is one such a policy implemented to address and manage the emotional needs and personal difficulties of employees, which are negatively affecting job performance and are, as a result, detrimental to the overall organisational productivity (Davies, 2003: 14; Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 2, 12-18; Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 1999: 4; Masi, 1994: 13). The next section of this chapter will, therefore, give an overview of the concept of an EAP, including the objectives, rationale and outcomes of EAPs.

2.3 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

2.3.1 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

EAPs developed out of Occupational Alcoholism Programmes, which began in the early 1940s. These pioneer programmes were developed through the efforts of recovering alcoholics to combat financial and personnel losses associated with problem drinking, and dealt exclusively with alcoholism (Masi, 1994: 13; McCaffery, 1992: 104; Jerrell & Rightmyer, 1988: 252). During the 1970s it became increasingly difficult to justify treating only alcoholic employees and as a result the evolution of broader-based programmes, called Employee Assistance Programmes, began (Masi, 1994: 13).

Over the past sixty years, EAPs have grown and evolved well beyond the original singular focus of assisting employees impaired by substance abuse to a 'broad brush' or comprehensive approach to human problems, which include an extensive variety of clinical services and organisational tools for promoting productivity. These programmes usually offer full-spectrum support services for employees, and deal with individual psychological problems; marriage, family and childcare difficulties; work stress; and financial and legal concerns, and virtually any other type of problem that may be troubling the employee (Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 2; CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online; Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 1999: 4; McCaffery, 1992: 105).

Myers (1984: 4) perceives employee assistance as a generic term referring to more or less structured programmes implemented to meet the needs of employees who are experiencing personal problems and stresses that are negatively impacting on their work performance. According to this author, the title Employee Assistance Programme is the term used most frequently to define this formal approach of employee assistance; however, many other titles are also used, e.g., Personal Assistance Programme, Employee Counselling Programme, Employee Health Programme, and Employee Counselling and Assistance Service (Myers, 1984: 4).

Csiernik (1995: 25) stipulates that EAPs provide assistance to employees suffering from physical, mental, or emotional problems, and attempt to reduce or resolve these concerns by directing employees to appropriate treatment or self-help groups. According to Masi (1994: 13), an EAP is a professional assessment, referral, and/or short-term counselling service, offered to employees with substance or mental health problems that adversely affect their job performance. However, EAP services also include managerial consultations, supervisory and union training, employee orientations, childcare, elder care, critical incidence stress debriefings, and

employee education (*op. cit.*). Similarly, Davies (2003: 14) describes EAPs as structured intervention programmes, offering various support services, including counselling, which aim to enhance the well-being of employees, and as a result, the organisation's overall productivity and profitability. The most workable generic definition of an EAP, is provided by Berridge and Cooper (1994: 5): "a programmatic intervention at the workplace, usually at the level of the individual employee, using behavioural science knowledge and methods for the recognition and control of certain work- and non-work related problems (notably alcoholism, drug abuse and mental health) which adversely affect job performance, with the objective of enabling the individual to return to making her or his full work contribution and to attaining full functioning in personal life".

It is clear that the focus of EAPs has shifted from the initial distinct focus on supporting and assisting employees impaired by alcohol and substance abuse only to focusing on assisting and treating a variety of personal and practical problems, including employee education and managerial consultations and training. The general emphasis of the modern EAP is on the overall well-being and quality of life of employees, which, consequently, also influence the organisation's overall efficiency, productivity, quality, and competitiveness in a positive way. To summarise in the words of Reddy (1994, in Davies, 2002: 2), employee assistance is more about a concept or a philosophy that focuses on assisting and supporting employees in the interest of health and performance, and finding ways to identify and meet their needs, than it is about any single and specific programme to meet them. This philosophy of employee assistance in the interest of health and performance could be illustrated in more detail by focusing on the goals and objectives of EAPs.

2.3.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

According to Jerrell and Rightmyer (1988: 252) the typical goals of EAPs include the promotion of employee health, morale, and productivity. These authors indicate that, although the scope of problems addressed by EAPs has expanded tremendously, the primary goal remains to improve the work performance and efficiency of the employee in order to minimise the organisational costs associated with these problems experienced by employees.

Thompson (1990: 164) explains that the EAP is a confidential service aimed at assisting troubled employees and summarises the four primary goals of an EAP as follows:

- To identify employees whose personal problems are negatively affecting their job performance.
- To motivate these employees to request and accept help for their problems.
- To assess the problems and personal resources of these employees and to develop a strategy to assist them.
- To assist these employees in obtaining the service they need in order for them to live healthy, happy, and productive lives (*op. cit.*).

The EAP Handbook (CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online) stipulates that in order for an EAP to function fully, the programme needs both clinical and organisational responsibilities. Beyond its clinical role of assessment, diagnosis, and referral, the basic objectives of an EAP are to retain valued employees with skills and experience, and to contribute to various aspects of the organisation. To this extent more specific objectives of the EAP include:

- To serve as a resource to supervisors, assisting them to deal with employees experiencing personal problems.
- To assist with the training and development of employees.
- To assist in maximising employee potential.
- To assist in promoting and maintaining a productive and efficient work environment.
- To maximise the organisation's social responsibility.
- To serve as a resource to union representatives.
- To assure quality of care (*op. cit.*).

An additional objective of EAPs includes the improvement and strengthening of relationships and interpersonal skills between and among groups of employees, management, labour unions, and local community members (Jerrell & Rightmyer, 1988: 253).

Although these goals and objectives of EAPs were discussed independently to illustrate in particular and in detail the purpose of EAPs, they are fundamentally based in the general rationale and motivation for implementing EAPs and should holistically be viewed against this.

2.3.3 RATIONALES AND MOTIVATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

In the present day, more and more managers realise that employees are their most important assets. With this realisation, managers also recognise that employees are human beings and therefore face human problems (CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online). Human problems have a direct and negative impact on the productivity, performance, and behaviour of employees in the workplace in view of the fact that mounting personal problems may cause a substantial decline in their ability to function due to a reduction in energy levels and efficiency (Davies, 2002: 11). Research monitoring employee stress levels illustrates the significant impact of employee problems on organisational efficiency. Simultaneously, research indicates that with appropriate intervention it is possible to effectively manage and in many cases even prevent the development of stress and its related organisational costs (Davies, 2003: 15).

According to the EAP Handbook (CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online), the primary rationales for developing and implementing an EAP fall into three major areas: humanitarian commitments, safety issues, and economic concerns. In the past, the most important motivating factors for the development and implementation of EAPs tended to fall more in the area of humanistic concerns. Assisting employees through their difficulties was seen as a humanitarian and moral act, and EAPs were introduced into many organisations first and foremost in response to the needs of employees and to project a 'caring' image of the organisation, internally and externally; expressing a concern about the welfare and well-being of their employees (Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 6; CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online; Challenger, 1988: 7). This humanitarian motivation for introducing EAPs was justified in addition because of the opportunity and ability of EAPs to save valued employees and their jobs, to restore families, and to save lives (Challenger, 1988: 8), as well as to assist in the desire to help build employee loyalty (Myers, 1984: 4).

Safety issues and concerns also motivate organisations to establish EAPs. There exists legislation which specifies that organisations should provide a safe working environment for their employees. As a result, failure to address human problems may subject an organisation to liability. Any of the wide range of human problems, including depression, anxiety, stress and definitely substance abuse, can cause or accelerate safety-related problems (CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online). Safety concerns could be extended to include not only physical safety concerns but also concerns regarding emotional and psychological safety, which could include issues such as promoting mental health and well-being, fostering an environment free of sexual harassment and bullying, job security, etc.

However, the primary impetus for the establishment of EAPs has changed substantially and there has been a shift away from the purely humanistic or welfarist orientation to one driven by economic reasons (Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 6; CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online). Challenger (1988: 7) explains that the implementation of an EAP limits health care costs through the early identification and treatment of employee problems, before a crisis situation develops. EAPs could also prevent potential problems through employee education and the training of supervisors, and it could thus result in an increase in productivity for a minimum investment. Furthermore, introducing an EAP into an organisation would be an opportunity to provide an additional benefit to employees and their families, which provides a higher return on investment (*op. cit.*).

As a result of this return on investment, organisations are beginning to see the business benefits of EAPs and perceive EAPs not as an additional cost, but as a wise investment (Highly, 1998, in Davies, 2002: 6). To summarise in the words of Davies (2002: 6): “There is no way to place a monetary value on a job saved, a family put back together, the gratitude of the employee helped, or avoiding the loss of a life... On the other hand, ... the simple fact is that [life] problems affect people, and people affect productivity”. Organisations are recognising that by assisting employees to cope with stress and personal problems, they can reduce absenteeism, enhance morale and ultimately boost productivity and profitability (Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 6). The next section of this chapter will explore, in more detail, the outcomes and benefits of implementing an EAP.

2.3.4 OUTCOMES OF IMPLEMENTING EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

The potential outcomes of implementing an EAP could be seen in various benefits for both the individual employee and the organisation.

The potential outcomes and benefits for the individual employee are directly observed by means of improved job performance, better social functioning, an enhanced self-esteem and a more positive attitude towards the organisations (Davies, 2002: 15; Davies, 1999: 4). Employees have improved mental well-being, function better at work, and express higher job and life satisfaction and satisfaction with the fringe benefits provided for them (Davies, 2002: 15; Davies, 1999: 4; Highly & Cooper, 1994: 46). Employees also experience enhanced morale (Berridge & Cooper, 1994: 11). As EAP services are not paid for by the employee, a further benefit for the employee is the reduced health care costs (Davies, 2002: 14-15).

Additional outcomes of the implementation of an EAP according to ICAS (1997: 6) are the following:

- Employees are more able to focus at work
- Employees are better motivated
- Employees are more in control of their work-life balance
- Employees take reduced time off for personal concerns
- Employees have more energy
- Employees' coping skills are more developed
- Employees have improved psychological resilience and stability
- Employees are less distracted by personal concerns (*op. cit.*)

Simultaneously, developing and implementing an EAP has several outcomes for the organisation, which could be perceived in terms of various performance- and health-related indicators and benefits. Various performance-related benefits could be observed as a result of helping employees to cope with stress and personal problems. These performance-related benefits include a reduction in sickness absence / absenteeism, poor time keeping (tardiness, leaving early), errors and accident rates, and grievance and disciplinary procedures (Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 12, 15; Highly & Cooper, 1994: 46). According to Davies (2002: 12) research indicates an average improvement of 50% - 70% in these various performance-related areas after an EAP has been introduced into the organisation.

Another benefit the organisation experiences due to more satisfied and happy employees is a reduction in unwanted staff turnover (improved employee retention) with consequent savings in recruitment, development, and training costs, as well as expertise protection (Davies, 2002: 12, 15; Berridge & Cooper, 1994: 11; Highly & Cooper, 1994: 46;). Furthermore, the organisation benefits from improvement in internal communication, health and safety, and external public relations, being perceived as 'caring employers' (Highly & Cooper, 1994: 46). These factors all add to improved commitment and morale, better working relationships, and increased productivity (Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 12, 15).

Introducing an EAP also has several health-related outcomes and benefits. Health-related benefits include a cutback in sick pay and medical costs, reduced use of medical insurance, fewer accidents and injuries, compensation claims, sick leave, and disability (Davies, 2002: 14).

Additional outcomes of implementing an EAP are the attraction of top quality staff, as well as building and improving staff loyalty (Davies, 2002: 18). The recruitment and retention of talented employees have always been a challenge, especially in an environment of disappearing staff loyalty and intense competition. As a result, an organisation's benefits may be a beneficial means to recruit and retain talented employees and in building a satisfied, dedicated and loyal workforce (*op. cit.*). According to Dobbs, Gordon and Stamps (2000, in Davies, 2002: 18), EAPs are swiftly developing as a benefit of choice. In general, employees appreciate the availability of these programmes and the fact that they are perceived as more than just employees, and the EAP plays a role in bonding the employee more to the organisation (*op. cit.*).

As mentioned earlier, EAPs are implemented as an effective system to address the health and well-being, as well as performance and productivity issues, of employees and organisations. Another innovative measure that promotes employee health and well-being, in an effort to ultimately enhance performance and overall organisational productivity, is a pet-friendly workplace policy (Sawicki, 2004: online; Mzumara, 2000: online; Duffy, 1999: online; Marshall, 1999: online). The following section of this chapter will deal with a discussion of the concept of a pet-friendly workplace, by first considering the human-animal relationship and general benefits of pets to the typical adult population, and then translating these benefits to the work environment.

2.4 PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

2.4.1 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP

The interrelationship between humans and animals is not a new phenomenon. In fact, animals have been associated with man for as long as can be remembered, and the social symbiotic relationship that exists between humans and animals is an ancient one (Baiocco, 1997: online; Odendaal & Weyers, 1990: 28-29; Fitzgerald, 1986: 103-104). According to Odendaal (2002: 52-53), historical evidence and prehistoric speculations indicate that the social symbiotic relationship between humans and animals, in particular dogs and cats, developed without coercion from the human's side. The author therefore concludes that domestication was an unforced and natural process in establishing a social symbiotic relationship between humans and animals, which could be explained by well-developed needs for attention; and not a one-sided decision by humans to catch animals in order to domesticate them for the benefit of humans only (*op. cit.*).

The relationship between humans and dogs is regarded as the longest mutually beneficial inter-species relationship of all (Smith & Fingerhut, 2001: online), and it is considered that dogs, descendants of wolves, were probably the first animals domesticated, approximately between 10 000 to 15 000 years ago (Paws for Health, 2001: online; Cusack, 1988: 1; Fitzgerald, 1986: 103). In 1976, one of the earliest archaeological indicators of the human-animal bond, estimated to be approximately 12 000 years old, was uncovered in a tomb in northern Israel - a human skeleton with the remains of a puppy clutched in the hands of the skeleton, suggesting that the relationship between the two was an affectionate, and not a dietary one (Cusack, 1988: 1-2).

Primitive people in the hunter-gatherer societies considered relationships with animals essential to their survival, and it was commonplace for them to look after and care for animals (NIH, 1987: online). Animals, in particular dogs, presumably assisted these primitive communities in various activities, such as hunting, herding and retrieval, as well as transporting by being sled dogs or to pull carts; served as guards and alarm-givers to alert and protect the people of the community; were used as trade objects and for pest control; and occasionally also served as food (Baiocco, 1997: online; Odendaal & Weyers, 1990: 28; NIH, 1987: online; Fitzgerald, 1986: 103-104). Furthermore, animals played a significant role in human customs and traditions, legends and folklore, and religions and beliefs (NIH, 1987: online). Some animals were perceived as sacred objects, for example cats were made sacred by the Egyptians as early as 2500 to 2200 BC, and animals played a role in superstitious beliefs (Odendaal & Weyers, 1990: 28; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104). In addition, animals were used as fashion trends, as objects for drawings and paintings, and for relaxation and leisure time, and also provided companionship and love to humans (Odendaal & Weyers, 1990: 28).

In modern societies there has been an immense increase in pet ownership, with approximately half of all households owning at least one pet (Odendaal & Weyers, 1990: 29) and many perceiving their pets as members of the family (Paws for Health, 2001: online; Sable, 1995: 334). According to Becker (2002: 254), demographics show that about 6 out of 10 households in the United States have pets, whereas only 3 out of 10 have children. Odendaal and Weyers (1990: 29) contribute this modern interest in pets to the stressful lifestyles evident in a highly competitive and fast-paced society, which create a need for stress relief, as well as the rapidly changing life environment due to the recent increase and tempo of urbanisation, which emphasise human beings' need to establish a link or contact with nature. According to the authors, pets could play a crucial role in satisfying both these needs (*op. cit.*).

Human-animal interaction, as a field of study, has been recognised and developed during the second half of the 20th century, with a renewed interest in and focus on the role and therapeutic benefits of pets in the modern society (Odendaal, 1989: 169). Most people date

the beginning of this modern interest and research in human-animal interaction to Boris Levinson's first paper on this subject, *The Dog as a 'Co-Therapist'*, published in *Mental Hygiene* in 1962 (Rowan & Thayer, 2000: xxvii). However, in 1944 a paper by James H.S. Bossard in *Mental Hygiene* also addressed the therapeutic value of dog ownership by discussing the important role that domestic animals play in family life and in the mental health of its members. Bossard described the family pet "as a source of unconditional love; as an outlet for people's desire to express love; as fulfilling a human's desire for exercising power; as a 'teacher' of children on topics such as toilet training, sex education, and responsibility; as social lubricants; and as companions" (Rowan & Thayer, 2000: xxvii). Already in 1950, Bossard concluded, "the love for animals by humans is one of the universals in the existence of both. Household pets are an integral part of family life; they must be considered as a basic implement in mental hygiene" (Rowan & Thayer, 2000: xxviii).

However, the explosion of knowledge in this particular subject, resulting in it developing into a generally recognised field of study, only occurred in the 1980s, when scientific societies were founded; international conferences were arranged and conducted; and popular articles and scientific papers on human-animal interaction were more frequent and widespread (Odendaal, 2002: 1). In spite of this renewed interest in and significance that is given to pets and their special relationship with humans in modern societies, the relationship between humans and their pets has not changed in principle over the years, as the original and fundamental motivation for keeping pets has not changed. Modern relationships with pets have only become stronger, more intense and of greater variety (Odendaal, 2002: 52; Odendaal & Weyers, 1990: 21-29) and research is beginning to support what every pet owner knows, i.e., that having a family pet enriches the quality of life and well-being of their human companions (Sable, 1995: 334).

Scientific literature published prior to 1983 contains little evidence to verify a significant relationship between animal contact and human health (Garrity & Stallones, 1998: 3-4). However, a number of studies appeared between 1983 and 1989 that addressed the association between human health and well-being and the presence of pets; and between 1990 and 1995, 25 empirical studies (in the English language) addressed the issue of physical, psychological, social, and other behavioural effects experienced by humans as a result of contact with pets (*op. cit.*).

The human-animal bond and the positive relationship and interaction between humans and animals have a beneficial impact on the well-being and quality of life of people from all age groups and target groups. In general, though, research usually describes the therapeutic role pets play among the more vulnerable people in society, focussing on the people who are

physically or mentally handicapped, people who are socially maladapted, patients who are chronically ill, people who are lonely – suffering from long-term social deprivation, people who are emotionally disturbed, prisoners, substance-dependent addicts, the elderly, and children; in other words, people who are often not included in the mainstream community activities as experienced by the economically active adult population (Odendaal, 2002: 53-54). However, for the purpose of this study, the focus will be only on the positive influence and therapeutic value pets add to the lives of the economically active adult population.

2.4.2 THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF PETS TO THE GENERAL ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE ADULT POPULATION

In general, research indicates that human-animal interactions affect human well-being and functioning (Melson, 2002: 350). Humans benefit from pet ownership, especially when such ownership is accompanied by a strong positive attachment to the animal (DeMello, 1999: 859). Several studies illustrate that pet ownership is associated with better overall health status (Frisby, 2001: online; Friedmann, Thomas & Eddy, 2000: 137) and an enhanced quality of life (Garrity & Stallones, 1998: 3). The American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPMA) issued a report, *Healthy Pets, Healthy People*, as a result of a survey conducted in 2000, which indicates a strong correlation between enhanced physical and mental health and pet ownership (APPMA, 2001: online).

Scientific evidence supporting the view that human-animal interaction has a favourable impact on the overall physical, emotional, and psychological wellness of their human companions is growing rapidly (PAWSitive InterAction, 2002: 7, 9). Examples of such evidence include the association between positive pet ownership and:

- happiness (Rossbach & Wilson, 1992, in Friedmann, 2000: 54; Garrity, Stallones, Marx & Johnson, 1989, in DeMello, 1999: 859)
- improved physical health status (Dembicki & Anderson, 1996, in Friedmann, 2000: 55; Ory & Goldberg, 1983, in DeMello, 1999: 859-860; Friedmann & Thomas, 1995: 1213-1217; Siegel, 1993: 157-167; Anderson *et al.*, 1992: 298-301; Serpell, 1991: 717-720; Siegel, 1990: 1081-1086; Friedmann *et al.*, 1980: 307-312), and
- lower levels of psychiatric disturbance (Straede & Gates, 1993, in DeMello, 1999: 860), including decreased depression (Hart, 2000: 62; Holcomb *et al.*, 1997, in Friedmann, 2000: 54; Folse *et al.*, 1994, in Friedmann, 2000: 54).

According to Bergler (1988: 111), pet owners, in particular dog owners, have no difficulty in confirming this direct relationship between personal well-being, quality of life, and the presence of their pet.

The various ways in which pets benefit their human companions are complex and it is difficult to simplify the fundamental factors or mechanisms responsible for the effects of positive human-animal interaction (Council for Science and Society, 1988: 30). Two possible mechanisms have, however, been confirmed to be responsible for the beneficial effects of positive pet ownership and animal contact. The first mechanism includes the fact that animals are able to cause an immediate, physiological de-arousing state of relaxation simply by attracting and holding the attention of their human companions (Katcher *et al.*, 1983, in Serpell, 2000: 15). The mere physicality of the relationship with an animal benefits human health (Becker, 2002: 6). There is something soothing, comforting and healing about petting or cuddling an animal, and being 'kissed' or 'nuzzled' in return - even the feeling of its fur could be calming and relaxing (Becker, 2002: 6-7; Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 117; Baiocco, 1997: online; MacCallum, 1992: online). In addition, pets are extremely diverting and entertaining, and provide recreational distraction from stressors and concerns (Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 117; Council for Science and Society, 1988: 30). Pets encourage laughter and a sense of humour, and provide their human companions with fun, relaxation, and entertainment (Hart, 2000: 59; Cusack, 1988: 19). Interacting with pets, or simply watching them, appears to divert people's attention away from themselves, causing a state of absorption that is usually associated with a rewarding sense of calmness and relaxation (Council for Science and Society, 1988: 30).

The second mechanism that offers a convincing explanation for the benefits of human-animal interaction is the concept of pets being capable of providing their human companions with a form of stress-reducing or stress-buffering social support (Serpell, 1996, in Serpell, 2000: 15; Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 117; Siegel, 1990: 1081-1086). According to Garrity and Stallones (1998: 5), pets are viewed as a type of nonhuman social support capable of producing health and behavioural benefits on their human companions. Often pets are perceived as being more humane than humans, reflecting the kindest, purest and best indicators of humanity:

- "Pets don't lie or cheat; they have to-die-for loyalty, and they love unconditionally" (Becker, 2002: 254).
- Pets are non-judgemental and are perceived to always be available, accepting, and predictable in their responses (Becker, 2002: 76; Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 117).

- Pets provide a sense of esteem in that they are perceived as both caring about their owners, and making them feel needed and important by their dependence on them (Paws for Health, 2001: online; Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 117).
- Pets provide a consistent and unconditional source of support, regardless of the instability of human support (Hart, 2000: 59; Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 117).
- Pets provide a refuge from the pressures of human interactions, allowing their human companions to voice their frustrations, prejudices, and anger freely, without pretences or barriers, and without the requirements of social skills demanded in normal human relationships (Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 118; Baiocco, 1997: online; MacCallum, 1992: online).

Bergler (1988: 111) claims that the majority of pet owners, especially dog owners, regard their pet as an established part of their system of social relationships and interactions, describing the pet as “a ‘member of the group’ and in the case of a person living alone he may constitute a kind of social group – a source of sympathy, happiness, friendship, companionship, joy, amusement, understanding, relaxation, etc.” In addition to the social support offered by pets, which is essential in buffering threats from stressors to the mental health of their human companions, pets also provide companionship, which includes intrinsic satisfaction, such as shared pleasure in recreation, relaxation, and uncensored spontaneity, that is crucial in the fostering of positive mental health for their human companions (Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 115).

These health-enhancing effects of animals on the physical, psychological, and social health and well-being of humans are, however, not limited to the actual touching and interaction with one’s own pet. Interaction with animals that could provide these various health benefits can be divided into three different types of exposure to animals (Friedmann, 2000: 47; Friedmann, Thomas & Eddy, 2000: 137). The first type of association is where people explicitly look at or observe animals or pictures of animals (Friedmann, 2000: 47; Friedmann, Thomas & Eddy, 2000: 137). According to Friedmann (2000: 47), looking at or observing domestic animals is associated with relaxation. This statement is based on evidence of lowered levels of physiologic indicators of parasympathetic nervous system arousal. In a study conducted by Katcher *et al.* (1983, in Friedmann, 2000: 47), the blood pressure of both normotensive and hypertensive subjects decreased while the subjects were watching fish swim in an aquarium. This study, as well as a study regarding people watching chimpanzees, indicates that the constant motion of these animals attracts people’s attention and encourages them to relax while watching these animals from a safe position (Friedmann, 2000: 48). Furthermore, the data obtained during observation of loud, rambunctious chimpanzees suggests that profound tranquillity and serenity are not essential requirements for the decreased parasympathetic nervous system arousal experienced

while watching animals (Friedmann, 1999, in Friedmann, 2000: 48).

The second type of association is where people are merely in the presence of animals or implicitly observing them, without focusing on them or interacting with them (Friedmann, 2000: 48-49; Friedmann, Thomas & Eddy, 2000: 137). Results of several studies indicate that the being in the presence of animals or watching them implicitly has a direct impact on both physiological arousal (Friedmann *et al.*, 1983b, in Friedmann, 2000: 49), as well as psychological health status (Sebkova, 1977; Holcomb *et al.*, 1997, in Friedmann, 2000: 49). In addition, the mere presence of an unknown friendly pet, traditional or non-traditional, can moderate people's stress response by exerting a calming influence on people in stressful situations, without the people handling, touching, or interacting with the animal (Friedmann, 2000: 49; DeMello, 1999: 859; Friedmann *et al.*, 1983: 461-465, in Council for Science and Society, 1988: 28; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104-105).

The third type of association is where people directly interact with animals (Friedmann, 2000: 51; Friedmann, Thomas & Eddy, 2000: 137). Research found that interaction with pets, whether it is petting, stroking, cuddling, or talking to pets, reduces the cardiovascular, behavioural and psychological indicators of stress (Paws for Health, 2001: online) and appears to lower blood pressure and heart rate in both the human who is petting and the animal being petted (Friedmann, *et al.*, 1983, in Paws for Health, 2001: online; Baiocco, 1997: online; Avanzino, 1996: online; MacCallum, 1992: online; Katcher, 1981, in Council for Science and Society, 1988: 28; NIH, 1987: online; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104-105; Lynch, *et al.*, 1974: 472-478; Lynch and McCarthy, 1969: 389-393).

In the next section, the researcher will consider the general health benefits of pets to the typical economically active adult population. As indicated by Friedmann (2000: 41) health should not be considered as being one-dimensional; rather, health should be perceived as involving the integration of psychological, physical, social, environmental, and spiritual aspects. In comparison, the World Health Organisation defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being..." (Becker, 2002: 15). The researcher will focus on human health holistically, by discussing the physical health benefits, emotional and psychological benefits, and social benefits of pet ownership, which collectively impact the quality of life of humans.

2.4.2.1 Physical health benefits of pets on the general economically active adult population

The overall health of pet-owners is more stable than the health of non-pet owners, and the impact of a stressful situation is less on pet owners than on those who do not own a pet (APPMA, 2001: online; Frisby, 2001: online; MHN, in San Francisco SPCA, 2001: online; Hart, 1995: 171). According to research, a pet's natural stress-reducing ability can affect a human's body to an extent where the person actually derives health benefits from his/her pet (APPMA, 2001: online; MHN, in San Francisco SPCA, 2001: online; Avanzino, 1996: online).

In 1929 it was found that when a person strokes a dog, the dog's blood pressure will reduce (Odendaal, 2002: 79); a phenomenon that was termed 'the effect of person' by Dr. W. Horsley Gantt, describing the powerful effect that human contact has on the cardiovascular response of animals (Becker, 2002: 73-74). However, it was only in the early 1980s that it was determined that a person's blood pressure also reduces as a result of stroking a dog (Odendaal, 2002: 79).

Research on the role of pets in enhancing the physiological health of their human companions since 1980, documents physiological parameters such as diastolic and systolic blood pressure, plasma cholesterol, plasma triglyceride and skin conductance responses, as well as the effects of the autonomic nervous system, indicating anxiety and stress relief (Odendaal, 2002: 79; Frisby, 2001: online). Theoretically, when people are stressed or upset, they have a stress response, known as the fight-or-flight reaction, which activates the sympathetic nervous system. As a result, blood pressure escalates, the heart and respiratory rates increase, and hormonal changes occur, preparing the person to cope with the threat. After the activity of fight or flight, the physiological levels return to normal; however, if there is no such response, there is also no quick return to normal physiological levels, which, if frequently repeated or sustained for long periods without quick relief, can be detrimental to the cardiovascular system (Odendaal, 2002: 80).

There is reliable proof that positive human-animal interaction provides significant health benefits to humans, and that it positively influences transient physiological states, morale and feelings of self-worth, either directly or by influencing psychosocial or risk behaviours (Rowan & Beck, 1994: 88). There is a growing body of literature which illustrates that pets help reduce stress in their human companions, and subsequently influence physiological measures, such as heart rate and blood pressure (Becker, 2002: 60-77; APPMA, 2001: online; Frisby, 2001: online; MHN, in San Francisco SPCA, 2001: online; Friedmann, 2000: 41-58; Friedmann *et al.*, 1983b, in Friedmann, 2000: 49; Rajack, 1997, in Friedmann, 2000: 49; Katcher *et al.*, 1983, in Serpell, 2000: 15; DeMello, 1999: 859-868; Baiocco, 1997: online; Avanzino, 1996: online; MacCallum, 1992: online; Allen *et al.*, 1991: 582-589; Wilson, 1991: 482-489; Siegel, 1990: 1081-1086; Katcher, 1981, in Council for

Science and Society, 1988: 28; Grossberg *et al.*, 1988: 38-44; NIH, 1987: online; Wilson, 1987: 606-612; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104-105; Baun *et al.*, 1984: 126-129).

Research on the influence of pets on hypertension suggests that pets, especially dogs, have an anti-hypertensive effect (Frisby, 2001: online; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104-105). In a study of 48 New York stockbrokers, a population whose general level of stress and anxiety is extremely high, it was found that the stockbrokers benefited from pet ownership (Becker, 2002: 18, 72; Frisby, 2001: online; Marshall, 1999: online). Although all of the subjects suffered from high blood pressure, the study found that once the stockbrokers brought a pet into their homes, their stress levels and blood pressure scores dropped dramatically to such an extent that nearly half of them were able to go off medication for their high blood pressure. Even when separated from their pets for hours, the stockbrokers with pets experienced only half the blood-pressure increase during stressful situations, compared to stockbrokers without a pet, indicating that their cardiovascular system was still receiving the beneficial effects of the contact with their pets (Becker, 2002: 18, 72). Another study of women undergoing stress tests demonstrated that the presence of a dog had more effect on reducing blood pressure than the presence of friends (Frisby, 2001: online). According to Friedmann (1995, in Odendaal, 2002: 80), animals can help people avoid stress responses or reduce their impact, and they can help eliminate the stress hormones more swiftly by encouraging people to exercise.

An 1992 Australian study conducted by Anderson, Reid and Jennings (1992: 298-301) with 5741 cardiovascular disease sufferers who attended the Baker Institute Risk Clinic, revealed that pet owners enjoy lower systolic blood pressure and plasma cholesterol and triglyceride values and have significant fewer risk factors for cardiovascular disease (heart attacks) compared to non-pet owners (Also refer to Becker, 2002: 64; Dale, 2001: online; Friedmann, 2000: 43-44; Rowan & Beck, 1994: 85-89). According to this study, a pet could reduce blood pressure as efficiently as eating a low-salt diet and/or cutting down on alcohol (Anderson, Reid & Jennings, 1992: 300; also compare with Dale, 2001: online). Furthermore, pet owners were significantly more active generally, although they tended to eat more meat and fatty take-out foods than non-pet owners (Anderson, Reid & Jennings, 1992: 299; also compare with Becker, 2002: 64; Rowan & Beck, 1994: 85). According to Becker (2002: 64), pet-owners took less medication for high blood pressure and cholesterol, did not have as much trouble falling asleep at night, had shorter hospital stays, and fewer doctors visits (dog owners had 8% fewer doctor visits, while cat owners had 12% fewer doctor visits). Rowan and Beck (1994: 85) concludes that it seems that positive human-animal interaction reduces risks of cardiovascular disease, probably for reasons greater than only influencing the risk factors.

According to Becker (2002: 71), recent guidelines in the *Journal of American Medical Association* reveal that 12 million Americans take cholesterol-lowering drugs at present, a number that could eventually increase to 36 million, or 1 in 5 Americans. The author indicates that, while drug companies and research institutes spend billions trying to find a medication that will lower cholesterol and blood pressure by even 20 points, pets are already doing exactly that, for practically nothing (*op. cit.*).

However, the most publicised and well-known effect of pet ownership on the cardiovascular health of humans are the findings of a 1980 study, and subsequent 1995 study, which indicate that coronary patients with pets had significantly lower mortality rates than non-pet owners (Friedmann, Katcher, Lynch & Thomas, 1980: 307-312; Friedmann & Thomas, 1995: 1213-1217). In the 1980 study of 92 people who had suffered their first heart attack (Friedmann, Katcher, Lynch & Thomas, 1980: 307-312), heart attack sufferers who owned pets had a four times better chance of surviving one year. By the end of the year, 11 people (28.2%) of the 39 non-pet owners had died, compared to only 3 people (5.7%) of the 53 pet owners (Becker, 2002: 63; Friedmann, 2000: 42-43).

The 1995 study, conducted by Friedmann and Thomas (1995: 1213-1217), was a replication of the 1980 study, but with a larger population of 369 patients who had suffered heart attacks and had life-threatening irregular heartbeats. In addition, the subjects were tested with a sophisticated battery of psychological assessment tests to establish their social support and mental health status. The results of this subsequent study were even more dramatic than the 1980 study, indicating that dog owners were 8.6 times more likely to survive one year after a heart attack than non-dog owners. After one year, only one person (1.15%) had died of the 87 dog owners, compared with 19 (6.73%) of the 282 who didn't own dogs (Becker, 2002: 74; Friedmann, 2000: 42-43). According to these studies, pet ownership was an independent predictor of one-year survival after a heart attack, unrelated to gender, socio-economic status, psychological status, social support, exercise, or the severity of the cardiovascular disease (Becker, 2002: 64; Friedmann, 2000: 43; DeMello, 1999: 859). This leads to the conclusion that the presence of pets influences people in ways that are different from and in addition to other social human relationships (Sable, 1995: 334).

In addition, pet owners were more likely to adhere to a cardiac rehabilitation programme, according to a study conducted at the University of Texas on 79 Texas heart patients whose doctors had prescribed a rigorous 12-week rehabilitation programme. Ninety-six percent of the pet owners completed the programme, compared to 77% of non-pet owners, indicating that caring for pets gave people a sense of responsibility and a schedule, factors useful in breaking old bad habits (Becker, 2002: 64). Friedmann (2000: 43) concludes that, besides influencing the

survival of individuals who have experienced heart attacks, pet ownership may protect people from developing coronary heart disease, or slow its progression.

In general, pet owners report better overall health than non-pet owners. In a study conducted by Serpell (1991: 717-720), it was found that the 71 adults who adopted pets experienced a significant reduction in minor health problems one month after adopting a pet. Minor health problems assessed in this study included “headaches, painful joints, hay fever, difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping, palpitations or breathlessness, constipation, trouble with ears, trouble with eyes, worrying over every little thing, a bad back, indigestion or other stomach trouble, nerves, sinus trouble or catarrh, colds and flu, persistent cough, general tiredness, faints or dizziness, kidney or bladder trouble, and trouble with feet” (Friedmann, 2000: 45). In comparison, the health of the 26 volunteers who did not adopt pets did not change during the same period (*op. cit.*).

Another study conducted by Siegel (1990: 1081-1086) concerning 938 Medicare enrollees, revealed that pet owners reported less psychological distress and made fewer visits to the doctor over a one-year period than non-pet owners. In addition, for non-pet owners, psychological distress, as assessed by stressful life events, was directly correlated with doctor visits; in other words, the higher the stress level, the more doctor visits. In comparison, increased stress levels for pet owners did not predict more doctor visits (Friedmann, 2000: 44). This study suggests that the most significant role of animal contact could be that it enhances a person’s sense of well-being. Most pet owners reported that their pets gave them companionship and a sense of security, as well as the opportunity to have fun, play and relax (Rowan & Beck, 1994: 86). Furthermore, pets have the ability to encourage and motivate people to engage in constructive activities, such as exercise, that they would not have otherwise. Dogs can serve as a stimulus and motivate people to take walks. Regular walks and exercise required for dogs, end in dog owners becoming more active Becker, 2002: 6-7; Frisby, 2001: online; Hart, 2000: 69-70; Baiocco, 1997: online; MacCallum, 1992: online; Ruckert, 1987: 7). As a result of pets motivating people to exercise, fighting depression, reducing blood pressure, and helping prevent heart disease, the Midland Life Insurance Company of Columbus, Ohio, even gives a premium discount to pet owners (Becker, 2002: 67).

It is, therefore, evident that positive human-animal interaction can assist with the treatment of a whole list of chronic conditions that might lead to severe health problems (Becker, 2002: 18). In fact, scientists discovered that pets could prevent, detect, help treat, and in some cases even cure a variety of maladies and illnesses (Becker, 2002: 17). As a result, many medical practitioners and specialists, including cardiologists and oncologists, routinely prescribe pets, especially dogs, cats, and birds, just like they prescribe medication (Becker, 2002: 17, 74-75).

To summaries in the words of Becker (2002: 64), "a pet can be a miracle drug that keeps you healthier; home instead of hospitalized; reduces your risk of heart attacks; and keeps you healthier with a lick of a tongue, wag of a tail, or rhythmic purring. All of these benefits are available, not during doctors' hours, but around the clock".

2.4.2.2 Emotional and psychological benefits of pets on the general economically active adult population

In addition to the physical health benefits, there is an opinion that psychiatrists could prescribe pets for chronically ill patients, for people who feel isolated and lonely, experience hopelessness and low self-esteem, or lack a sense of humour, and for people who are disabled (Odendaal, 2002: 64). Due to the very nature of pets - their physical presence, availability, and responsiveness to human contact; their unlimited source of unconditional and non-judgemental love, affection, and companionship; their consistent and readily available source of warmth and trust; their sensitivity to the moods of their human companions; and their unpredictable and continual source of creativity, energy, and surprise, encouraging laughter and a sense of humour, fun, pleasure and entertainment - they are natural therapists, giving their human companions a sense of emotional security that is often missing in today's fast-paced and rapidly changing world (Cusack, 1988: 11, 19; Ruckert, 1987: 7-10).

Pets fulfil the emotional needs of friendship, love, understanding, and acceptance of their human companions (Odendaal and Weyers, 1990: 28-29), by providing a safe and dependable relationship, companionship, and intimacy, which is undemanding and straightforward (Baiocco, 1997: online; MacCallum, 1992: online). Although human relationships may be deeply satisfying, they are reliant on moods, responsibilities, and demands of everyday life. Descriptions of animal companionship often consist of emotional and esteem support as elements of the relationship, which, in comparison with similar elements of support from human relationships, are perceived to have greater stability (Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 116). Pets are "always there, always loving, and always willing to both give and to accept affection" (Cusack, 1988: 11). The fact that pets are not human may be advantageous because there is no fear that the relationship will be damaged by displays of weakness, emotion, or by excessive demands (Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 116). Unlike intimacy with other humans, which require a degree of prior understanding, intimacy with an animal can be achieved instantly and can be expressed freely, even at times when such displays and feelings to another human would be highly inappropriate (Cusack, 1988: 12-13). Furthermore, in comparison with most human relationships, pets can represent a low emotional investment for a big return. This is due to the fact that the relationship with pets does not require the same input, in terms of time and effort, as a human relationship;

nevertheless the rewards and benefits are overwhelming in terms of unconditional love and acceptance, gratitude, fun and affection (Baiocco, 1997: online; MacCallum, 1992: online).

Across the world people report that what they value most in their relationship with their pets is the companionship they offer (Hart, 2000: 62). Research indicates that this faithful companionship provided by pets also play an essential role in maintaining the mental health of, and providing a measure of psychological well-being and stability to their human companions (APPMA, 2001: online; MHN, in San Francisco SPCA, 2001: online; Baiocco, 1997: online; MacCallum, 1992: online; Serpell, 1986, in Council for Science and Society, 1988: 31). Loneliness, depression, and a lack of social support and companionship are major risk factors that can hinder a person's well-being and even increase the possibility of suicide or other maladaptive behaviours (Hart, 2000: 62). Pets, especially dogs and cats, have the ability to provide an emotional bond of attachment to their human companions that promotes a sense of well-being and security (Sable, 1995: 336). In addition, pets are very efficient morale boosters, and studies have found that, in general, pet owners have higher morale than non-pet owners (Fitzgerald, 1986: 104). As a result, animal companionship has been associated with people suffering less depression and loneliness (Hart, 2000: 62). Research reveals that pet ownership is indirectly related to depression and emotional instability, and it is suggested that persons with reactive depression may benefit from the presence of animals (Garrity, Stallones, Marx & Johnson, 1989, in Sable, 1995: 334; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104). It is therefore no surprise that animals have been used in formal psychotherapeutic settings by psychiatrists and psychologists for many years (Paws for Health, 2001: online; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104-105). Cusack (1988: 85) indicates that pets are often "the impetus to improved mental health, the focal point of a life, the bridge between the individual and the community. For those who are on the fringes of normalcy or reentering the world of sound mental health, there may be ... 'nothing more precious'."

Apart from the direct unpleasant emotional and psychological effects of depression, a recent study of 350 heart patients by the Duke University Medical Centre demonstrated that the higher the patients scored on a depression scale, the lower was the reactivity of their hearts (Becker, 2002: 66). One in four heart patients who suffered from clinical depression rated themselves as extremely inactive, as compared with one in 14 for those who didn't suffer from depression. On average, depressed people engage only half as much time in moderate activity, such as walking, as non-depressed people. Another study conducted by the Montreal Heart Institute, reported that depression increases the likelihood of dying from a second heart attack, especially if the individual walks less than a block a day (Becker, 2002: 67). Furthermore, according to a study by the Washington University Medical School, depression leads to elevated stress hormones, which lowers heart resiliency (Becker, 2002: 66). According to Hart (2000: 60), loneliness and depression have been linked with an extensive range of diseases,

including cancer and cardiovascular disease (Lynch, 1977, in Hart, 2000: 60), and it has even been suggested that depression is a central etiologic factor of these diseases (Chrousos and Gold, 1992, in Hart, 2000: 60).

Informally, pet owners typically talk to their pets as if they were human. This provides the valuable opportunity for people to 'let off steam', to unload their problems, fears, and concerns, without the fear of being judged, ridiculed, or rejected (Paws for Health, 2001: online; MacCallum, 1992: online). As a result, pets provide a calming effect and tension release to their human companions (Odendaal & Weyers, 1990: 28-29), as well as emotional security (Mugford, 1980, in Hart, 1995: 166). In addition, pets are always good listeners, never give bad advice and are always supportive (Paws for Health, 2001: online) and, unlike most people, pets are responsive to and enjoy contact (MacCallum, 1992: online).

Part of the benefits and value of companionship is that it provides a sense of being valued or needed. By behaving in a highly dependent, possessive, and attentive manner towards their human companions, pets are particularly good at fulfilling these needs of feeling valued, needed and loved (Serpell, 1986, in Council for Science and Society, 1988: 31). The opportunity to be needed and to provide nurturance enhances one's sense of competence and worth, and is particularly relevant for human-animal relationships (Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 117). In addition, caring for a pet and tending to its physical needs provides a rhythm to its owner's life, and stimulates the natural tendency to offer support and protection (Cusack, 1988: 82-84).

In conclusion, it can be said that "animals are beings capable of uplifting the human spirit without even trying. By showering a person with unconditional attention, acceptance and honesty, they play a huge role in giving that person a sense of euphoria, triggering a natural healing process within them" (Letard, 2004: Health Talk). Taking into consideration the beneficial impact and therapeutic value pets have on the emotional and psychological health of their human companions, it can be considered rational and practical when Boris M. Levinson proposed, "Animals have generally played a great role in human ecological adjustment. Just as credible a reason as any for the domestication of animals is their use as pets. In other words, there is much reason to believe that man's psychological needs were the primary cause for domestication of animals as that man needed to use animals for such material purposes as the saving of human labor and the satisfaction of a hunger for food" (Levinson, 1969, in Beck, 2000: 21).

2.4.2.3 Social benefits of pets on the general economically active adult population

It is a fact that humans possess social needs and, to this extent, an increasing amount of medical evidence suggests that positive social interactions and social support systems play a critical role in maintaining people's mental and physical health (Serpell, 1986, in Council for Science and Society, 1988: 31). Many studies have indicated either a general positive association between social support and health, or a buffering effect in the presence of stress (House, *et al.*, 1988: 540-545).

According to attachment research and theory, people's emotional well-being is to a great degree influenced by their personal relationships. Humans need a variety of relationships, ranging from close affectionate attachments to broader social contacts (Levitt, 1991; Weiss, 1991, in Sable, 1995: 339). However, living in the modern world involves coping with rapid changes and complexities, and often leaves people without the social or family support they need, resulting in social isolation (House *et al.*, 1988: 544). A lack of social relationships and support systems has been established as a risk factor for mortality and morbidity (House *et al.*, 1988: 543), and it is recognised as an important factor in the onset of depression (Cusack, 1988: 55).

The changing landscape of family life in the modern world, has resulted in an increase of the significance of pets for reducing loneliness, giving purpose to life, and providing the comfort of proximity (Sable, 1995: 339). Perhaps the most common and familiar function attributed to pets is their ability to serve as antidotes to social isolation and loneliness (Baiocco, 1997: online; MacCallum, 1992: online; Council for Science and Society, 1988: 29). It is evident that human-animal interaction has a positive influence on loneliness (Calvert, 1989: 194-202). Mugford (1980, in Hart, 1995: 166) refers to this ability of pets as 'the social significance of pet ownership'.

Humans benefit from pet ownership, either through their pets just being there, easing the loneliness, or through their pets acting as social catalyst, introducing them to other people. In relation to people who live alone, pets play an essential role in reducing the feelings of loneliness and isolation (Baiocco, 1997: online; MacCallum, 1992: online; Council for Science and Society, 1988: 29). A pet is not supposed to take the place of another person; however, for an individual who lacks social relationships and support systems, a pet can provide affection, companionship, and a focal point to life, elements vital for a healthy life (Cusack, 1988: 55). Pets and their human companions usually form a strong emotional bond and close companionship, which in itself may assist in addressing the needs for affiliation and self-esteem. According to Sable (1995: 336), pets uniquely fill a range of emotional needs, which may vary from substituting for a lack of human attachment, to expanding and enriching the variety of

relationships and social contacts that add to the pleasures of life and give a feeling of comfort and companionship.

With regard to pets acting as social catalysts, they can be perceived as valuable and obvious facilitators of human contact and social interaction (Melson, 2002: 350; Hart, 1995: 166; MacCallum, 1992: online). Various studies have indicated that the presence of pets leads to the interpretation of the social situation as being less threatening, and improves the perceived character of the owner by making him or her more appealing and attractive to others. This is due to the fact that pets are usually perceived as friendly and non-threatening, and this positive, reassuring effect is normally extended to include both the owner and the situation the animal is in (Lockwood, 1983, in Friedmann, 2000: 47).

The tendency of some pets to approach strangers in a friendly and uninhibited way also increases the social contact of their human companions, by initiating interaction with strangers, which might not have occurred otherwise (Council for Science and Society, 1988: 30). In addition, animals of almost any species stimulate conversations, resulting in people speaking with strangers in a friendly way (Hart, 2000: 67). Pets can become a topic of conversation with other people, act as a reason to talk to strangers, and as a point of contact with others; they can also represent neutral territory in family disputes and divorces (Baiocco, 1997: online; MacCallum, 1992: online).

According to a study conducted by Peter Messent of the Animal Study Centre of the United Kingdom, where the social interactions of 8 persons were observed - walking with and without their dogs - it was found that when they were walking with their dogs, they experienced some sort of interaction from passers-by on 22% of the walks, compared to only 2% when not with their dogs (Cusack, 1988: 16). It seemed more likely for people to start conversations and to laugh and exchange stories when a dog was present, than when the person was alone (Messent, 1984, in Hart, 2000: 67). In a similar study conducted by Robins, Sanders and Cahill (1991: 3-25) to determine the effect of the presence of a dog between unacquainted strangers, the results were that, in public places, dogs expose their human companions to encounters with strangers, facilitate interaction among previously unacquainted persons, and help establish trust among the newly acquainted persons (Rowan & Thayer, 2000: xxxvii).

As a result, pets have been termed 'social lubricants' as they increase the social mobility and acceptability of their owners by increasing the number of social contacts and conversations the person has. Many pet owners, especially dog owners, claim that their circle of acquaintances, as well as their number of friends, has increased as a result of their pets (Paws for Health, 2001: online; Adell-Bath, 1979, in Hart, 1995: 166; Rowan & Beck, 1994: 86; Council for Science and

Society, 1988: 28-30; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104-105). According to an Australian study, pet owners had a better social life, with nearly 60% of them reporting that they have made friends through their pets, and 62% claiming that their pets made conversation with a visitor easier (Becker, 2002: 74). One possible explanation for the social-lubricant effect of a pet is that intimacy is easily achieved with an animal. It is not always considered proper to address a stranger, but it is perfectly acceptable to talk to his dog. Additionally, since persons associated with animals are perceived to be more benign and safer, the passer-by might feel less threatened and more apt to strike up a conversation (Cusack, 1988: 16).

In conclusion, according to Serpell (1986/1996, in Hart, 2000: 66), the absence of a supportive network of social companionship is considered to be a major cause leading to depression, stress, suppression of the immune system, and various other conditions. Social companionship and support networks protect the individual and lessen the impacts of such stress. In light of this, animal companionship offers an easily accessible compensatory substitute, in that pets are consistently available companions (Hart, 2000: 66-67). As full-time companions, pets are very capable conversational partners. Although they do not respond with verbal conversation, they are able to convincingly communicate their love and affection to their human companions (*op. cit.*).

Interaction with pets has a tendency to make their human companions happier, more alert, and less lonely; it stimulates touch, talk, and smiling; owners exercise more; and, generally pet owners are more satisfied with their physical, emotional, and social health status (Odendaal, 2002: 81). The above section focused on the physical, emotional and psychological, and social benefits of positive human-animal interaction on the well-being and functioning of humans. To summarise in the words of Erika Friedmann (1995, in Odendaal, 2002: 80) "... pets can decrease anxiety and sympathetic nervous system arousal by providing a pleasant external focus of attention promoting feelings of safety and providing a source of contact comfort. They can decrease loneliness and depression by providing companionship, promoting an interesting and varied lifestyle and providing an impetus for nurturing. Certain types of pets could help improve physical fitness by providing a stimulus for exercise. Pets therefore have the potential to moderate the development of stress related diseases such as coronary heart disease and hypertension. The range of benefits that owners might derive from their pets may not pertain only to pet owners; one could speculate that anyone, not just pet owners, could benefit from the presence of friendly animals".

In conclusion, reference is made to the proposal formulated by Beck and Glickman at the final presentation of the 1987 National Institute of Health Technology Assessment Workshop (Rowan & Beck, 1994: 85), which summarises the vital importance of pets in human health: "All future

studies of human health should consider the presence or absence of a pet in the home and, perhaps, the nature of this relationship with the pet, as a significant variable. No future study of human health should be considered comprehensive if the animals with which they share their lives are not included”.

Taking into consideration the beneficial impact and therapeutic value pets have on the physical, emotional and social health of their human companions, who, for the purpose of this study, are limited to the general economically active adult population, the next section will focus on the rationale of introducing pets into the workplace; exploring whether these benefits could also be translated to the working environment.

2.4.3 RATIONALE FOR INTRODUCING PETS IN THE WORKPLACE

Although there is no legislation that prevents employees from bringing their pets to their working environments, most companies and government departments do not allow animals in the workplace, other than the service animals that assist disabled people (Ginsberg, 1997: online). However, in the commercial workplace of the present day, more and more organisations are implementing policies and practices that accept, welcome, and regulate the presence of pets into the working environment (Mzumara, 2000: online; Duffy, 1999: online; Marshall, 1999: online). According to www.dogfriendly.com (1 April 2003) there are currently more than 260 companies registered as pet-friendly employers internationally; most of them situated in the United States, but also in Canada, England, and Israel. These pet-friendly workplaces and policies allow not only dogs, but also cats, small animals, such as rabbits and hamsters, birds, fish, reptiles, etc., and may vary from live-in office animals, e.g., resident cats, birds and fish, to allowing employees to take their own pets to work on a daily basis, to implementing a rotating schedule, so that everyone has a chance to spend time with their pets at work.

In addition, the ‘Take Your Dog To Work Day’ is a workday for dogs created to, firstly, celebrate canine companionship, and, secondly, to inspire colleagues who do not have dogs to consider adopting a dog of their own from an animal shelter or a rescue group (Levine, 2004: online). The rationale behind the ‘Take Your Dog To Work Day’ is that a happy dog means a happy worker, which means a productive worker (Croteau, 2001: online). Supporters of the ‘Take Your Dog to Work Day’ hope to give colleagues who do not own pets a chance to see the human-animal bond personally (Levine, 2004: online). The “day” also encourages dog owners to spend more time with their animals by offering them a taste of working life (The Blue Cross, 2004: online). This event has been organised for the last nine years in the United Kingdom by Britain’s pet charity, The Blue Cross (The Blue Cross, 2004: online), and for the last six years in the United

States, a day created by Pet Sitters International (Levine, 2004: online). And with great success, this year's U.S. event on Friday, 25 June 2004, took place in 47 states, Canada, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (Pet Sitters International, 2004: online).

The most obvious question in this regard is, 'why?' Why do some organisations allow their employees to take their pets to work? What is behind this new phenomenon of implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy?

As indicated in the above discussion, pets have various significant benefits on the physical, psychological, and emotional, and social health of their human companions. It is assumed that these benefits that pets have on the everyday lives of the general economically active adult population could be translated into benefits in the work environment. The workplace of the new millennium is riddled with deadlines, competitions, demanding time commitments, and other job-related stresses (Ruckert, 1987: 10). Stress levels are at an all time high, closely linked to the high expectations that are placed on employees (Pat4Paws, 2004: online). While productivity is increasing, spirits are often sagging as the high-tech, high-intensity lifestyle takes a silent but deadly toll on the minds and bodies of the employees (Becker, 2002: 63). A Type A personality could be identified as an unspoken requirement to succeed in today's fast-paced work environment, involving a chronic struggle to achieve more and more in less and less time (Becker, 2002: 62).

Since the workplace of the new millennium has such high levels of stress and expectations, it seems like a natural progression to introduce pets in the workplace in order to put the benefits and therapeutic effect of the human-animal bond to work (Alvarado, 2001: online; Skoczek, 2001: online). The high-tech industry was the first to recognise the significant health benefits of allowing pets at work and pets have become part of a casual-office culture (Duffy, 1999: online; Marshall, 1999: online). The modern workplace has been transformed by the addition of computers (Smith, 2004: online). For many employees, computer links are the main form of interaction, which are lacking in the relations needed for healthy mental and physical health, that is, face to face talking and touch. Animals can provide this outlet just as effectively as humans (*op. cit.*). In addition, recent studies indicate what high-tech industry leaders have believed for years, that by allowing pets at work, stress levels reduce and employees become more productive (Duffy, 1999: online; Marshall, 1999: online).

Wells and Perrine (2001: 81-87) conducted an exploratory study on the perceived functions and effects of pets in the workplace. According to these authors, pets were primarily perceived to reduce stress at work. In addition, pets were also to a great extent perceived as positively affecting employee health and organisational issues. In a study done by Sebkova (1977, in

Friedmann, Thomas & Eddy, 2000: 130), it was found that people behave significantly less anxious in a highly stressful environment when a pet is present. It was found that participants paid more attention to the pet in a highly stressful environment, compared to an environment with relatively low stress levels. It was therefore suggested that the relaxing external focus of attention, or the feelings of safety, provided by a non-threatening animal might be particularly important in stressful situations. Marshall (1999: online) supported this finding by indicating that pets provide comfort in a stressful environment by providing enjoyment and relaxation to employees and their clients. As a result, pets ensure that the work environment is more comfortable, they provide a pleasant diversion from work, and offer companionship (Wells & Perrine, 2001: 85). In addition, research done by the American Heart Association suggests that pets significantly reduce high blood pressure that is associated with highly demanding and stressful careers (Marshall, 1999: online). Pets also can improve communication and team building among employees (Wilde, 1998: online).

A further reason to introduce pets into the workplace is to recruit and retain talented and highly skilled employees. Companies of the new millennium will go to great lengths and will do anything possible to capture the interest of prospective employees, or to reduce staff turnover by retaining good employees (Bennett, 2000: online; Business Weekly, 2000: online; Mzumara, 2000: online; Sawicki, 2004: online; Schorr, 2004: online). Technology companies listed on the Deloitte and Touche Technology Fast 500 have revealed that business managers are becoming more creative in offering corporate incentives, which assist them to recruit and retain valuable and talented workers. Creative perks, which go against the standard and traditional means used for enhancing productivity, performance and commitment, as well as to make long working hours and work-weeks more pleasant, has become the norm for companies in the new economy. These benefits range from new luxury cars to on-site gyms to pets at work (Business Weekly, 2000: online). Of the technology companies listed on the Deloitte and Touche Technology Fast 500, 6% of CEOs allow pets at work (Business Weekly, 2000: online).

According to Bruce Tulgan, a business consultant and author of 'Managing Generation X: How To Bring Out The Best In Young Talent', a company that implements a pet-friendly workplace policy, which allows pets at work, represents a "free thinking, open-minded workplace-of-the-future kind of corporate culture" (Mzumara, 2000: online). For employees more lifestyle-driven and less status-conscious, a pet-friendly workplace policy may be perceived as an additional benefit (DogFriendly.com, 2001: online; Bennett, 2000: online; Business Weekly, 2000: online; Mzumara, 2000: online). It is a fact that most employees spend most of their wakeful hours at work. Therefore, by allowing employees to bring their pets to work, a more relaxed atmosphere is established, which would stimulate creative thinking (Business Weekly, 2000: online) and enhance job satisfaction (Schorr, 2004: online).

In addition, although to a lesser degree, Wells and Perrine (2001: 81-87) found that pets are also perceived to facilitate social interaction in the work environment among employees, supervisors and clients; to serve as empathetic organisational symbols, by communicating warmth and comfort to employees and clients; and to serve a self-expressive function, allowing employees to personalise their workspace.

In conclusion, it is evident that the implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy is perceived as positively influencing the health and well-being of the employees, as well as organisational issues, such as increasing productivity levels and recruiting and retaining valued employees. The next section of this chapter will explore, in more detail, the possible outcomes and benefits of implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy.

2.4.4 OUTCOMES OF IMPLEMENTING A PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICY

2.4.4.1 Benefits of implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy

The potential outcomes of implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy could be seen in various benefits for both the individual employee and the organisation. Studies where pets were introduced into the work environment, indicated a reduction in stress levels, consequently leading to happier, healthier employees, with more motivation, creativity, and productivity - all essential elements to the success of the working environment and corporate culture (APPMA, 2001: online).

In a nationwide survey of companies with pet-friendly workplace policies, conducted by the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPMA) in 2000, the following benefits of allowing pets in the workplace were identified (APPMA, 2001: online):

- 73% of the companies surveyed claimed that pets create a more productive work environment
- 27% illustrated a decrease in employee absenteeism
- 73% indicated that pets help to establish a more creative work environment
- 73% reported that interpersonal skills improved, in comparison to a 42 percent improvement through business development or management training courses
- 96% claimed that pets create positive work relations

- 58% of employees indicated that they do not mind to stay late and work overtime with pets in the office
- 100% of the companies polled agreed that having pets in the workplace relaxes employees
- 100% of the companies surveyed reported that they would continue to have pets in the workplace

In addition the following benefits were also noted to derive from bringing pets to work (DogFriendly.com, 2001: online):

- Increased employee morale and productivity
- Increased camaraderie among employees
- Happier employees resulting in enhanced job performance
- Increase in sales reported by store owners who take their pets to work
- Dogs can serve as a crime deterrent

More such benefits were reported from PAT4PAWS (Pets As Therapy 4 Pets Against Workplace Stress), including:

- Energised and more productive staff both at work and at home
- A sense of value instilled in both staff and management
- A calmer, stress free working environment a great benefit when dealing with clients
- Improved interpersonal staff and management relationships
- A decrease in stress related absences from work
- Benefits for staff loyalty (PAT4PAWS, 2004: online)

These findings reveal and confirm that the many health-enhancing benefits of pet ownership - including reduced blood pressure, lower stress levels, and improved overall emotional and physical health - also translate in an office environment (Schorr, 2004: online; APPMA, 2001: online), which consequently assist with limiting health care costs – “a rover a day keeps the blues away” (Eckardt, 2002: 5).

Additionally, it is believed that animals benefit from being at the office as much as their human companions do, in particular by becoming very well-socialised because they spend time at work (The Poop, 2004: online; McCullough, 2001: online). A survey conducted by the American

Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) indicated that 76 percent of American pet owners feel guilty over leaving their pets at home alone (McCullough, 2001: online; Marshall, 1999: online). To this extent, a pet-friendly workplace policy could assist in alleviating these feelings of guilt for the pet owner, as well as relieving feelings of loneliness and boredom for the pet, who does not need to stay home alone anymore.

Many pet-friendly companies acknowledge that the implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy is not for employee satisfaction and benefits alone, but that it simultaneously has several benefits for the organisation itself (Marshall, 1999: online). In a highly competitive workplace environment, where many employers are struggling to retain their best and highly skilled employees, alternative personal perks and incentives, aimed at giving the job a 'warm' and 'fuzzy' feeling - such as allowing pets to roam around the office - are increasing (Ginsberg, 1997: online). Those companies that do allow their employees to bring their pets to work may, as a result, have an edge over the more traditional companies when it comes to recruiting and retaining employees (McCullough, 2001: online). Many people consider being able to bring their pet to work a desirable employment benefit, which may translate to less employee turnover and a more committed workforce (Shay & Shipley, 2001: online). Furthermore, employees are willing to spend longer hours at the office, as they don't have to rush home to feed their pets or walk the dog (Marshall, 1999: online) and it is also suggested that pet-friendly workplace policies help build loyalty in the workplace (Coolidge, 1998: online).

These benefits of welcoming pets at work are not limited to pet owners only. Organisations with pet-friendly workplace policies claim that the presence of pets improves the atmosphere for all employees, especially at companies where people work long hours or sit at a computer all day. It is, however, indicated that employees who bring their pets to work receive greater benefits than both employees who do not bring their pets to work and employees who do not own pets themselves (Wells & Perrine, 2001: 85). Nevertheless, with pets on the premises, all employees are encouraged to take a break once in a while to play with one of the office pets. And, as most pets are willing to share their love, and will allow any willing human to pet and adore them, the result is that the presence of pets in the workplace serves as a stress reliever and morale-booster for everyone in the office and all employees will gain from working in a pet-friendly office environment (San Francisco SPCA, 2001: online; Skoczek, 2001: online).

Because of the many health-enhancing benefits of pets, allowing pets in the workplace can create a workforce that is happier and less stressed (Shay & Shipley, 2001: online). Consequently, a pet-friendly workplace policy could be summarised as a low-cost benefit that improves morale and productivity, reduces absenteeism, contributes to a more creative work environment, and serves as an effective recruitment and retention tool (San Francisco SPCA,

2001: online).

2.4.4.2 Drawbacks of implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy

Organisations may, however, experience some challenges or obstacles when considering implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy. Some employees may perceive pets as being a nuisance or a distraction. Some may complain about allergies, fur on the furniture, and uncleanliness, while others may be concerned that some clients might be afraid of or dislike the pets (McCullough, 2001: online; Wells & Perrine, 2001: 86). Cultural differences regarding the value of the human-animal bond also need to be taken into consideration (Odendaal & Weyers, 1990: 21-30).

In addition, the onus is on the pet owner to be respectful of other employees, and even more so to be realistic and ethical towards the pet. A pet should not be taken to work if there is evidence of aggression problems, or housebreaking problems, or major anxiety, temperament, or training issues (The Poop, 2004: online). It is also important to realise and remember that not every pet is suited for spending all day in an office environment. The workplace could be too stressful for some pets, as they may suffer separation anxiety when left alone in the office while the employee is out attending meetings. Others may become overly protective of 'their' space, making it difficult for colleagues and clients to enter the office. While some pets would, quite simply, be happier sleeping on their owner's bed all day than accompanying them to the work environment (Skoczek, 2001: online). The most important, and ethical, requirement is that the animals should enjoy the situation completely. They should get the same benefits and value out of the interaction sessions as the people do (Letard, 2004: Health Talk). It is crucial that the animals feel comfortable in all different situations, possess a sound temperament, and enjoy being around humans and other animals, in order to ensure their safety, and the safety of the humans and other animals around them (*op. cit.*). The physical, social, mental and emotional needs of the animals therefore need to be taken into account.

Therefore, despite the benefits of allowing pets in the workplace, in today's litigious environment, plenty of companies see such pet-friendly policies as a lawsuit waiting to happen (Coolidge, 1998: online). Although organisations with pet-friendly workplace policies report few serious problems or incidents, there are, however, managers who believe allowing pets in the workplace is not a good management strategy. While some people might be able to work longer hours because they don't need to rush home to let their pets out, pets could create a needless distraction to others. Therefore, with organisations having enough trouble getting employees to concentrate at the workplace, it may be argued that allowing pets at work is not worth the potential conflict between people (Duffy, 1999: online).

2.5 POSSIBLE OVERLAP OF OUTCOMES OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES AND PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

From the discussion on the potential outcomes of permitting pets in the workplace, it is evident that implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy could have very similar and compatible desirable effects as implementing an EAP. If the potential outcomes and benefits of both policies and practices are compared, the following similarities and overlapping of possible outcomes are identified. Both an EAP and a pet-friendly workplace policy:

- **Reduce stress and its related health risks** (Levine, 2004: online; PAT4PAWS, 2004: online; Schorr, 2004: online; Becker, 2002: 60-77; Davies, 2002: 12-13; APPMA, 2001: online; Wells & Perrine, 2001: 81-87; Friedmann, 2000: 41-58; Davies, 1999: 6; DeMello, 1999: 859-868; Standards Committee of EAPA-SA, 1999: 4; Marshall, 1999: online; Collis & McNicholas, 1998: 117; Baiocco, 1997: online; Serpell, 1996, in Serpell, 2000: 15; Hart, 1995: 171; Highly & Cooper, 1994: 46; MacCallum, 1992: online; Allen *et al.*, 1991: 582-589; Serpell, 1991: 717-720; Wilson, 1991: 482-489; Siegel, 1990: 1081-1086; Grossberg *et al.*, 1988: 38-44; Jerrell & Rightmyer, 1988: 252; NIH, 1987: online; Wilson, 1987: 606-612; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104-105; Friedmann *et al.*, 1983b, in Friedmann, 2000: 49; Katcher *et al.*, 1983, in Serpell, 2000: 15)
- **Enhance psychological and emotional stability** (APPMA, 2001: online; MHN, in San Francisco SPCA, 2001: online; Hart, 2000: 59-79; Baiocco, 1997: online; ICAS, 1997: 6; Highly & Cooper, 1994: 46; MacCallum, 1992: online, Serpell, 1986, in Council for Science and Society, 1988: 31)
- **Promote healthier individuals** (Schorr, 2004: online; Davies, 2002: 12-15; APPMA, 2001: online; Serpell, 1991: 717-720)
- **Limit and reduce health care costs** (Davies, 2002: 13-15; Eckardt, 2002: 5; Siegel, 1990: 1081-1086; Challenger, 1988: 7)
- **Decrease employee absenteeism** (PAT4PAWS, 2004: online; Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 6, 14-15; APPMA, 2001: online; Davies, 1999: 7; ICAS, 1997: 6)
- **Enhance staff morale** (Sawicki, 2004: online; Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 6, 12, 15; DogFriendly.com, 2001: online; Davies, 1999: 12; Berridge & Cooper, 1994: 11; Jerrell & Rightmyer, 1988: 252; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104)
- **Increase job satisfaction** (Schorr, 2004: online; Davies, 2002: 15; Davies, 1999: 4; Highly &

Cooper, 1994: 46)

- **Improve job performance** (Sawicki, 2004: online; Davies, 2002: 12; DogFriendly.com, 2001: online; Davies, 1999: 4)
- **Assist in promoting and maintaining a productive and efficient work environment** (PAT4PAWS, 2004: online; Sawicki, 2004: online; Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 6, 12, 15; APPMA, 2001: online; DogFriendly.com, 2001: online; CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online; Jerrell & Rightmyer, 1988: 252)
- **Assist with maximising employee potential and creativity** (APPMA, 2001: online; Business Weekly, 2000: online; CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online)
- **Improve interpersonal skills** (PAT4PAWS, 2004: online; APPMA, 2001: online; Davies, 1999: 4; Jerrell & Rightmyer, 1988: 253)
- **Create positive work relations and interaction** (Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 12, 15; APPMA, 2001: online; DogFriendly.com, 2001: online; Paws for Health, 2001: online; Wells & Perrine, 2001: 81-87; Davies, 1999:12; Rowan & Beck, 1994: 86; Council for Science and Society, 1988: 28-30; Jerrell & Rightmyer, 1988: 253; Fitzgerald, 1986: 104-105; Adell-Bath, 1979, in Hart, 1995: 166)
- **Enhance the organisation's image as a caring and responsible employer** (Senior, 2003: 6; Davies, 2002: 6; CONSAD Research Corporation, 1999: online; Highly & Cooper, 1994: 46; Challenger, 1988: 7)
- **Are perceived as an additional employee benefit, which serves as an effective recruitment tool to attract and retain valuable employees** (Sawicki, 2004: online; Davies, 2002: 18; San Francisco SPCA, 2001: online; Business Weekly, 2000: online; Mzumara, 2000: online; Challenger, 1988: 7)
- **Enhance employee loyalty** (PAT4PAWS, 2004: online; Sawicki, 2004: online; Davies, 2002: 18; APPMA, 2001: online; Coolidge, 1998: online; Myers, 1984: 4)
- **Reduce staff turnover** (Schorr, 2004: online; Davies, 2002: 12, 15; Shay & Shipley, 2001: online; Business Weekly, 2000: online; Mzumara, 2000: online; Davies, 1999: 4; Berridge & Cooper, 1994: 11; Highly & Cooper, 1994: 46)

- **Put employees in control of their work-life balance** (McCullough, 2001: online; Marshall, 1999: online; ICAS, 1997: 6; Berridge & Cooper, 1994: 4-5)
- **Enhance the quality of life of all employees** (Garrity & Stallones, 1998: 3)

It is well recognised that emotional difficulties and stress have a detrimental effect on both individual and organisational health. Correlations have been established and confirmed between stress and coronary heart disease, alcohol abuse and alcoholism, behavioural problems, reduced job satisfaction and a drop in productivity. However, it has also been confirmed that the relationship between stresses and detrimental work and health outcomes is to a considerable extent reversible if certain policies and practices are developed and implemented in the workplace (Davies, 1999: 5).

As indicated in this chapter, an EAP is a valuable and effective policy implemented by many organisations to assist employees with personal and work-related difficulties and stresses, in order to improve job performance and productivity, increase job satisfaction, and enhance employee morale and loyalty, which consequently reduces costs associated with absenteeism, productivity loss and staff turnover. Furthermore, it was also confirmed that implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy could have the same results.

2.6 SUMMARY

In today's highly competitive and stressful working environment, it is noteworthy when a policy that benefits the organisation also benefits its employees and their family members, and *vice versa*. Both an EAP and a pet-friendly workplace policy can successfully do exactly that. However, an EAP is a long-established means implemented by many organisations to address the health and well-being of their employees, which in turn also improves the overall health and productivity of the organisation itself. In fact, a pet-friendly workplace policy is a comparatively new means of obtaining the same results, and relatively few organisations have implemented such a policy.

Nevertheless, the literature reviewed in this chapter confirmed that the therapeutic effect and health enhancing benefits of pets could translate into the working environment. The next chapter will explore the possibility of implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African work environment by exploring the perceptions and opinions of a specific South African workplace population to the presence of pets in the workplace.

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study used survey research methodology as the research procedure. Survey research can be defined as "...a systematic way of collecting data by obtaining opinions or answers from selected respondents who represent the population of interest, or, occasionally, from an entire population" (McMurtry, 1997: 334-335). The purpose of survey research is to understand something about the population as a whole by means of collecting data from many individuals within the population (*op. cit.*).

An extensive literature study enabled the development of a semi-structured questionnaire, which was used as a data-gathering instrument for exploring perceptions and opinions to the presence of pets in the workplace (Questionnaire attached as Annexure B). The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended questions and closed questions. However, the information obtained via the open-ended questions was quantified into themes or topics, and was used to provide more in-depth elaborations and opinions, which were used to complement and enhance the quantitative data. Consequently, the study complied with a quantitative approach. Due to the convenience, speed, and cost-saving element of electronic communication, the questionnaire was designed to allow for self-completion directly in Microsoft Word. An electronic format of the questionnaire was e-mailed to the respondents, which, after completion, was returned via e-mail to a dedicated mailbox. It took approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Data gathering was done during September to November 2003.

The study was conducted with the employees of Lowe Bull Calvert Pace (LBCP), a leading advertising company in South Africa with an estimate of 106 employees. The organisation was recruited with the assistance of the Independent Counselling and Advisory Services of Southern Africa (ICAS), a foremost Behavioural Risk Management consultancy and provider of Employee Assistance Programmes. The suitability of LBCP to participate in this study was considered for the following three reasons:

- Firstly, LBCP displays a concern for its employees and their well-being. Various services are offered to help employees deal with the stresses of life.

- Secondly, LBCP seeks to attract and retain the best employees.
- Thirdly, LBCP emphasises creativity and innovation. It believes that every successful business is built upon creativity and that the most creative and most innovative company always wins.

Due to the fact that the researcher is not employed by, and has no involvement with, LBCP, the questionnaire was e-mailed to the Managing Director and the Head of Strategy of LBCP, who were requested to distribute the questionnaire to all 106 employees via e-mail. The covering letter of the questionnaire informed the respondents of the nature and goal of the research, as well as the procedure to be followed during the study. Various ethical considerations were dealt with in the covering letter, including the nature of the information requested, confidentiality, release of findings, and informed consent, as well as additional information regarding the demands that will be required from the respondents in terms of time and activities. Instructions for the completion of the questionnaire, as well as gratitude for participating in the study, were given to the respondents via the covering letter.

Although it was requested that the questionnaire be e-mailed to all 106 employees of LBCP, a total of only 75 employees received the questionnaire - 50 employees at the Head Office in Johannesburg and 25 employees at the regional office in Cape Town. As a result of poor response rates, the due date for returning the questionnaire was extended four times. The first due date was 26 September 2003; at which 9 completed questionnaires were received. The next due date was 3 October 2003; however, only 21 completed questionnaires were received at that stage. Consequently, the due date was postponed again until 15 October 2003, upon which 23 completed questionnaires were returned. The final due date for receiving completed questionnaires was 14 November 2003. A total of 28 completed questionnaires were received for a response rate of 37.33%.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A focused on the demographic information of the respondents and included questions regarding gender, age, home language, life stage grouping, highest educational level, where the respondent currently lives, as well as whether or not the respondent has any pets, and if yes, what kind of pets. This information assisted the researcher to establish the profile of the respondents and to examine whether correlations could be established between certain variables and specific opinions, perceptions, or thoughts.

Section B comprised of six open-ended questions that asked respondents to state their opinion on the idea of introducing a pet-friendly workplace policy, the benefits and drawbacks of pets in the workplace, which animals would be suitable for bringing to work, and conditions and rules

that should be laid down during policy formulation. Responses to these open-ended questions were listed and after review, some inter-related responses were combined based on the researcher's subjective evaluation.

Section C consisted of 50 statements, including various statements about possible functional effects of pets in the workplace (based on a 2001 study conducted by Wells and Perrine), as well as numerous other statements relating to feelings towards pets in general. Respondents were requested to rate the extent to which they agree with the statements on a six-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with 6 being 'not applicable'. In her analysis of the data, the researcher aimed to identify emerging hypothetical constructs, such as perceived organisational and performance-related effects of pets and perceived individual and health effects of pets in the workplace.

Data analysis was done on aggregated data only. The first level of data analysis involved the constructing of basic descriptive statistics and frequency distributions. All responses were coded and data was captured in SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions), a statistical analysis software package. Responses to the open-ended questions were listed and, after review, some inter-related responses were combined based on the researcher's subjective evaluation. Summated scores were also calculated to provide measurements for a number of emerging hypothetical constructs relating to the functional effects of pets in the workplace. The study also conducted a second level of data analysis, involving the calculation of the correlation coefficients, which provided insight into the relationships between ordinal variables, as well as a third level of data analysis, involving reliability analysis. However, due to the limited scope of a mini-dissertation, the researcher did not discuss, integrate or interpret these analyses and results. The data can, though, be made available on request by the researcher.

The results obtained during the process of data collection will be discussed in the rest of this chapter according to the different sections of the questionnaire.

3.2 SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Although the MD and Head of Strategy were requested to e-mail the questionnaire to all 106 employees of LBCP, only 75 employees received the questionnaire, and 28 completed questionnaires were received for a response rate of 37.33%. The following possible reasons were identified to explain the poor response rate of 37.33%:

- The fact that the end of the year was an extremely busy time for the employees of LBCP, as related to the researcher by the Head of Strategy, Sarah Matthams.
- The organisation's general attitude towards surveys. According to Matthams, the best response rate ever obtained from an internal survey conducted was 37%, which is consistent with the response rate of 37.33% for this study.
- A lack of interest in the topic of a pet-friendly workplace policy. For some people, allowing pets in the workplace might seem to be an absurd, silly, and impractical idea, which could result in them not completing the questionnaire.

The profile of the respondents can be described as follows (n=28):

- In terms of gender, 79% of the respondents (f=22) are female in comparison to 21% male (f=6).
- The majority of respondents, 86% (f=24), are aged from 18 to 34.
- Seventy-five percent of the respondents (f=21) have some form of tertiary education, be it a diploma, degree, or postgraduate degree.
- With regard to where the respondents currently live, the majority of respondents, 46% (f=13), indicated that they live in a house; 29% (f=8) indicated a duplex or simplex with a garden; and 25% (f=7) indicated a flat, duplex, or simplex without a garden.
- Almost half of the respondents, 46% (f=13), have children at home.
- Nearly two-thirds of the respondents, 64.3% (f=18), are pet owners. Compare with Becker (2002: 254), where demographics show that about 6 out of 10 households in the United States have pets, while only 3 out of 10 have children.

The following figure illustrates the profile of respondents in terms of pet ownership.

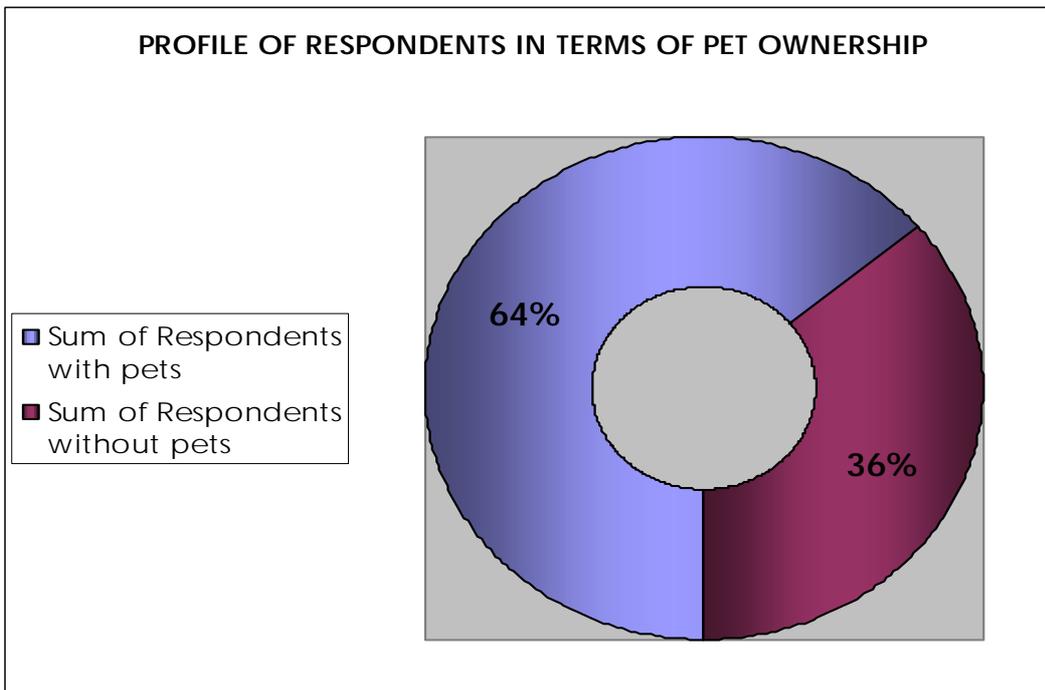


Figure 3 Profile of respondents in terms of pet ownership (n=28)

- Of the pet owners (n=18), 94% were female; 66.7% had some form of tertiary education; 61.1% had children at home; 61.1% lived in a house, 33.3% lived in a duplex or simplex with a garden and 5.6% lived in a flat, duplex or simplex without a garden.
- It seems that the profile of pet owners in this study is a female mother, with a tertiary education, who resides in a house. This relates to the Universal Living Standards Measurement (LSM) 6-8 (Lamb, *et al.*, 2004: 50-54).

The following figure illustrates the profile of pet owners (n=18) in terms of the types of pets they have at home.

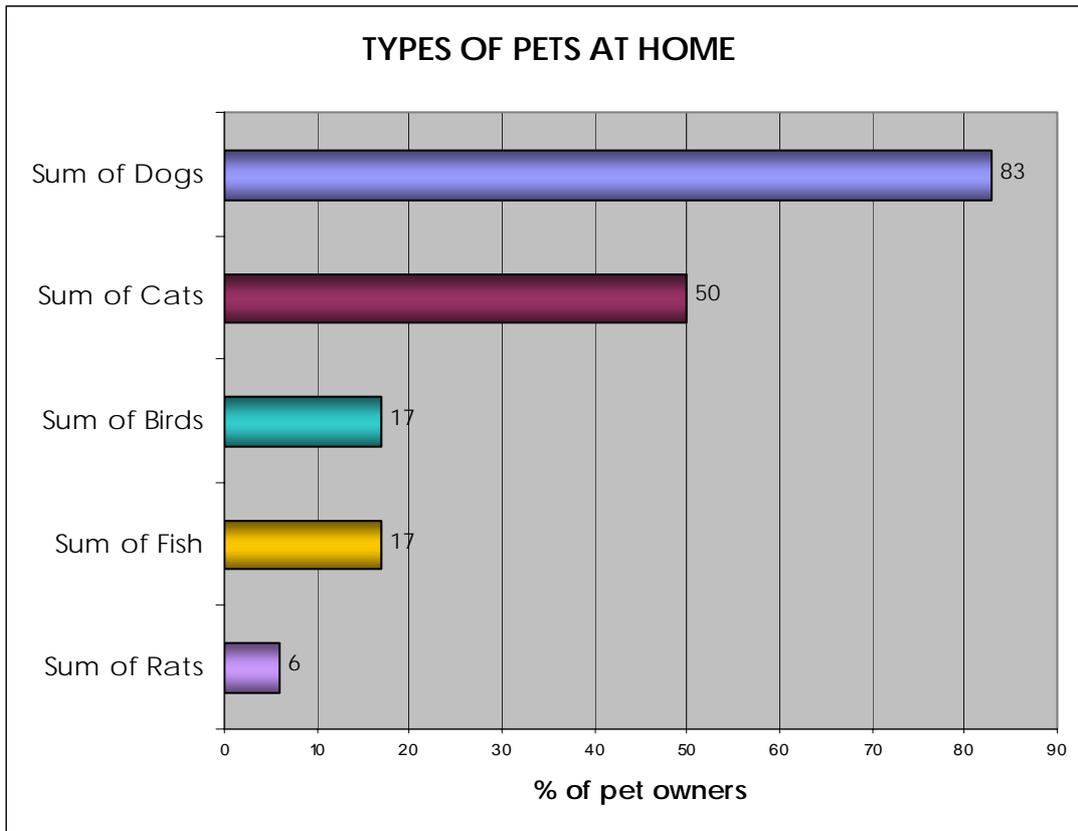


Figure 4 Profile of pet owners in relation to the types of pets at home (n=18)

From this illustration, it is obvious that dogs are the most common pets at home. As a result, one could conclude that dogs would be the most likely pets taken to work (if a pet-friendly workplace policy should be implemented). Therefore, knowledge in terms of canine behaviour, different breeds and the human-dog bond (cynopraxis) would be a relevant aspect and consideration in the formulation of a pet-friendly workplace policy.

The overlapping of more than one type of pet per household was not discussed, as it is not relevant to this study.

3.3 SECTION B: OPEN QUESTIONS

Section B comprised six open-ended questions that asked the respondents to give their opinions or perceptions about various aspects of allowing pets in the workplace. Inter-related responses to the open-ended questions were identified during the data analysis in order to establish specific themes or topics. The data obtained provides more in-depth elaborations and opinions, which complement and enhance the quantitative data. The results are discussed according to the six questions that constituted Section B.

3.3.1 THE IDEA OF INTRODUCING A PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICY

Question 1: "What do you think of the idea of being allowed to bring your pet along to work (that is, introducing a pet-friendly workplace policy)? Please elaborate."

When asked about their thoughts regarding the idea of pets in the workplace, twelve respondents (43%) responded positively to the idea of introducing a pet-friendly workplace policy, in comparison with 16 respondents (57%) who responded negatively to the idea. The results are illustrated schematically in Figure 5.

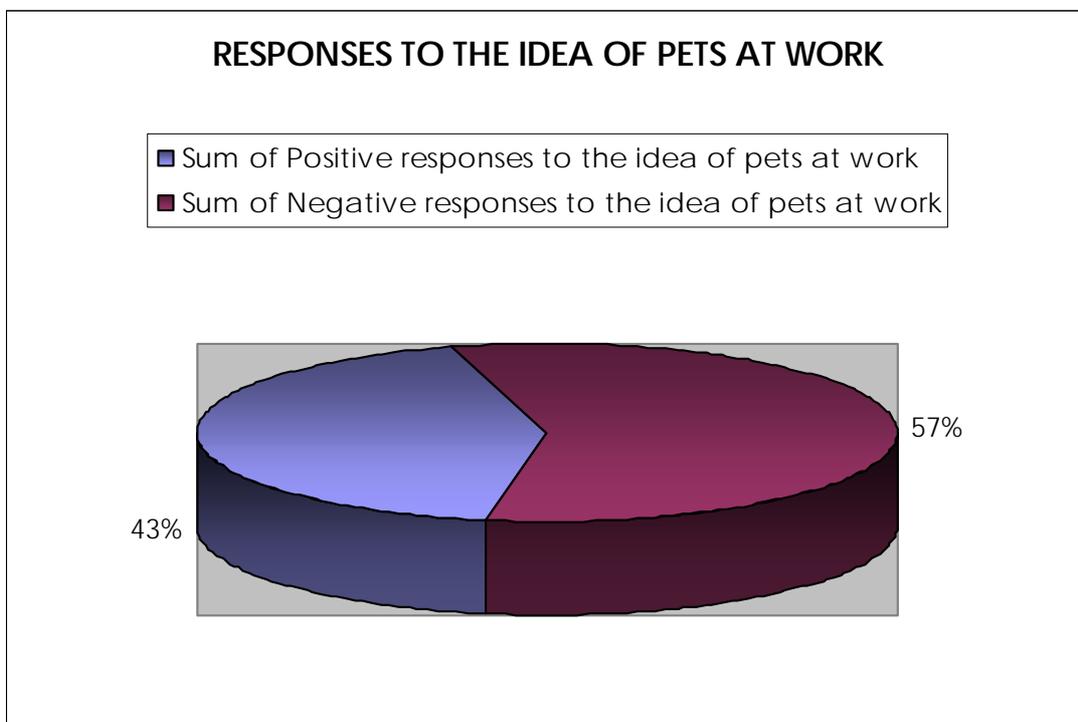


Figure 5 Responses to the idea of introducing a pet-friendly workplace policy (n=28)

The positive responses ranged from “I think it’s fantastic”, “I personally would love bringing pets to work” and “Would welcome having a dog(s) or cat(s) around the workplace”, where no conditions or concerns were mentioned, to “It should be allowed but with limits” and “In some circumstances I think it would be wonderful”, where some concern or condition is mentioned.

Conditions and concerns reported by some of the respondents for allowing pets in the workplace are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Conditions and concerns for allowing pets in the workplace

Conditions
If the animals do not cause disruption or interfere with the workflow
If there is proper care for the animals
While the animals are still young (e.g., puppies)
If the animals were trained
As long as the animals are not too big
As long as the animals have been socialised
As long as the workplace is kept hygienic
Concerns
Animals fighting with each other
Animals getting frustrated being in an office environment

The majority of the respondents (57.14%) did not favour the idea of introducing a pet-friendly workplace policy. Negative responses included statements such as “It’s absurd, cruel and stupid”, “Pets and workplace is a total no no!!”, “I think it is a terrible idea. It would be extremely disruptive. I can’t think of any benefits” and “Too much work for me to look after them and attend meetings and focus on the work I need to do”.

The reasons mentioned for not liking the idea of allowing pets in the workplace are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 Reasons for not liking the idea of allowing pets in the workplace

Reasons for not liking the idea
Distractions – employees will not be able to focus 100% on work
Pets will cause chaos
Not hygienic
Allergies
Inconsiderate towards employees who do not like animals
Some employees may fear some animals
Unfair towards the animals - need open space, love and attention all the time
Practical issues, such as who will take care of them, space for them, facilities
Religious issues
Concerns about losing one’s pet
There is no reason for animals being at work

When considering the reasons for not liking the idea of allowing pets in the workplace, it is clear that the reasons are diverse and involve all the stakeholders implicated in such a policy, as it ranged from organisational concerns or performance issues, to concerns about the other employees, and concerns about the needs of the animals, as well as issues about the workplace itself, such as hygiene.

3.3.2 THE REASON FOR INTRODUCING A PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICY

Question 2 “What do you think would be the aim or main reason for such a pet-friendly policy?”

Responses to the open-ended question regarding the aim or main reasons for allowing pets in the workplace are reported as the percentage of respondents who gave that response.

The most frequently reported aim or main reasons for allowing pets in the workplace were that pets have the ability to relieve stress, relax, calm, comfort, and entertain people (32.14%), or that they had no idea or did not know the reasons (35.71%). Other common reasons given for allowing pets at work were to enhance pet-owner relationship or bond (7.14%), to increase goodwill in the workplace and to develop relations (7.14%) and to prevent pets from staying unattended at home all day (7.14%).

Responses were obtained from all 28 respondents; however, respondents were not limited to reporting one reason only. The various reasons mentioned by the respondents are summarised in Figure 6.

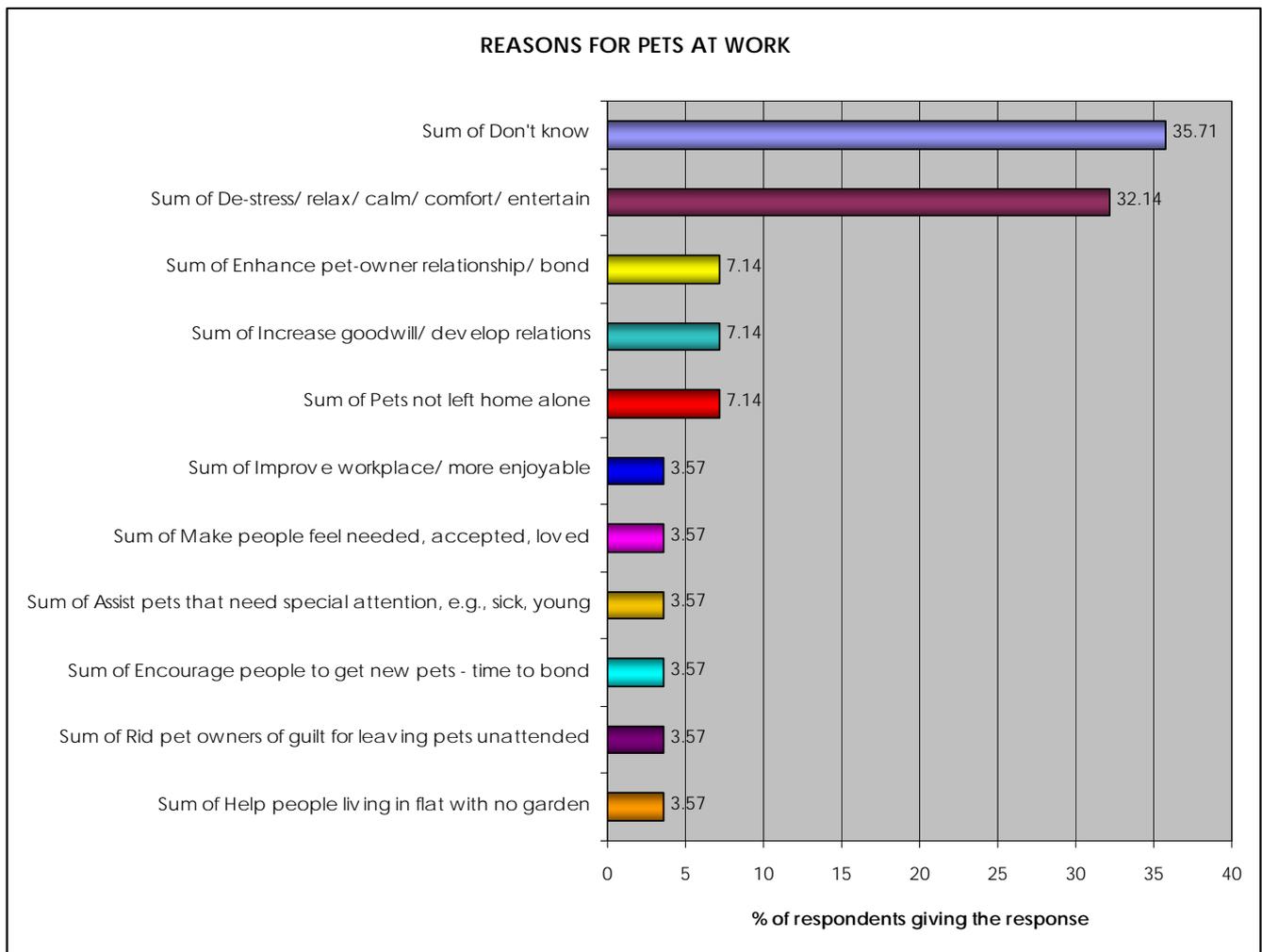


Figure 6 Reasons for allowing pets at work (n=28)

The following three reasons could be combined into one reason relating to pet owners not leaving their pets unattended: 'Pets not left home alone', 'Assist pets that need special attention, e.g., sick, young' and 'Rid pet owners of guilt for leaving pets unattended'. As a result, 14,28% of respondents thought that a reason for introducing pets in the workplace could be that pet owners do not have to leave their pets unattended throughout the day.

The reason relating to helping people who live in a flat with no garden can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it could mean that a pet-friendly workplace policy could give people who live in a flat with no garden the opportunity to interact with animals, as it would be likely that these people do not have pets at home as a result of the lack of space. Alternatively, it could mean that people who live in a flat with no garden and who have pets at home, could take their pets

to work, assisting them by giving their pets more space during the day and not leaving them cooped up in a flat all day, which again could be associated with guilt feelings for leaving the pet unattended all day.

Taking into consideration that the most frequently reported reason for allowing pets in the workplace was that they had no idea or did not know, the researcher concludes that approximately one-third of the respondents do not have any knowledge of the significance of the human-animal bond and the benefits obtained from positive human-animal interaction. Therefore, with appropriate information and awareness raising, these respondents could be made aware of the significance and possible benefits of the human-animal bond and positive human-animal interaction, which could change their perception about the reasons for allowing pets in the workplace.

3.3.3 THE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS/DRAWBACKS WITH PETS IN THE WORKPLACE

Question 3	“What potential problems/drawbacks do you envisage if your work allows employees to bring their pets to work? Please elaborate.”
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When asked about the potential problems or drawbacks of pets in the workplace, the two most frequently reported drawbacks or problems were that pets would cause distractions, noise, and chaos that would result in reduced productivity (75%) and hygiene and cleanliness issues (53.57%). Other frequently cited drawbacks or problems included potential fighting and barking (32.14%) and allergies (21.43%). (Compare with Wells & Perrine, 2001: 86; McCullough, 2001: online.)

Responses were obtained from all 28 respondents; however, respondents were not limited to reporting only one potential problem. Inter-related responses were combined based on the researcher's subjective evaluation and are reported as the percentage of respondents who gave that response.

The potential problems or drawbacks reported for allowing pets in the workplace are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 Potential problems or drawbacks of pets in the workplace (n=28)

Problems or drawbacks	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Distractions, noise, and chaos that would result in reduced productivity	21	75%
Lack of hygiene, dirt, messy, bad smells, and having to clean up after the animals	15	53.57%
Potential fighting and barking	9	32.14%
Allergies	6	21.43%
Need for space, constant attention, and stimulation	3	10.71%
Lack of training	2	7.14%
Additional cost for hiring someone to supervise, feed, water, and clean after animals	2	7.14%
Damage to property	1	3.57%
Some religions would resign, e.g., Muslim	1	3.57%
May infringe on rights of employees who do not like animals	1	3.57%
To determine what qualifies as pet(s) may be problematic	1	3.57%
Lack of fire hydrants	1	3.57%
There is no reason for animals to be at work	1	3.57%

The fact that 75% of the respondents reported that pets in the workplace would cause distractions, noise, and chaos that would result in reduced productivity differs from the literature. Various studies of companies with pet-friendly workplace policies have reported that pets in the workplace are perceived to increase productivity (PAT4PAWS, 2004: online; Sawicki, 2004: online; APPMA, 2001: online; DogFriendly.com, 2001: online). According to the nationwide survey of companies with pet-friendly workplace policies conducted by the APPMA in 2000 (APPMA, 2001: online), 73% of companies claimed that pets in the workplace create a more productive work environment. This indicates that the respondents are not aware of the possible benefits that the presence of pets in the workplace could have for the productivity and performance of the employees. Again, the researcher is of the opinion that with appropriate information, these respondents could be made aware of the possible benefits of the human-animal bond and positive human-animal interaction, which could change their perception about the impact of pets in the workplace on the productivity and performance of the employees.

Interestingly, only three respondents (10.71%) were concerned about the animals' need, including a need for space, attention, and stimulation. This indicates a lack of knowledge about the needs of animals in general. Therefore it would be important to take into account and include the role of responsible pet ownership when formulating a pet-friendly workplace

policy.

The following three potential problems reported relate to animal behaviour: 'Distractions, noise and chaos that would result in reduced productivity' 'Potential fighting and barking' and 'Lack of training'. As a result, these problems could be addressed through training and socialisation. Potential problems relating to lack of hygiene and allergies could be ascribed to misconception about animals. Animals are not necessarily dirty or smelly, and do not necessarily cause allergies. On the contrary, exposure to animals in childhood could reduce a person's likelihood for allergies. As already mentioned, the necessary information could address these concerns regarding potential problems.

3.3.4 THE ADVANTAGES OF PETS IN THE WORKPLACE

Question 4 "What advantages do you think there could be? Please elaborate."

The most frequently reported responses to the possible advantages of pets in the workplace were that there are no benefits (32.14%) and that pets would create a less stressed, pleasant, calming, loving, and tolerant work environment (17.86%). Other frequently reported advantages of pets in the workplace included that pets would bring more life, fun, and entertainment to the workplace (10.71%) and that pet owners do not have to worry about their pets being left alone at home all day (10.71%). (Compare with PAT4PAWS, 2004: online; APPMA, 2001: online; DogFriendly.com, 2001: online; Wells & Perrine, 2001: 85; Marshall, 1999: online.)

Responses were obtained from all 28 respondents; however, respondents were not restricted to reporting only one potential advantage of pets in the workplace. Inter-related responses were combined based on the researcher's subjective evaluation and are reported as the percentage of respondents who gave that response.

Table 4 summarises the potential advantages of allowing pets in the workplace.

Table 4 Potential advantages of pets in the workplace

Advantages	No. of respondents	% of respondents
No benefits	9	32.14%
Pets would create a less stressed, pleasant, calming, loving, and tolerant work environment	5	17.86%
Pets would bring more life and fun to the workplace / entertainment	3	10.71%
Pet owners do not have to worry about their pets being left alone at home / in confined spaces all day, especially puppies	3	10.71%
Pet owners could be close to their beloved pets all day	2	7.14%
Happier pet/animal lovers	2	7.14%
Pet owners do not have to rush home from work to take care of their pets	1	3.57%
If pets need attention, they could get attention during working hours	1	3.57%
Pets could help to sell an advertisement	1	3.57%
Selfish reasons for the pet owners	1	3.57%

The following three reasons could be combined into one reason relating to the human-animal bond: 'Pet owners do not have to worry about their pets being left alone at home / in confined spaces all day, especially puppies'; 'Pet owners could be close to their beloved pets all day'; 'Happier pet/animal lovers'; 'Pet owners do not have to rush home from work to take care of their pets'; 'If pets need attention, it could get attention during working hours'. As a result, 32.14% of respondents indicated that a possible advantage of introducing pets into the workplace could be that it would enhance the human-animal bond. This equals the original most frequently reported advantage of pets in the workplace, i.e., that there are no benefits.

Taking into consideration, though, that the most frequently reported advantage of pets in the workplace was that there are no benefits, the researcher concludes that approximately one-third of the respondents do not have any knowledge of the significance of the human-animal bond and the vast amount of potential benefits gained from positive human-animal interaction, as illustrated and confirmed in various studies (PAT4PAWS, 2004: online; Becker, 2002: 60-77; APPMA, 2001: online; Wells & Perrine, 2001: 85; Friedmann, 2000: 41-58). Therefore, with appropriate information and awareness raising, these respondents could be made aware of the significance and possible benefits of the human-animal bond and positive human-animal interaction, which could change their perception about the potential advantages for allowing pets in the workplace.

3.3.5 SUITABLE ANIMALS TO ALLOW IN THE WORKPLACE

Question 5 “What kind of pets do you think would be suitable (or not suitable) for bringing to work?”

Respondents mentioned various animals thought to be suitable for bringing to work, ranging from small dogs that are well-trained and housed-trained, puppies, cats, birds with clipped wings, caged animals, rabbits, fish, reptiles, and insects. Of all the animals, fish was mentioned the most frequently, by 18 respondents. Responses to the open-ended question regarding animals thought to be suitable for bringing to work are reported as the number of respondents who gave that response.

Responses were obtained from all 28 respondents; however, respondents were not limited to reporting only one pet thought to be suitable for bringing to work. Figure 7 portrays a schematic presentation of the animals thought to be suitable for bringing to work.

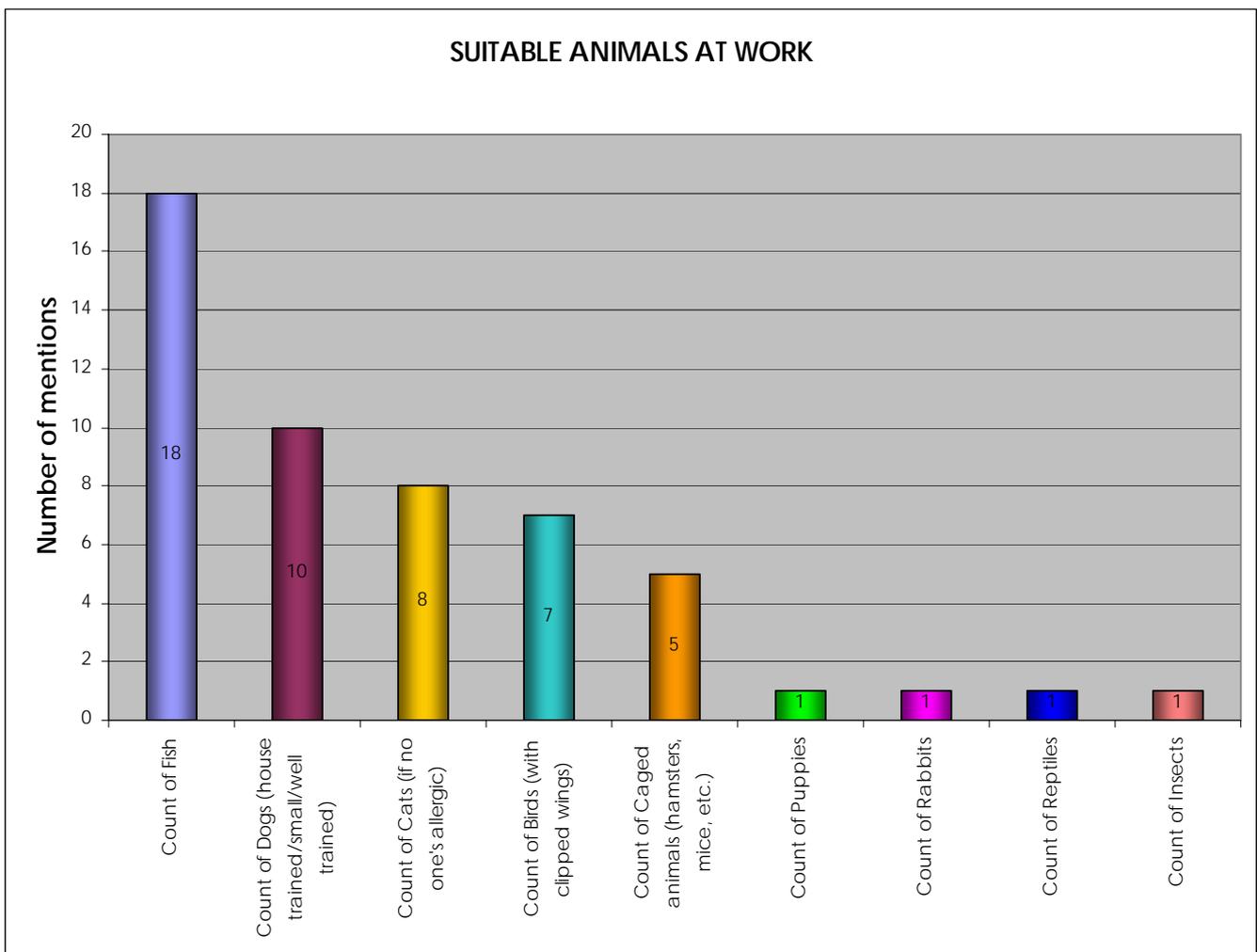


Figure 7 Animals thought to be suitable for bringing to work

A possible reason why fish was by far the animal mentioned most frequently as being suitable for bringing to work, could be that fish would cause the least amount of distractions to the employees since it would need the least amount of attention from employees. Fish could also be perceived as being the most hygienic animal because it does not require cleaning up after it. It could also be because fish needs the least amount of space as it is confined in a fish tank or aquarium. The responsibility for taking care of the fish would also be minimal and would basically result only in feeding it. Fish would also not create the element of fear in employees or infringe on some religions, as might be the case with other animals, such as dogs.

The researcher therefore concludes that the concerns and potential problems reported by the respondents, as mentioned earlier, definitely influenced their perception, and ultimately their choice, of a suitable animal for introducing into the workplace.

3.3.6 CONDITIONS OR RULES NECESSARY TO BE ESTABLISHED DURING THE FORMULATION OF A PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICY

Question 6 "What conditions or rules do you think need to be laid down during policy formulation to make such a policy viable? Please elaborate."

Responses to the open-ended question regarding the conditions or rules respondents thought necessary to be established during the formulation of a pet-friendly workplace policy were obtained from all 28 respondents; however, respondents were not limited to reporting only one condition or rule. The responses obtained were listed and after review, some inter-related responses were combined based on the researcher's subjective evaluation.

Based on this exercise, it seems evident that the rules and conditions to be established during the formulation of such a policy would be based on ten specific topics as identified by the researcher. The issues to be considered when formulating a pet-friendly workplace policy are summarised in Table 5. (The numbering of the issues from 1 to 10 does not relate to the importance of the responses.)

Table 5 Issues to be considered when formulating a pet-friendly workplace policy

Issues to be considered
1. The rights of other employees should be considered and respected at all times
2. Buy-in should be obtained from all employees
3. Pet owners should take full responsibility for their pets at all times
4. The needs of the animals should be considered at all times
5. Sufficient and appropriate demarcated space (or pet-facilities) should be allocated to the animals
6. Decisions should be taken about the number, type, and age of pets to be allowed at work
7. Pets should be under control, well-trained, and socialised with other animals
8. Health issues, e.g., vaccinations, should be prioritised and taken seriously
9. Hygiene and cleanliness of the workplace should be ensured
10. Rules regarding distractions and damage

These conditions or rules coincide with rules and guidelines for pet-friendly workplace policies as mentioned in the literature. (Compare with Dale, 2001: online; Shay & Shipley, 2001: online; Skoczek, 2001: online; Marshall, 2000: online; Wilde, 1998: online.)

The issues that need to be considered when formulating a pet-friendly workplace policy will be guidelines for the management of pets in the workplace to ensure the peaceful coexistence between the animals, their owners, and their human colleagues.

3.4 SECTION C: STATEMENTS

Section C consisted of 50 statements that explored respondents' perceptions about pets in general, as well as pets in the workplace. Respondents were requested to rate the extent to which they agree with the statements on a six-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with 6 being 'not applicable'. During the process of data analysis, the researcher aimed to identify a number of emerging hypothetical constructs relating to the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace, as well as the overall opinion of respondents to the presence of pets in the workplace.

The emerging hypothetical constructs relating to the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace are divided into functional effects or benefits for the individual employee and functional effects or benefits for the organisation. To this extent, the researcher identified five emerging hypothetical constructs relating to the functional effects of pets in the workplace, which are listed in Table 6.

Table 6 Five emerging hypothetical constructs relating to the functional effects of pets in the workplace

Functional effect of pets for the individual employee	Functional effect of pets for the organisation
Physical health benefits	Benefits for the corporate image
Psychological health benefits	Performance-related benefits
Social health benefits	

These specific emerging hypothetical constructs were identified and selected for the following two reasons:

- Firstly, the researcher wanted to explore whether the benefits of positive human-animal interaction are perceived to translate into a South African work environment. As discussed in Chapter 2, the benefits of positive human-animal interaction to the general economically active adult population are viewed holistically, in terms of physical health benefits, emotional and psychological health benefits, and social health benefits, which collectively impact the overall quality of life of humans. (Compare with Becker, 2002: 15; Friedmann 2000: 41.)
- Secondly, the researcher wanted to explore whether positive human-animal interaction is perceived as a possible means to enhance the outcomes of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). As discussed in Chapter 2, an EAP focuses on assisting and supporting employees in the interest of health and performance, which consequently also benefits the

organisation’s overall efficiency, productivity, quality and competitiveness. (Compare with Davies, 2002: 2.)

With reference to the emerging hypothetical constructs relating to the overall opinion of respondents to the presence of pets in the workplace, summated scores were calculated to provide measurements and two additional emerging hypothetical constructs were identified:

- Respondents responding positive to the idea of pets in the workplace
- Respondents responding negatively to the idea of pets in the workplace

The results for Section C of the questionnaire are discussed according to the emerging hypothetical constructs relating to the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace, firstly for the individual employee, and secondly for the organisation. Finally, the results for the emerging hypothetical construct relating to the overall opinion of respondents to the presence of pets in the workplace will be discussed.

3.4.1 PERCEIVED FUNCTIONAL EFFECTS OF PETS IN THE WORKPLACE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE (HEALTH-RELATED BENEFITS)

In order to create emerging hypothetical constructs relating to the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace for the individual employee (health-related benefits) summated scores for various statements were calculated. The statements were selected based on the direct link they have with health, on the role they play in health, on the contribution they make towards health, or on the effect they have on health. Distinctions were made between physical health, psychological health, and social health. Table 7 lists the statements that were used for creating the hypothetical constructs of health-related benefits.

Table 7 Statements used for creating the hypothetical constructs of health-related benefits

FUNCTIONAL EFFECTS OF PETS ON PHYSICAL HEALTH	FUNCTIONAL EFFECTS OF PETS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH	FUNCTIONAL EFFECTS OF PETS ON SOCIAL HEALTH
7. Attract attention of employees	14. Reduce anxiety of employees	5. Provide social interaction with employees
9. Entertain people	18. Enhance the mood	6. Provide social interaction with clients
17. Cope with stress	24. Positively affect morale	10. Improve relationship amongst employees
33. Physical health benefit for employees	32. Psychological benefit for employees	11. Improve relationship with clients
45. Create comfortable atmosphere	41. Talk to pet	

The researcher focused on four variables individually in her discussion of the results, i.e.:

- whether the respondents have pets at home (pet ownership)
- whether the respondents were male or female (gender)
- whether the respondents had children at home (children)
- whether the respondents had some form of tertiary education (education)

The study also conducted a second level of data analysis, involving the calculation of the variances or differences between the results of the relevant opposites, e.g., pet owners in comparison with non-pet owners, males in comparison with females, etc. However, due to the limited scope of a mini-dissertation, the researcher did not discuss, integrate, or interpret these analyses and results. The data can, though, be made available by the researcher on request.

Overall, when considering all the respondents and not taking into consideration any of the four variables (n=28), respondents were most likely to perceive pets in the workplace to promote the psychological health of employees (54.04%), then the physical health (49.11%), and to a much lesser extent the social health of employees (38.39%).

When **pet ownership** was the variable, results indicated that a greater percentage of respondents who have pets at home perceived pets in the workplace to benefit the individual employee in terms of health than the percentage of respondents who do not have pets at home (see Figure 8). This was true for all three aspects of health - physical, psychological and social health. This may be due to the fact that pet owners have more first-hand experience of the potential health-related benefits of pets because of their interaction with their pets. It could also be that pet owners have different criteria for quality of life and a different lifestyle that revolves around their pets.

The results coincide with the literature that pet owners have no difficulty in confirming the direct relationship between personal well-being, quality of life, and the presence of their pet (Bergler, 1988: 111), and the findings that pet owners generally report better overall health (Serpell, 1991: 717-720), less psychological distress and fewer visits to the doctor when compared to non-pet owners (Siegel, 1990: 1081-1086). The results also correspond with findings that pet owners generally have higher morale than non-pet owners (Fitzgerald, 1986: 104) and suffer less depression and loneliness (Hart, 2000: 62). Compare also with findings from Wells and Perrine (2001: 83), that pet owners who bring their pets to work perceive greater benefits than both employees who do not bring their pets to work and non-pet owners (see Figure 8).

Additionally, the percentages of non-pet owners who were of the opinion that pets in the workplace could benefit the physical and social health of employees were the lowest when taking into account all the variables (43% and 33.13% respectively) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 summarises the results in terms of pet ownership schematically.

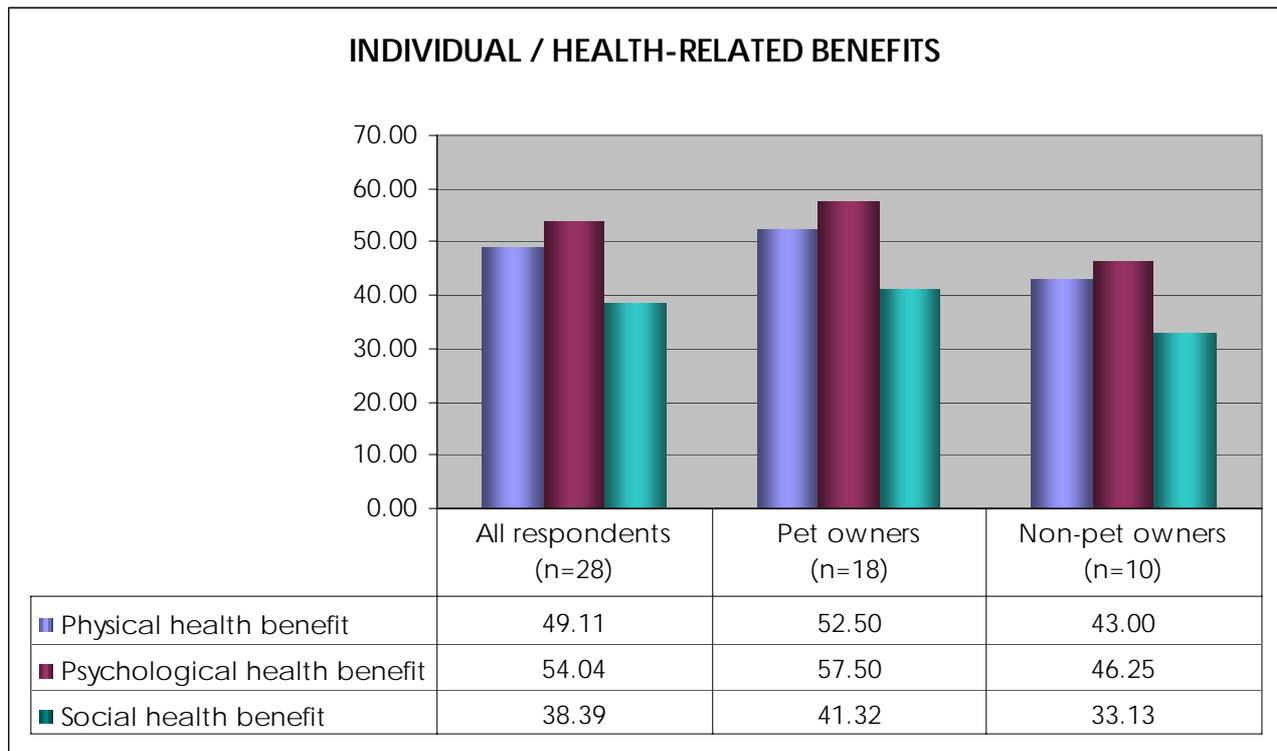


Figure 8 Pet ownership and perceived individual / health-related benefits

When **gender** was the variable, results indicated that the percentage of males who were of the opinion that pets in the workplace could benefit the individual employee in terms of health was greater than the percentage of females (see Figure 9). As with pet ownership, this greater percentage of males was in terms of physical, psychological and social health. A possible reason for the higher percentage of males perceiving that pets could benefit the health of employees overall, might be due to the fact that in general, men’s relationship and interaction with pets is more active and physical, full of fun, play and relaxation. Therefore, they would benefit more from pets in terms of these aspects that result in health-enhancing benefits.

Also, although it might be perceived as a sexist remark, it is the researcher’s opinion that men in general have a more ‘So what’ attitude or ‘It’s OK’ attitude. In comparison with women, who tend to stress more easily due to their more acute sense of responsibility that stems from their nurturing role, men are more inclined to relax and to take life a bit less seriously. As a result, they could be more focused on and aware of the less serious side of life, including the effect of

positive human-animal interaction.

Another interesting finding was that the highest percentage of respondents who were of the opinion that pets in the workplace could benefit the social health of employees, was males (43.75%) (see Figure 9). This could be due to the fact that men are generally more sociable than women, which could indicate that they would be more aware of the possible benefits that pets could have on their social health. Again, this is only the researcher’s personal opinion.

Figure 9 summarises the results in terms of gender schematically.

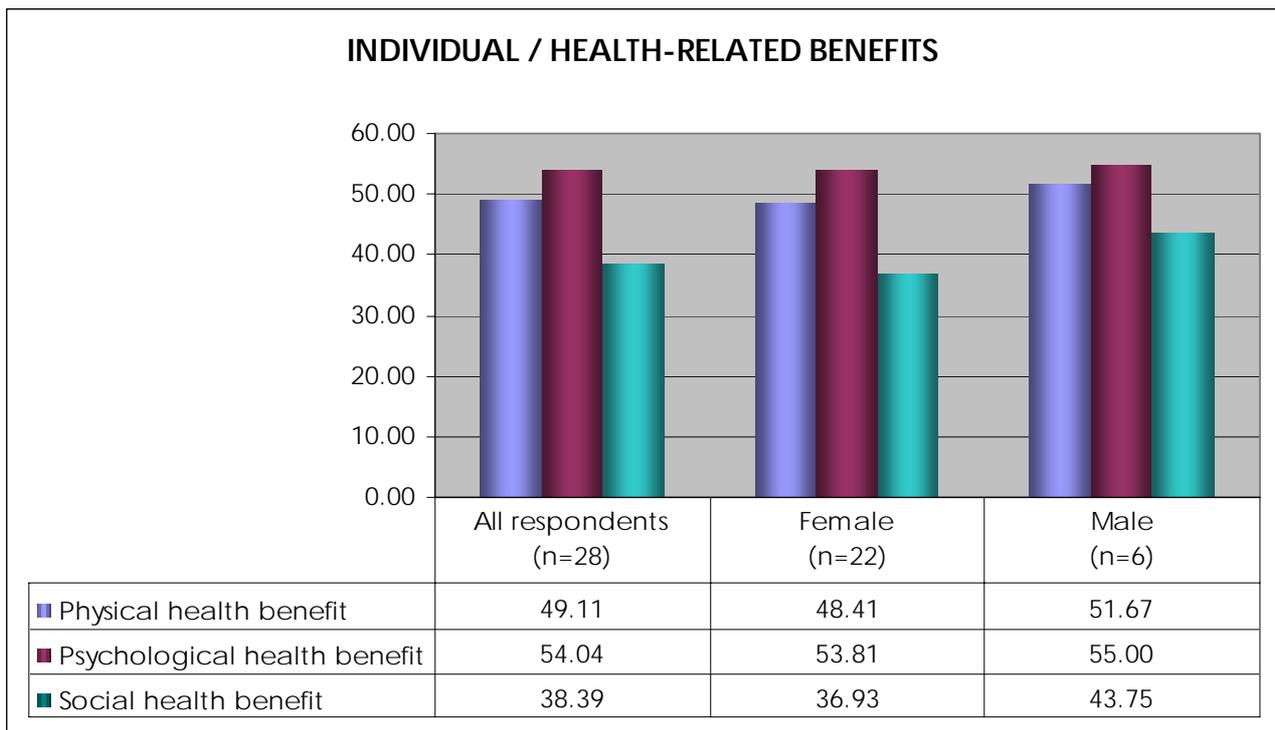


Figure 9 Gender and perceived individual / health-related benefits

When **children** were the variable, results indicated that the percentage of respondents with children at home who thought pets in the workplace would benefit the individual employee in terms of health was lower than the percentage of respondents who do not have children at home (see Figure 10). This was true for all three aspects of health - physical, psychological and social health.

In fact, the percentage of respondents who do not have children at home who thought that pets would positively affect psychological health was the greatest at 63.10% (see Figure 10). This was so when considering all the variables for the respondents (pets, gender, children and education), as well as all the possible functional effects pets in the workplace might have (individual/ health-related benefits and organisational/ performance-related benefits).

Moreover, the highest percentage of respondents who thought that pets in the workplace could benefit the physical health of employees was those who do not have children at home (55.36%) (see Figure 10).

Interestingly, the percentage of respondents who have children at home, who perceived that pets would benefit psychological health, was the lowest percentage of respondents when considering all the variables (46.03%) (see Figure 10). This may be due to the fact that the lives of people with children at home, to a great degree, revolve around their children, which could take the focus off the potential benefits that pets could add to life, while those who do not have children at home is in a position to truly notice and experience the benefits that pets could add. Also, people who do not have children at home could substitute children with pets, which may result in them receiving similar benefits from animals as people with children receive from their children. Another possible explanation could be that people who do not have children are more vulnerable to loneliness. Therefore, they could rely on pets to a greater degree for their companionship and social support, forming an emotional bond of attachment, which could result in various health-enhancing benefits and a sense of well-being. (Compare with Sable, 1995: 336.)

Figure 10 summarises the results in terms of children schematically. (When considering the variable of children, please note that one of the respondents did not indicate whether he has children at home or not; as a result the total only adds to 27.)

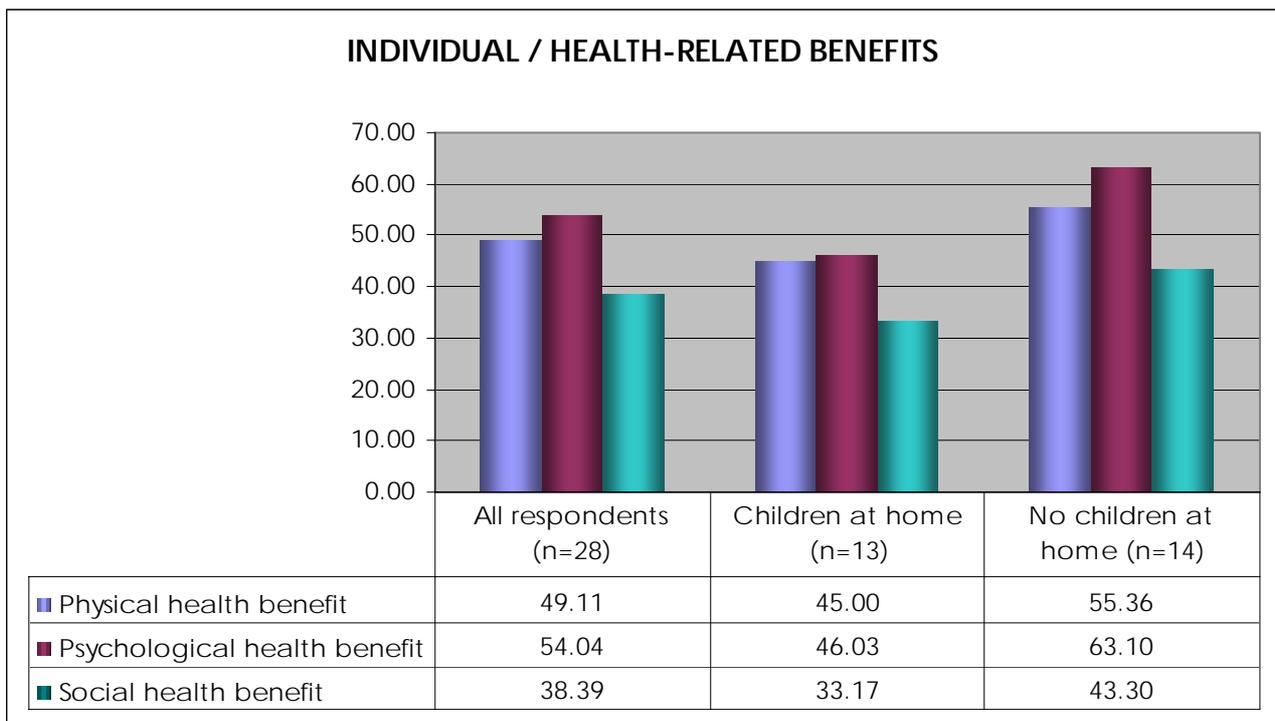


Figure 10 Children and perceived individual / health-related benefits

When **education** was the variable, results indicated that, with reference to physical health, a greater percentage of respondents who do not have any form of tertiary education thought that pets would benefit the physical health of employees than the percentage of respondents who do have some form of tertiary education. However, with regard to psychological and social health, the results were reversed (see Figure 11). A greater percentage of respondents who do have some form of tertiary education thought that pets in the workplace would benefit the individual employee in terms of psychological and social health.

It could be that people with some form of tertiary education have more extensive general knowledge as a result of greater exposure to a greater variety of cultures, backgrounds, and opinions, and better awareness and understanding of scientific research. It may be that people with a tertiary education are more aware of one’s psychological and social health than people without a tertiary education. It may also be that people with a tertiary education have a different lifestyle, which could result in them falling into a higher LSM, 8 or higher, which may imply that they are targeted with more knowledge than the lower LSM. With regard to the results concerning the physical health, it could be that people without a tertiary education are more likely to focus on one’s physical health, and they may also be more involved in physical activities, in general and with their pets. As a result, they may be more inclined to focus on the benefits of pets on the physical health of their human companions.

Figure 11 summarises the results in terms of education schematically.

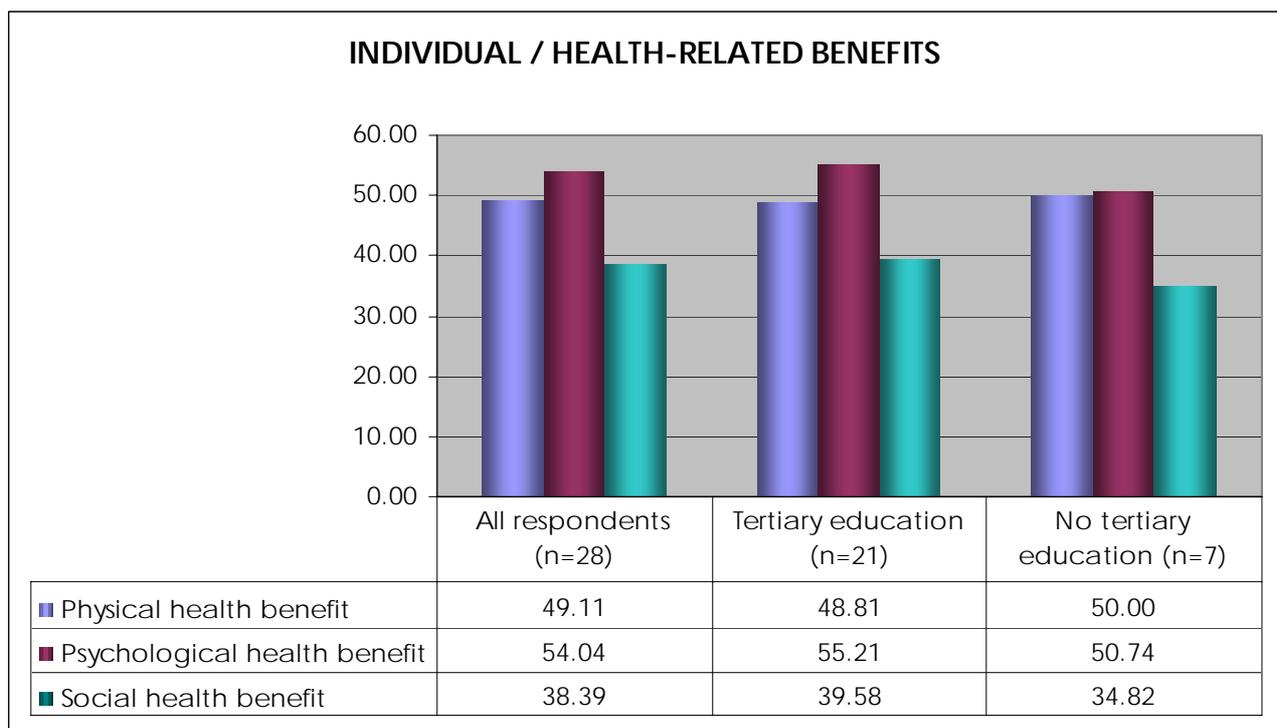


Figure 11 Education and perceived individual / health-related benefits

3.4.2 PERCEIVED FUNCTIONAL EFFECTS OF PETS IN THE WORKPLACE FOR THE ORGANISATION (CORPORATE IMAGE / PERFORMANCE-RELATED BENEFITS)

Summated scores for various statements were calculated to create emerging hypothetical constructs relating to the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace for the organisation. Distinctions were made between statements relating to the corporate image and statements associated with performance-related benefits. The statements were selected based on the direct link they have with the corporate image and performance-related aspects, on the role they play in the corporate image and performance-related aspects, on the contribution they make towards the corporate image and performance-related aspects, or on the effect they have on the corporate image and performance-related aspects.

The statements that were used for creating the hypothetical constructs of organisational-related benefits are listed in Table 8.

Table 8 Statements used for creating the hypothetical constructs of organisational-related benefits

FUNCTIONAL EFFECTS OF PETS ON THE CORPORATE IMAGE	FUNCTIONAL EFFECTS OF PETS ON PERFORMANCE-RELATED ISSUES
6. Provide social interaction with clients	5. Provide social interaction with employees
8. Attract attention of clients	7. Attract attention of employees
11. Improve relationship with clients	10. Improve relationship amongst employees
12. Attract clients	19. Positively affect work satisfaction
13. Present a positive image of the company	20. Positively affect productivity
15. Reduce anxiety of clients	21. Positively affect work quality
16. Foster corporate identity	22. Positively affect attendance
	23. Positively affect commitment
	24. Positively affect morale
	25. Positively affect creativity

As with the discussion of the results for the perceived functional effects pets in the workplace have on the individual in terms of health, the researcher focused on the same four variables in her discussion of the results for the perceived functional effects pets in the workplace have on the organisation. Therefore, results were discussed in terms of pet ownership, gender, children, and education.

On the whole, when considering all the respondents (n=28) and not taking into consideration any of the four variables, 44.64% of all the respondents thought that pets in the workplace

would benefit performance-related issues, while only 35.97% of all the respondents were of the opinion that pets in the workplace would promote the corporate image of the organisation. (Compare with Wells & Perrine, 2001: 85; APPMA, 2001: online; PAT4PAWS, 2004: online.)

When **pet ownership** was the variable, results indicated that a greater percentage of respondents who have pets at home perceived pets in the workplace to promote organisational issues than the percentage of respondents who do not have pets at home. This was true for both corporate image issues and performance-related issues (see Figure 12). Non-pet owners comprised the smallest percentage of respondents who perceived pets in the workplace to possibly promote performance-related issues (35.50%) (see Figure 12).

Pet owners' greater likelihood to perceive pets in the workplace to promote organisational issues may be due to the fact that pet owners have more first-hand experience of, or are more able to envisage the potential benefits pets may have on various issues, such as work satisfaction, productivity, commitment, morale, and creativity as a result of their direct experience and interaction with pets. It could also be that pet owners have different criteria for quality of life and a different lifestyle that revolves around their pets. Pet owners could also possibly be more aware of the positive association made with pets that could materialise into a more positive corporate image.

Figure 12 summarises the results in terms of pet ownership schematically.

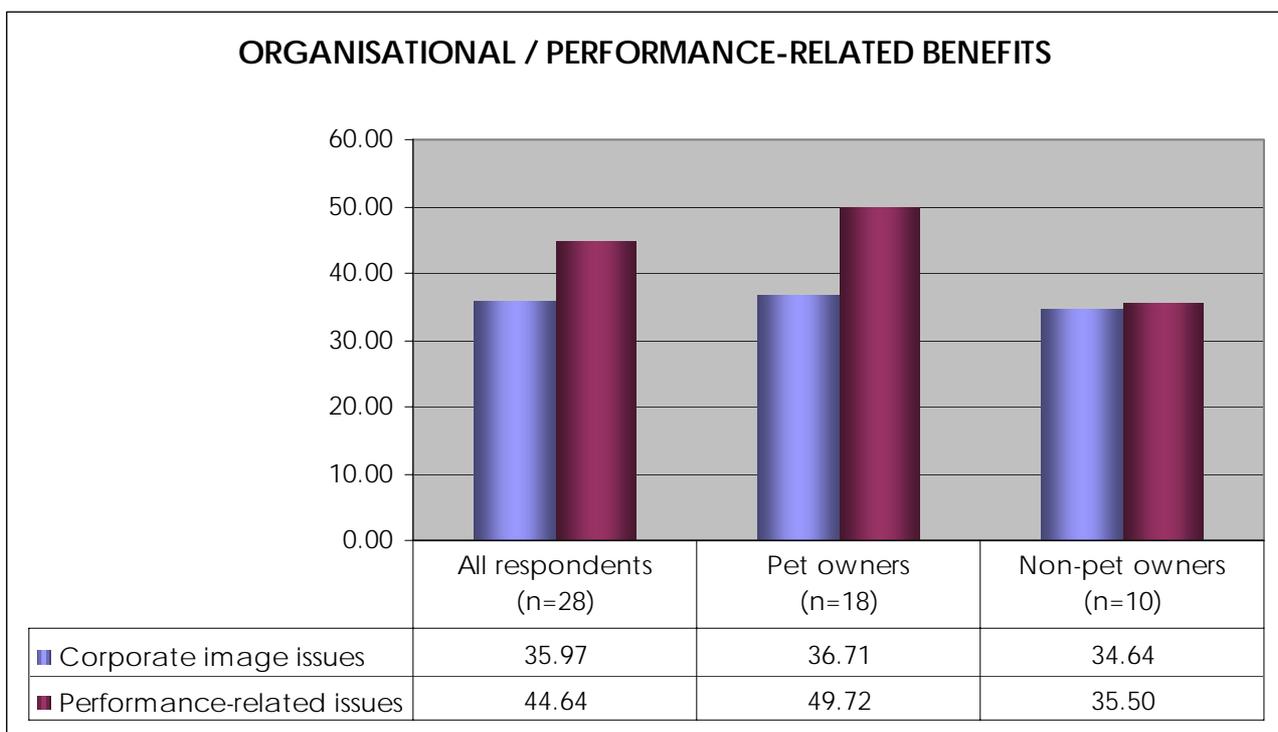


Figure 12 Pet ownership and perceived organisational / performance-related benefits

When **gender** was the variable, results indicated that the percentage of males who were of the opinion that pets in the workplace could promote the corporate image was greater than the percentage of females, while the percentage of females who perceived pets in the workplace to benefit performance-related issues was greater than the percentage of males (see Figure 13). In fact, the percentage of males who were of the opinion that pets would positively promote the corporate image was the greatest across all the variables when considering the possible benefits pets might have for the organisation (42.26%) (see Figure 13).

Although it might be perceived as a sexist remark, it is the researcher's opinion that men are generally more sociable and outgoing of nature. As a result, men could possibly be more inclined to perceive the potential benefits of pets for the corporate image, as the corporate image basically links with building relationships with external clients and it could be that men are more focused on this external relationship with the client. Therefore, the perception about the organisation's corporate image could possibly be linked to men's perception of the benefits of pets to the social health of employees. Women could be more likely to notice internal issues, such as the potential benefits of pets for commitment, creativity, work quality, etc., as a result of their general inclination to focus within, on the work family, before focusing on the external clients. Again, this is only the researcher's personal opinion.

It could also be as a result of men's' more 'So what' attitude or 'It's OK' attitude. Once more, it might be perceived as a sexist remark but this is only the researcher's personal opinion. In comparison with women, who tend to stress more easily due to their more acute sense of responsibility which stems from their nurturing role, men are more inclined to relax and take life a bit less seriously. As a result, they could be more focused on and aware of the less serious side of life, including the effect of positive human-animal interaction.

Figure 13 summarises the results in terms of gender schematically.

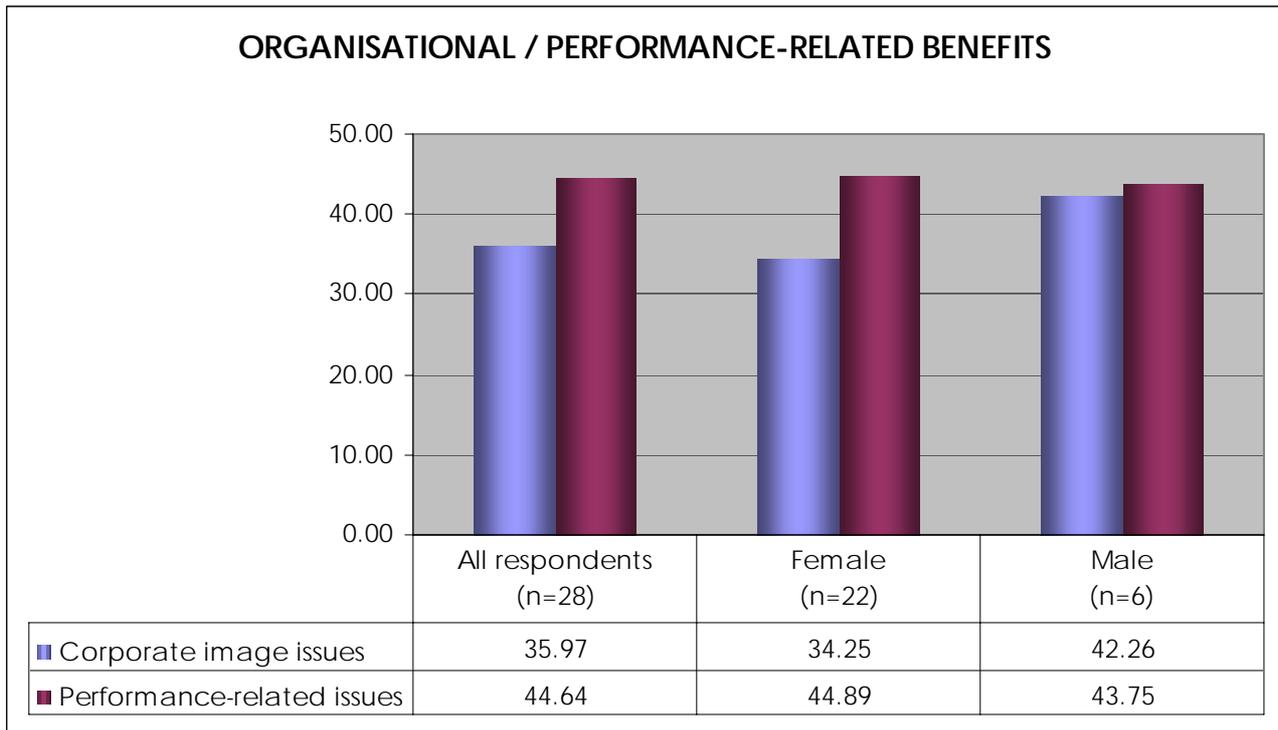


Figure 13 Gender and perceived organisational / performance-related benefits

When **children** were the variable, results indicated that a greater percentage of respondents who do not have children at home perceived pets in the workplace to promote organisational issues than the percentage of respondents who do have children at home (see Figure 14). This was true for both corporate image issues and performance-related issues. In fact, the percentage of respondents who do not have children at home who were of the opinion that pets would positively affect performance-related issues was the greatest across all the variables when considering the possible benefits pets might have for the organisation (50.18%) (see Figure 14). Interestingly, also, the percentage of respondents with children at home, who perceived that pets would benefit the organisation in terms of corporate image issues was the smallest (31.59%) (see Figure 14).

This difference in perceptions between people with and those without children at home may be due to the fact that people who do not have children at home are in a position to notice and experience the benefits that pets might have on various organisational issues, such as work satisfaction, productivity, commitment, morale, and creativity, while people with children at home focus all their energy and attention on their children.

Figure 14 summarises the results in terms of children schematically. (When considering the variable of children, please note that one of the respondents did not indicate whether he has children at home or not; as a result the total only adds to 27.)

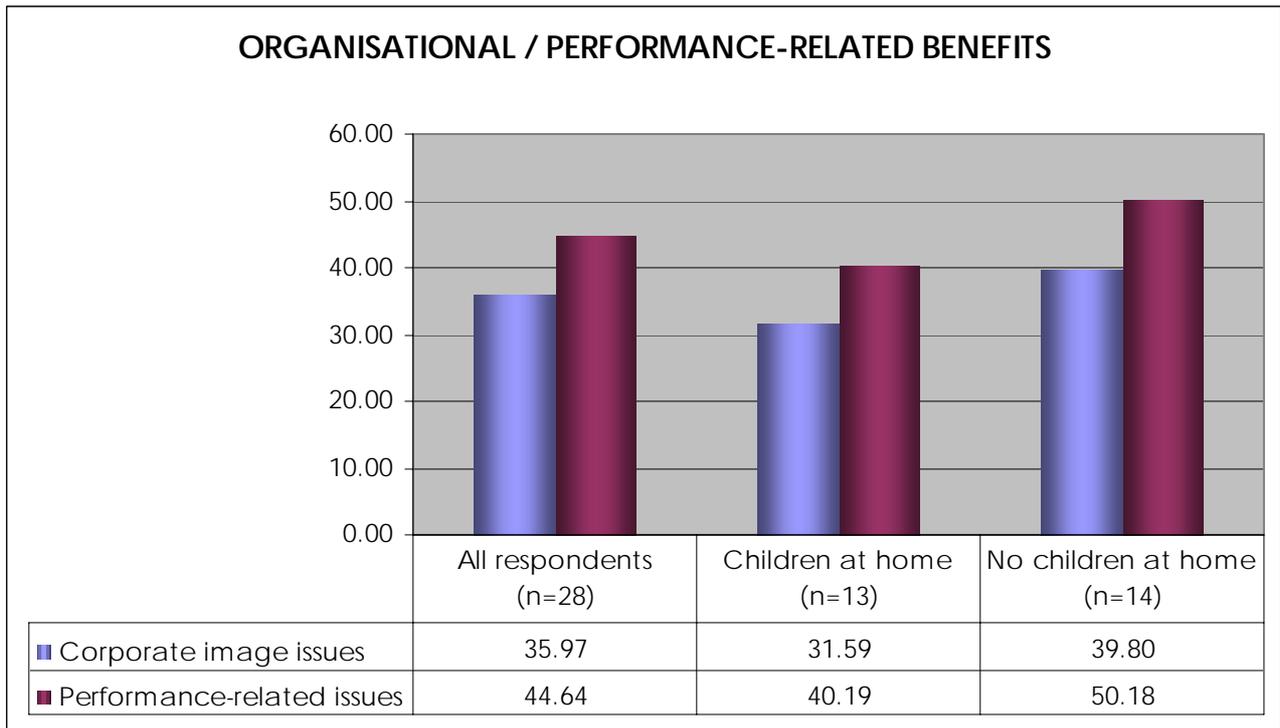


Figure 14 Children and perceived organisational / performance-related benefits

When **education** was the variable, results indicated that with reference to the corporate image a greater percentage of respondents who do have some form of tertiary education thought that pets would promote the corporate image of the organisation than the percentage of respondents who do not have any form of tertiary education (see Figure 15). It may be that the respondents with a tertiary education have more extensive knowledge of management, which usually entails information about productivity and work-related stress, which could make them more aware of the link between productivity and work-related stress.

However, with regard to performance-related issues, the results were reversed. A greater percentage of respondents who do not have any form of tertiary education thought that pets in the workplace would benefit performance-related issues (see Figure 15). The researcher cannot logically explain why respondents who do not have any form of tertiary education were more likely to perceive possible benefits of pets in the workplace for performance-related issues.

Figure 15 summarises the results in terms of education schematically.

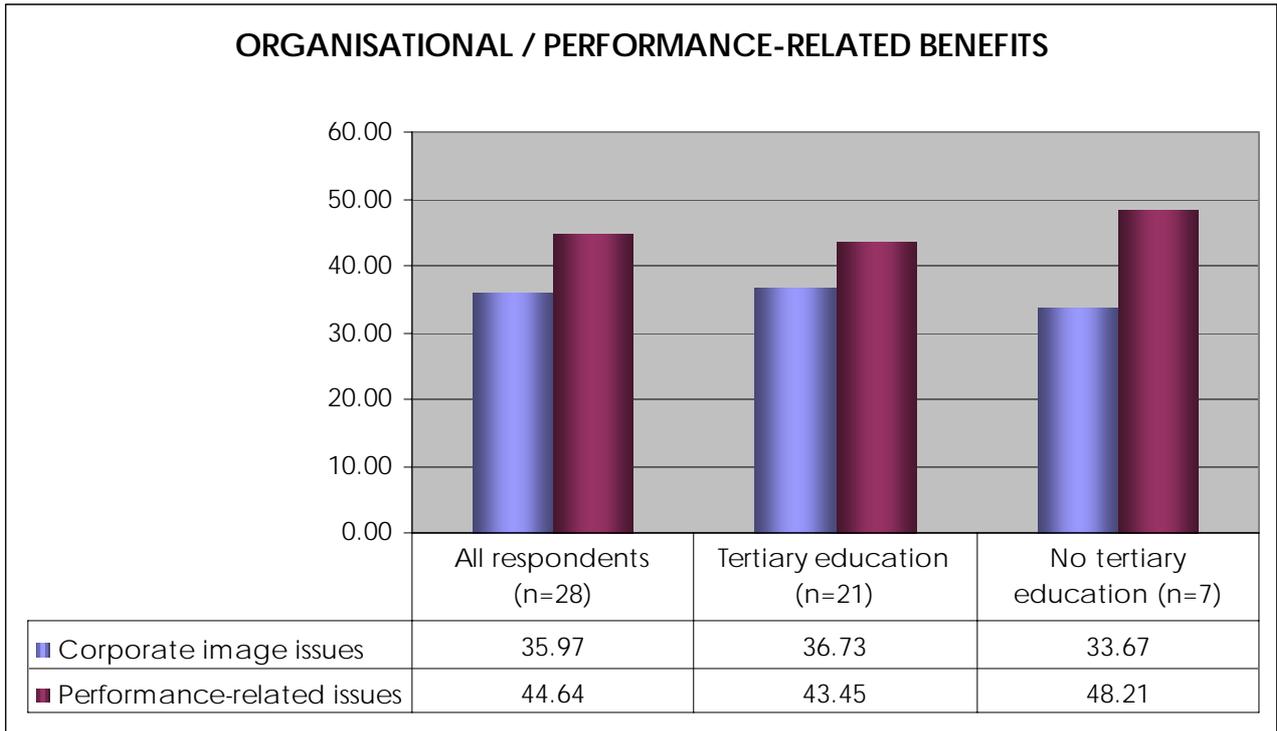


Figure 15 Education and organisational / performance-related benefits

3.4.3 OVERALL OPINION TO THE PRESENCE OF PETS IN THE WORKPLACE

Summated scores for various statements were calculated to create emerging hypothetical constructs of the overall opinions regarding the presence of pets in the workplace. The statements were selected based on the direct link they have with the overall opinions regarding the presence of pets in the workplace, on the role they play in formulating the overall opinions about the presence of pets in the workplace, on the contribution they make towards the overall opinions about the presence of pets in the workplace, or on the effect they have on the overall opinions about the presence of pets in the workplace.

The statements that were used for creating the hypothetical constructs of overall opinions regarding the presence of pets in the workplace are listed in Table 9.

Table 9 Statements used for creating the hypothetical constructs of overall opinions regarding the presence of pets at work

OVERALL POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE PRESENCE OF PETS IN THE WORKPLACE	OVERALL NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO THE PRESENCE OF PETS IN THE WORKPLACE
26. Will like to bring pet to work	29. Don't like pets
27. Pet at work would be an added benefit	30. Allergic to pets
38. Would welcome a pet friendly workplace	31. Pets at work would cause disruption
39. Company culture suited for pet friendly workplace	35. Pet's place is at home
45. Create comfortable atmosphere	46. Pets at work is sweet idea but disruptive

As with the discussion of the results for the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace, the researcher focused on the same four variables in her discussion of the results. Therefore, results were discussed in terms of pet ownership, gender, children, and education.

In general, when considering all the respondents (n=28) and not taking into consideration any of the four variables, the majority of the respondents responded negatively to the presence of pets in the workplace, 52.32%, while only 34.29% of the respondents responded positively to the presence of pets in the workplace.

Intriguingly, when **pet ownership** was the variable, results indicated that a higher percentage of respondents who do not have pets at home (35.50%) responded positively towards the idea of pets in the workplace than the percentage of respondents who have pets at home (33.61%) (see Figure 16). Compare with Wells and Perrine (2001: 85), where 14% of employees took their pets to work, whereas 63% of employees did not take their pets to work (the remaining 23% did not own pets).

This may be due to the fact that pet owners, as a result of their direct experience with animals, are more aware of and, consequently, placed more emphasis on the animals' needs, e.g., open spaces, than non-pet owners. Being cooped up in a small office would not ordinarily be the ideal place where pet owners would like to see their pets all day. It could also be that pet owners, if they considered bringing their own pets to the workplace, might have envisaged a situation of chaos and disruption, as the majority of pet owners in South Africa do not take their pets for training and socialisation. Also, in South Africa, emphasis is placed on obtaining pets, especially dogs, for security reasons. The idea of these big and aggressive dogs in the workplace could be one of the reasons why pet owners responded negatively towards the idea of pets in the workplace, especially if one considers that 83% of pet owners in this study have dogs as pets. Furthermore, bringing their pets to work would also mean added responsibility for the employees, as pet owners would be responsible for their own pets.

Figure 16 summarises the results in terms of pet ownership schematically.

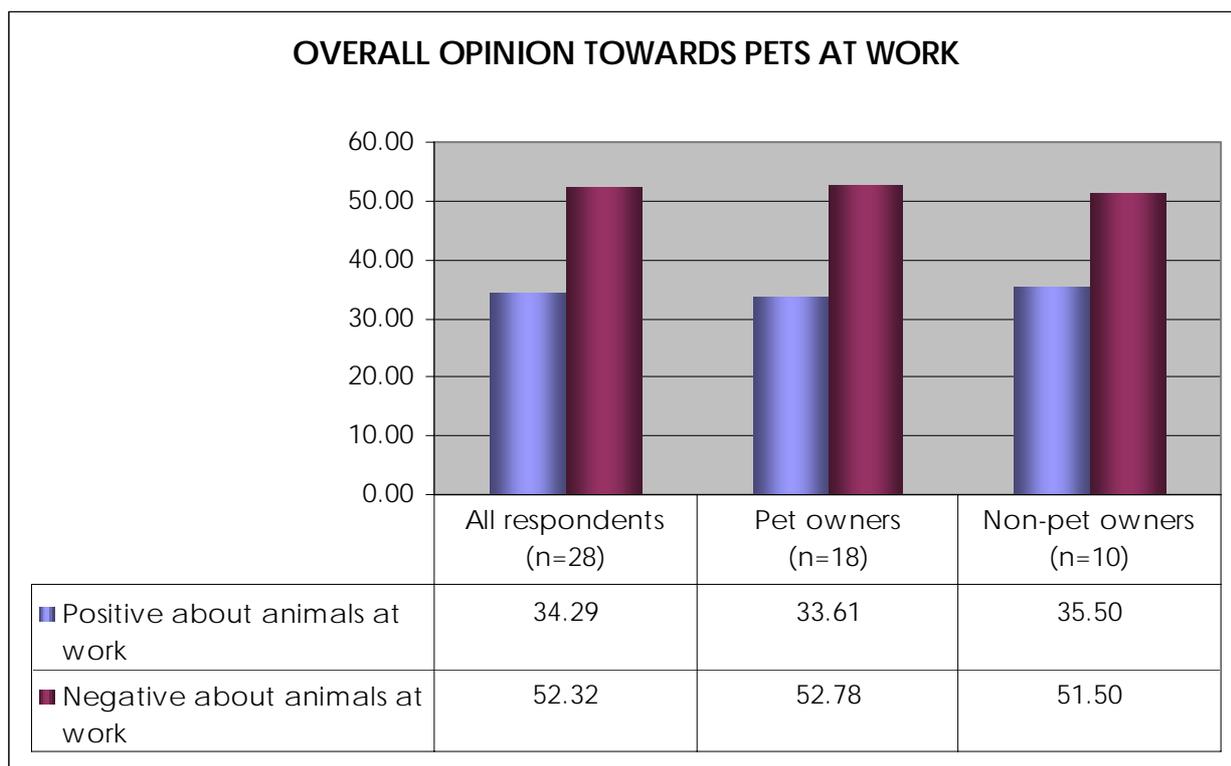


Figure 16 Pet ownership and overall opinion towards pets in the workplace

When **gender** was the variable, results indicated that the percentage of males who responded positively towards the idea of pets in the workplace (44.17%) was greater than the percentage of females (31.59%) (see Figure 17). In fact, the percentage of males who responded positively to the idea of pets in the workplace was the greatest across all the variables when considering

the overall opinion of respondents towards pets in the workplace. This may be due to the fact that men are generally more relaxed and fun-seeking, and less stressed about potential problems. Men's overall more sociable nature could also be a reason for being more in favour to the idea of pets in the workplace. As mentioned earlier, although this might be perceived as a sexist remark, this perception is only the personal opinion of the researcher.

It could also be as a result of men's more 'So what' attitude or 'It's OK' attitude. Again, this is only the researcher's personal opinion. In comparison with women, who tend to stress more easily due to their more acute sense of responsibility that stems from their nurturing role, men are more inclined to relax and to take life a bit less seriously. As a result, they could be more focused on and aware of the less serious side of life, including the effect of positive human-animal interaction.

Figure 17 summarises the results in terms of gender schematically.

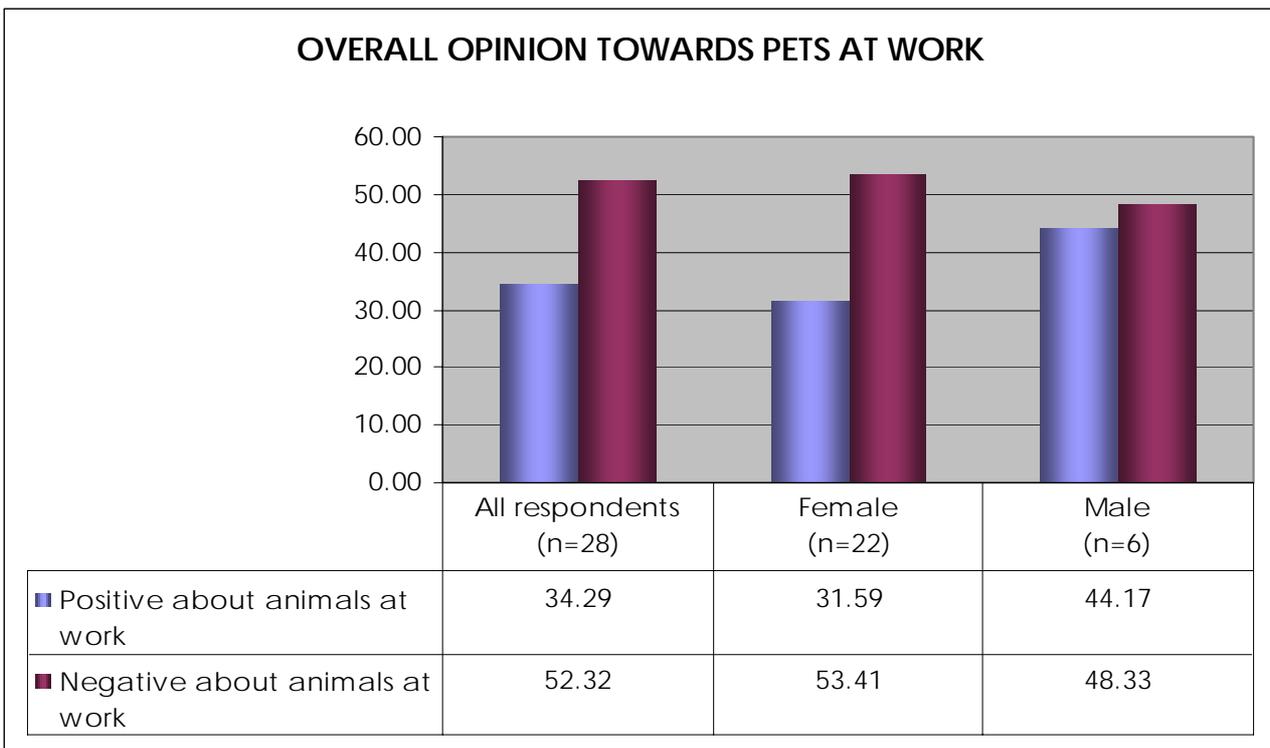


Figure 17 Gender and overall opinion towards pets in the workplace

When **children** were the variable, results indicated that a higher percentage of respondents who do not have children at home (43.93%) responded positively towards the idea of pets in the workplace than the percentage of respondents with children at home (25.77%) (see Figure 18). As a matter of fact, the percentage of respondents who do have children at home who responded positively towards the idea of pets in the workplace was the lowest when all the variables were considered, whereas the percentage of respondents who do not have children

at home who responded positively towards the idea of pets in the workplace was the second highest, after males, when all the variables were considered. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents who do have children at home who responded negatively towards the idea of pets in the workplace was the greatest when all the variables were considered (58.08%), while the percentage of respondents who do not have children at home who responded negatively towards the idea of pets in the workplace was the smallest when all the variables were considered (45.71%) (see Figure 18).

As with the perception towards the potential functional effects of pets in the workplace, this may be due to the fact that the lives of people with children at home, to a great degree, revolve around their children, which could take the focus off the potential benefits that pets could add to life, while those who do not have children at home are in a position to truly notice and experience the benefits that pets could add. In addition, people who have children at home may have a different lifestyle and different criteria for quality of life than those who do not have children at home. People with children at home most probably determine and set their criteria for what defines a quality life according to what is important for their children. Children are more important than pets.

Figure 18 summarises the results in terms of children schematically. (When considering the variable of children, please note that one of the respondents did not indicate whether he has children at home or not; as a result the total only adds to 27.)

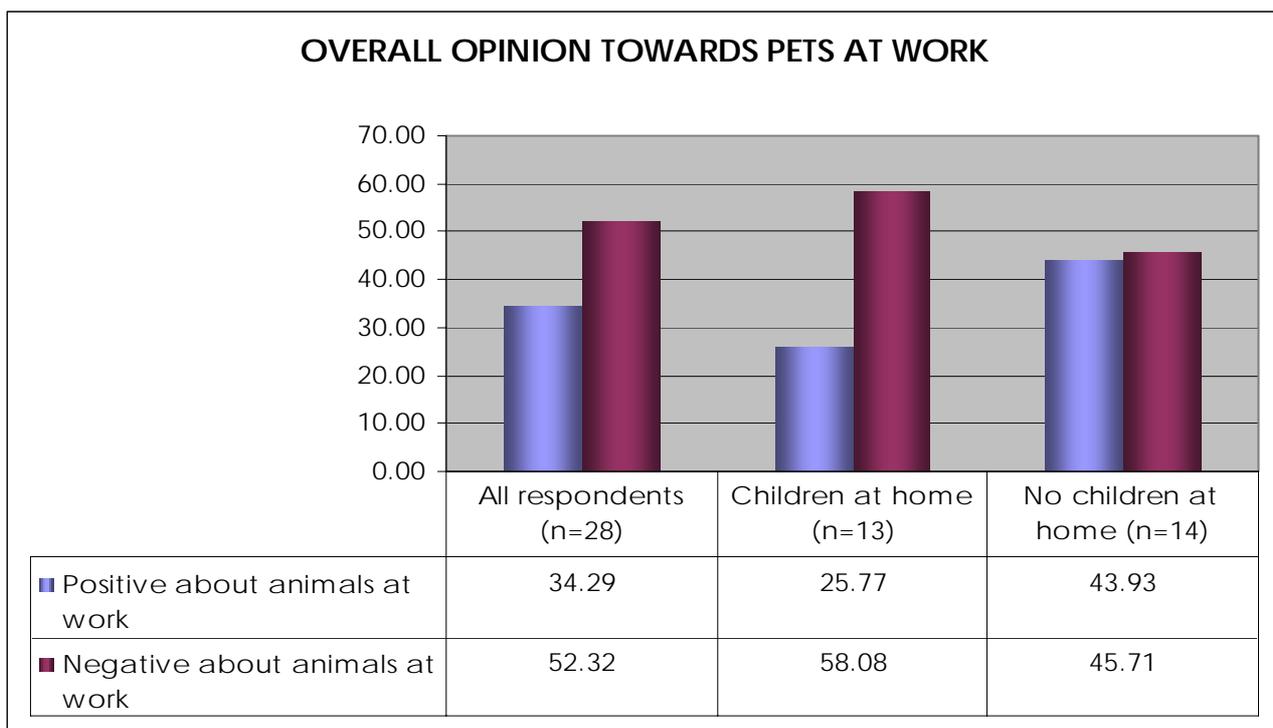


Figure 18 Children and overall opinion towards pets in the workplace

When **education** was the variable, results indicated that a greater percentage of respondents who do have some form of tertiary education had a positive response towards the idea of pets in the workplace than the percentage of respondents who do not have any form of tertiary education (see Figure 19). A possible reason could be that people with some form of tertiary education consider the idea of pets in the workplace more theoretically and philosophically, while people without any form of tertiary education think about the idea of pets in the workplace more practically, focusing on all the potential drawbacks. It could also be that people who have some form of tertiary education could be more aware of responsible pet ownership and therefore be more likely to take their pets for training, which would make the animals more suitable for the workplace.

Figure 19 summarises the results in terms of education schematically.

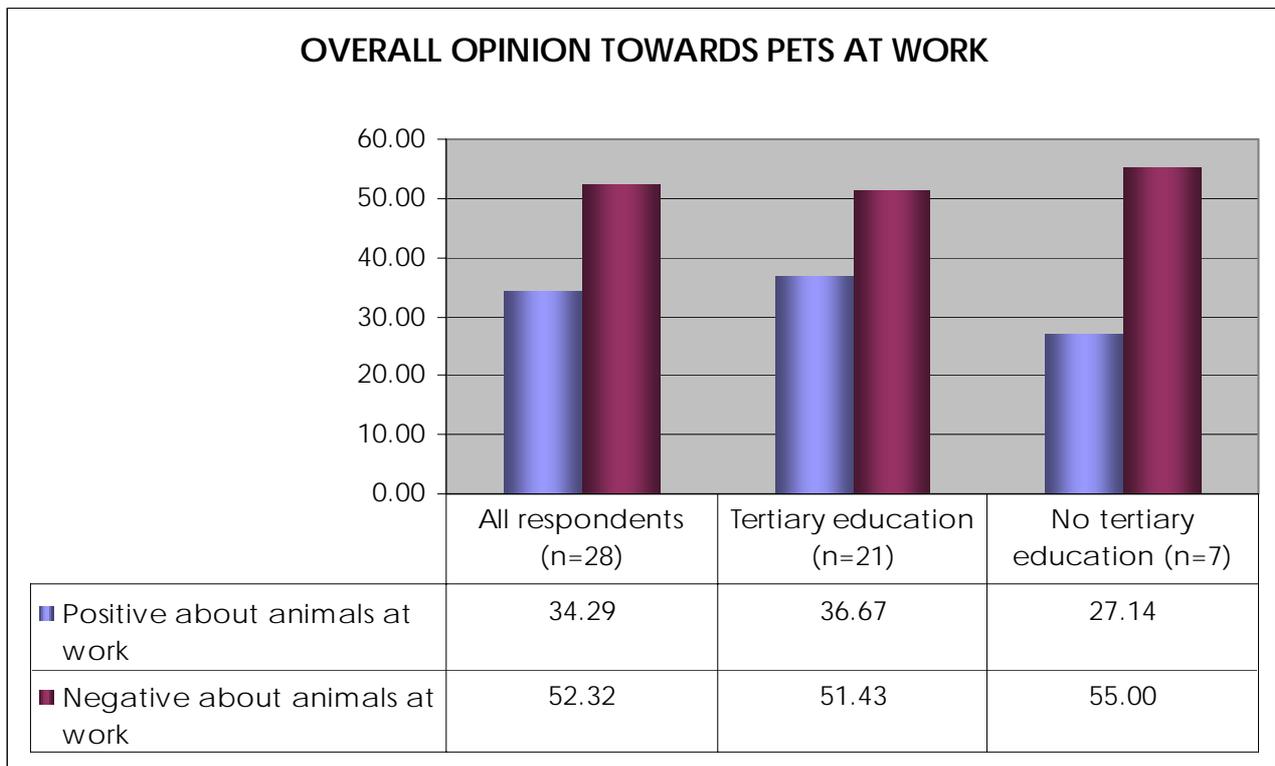


Figure 19 Education and overall opinion towards pets in the workplace

3.5 SUMMARY

An electronic semi-structured self-completion questionnaire was developed and used as data gathering instrument for exploring the perceptions and opinions of the employees of LBCP to the presence of pets in the workplace. This was done to explore whether a pet-friendly workplace policy could be implemented in a South African workplace as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP. The study complied with a quantitative approach although the questionnaire consisted of both open-ended questions and closed questions. The information obtained via the open-ended questions was quantified into themes or topics, and was used to provide more in-depth elaborations and opinions, which were used to complement and enhance the quantitative data.

In terms of the characteristics of the organisation selected to participate in this study, Lowe Bull Calvert Pace (LBCP) is a leading advertising company in South Africa that displays a concern for its employees and their well-being, seeks to attract and retain the best employees, and places great emphasis on creativity, and employs an estimate of 106 employees. In terms of the profile of respondents (n=28), the majority was female (79%), aged from 18 to 34 (86%), have some form of tertiary education (75%), currently live in a house (46%), do not have children at home (50%), and are pet owners (64.3%).

The present study discovered several interesting findings about the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace, as well as the overall opinion of the respondents towards the idea of pets in the workplace, which were correlated to various characteristics of the respondents. With regard to the functional effects of pets in the workplace, and when considering all the respondents (n=28) and not taking into consideration any of the four variables, pets were most likely to be perceived that they could benefit the psychological health of employees (54.04%), but less likely to be perceived that they could benefit the physical health of employees (49.11%), promote performance-related issues (44.64%), benefit the social health of employees (38.39%), and least likely to promote the corporate image (35.97%).

With regard to perceived benefits of pets in the workplace to the psychological health of employees, when considering the different variables for the respondents, i.e., pet ownership, gender, children and education, the researcher found that the greatest percentage of respondents who was of the opinion that pets in the workplace could benefit the psychological health of employees, was those who do not have children at home (63.10%), followed by pet owners (57.50%), respondents with some form of tertiary education (55.21%) and males (55%). The smallest percentage of respondents who was of the opinion that pets in the workplace could benefit the psychological health of employees, was those who do have children at home

(46.03%), followed by non-pet owners (46.25%).

When considering the different variables for the respondents relating to perceived benefits of pets in the workplace to the physical health of employees, the researcher found that the highest percentage of respondents who thought that pets in the workplace could benefit the physical health of employees, was those who do not have children at home (55.36%), followed by pet owners (52.50%) and males (51.67%). The lowest percentage of respondents, who thought that pets in the workplace could benefit the physical health of employees, was non-pet owners (43%), followed by respondents who do have children at home (45%).

Concerning the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace to promote performance-related issues, the researcher found that the greatest percentage of respondents who perceived pets in the workplace to possibly promote performance-related issues, was respondents who do not have children at home (50.18%), followed by pet owners (49.72%) and respondents who do not have any form of tertiary education (48.21%). The lowest percentage of respondents, who perceived pets in the workplace to possibly promote performance-related issues, was non-pet owners (35.50%), followed by respondents who do have children at home (40.19%).

When assessing the results about perceived benefits of pets in the workplace to the social health of employees, the researcher found that the highest percentage of respondents who was of the opinion that pets in the workplace could benefit the social health of employees, was males (43.75%), followed by respondents who do not have children at home (43.30%) and pet owners (41.32%). The lowest percentage of respondents who was of the opinion that pets in the workplace could benefit the social health of employees, was non-pet owners (33.13%), followed by respondents who do have children at home (33.17%) and respondents who do not have any form of tertiary education (34.82%).

Pertaining to the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace to promote the corporate image, the researcher found that the greatest percentage of respondents who thought that pets in the workplace could promote the corporate image, was males (42.26%), followed by respondents who do not have children at home (39.80%). The smallest percentage of respondents who thought that pets in the workplace could promote the corporate image, was respondents who do have children at home (31.59%), followed by respondents who do not have any form of tertiary education (33.67%).

With regard to the overall opinion of the respondents towards the idea of pets in the workplace, it was found that the greatest percentage of respondents who responded positively to the idea

of pets in the workplace, was males (44.17%), followed by respondents who do not have children at home (43.93%). The highest percentage of respondents who responded negatively to the idea of pets in the workplace was those with children at home (58.08%), followed by respondents who do not have any form of tertiary education (55%), females (53.41%), and pet owners (52.78%).

The open-ended questions also revealed interesting findings. The most frequently reported aim or main reasons for allowing pets in the workplace were that pets have the ability to relieve stress, relax, calm, comfort and entertain people (32.14%), or that they had no idea or did not know the reasons (35.71%). The two most frequently reported drawbacks or problems were that pets would cause distractions, noise, and chaos that would result in reduced productivity (75%) and hygiene and cleanliness issues (53.57%). The most frequently reported advantages of pets in the workplace were that there are no benefits (32.14%) and that pets would create a less stressed, pleasant, calming, loving, and tolerant work environment (17.86%).

Various pets were identified as suitable animals for bringing to work, of which fish was mentioned the most frequently. In addition, ten conditions and rules were identified to be established during the formulation of a pet-friendly workplace policy. These include issues regarding the rights of other employees, that pet owners should take full responsibility for their pets at all times, and that the needs of the animals should be considered at all times. The conditions mentioned by the respondents for allowing pets in the workplace (as identified by the researcher in Question 1 of Section B) could also be considered as essential elements in the formulation of a pet-friendly policy.

In conclusion, the exploratory study of the possibility of a pet-friendly workplace policy to enhance the outcomes of an EAP suggests that, although more than half of the respondents perceived pets in the workplace to potentially benefit the psychological health of employees (54.04%), and nearly half of the respondents thought that pets in the workplace could promote physical health (49.11%) and performance-related issues (44.64%), which are all outcomes of an EAP, only 34.29% of respondents were positive about the idea of allowing pets in the workplace.

A pet-friendly workplace policy might be of significant importance to the field of employee assistance. As the general health-enhancing benefits of pets on their human companions are also experienced in the workplace, it could consequently benefit the economically active adult population, as well as some forward-thinking organisation of the new millennium. However, a great deal still needs to be done before pets could be included in the South African work environment. This study suggests that with sufficient information, and sensitisation to encourage a mindset change as well as the necessary rules and conditions for the introduction of pets in

the workplace, it may however, in the near future, be possible to integrate a pet-friendly workplace policy as a logical, but limited, component of a comprehensive EAP as a means to enhance the outcomes of the EAP.

CHAPTER 4

GENERAL SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 of this research report an overview and general introduction to the study is given by establishing the motivation for the study, the problem formulation, and the goals and objectives of the study, as well as by describing and explaining the research procedure and strategy that was followed during the study.

Chapter 2 gives a comprehensive description of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) and pet-friendly workplace policies as identified in and depicted by the literature study. Chapter 3 consists of the results obtained from the empirical study.

The final chapter of this research report will include the general summaries, conclusions, and recommendations of the first three chapters, the testing of the goals and objectives for the study, and the answering of the research question that is posed in chapter 1.

4.2 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY: CHAPTER 1

4.2.1 SUMMARY

The research report commences with a description of the work environment of the new millennium, which ultimately affects the health and well-being of the employee and the organisation, as well as the statement that employers are constantly searching for means and measures that would enhance employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment in order to improve the productivity and performance levels of their employees, and, in addition, create a supportive social climate and organisational culture. Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) and pet-friendly workplace policies are identified as two possible means that may address these issues.

The goal of this study is to explore the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African work environment as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP. In order to reach this goal, focus is directed to the following objectives:

- Exploring the perceptions and opinions of employees from LBCP to the presence of pets in the workplace.
- Identifying the possible functions, benefits, and drawbacks of allowing pets in the workplace, as perceived by employees from LBCP.
- Identifying issues that need consideration during actual policy formulation (if the idea is found suitable by employees and management).
- Identifying areas that need further research with regard to possible formulation of such a workplace policy.
- Providing specific recommendations regarding formulating a pet-friendly workplace policy in a specific South African work environment, i.e. LBCP.

This study complies with a quantitative approach due to the unfamiliarity of the concept and the limited scope of a mini-dissertation. Even though the questionnaire consisted of both open-ended questions and closed questions, the information obtained via the open-ended questions was quantified into themes or topics, and was used to complement and enhance the quantitative data.

The type of research that was utilised is applied research, in particular strategic research, as the aim was to generate basic knowledge regarding the perceptions and opinions of pets in the workplace in order to contribute towards practical issues of problem-solving, decision-making, and policy analysis relating to the implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy. An exploratory research design, more specifically a cross-sectional design, was utilised, as it was essential to gain insight into the perceptions and opinions regarding the presence of pets in the workplace of a specific employee population. An extensive literature study enabled the development of a semi-structured questionnaire, which was used as a data-gathering instrument for exploring the perceptions and opinions of employees of Lowe Bull Calvert Pace (LBCP) to the presence of pets in the workplace. No sampling method was used due to the fact that data was collected from the entire population.

4.2.2 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are made from the general introduction to the study:

- Employees and organisations of the new millennium exist in an environment that is extremely stressful, demanding, and competitive, which ultimately affects the health and well-being of the individual employee, as well as the health and well-being of the organisation.
- Essential to achieving success is the extent to which organisations are able to maintain optimal performance, together with commitment, morale, and well-being of their employees.
- Employers are also realising that employees are their most important asset and that the health and well-being of these employees play a critical role in the productivity, profitability, and competitiveness of the organisation.
- Employers are constantly searching for means and measures that will enhance employee morale, job satisfaction, and commitment in order to improve the productivity and performance levels of their employees, and in addition create a supportive social climate and organisational culture.
- The implementation of an EAP is a traditional and recognised policy that addresses these issues by means of identifying and resolving personal and work-related problems that adversely affect job performance through a programme of counselling, advice, and assistance.
- Another innovative and more controversial policy that may address these issues is the implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy.
- The nature of the study is such that either a quantitative or a qualitative approach could have been utilised. The researcher adopted a quantitative approach due to the fact that the topic is unknown and possibly controversial, which could have generated a vast amount of 'nice-to-know' information.
- This study could be viewed as a pilot study for further research.

4.2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made from the general introduction to the study:

- The researcher should have consulted with experts in the field of human-animal interaction and Employee Assistance Programmes, as well as legal experts with regard to animals in the workplace and the law.
- With regard to the population selected for this study, it is recommended that different types of organisations – one organisation in the public sector, one company in the private sector and one non-governmental organisation (NGO), are selected to explore whether there is a difference in the perceived potential functional effects of pets in the workplace.
- Regarding the research approach, it is recommended that a predominantly qualitative approach should have been selected, as it could have obtained valuable information regarding employees' personal feelings and perceptions regarding the presence of pets in the workplace, as well as to present them with more information regarding the aim of and reason for this study.

4.3 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME AND A PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE: CHAPTER 2

4.3.1 SUMMARY

- Chapter 2 first gives a general idea of the state of mental health and the incidence of stress in the modern workplace, which is followed by an overview of the concepts of EAPs and pet-friendly workplaces.
- The increasing demands and pressures placed on employees in the modern workplace create greater and more intense levels of stress and anxiety, which in turn have major risks for the psychosocial well-being and mental health of employees.
- More and more organisations across the world are implementing policies and programmes that promote the health and well-being of their employees, as well as improving their quality of life.

- Both EAPs and pet-friendly workplaces are measures that promote health and well-being, which ultimately enhance employee performance and overall organisational productivity.
- Since its establishment in the 1940s, EAPs have grown and evolved well beyond the original singular focus of assisting employees impaired by substance abuse, to a 'broad brush' or comprehensive approach to human problems, which includes an extensive variety of clinical services and organisational tools for promoting productivity.
- The primary motivation for the establishment of EAPs has changed substantially and there has been a shift away from the purely humanistic or welfarist orientation of the past to one driven by economic reasons. Greater emphasis is placed on employee performance and organisational productivity, and there is an increasing recognition that the health and well-being of employees are critical predictors of long-term productivity, profitability, and competitiveness.
- The typical goals of EAPs include the promotion of employee health, morale, and productivity.
- The potential outcomes of implementing an EAP may be seen in various benefits for both the individual employee and the organisation.
- Pets have various significant benefits on the physical, psychological and emotional, and social health of their human companions.
- Since the workplace of the new millennium has such high levels of stress, it seems like a natural progression to introduce pets in the workplace to put the benefits and therapeutic effect of the human-animal bond to work.
- Many health-enhancing benefits of pet ownership - including reduced blood pressure, lower stress levels, and improved overall emotional and physical health - also translate in an office environment.
- The implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy is perceived as positively influencing the health and well-being of the employees, as well as organisational concerns, such as recruiting and retaining valued employees.

- The potential outcomes of implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy may be seen in various benefits for both the individual employee and the organisation.
- Many pet-friendly companies acknowledge that the implementation of a pet-friendly workplace policy is not for employee satisfaction and benefits alone, but that it simultaneously has several benefits for the organisation itself.
- Implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy may have very similar and compatible desirable effects as implementing an EAP.

4.3.2 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are made from the literature study regarding EAPs and pet-friendly workplaces:

- As a result of the greater than ever levels of stress that exists among employees, together with the growing recognition of the importance of managing psychosocial risks in limiting health care costs and improving organisational productivity, the promotion of mental health and psychological well-being and resilience among employees is likely to become fundamental characteristics of the modern workplace.
- Employers could improve employee performance, and consequently organisational productivity, by promoting both healthier individuals and healthier work environments.
- It is therefore important that policies and programmes that promote the health and well-being of employees be individualised and introduced into organisations in an attempt to ultimately attend to productivity and performance issues negatively impacting on the organisational well-being.
- The interrelationship between humans and animals is not a new phenomenon and has not changed in principle over the years, as the original and fundamental motivation for keeping pets has not changed. However, the modern relationships with pets have only become stronger, more intense and of greater variety.
- The human-animal bond and the positive relationship and interaction between humans and animals have a beneficial impact on the well-being and quality of life of people from all age groups and target groups, including the typical economically active adult population.

- It is assumed that the benefits that pets provide to the everyday lives of the general economically active adult population may be translated into benefits in the work environment.
- There is a possible link between the outcomes of an EAP and the outcomes of a pet-friendly workplace policy, indicating that a pet-friendly workplace may enhance the outcomes of an EAP.
- A pet-friendly workplace policy should be a logical component of a comprehensive programme to help employees maintain a work-life balance. The ideal should thus be a combination and integration of a pet-friendly workplace policy with an EAP.

4.3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made from the literature study regarding EAPs and pet-friendly workplaces:

- Research should be conducted in organisations where EAPs and pet-friendly workplace policies are already implemented to establish whether the presence of pets in the workplace enhances the outcomes of the EAP.
- The results of such research should be communicated to the public in order to raise awareness of the possible benefits that pets could have in the workplace (if any) and to sensitise people to the idea of introducing pets in the workplace (if results show a link with the outcomes of the EAP).

4.4 EMPIRICAL STUDY: CHAPTER 3

4.4.1 SUMMARY

A semi-structured questionnaire, designed to allow for self-completion directly in Microsoft Word, was developed and used as data gathering instrument for exploring the perceptions and opinions of the employees of LBCP to the presence of pets in the workplace. The questionnaire consists of both open-ended questions and closed questions; however, the information

obtained via the open-ended questions was quantified into themes or topics, and was used to provide more in-depth elaborations and opinions, which were used to complement and enhance the quantitative data.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A focused on the demographic information of the respondents. Section B comprised six open-ended questions that asked respondents to state their opinion on various aspects of pets in the workplace. Section C consisted of 50 statements that explored respondents' perceptions about pets in general, as well as pets in the workplace. Data analysis was done on aggregated data only. During data analysis, a number of emerging hypotheticals were identified. These constructs relate to the perceived functional effects of pets in the workplace (for the individual employee and for the organisation), as well as the overall opinion of respondents to the presence of pets in the workplace.

The study was conducted with the employees of Lowe Bull Calvert Pace (LBCP, a leading advertising company in South Africa). Twenty-eight respondents completed and returned the questionnaire for a response rate of 37.33%. The majority of the respondents was female (79%), aged from 18 to 34 (86%), have some form of tertiary education (75%), currently lives in a house (46%), do not have children at home (50%), and are pet owners (64.3%).

4.4.2 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are made from the empirical study:

- The findings of this study should be interpreted cautiously owing to several limitations.
 - First of all, the sample was self-selected and chosen specifically for reasons that made them more suitable for pets in the workplace than other companies (e.g., their concern for the well-being of their employees, their quest to attract and retain the best employees, and their emphasis on creativity and innovation). As a result, they might be more positive towards the idea of pets in the workplace than other more traditional and conservative organisations, e.g., the Public Service.
 - Secondly, results are only applicable to this specific population of LBCP, so the findings may not be generalised to other companies.
 - Thirdly, the respondents' response rate was only 37.33%, indicating that 62.67% of the employees did not participate. The employees who participated in this study could have been more or less positive about the possibility of pets in the workplace than the

employees who chose not to participate.

- The majority of the respondents responded negatively towards the idea of introducing a pet-friendly workplace policy.
- With regard to the functional effects of pets in the workplace, and when considering all the respondents, pets were most likely to be perceived that they could benefit the psychological health of employees (54.04%), but less likely to be perceived that they could benefit the physical health of employees (49.11%), promote performance-related issues (44.64%), benefit the social health of employees (38.39%), and least likely to promote the corporate image (35.97%).
- The greatest percentage of respondents, who were of the opinion that pets in the workplace could benefit the psychological health of employees, were those who do not have children at home (63.10%), while the smallest percentage were those who do have children at home (46.03%).
- The highest percentage of respondents who thought that pets in the workplace could benefit the physical health of employees, was those who do not have children at home (55.36%), whereas the lowest percentage was non-pet owners (43%).
- The greatest percentage of respondents, who perceived pets in the workplace to possibly promote performance-related issues, were respondents who do not have children at home (50.18%), while the lowest percentage was non-pet owners (35.50%).
- The highest percentage of respondents, who were of the opinion that pets in the workplace could benefit the social health of employees, were males (43.75%), whereas the lowest percentage were non-pet owners (33.13%).
- The greatest percentage of respondents, who thought that pets in the workplace could promote the corporate image, were males (42.26%), while the smallest percentage were respondents who do have children at home (31.59%).
- The greatest percentage of respondents, who responded positively to the idea of pets in the workplace, were males (44.17%), whereas the highest percentage of respondents who responded negatively to the idea of pets in the workplace were those with children at home (58.08%).

- The most frequently reported reasons for allowing pets in the workplace were that pets have the ability to relieve stress, relax, calm, comfort, and entertain people (32.14%), or that they had no idea or did not know the reasons (35.71%).
- The two most frequently reported drawbacks or problems of pets in the workplace were that pets would cause distractions, noise and chaos that would result in reduced productivity (75%) and hygiene and cleanliness issues (53.57%).
- The most frequently reported advantages of pets in the workplace were that there are no benefits (32.14%) and that pets would create a less stressed, pleasant, calming, loving and tolerant work environment (17.86%).
- It is evident that the organisation, as well as the pet owner, has very specific responsibilities when a decision is taken to allow pets at work.
- It is crucial that the needs of the animals be considered at all times. The pet-friendly workplace policy should benefit the employees and the organisation, but most importantly the animals as well.
- The present study focused predominantly on the possible benefits of pets in the workplace. Due to the limited scope of a mini-dissertation the possible negative effects and drawbacks of pets in the workplace were largely overlooked and not discussed in detail. Future research could explore in depth the possible negative effects and drawbacks of allowing pets in the workplace.
- Future research may want to address different types of organisations, e.g., the public sector, the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to explore whether there is a difference in the perceived potential functional effects of pets in the workplace. Even within the various sectors, future research could give attention to the various types of industries, as this present study only focused on the advertising industry.
- Future research could also be more qualitative in nature, e.g., utilising focus groups where people's concerns, ideas and opinions could be explored more in depth. It would also be interesting to conduct a pre- and post-intervention study, where people's perceptions and opinions regarding the potential benefits of pets in the workplace are assessed first, followed by an intense marketing strategy, promoting and sensitising people to the potential benefits of pets, which could be followed by a post-intervention assessment to evaluate whether people's perceptions and options have changed after receiving information on the

potential benefits of pets.

- Another study could explore the perceptions of employees about the different options of pet-friendly workplace policies (including live-in animals, visitation programmes, pets on a rotation basis, the once a year Take Your Dog To Work Day, etc.), so that respondents could think beyond the idea of 'taking my own pet to work everyday'. Finally, future research could also be done on the role of pets in different religions, in order to assess the potential effect of pets in the workplace on various religions. Specific reference is made to comments made by the Muslim culture in the present study.

4.4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made from the empirical study:

- The results of the present study are only applicable to this specific population of LBCP, so the findings may not be generalised to other companies.
- Expect that the percentage of respondents responding positively to the idea of pets in the workplace might be even smaller in other, more conservative organisations, due to the profile of LBCP as explained in Chapter 1.
- Even for LBCP it would be precarious to generalise the findings, as the questionnaire was only e-mailed to 75 of the 106 employees. Therefore, 28 of 106 only represent 26.4% of the total population. In future, a better means of questionnaire distribution should be found, especially in organisations where the researcher is not employed or involved with.
- Research should be more qualitative in nature, e.g., focus groups, so that people's concerns, ideas and opinions could be explored more in depth.
- Explore different options of pet-friendly workplace policies, including live-in animals, visitation programmes, pets on a rotation basis, and the annual Take Your Dog To Work Day.
- Explore the perceptions of pets in the workplace of different types of organisations, e.g., the public sector, the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to assess whether there is a difference in the perceived potential functional effects of pets in the workplace in these different working environments.

- Explore the link between a pet-friendly workplace and organisational culture.
- Assess the impact of information on the potential benefits of pets on people's perceptions and opinions regarding pets in the workplace by conducting a pre- and post-intervention study.
- Explore the role of pets in different religions and cultures, in order to assess the potential effect of pets in the workplace on various religions and cultures in the multi-cultural nation of South Africa.
- Explore the pet-friendly workplace policies and programmes of some of the 266 companies internationally who are recognised as Dog-Friendly Employers.
- Explore and describe a concept/draft pet-friendly workplace policy to be tested in different work environments.

4.5 TESTING OF THE GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

4.5.1 GOAL

The goal of this study is to explore the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African work environment as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP.

The researcher succeeded in this goal. Although only 34.29% of respondents were positive about the idea of pets in the workplace, approximately half of all the respondents perceived pets in the workplace to potentially benefit the psychological and physical health of employees, as well as performance-related issues, which are all outcomes of an EAP. With sufficient information and sensitisation, as well as the necessary rules and conditions, it may be possible to introduce a pet-friendly workplace policy of a limited extent as a means to enhance the outcomes of an EAP.

4.5.2 OBJECTIVES

4.5.2.1 Objective 1

Exploring the perceptions and opinions of employees from LBCP to the presence of pets in the workplace.

A wide range of perceptions and opinions regarding the presence of pets in the workplace were identified by 28 employees of LBCP, which gives an objective picture of the perceptions, and opinions of employees from LBCP to the presence of pets in the workplace.

4.5.2.2 Objective 2

Identifying the possible functions, benefits, and drawbacks of allowing pets in the workplace, as perceived by employees from LBCP.

Possible functions, benefits and drawbacks of allowing pets in the workplace were obtained from the 28 respondents. The main function attributed to pets was that that they could benefit the psychological health of employees. The most frequently reported drawbacks or problems of pets in the workplace were that pets would cause distractions, noise and chaos that would result in reduced productivity, hygiene, and cleanliness issues. The most frequently reported advantages of pets in the workplace were that there are no benefits and that pets would create a less stressed, pleasant, calming, loving and tolerant work environment.

4.5.2.3 Objective 3

Identifying issues that need consideration during actual policy formulation (if the idea is found suitable by employees and management).

Ten conditions and rules were identified to be considered during the formulation of a pet-friendly workplace policy. These include issues about the rights of other employees, pet owners to take full responsibility for their pets at all times, and that the needs of the animals should be considered at all times. The conditions mentioned by the respondents for allowing pets in the workplace may also be considered as essential elements in the formulation of a pet-friendly policy.

4.5.2.4 Objective 4

Identifying areas that need further research with regard to possible formulation of such a workplace policy.

Specific areas were identified that need further research with regard to possible formulation of a workplace policy. These areas include exploring the different options of pet-friendly workplace policies, e.g., live-in animals, visitation programmes, pets on a rotation basis, and the annual Take Your Dog To Work Day; exploring the role of pets in different religions and cultures, to assess the potential effect of pets in the workplace on various religions and cultures in the multi-cultural nation of South Africa; assessing the pet-friendly workplace policies and programmes of some of the 266 companies internationally who are recognised as Dog-Friendly Employers; assessing the impact of information / sensitisation on people's perceptions and opinions regarding pets in the workplace by conducting a pre- and post-intervention study.

4.5.2.5 Objective 5

Providing specific recommendations regarding formulating a pet-friendly workplace policy in a specific South African work environment, i.e. LBCP.

The conditions and rules that were identified to be established during the formulation of a pet-friendly workplace policy, as well as the conditions mentioned by the respondents for allowing pets in the workplace, could be transformed into specific recommendations for the formulation of a pet-friendly policy. Also, the issues identified by Objective 4 should also be considered as specific recommendations in the formulation of a pet-friendly workplace policy within a South African work environment.

As a result, it can be concluded that the goal and objectives for this study have been reached.

4.6 ANSWERING OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the potential for implementing a pet-friendly workplace policy in a South African context as a means to enhance the objectives of an EAP?

Allowing pets in the workplace might be of significant importance to the field of employee assistance, as the general health-enhancing benefits of pets on the physical, emotional and social health of their human companions, are also experienced in a workplace environment, which could as a result benefit the economically active adult population, as well as the organisation. Although a lot still needs to be done to convince the majority of respondents of the potential benefits pets could have in the workplace, the present study suggests that with sufficient information and sensitisation, as well as the necessary rules and conditions, perhaps it might be possible sometime in the near future to integrate a pet-friendly workplace policy as a logical, but limited, component of a comprehensive EAP as a means to enhance the outcomes of the EAP.

4.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Generally, research describes the benefits of pets for the more vulnerable people in society - those who are often not part of the economically active adult population. However, a pet-friendly workplace policy might be of significant importance to the field of employee assistance. As the general health-enhancing benefits of pets on their human companions are also experienced in the workplace, it could consequently benefit the economically active adult population, as well as some forward-thinking organisation of the new millennium.

This exploratory study of a pet-friendly workplace policy to enhance the outcomes of an EAP reveals that, although approximately half of the respondents perceived pets in the workplace to potentially benefit the psychological and physical health of employees, as well as performance-related issues - all outcomes of an EAP - the idea of allowing pets in the workplace was welcomed by just more than one-third of the respondents. A great deal still needs to be done before pets could be included in the South African work environment. This study suggests that with sufficient information, and sensitisation to encourage a mindset change as well as the necessary rules and conditions for the introduction of pets in the workplace, it may however, in the near future, be possible to integrate a pet-friendly workplace policy as a logical, but limited, component of a comprehensive EAP as a means to enhance the outcomes of the EAP.

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