

**‘Specialization in ICTs and Special Education: Psychopedagogy
of Integration’ Postgraduate Program
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Philology in collaboration with
NCSR DEMOKRITOS Informatics and Telecommunications
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**THE CONTRIBUTION OF SPECIALLY TRAINED ANIMALS IN
SHAPING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL
NEEDS**

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POSTGRADUATE
THESIS

Komotini
2020

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the therapeutic value of animals has begun to be recognized by the global community, becoming a dynamically developing and promising field. The contribution of specially trained animals to the quality of life of people with or without disabilities seems to offer a large number of benefits and positive changes in their daily lives. After all, it has already emerged and been recognized over the centuries, a strong relationship, as well as the development of unconditional bonds of love between animals and humans.

The main purpose of this research study is to examine and highlight the therapeutic effect of specially trained animals on the quality of life of people with disabilities. At the same time, an effort is made to describe, identify and evaluate treatment methods, with the ultimate goal of recording the views and experiences of those who participated in the research. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, eleven individual interviews were conducted, in a semi-structured form for all participants, six of which were received by animal therapists and the other five from the patients or their parents.

The qualitative analysis of the results showed that both groups fully confirmed the diverse and beneficial benefits of interaction with specially trained animals in improving the physical, cognitive, psychological and socio-emotional health of individuals with disabilities. However, there were some restrictions on the participation of those interested in this treatment process, while the participants made it clear that the complete lack of critical attitude on the part of animals is the primary factor in the success of the treatment-alternative program.

Keywords: “Animal Assisted Therapy”, “Equine Assisted Therapy”, “Pet therapy”, “Therapy Dogs”, people with special needs.

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