

ANIMALS IN RESOCIALIZATION

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Abstract. *The benefits of relations between humans and animals have encouraged both scientists and members of other communities to popularize the knowledge in the field of animal-assisted therapy. Currently, animal-assisted therapy has been used not only in therapy, but also in resocialization. The increasing popularity of this form of supporting maladjusted people who are isolated from society or people with disabilities encouraged both practitioners and researchers to organize knowledge, thus reducing the scepticism about the usefulness of animal-assisted therapy.*

In Poland, the particular focus of the animal-assisted therapy is on the use of dogs to enhance the resocialization process. However, various experimental resocialization programs have also used horses and even lamas. This paper is intended to familiarize the reader with the aspects of the assistance of animals in resocialization. Furthermore, it emphasizes the difficulties and advantages that can be expected from integration of this type of therapy into resocialization programs.

Keywords: *animals, animal-assisted therapy, resocialization.*

Introduction

The positive effects of animals on humans were already known in antiquity. Nowadays, the interest in these correlations has been also increasing in the scientific community in many fields of research. The use of animals in therapy has been widely explored by psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and even medical and veterinary researchers. This led to the development of a new interdisciplinary science termed anthrozoology. The name stems from *anthropos*, meaning "human", and *zoon* ("animal"), and is understood to mean the investigations of the relationships between people and animals (<http://www.anthrozoology.org/>).

Most pet owners assure that animal have a positive effect on people. The look in their eyes, warm coat and happiness they express when they see their owners make people feel very comfortable with animals. Therefore, the awareness of the benefits of good relations between people and animals has led to the development of animal-assisted therapy. Components of this therapy are often integrated into resocialization programs for prisoners or used to help disabled people. *Animal-assisted therapy (zootherapy)* means the therapy that involves

animals as a method to treat people. The goal of this form is to support the conventional forms of rehabilitation and treatment. Animal-assisted therapy is a natural method. The basic assumption of the method is that animals have a positive and mobilizing effect on humans (Kokocińska, 2016).

Nowadays, the most popular animal-assisted therapeutic interventions include: (1) dog-assisted therapy; (2) hippotherapy, with therapeutic effects achieved by the use of horses; (3) felinotherapy, which uses cats, and (4) dolphin-assisted therapy. These forms are merely a few examples of the use of animals in therapies.

The greatest popularity in Poland is observed for dog-assisted therapy and hippotherapy. The focus of the present paper is on these two forms of animal-assisted therapy. The therapeutic sessions are attended by both adults and children. There are a variety of indications for participation in such sessions. Among others, the most frequent are various types of disability, social maladjustment (as mentioned above) and problems with cognitive functions. The sessions are organized to suit all the abilities and psychophysical needs of participants.

The outline of the concepts concerning the relations between humans and animals

The growing popularity of animal-assisted therapy (AAT) is largely attributable to the benefits of this form of therapeutic intervention. The following advantages of the AAT are mainly emphasized by researchers: (1) increased motivation for activity, which should be viewed as helping reduce human inactivity; encouraging to being more active; the presence of an animal makes responsible people care for the pet, (2) emotional benefits (animals ensure the sense of security, satisfy the need for emotional contact, help coping with difficult emotions); (3) cognitive benefits that can be observed in the way of seeing the world and enhanced self-assessment; (4) social benefits, such as openness to other people or encouraging to coming into contacts; (5) health benefits such as reduced stress, increased capacity of the immunological system, smaller doses of medicines that have to be taken, and (6) instrumental benefits, such as helping the disabled, therapies based on the use of animals, and using animals in the military service and police (Ustjan, 2008).

The important role in the development of the therapeutic and resocialization effects both in Poland and abroad was played by the theories that explained the relations between humans and animals. The first attempts to research this area and organize the animal-based therapeutic interventions were made by Delta Foundation, a non-governmental organization established in 1977. The organization was founded in 1977 by Michael McCulloch. In 1981, the

organization transformed into Delta Society and finally, in 2012, was renamed Pet Partners. Its aim is to continue the research that demonstrates the positive effect of animals on humans in the therapeutic process. Furthermore, the organization was one of the first to implement the uniform and comprehensive training program for volunteers who wanted to help others with their pets (www.deltasociety.org; <https://petpartners.org/>).

The multifaceted initiatives of Pet Partners have contributed to the formulation of theoretical fundamentals that explain the relations between humans and animals. As emphasized by M. Włodarczyk-Dudka, the below presented concepts are the most often explored theories in the literature. Among them are those that emphasize the role of the relations between humans and animals. These include: biophilia, attachment theory and the thesis by S. and E. Corson.

In the biophilia theory, the key focus is on the biophilic ties which are felt by people with respect to other species. Biophilia points to the natural human tendency for coexisting with the world of nature. The characteristic feature of these ties is sympathy. The fundamentals of biophilia were developed by the British researcher E.O. Wilson. The concept assumes that people and their willingness to care for living organisms are determined genetically. This author emphasized that at the stage of a single cell, all living bodies are equal and identical. This represented the starting point for his concept (Wilson, 1984). Coexistence of human with nature offers many benefits to humans. It helps improve mood and feel quiet and relaxed. It should be noted that these benefits contributed to what is broadly understood as aesthetic therapy, which uses e.g. the contact with nature (Konieczna, 2007).

Apart from the biophilia theory, a number of therapeutic or resocialization programs that used animal-assisted therapy refer to the attachment theory. This theory is based on the assumption that all people have an inbuilt system of attachment to others. The system is determined biologically. This explains human tendencies for development of strong ties, not only with other people but also with animals. In this respect, the animal represents a component of a specific stage towards the development of more complex ties with other people.

Another important thesis was proposed by S. and E. Corson (Ohio State University), who argued that people perceive relationships between humans and animals positively for two major reasons. These include: (a) they believe that animals accept them as they are and love them unconditionally and faithfully, and, (b) people tend to see childish behaviours in animals, including the dependency on the owner. In this context, care for an animal seems to be similar to parental care for an infant.

The scope of the concepts indicates that one of the benefits of animal-assisted therapy is the specific type of ties between a person and animal. Other interesting

examinations were conducted by Holly McLean Ryan in schools in California. This author emphasized the importance of human-animal ties. She explained that animals motivate people for building such ties. They are not only companions but their presence also helps support therapeutic effects. It provides motivation for changes in attitudes and behaviours. The benefit of the animal-assisted therapy sessions (with dogs used in this case) is also the willingness to be involved in performing simple and repeated activities (which is important in e.g. autistic people) (Ryan, 2002).

Ties are an integral part of the therapeutic effects of the animal-assisted therapy (AAT). AAT is a form of therapy that uses animals, separated from animal-assisted interventions. It represents a purposive activity and requires careful documentation and evaluation. AAT sessions are conducted by experts in a specific area. Other forms include animal-assisted education (AAE), which requires cooperation with teachers and its goal is to enhance cognitive functions, and animal-assisted activities (AAA), with formulation of the goals and documentation being not necessary. The sessions can be conducted by volunteers. They are a kind of spontaneous meetings adjusted to the needs of the recipients (Włodarczyk-Dudka, 2012).

The importance of these ties between humans and animals is often emphasized by the entities isolated from society. For prisoners, the animal often plays a role of the true friend, a companion who accepts them as they are. It motivates the prisoner for changing behaviours and attitudes, and improves mood and self-esteem. It also supports the rehabilitation process.

Hippotherapy and dog-assisted therapy in resocialization

The increased interest of researchers to the above theories has contributed to the systematization of knowledge in this field. Consequently, based on the knowledge derived from the research and the adopted theoretical concepts, the fundamentals of dog-assisted therapy or hippotherapy were developed and described in this paper. It is worth noting that the therapeutic interventions based on animal-based therapy in Poland are often inspired by *The Pet Partner Therapy Animal Program* (developed by Pet Partners).

In the area of resocialization in Poland, dog-assisted therapy and hippotherapy are beginning to gain on popularity. For organizational reasons, hippotherapy sessions in Poland are little frequent. The organizational problems are often caused by unavailability of stables or means of transport for horses and the related costs.

It is remarkable that the term hippotherapy in Poland is understood in a broader sense than in other countries. In Germany, the UK, the USA, Canada or Australia, hippotherapy is linked to physiotherapy and corrective exercises

performed on a horse (Heipertz-Hengst, 1997; Strumińska, 2003). In Poland, hippotherapy is viewed as all therapeutic measures used by a qualified hippotherapist using a horse. The goal of these measures is to improve patient's cognitive, emotional, social, or physical functioning (Strumińska, 2007; Czerw, 2010).

The hippotherapy sessions have been performed for several years in e.g. the youth detention centre in Studzieniec, Poland. for several years. Substantial problems with therapeutic programs started after changes in legal regulations. At the end of 2010, auxiliary enterprises that operated within budgetary economy entities were liquidated. The young people from the youth detention centre continue to do horse riding, but not in their own stable. They also do not perform work in their own agricultural farm where they grew and harvested fodder for their horses. These changes led to minimization of contacts of young people with animals. The resocialization and therapeutic effects became less effective. Contact with horses had helped people learn responsibility for animals and other people, patience and persistence. Young people from the detention centre also learnt tolerance while group sessions contributed to the development of abilities to cooperate with others. Furthermore, presence in the stable and contact with horses required subordination to specific rules. Currently, young people have contact with horses only twice a week during horse-riding sessions. Therefore, the achievement of the expected benefits of participation in hippotherapy is much more difficult. Furthermore, before the law was amended, the stable had performed the function of a vocational training centre, with the young people learning the vocation of a horseman who can care for horses in a stable (Dzięciołowski, <http://hejnakon.pl/?p=10989>, 2017). In this case, participation in hippotherapeutic sessions also offered opportunities for training professional skills.

Changes in the above legal regulations are one of the factors that can indirectly limit effective implementation of the therapeutic measures of animal-assisted therapy in various centres. The most important problem is financial limitations and poor conditions in the centres, which is also directly related to physical resources. Consequently, the animal-assisted therapies and resocialization were abandoned in the biggest External Department of the Penal Institutions in Poznań, Poland. Due to insufficient conditions, animals had to be moved from this department. The prisoners cared not only for birds (peacocks and parrots) but also iguanas and a pony (Ibidem).

This suggests that animal-assisted therapy remains to be underestimated and treated as less important. The limitations that were imposed on the youth detention centre in Studzieniec or the External Department of the Penal Institution in Poznań point to the neglected potential of such therapies. It should also be emphasized that among canons developed by the Polish Hippotherapeutic

Association, the indications for such therapeutic sessions include, apart from various disabilities, also psychiatric disturbances, addictions, or social pathologies (Izdebski et al., 2008).

The hippotherapeutic programs were also used in the Orionine Fathers Youth Education Centre in Warsaw. The hippotherapy sessions are organized in the Klucz stable in Skrzyszew. Unfortunately, the young people have to commute to the stable, which makes their contact with animals limited. Young people living in the centre are aged 13 years and older. The participants of the therapeutic programs in 2009 were people aged 14 to 18 years. Two forms of hippotherapeutic effects were used: therapy with horses (a form of hippotherapy where the point is to ensure the emotional contact between the patient and a horse, to establish proper relations with the animal and hippotherapist, and, finally, to extend these relations to further environments. Participants do not have to ride a horse) and a psychopedagogical horse riding, which consists in individual sessions with a qualified therapist. This form of hippotherapy requires specific physical fitness from participants such that the person is able to sit in the saddle and control the horse's movement. The therapy also includes the basics of horse grooming and performing works in the stable (Strumińska, 2003). The participants were usually young people with behavioural disturbances while the main objective of hippotherapy was to modify the attitudes, behaviours and misconceptions i.e. established and unknowing imaginations about themselves and the world. The participants were divided into three groups of 5 to 6 people. The last group was involved in the therapy in 2010. The therapeutic sessions were divided into theoretical, practical and conclusion parts. Furthermore, art therapy classes were also implemented (Fiejdasz, 2010).

The positive modifications observed during the hippotherapy included e.g. higher self-esteem. The young people were encouraged to help people with disabilities who also participated in hippotherapy sessions. The participants prepared horses, assisted people with disability to ensure their safety and helped organize Paralympics. Their activity made them feel competent and responsible. They could also share the knowledge, strengths and skills in a constructive manner. The tendencies for withdrawal from social contacts were also reduced. The therapy also helped decrease the level of fear of being rejected and fear of failure. Furthermore, one of the objectives adopted for hippotherapeutic programs was the change in the attitudes towards learning such that it was not treated as an unpleasant duty. Knowledge was transferred through games, playing and contests. This stimulated cognitive interest of the young people. New skills and knowledge also made them proud of themselves. They were also considered as an element that distinguished the young people from others in the group.

Properly organized hippotherapeutic classes can provide preventive, caring and educational measures. Therefore, they support school in fulfilling these

functions. The necessity of this extension of activities seems to be obvious, especially in light of the increasing and extensive deprivation, violence and unhealthy competition. Therefore, one of the objectives of the corrective work should be to provide conditions which are conducive to even the smallest successes in sports and other extra-curricular activities (Marzec et al., 2001). This can be effectively achieved by hippotherapy.

Other benefits of hippotherapy include opportunities for modification of e.g. lack of trust to adults and peers, difficulties in adaptation, difficulties in starting relations, withdrawal from problem situations, emotional disturbances, and aggressive or auto-aggressive behaviours (Fjedasz, 2010). As demonstrated in a study by E. Karpuszenko, "in the hierarchy of needs of the imprisoned women, the need for the emotional contact, caring for someone and the need of playing were dominant" (Karpuszenko, 2012). This suggests that even a several-hour contact of the person with an animal has a great potential that should not be neglected. Therefore, it is worth analysing the benefits that can be derived from the increased frequency of hippotherapeutic sessions.

A more popular method of working using animals that can be employed in penal institutions and youth detention centres is dog-assisted therapy. Dog-assisted therapy means a therapy that uses close contact with dogs. Therapy dogs can play the roles of both friends and therapists. These animals do not assess people, do not specify rules and limits, do not expect anything while giving a lot, do not prohibit and set conditions (Kulisiewicz, 2007). Most importantly, they forgive human mistakes. The benefits of long-term effects have been appreciated in penal institutions in Kraków, Jastrzebie-Zdrój, Hajnówka, Olsztyn, Rzeszów, Przytuły Stare, Starogard Gdański or Lubliniec. The sessions with the dogs in Hajnówka or Przytuły Stare have been organized since 2013. It should also be emphasized that dog-assisted therapy involves fewer organizational difficulties compared to hippotherapy.

The Dogs Behind project has a substantial effect on the dog-assisted therapy programs in Poland. The program started to be implemented in the USA in 1987. The benefits of participation in the program were multiple. The trained dogs had greater opportunities to find new homes, whereas people learnt responsibility and patience (Kokocińska, 2016). The dogs also positively influenced prisoners and motivated them for starting positive relationships.

An interesting initiative that is worth promoting in Poland is Puppies Behind Bars (PPB). The programme assumes training puppies in the prison settings. The dogs are trained to be guides. The program was developed in 1997 by Gloria G. Stoga, inspired by similar programs implemented in Florida and Ohio (<http://myhero.com/hero.asp?hero=puppiesbb>).

Trainings and conferences in this field have been more and more popular. In 2016, the Community Centre in Lubliniec, Poland, was the venue of the first

conference in Poland devoted exclusively to the work of therapy dogs under conditions of isolation in penal institutions. The conference participants included dog therapists, directors of penal institutions, lecturers and inspectors from OTOZ Animals. The initiative helped exchange knowledge and experiences while extending the conference with the practical part (conducted by the female prisoner from the Penal Institution in Lubliniec with the dog) allowed for demonstration of the benefits of dog-assisted therapy.

The model centre in Poland in the area of dog-assisted therapy used for resocialization is the Penal Institution in Hajnówka. The therapeutic work is possible through collaboration of the institution with the Ciapiek kennel located in the same town. The therapeutic sessions are based on the program composed of the theoretical and practical sessions. The first program in this area, named "Przyjaciele, czyli pies w celi" ("Friend: the dog in the cage"), was prepared in 2011. It is worth emphasizing that the Hajnówka Remand Prison has collaborated with the kennel since 2007. The prisoners were employed for voluntary work in the kennel. The works included care for dogs, building cages or kennels. The positive changes in the behaviour of the prisoners were the inspiration for starting further investigations in this field.

Consequently, a dog-assisted therapy program was developed. It was divided into two stages: the theoretical and practical. The theoretical part discusses the following problems: origin of the domestic dogs and history of dog domestication, specification of individual breeds and crossbreeds, dog ethogram, dominance theory, function of canine senses, social behaviours of dogs, problems concerning calming signals, prey drive and hunting chain, aggression and fear of canids, training methods, forms of resocialization, dog desensitization and flooding, psychological mechanisms of learning, care and feeding dogs, methods to play with the dog and reward the dog, basic psychological problems of dogs and their consequences, including learnt helplessness, dog box effect, environmental deficiencies, hunger, illness and other problems.

After familiarization with the problems contained in the theoretical part, the prisoner is allowed to participate in the practical part. The practical part is conducted in the Penal Institution in Hajnówka. This part includes the classes in socialization with people and other dogs, obedience, working using different training methods, learning to play with the dog, learning to read dog's body language and calming signals, familiarizing with social and alternative behaviours of dogs, training dogs to perform tricks (<http://psy-pies.com/arttykul/dogoterapia-jako-nowatorska-forma-oddzialywan-penitencjarnych,1330.html>). The contact with the animal was viewed by prisoners as e.g. the time of happiness. It helped them feel that they did something good and useful. The prisoners also identified themselves with the difficult situation of the dog. They also learned physical

contact (different when stroking compared to the contact during playing or caring activities) and developed patience.

Furthermore, the dog-assisted therapy in the Rzeszów Penal Institution is based on the "Pomóż mi wyjść" program ("Let me get out"). With this program, prisoners work as dog trainers in the Kundelek kennel located in the same town. Working with dogs, prisoners can forget about the everyday hardship of living in isolation. However, the benefits of the therapy are mutual. Trained dogs have opportunities to find a new home, whereas prisoners learn patience, responsibility, and expressing and controlling their emotions. The program is supervised by qualified coaches who explain and show how to work with dogs with different past (the material broadcast in TVP Rzeszów, also available at <http://rzeszow.tvp.pl/16300767/pomoz-mi-wyjsc-dogoterapia-w-rzeszowskim-zakladzie-karnym>). The important factor is ties between dog carer and the animal. In this case, both humans and dogs had difficult past. Awareness of this fact helps prisoners to identify themselves with the dog and experience selfless friendship. The progress in dog training and the fact that the opportunities are opened up for the dog for finding a new home can be rewarding for the prisoner and improve his or her self-esteem. Therefore, dog socialization occurs simultaneously with the prisoner's resocialization. The idea of this program is similar to the assumptions of the effects discussed in the Dogs Behind program.

The dog-assisted therapy is also used in the youth educational centres. One of the examples is the youth educational centre in Włocławek, which collaborates with the city's kennel. The resocialization and compensation programs were organized in the area of this centre. In this case, however, instead of the visits to the kennel, young people were involved in Rally-O.

Rally-O is a specific form of obedience training for dogs (a form of sport activity). The idea of Rally-O emerged in the USA and its originator was Charles L. Kramer. The author presented his assumptions in 2010. In Rally-O, the person and the dog have to cover a special route at their own pace. In order to encourage the pet, guide can use any commands and praising. The aim of Rally-O is to raise a happy dog. This form of activity is addressed to everyone, regardless of the age, level of physical fitness or disability. The dog's breed is also of meaningless (Sjosten, 2005).

The Rally-O activities in the above mentioned centre attracted much interest. Consequently, the Rally-O club was established in the Youth Educational Centre in Włocławek in 2015. The club was named Świat4Łap. The classes concentrated on three groups of objectives: resocialization, rehabilitation and objectives based on the kennel's needs (<http://kynoterapeuta.wloclawek.pl/index.php/kynoterapia-w-resocjalizacji2>). The benefits of participation in the program include learning patience, quiet, persistence, and building relation of humans with animals based on mutual trust and close ties. This is of much

importance to resocialization and successful return to society. Furthermore, the successes brought satisfaction and improved self-esteem of participants. They also increased chances to find a home for the dog.

In conclusion, two forms of dog-assisted therapy are used in Poland. One of them focuses on theoretical and practical sessions performed exclusively under conditions of penal isolation, whereas the second one concerns theoretical classes in the location of the penal institution combined with practical activities in the area of a kennel for stray dogs. In the case of classes taught in prison isolation, the dogs are transported from the nearby kennel.

An interesting initiative in terms of examinations of the effectiveness of dog-assisted therapy in Poland in resocialization was started in the Penal Institution in Przytuły Stare. The study participants were 36 prisoners with the dogs from Canis kennel in Kruszewo. The project was implemented in close collaboration of the Institute for Psychology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw with the director of the penal institution. The dog-assisted therapy program was comprised of 24 hours of theoretical classes and 60 hours of practical exercises. The data collected during the examinations demonstrated that the ties established through contact of humans with dogs have a substantial effect on interpersonal relations. Furthermore, they contribute to a reduction in the level of stress, fear and aggression. Dog-assisted therapy is conducive to socialization of prisoners (www.archiwum.moja-ostroleka.pl/dogoterapia-w-zakladzie-karnym,1474631475,2.html). The animals motivate prisoners for being active. Changes in the animal behaviour encourage modifications of persons' own behaviour.

It should also be emphasized that, contrary to dog-assisted therapy or hippotherapy dedicated to people who are not remaining in a youth detention centre or a penal institution, no uniform guidelines have been developed concerning the methodologies used in such therapeutic programs. Furthermore, there are no indications or contraindication with respect to individual situations of the imprisoned people. In addition to technical, organizational and financial problems, individual limitations of the people in such institutions should be also taken into consideration. Not all the prisoners express their willingness to participate in such programs and not all of them can be qualified for the participation. A substantial limitation is fear or unwillingness to work with animals, or allergies to animal's hair and sweat. Another barrier is the scepticism of society who approach dog-assisted therapies as a form of entertainment for prisoners. Such views are reflected by unpleasant messages posted in various Internet forums or chat rooms.

Conclusions

It should be emphasized that both hippotherapy and dog-assisted therapy integrated into resocialization programs represent only an alternative form that can be used to improve work in this area. Animal-assisted therapy for prisoners is used to support conventional resocialization methods. The goal of this therapy is to extend the scope of resocialization effects. There is still much to do by researchers in Poland to popularize this type of therapy. The starting point for the development of concise studies that might provide the guidelines for working in this area should be the examinations based on the methodological background. Slightly different problems are connected with the social scepticism about these forms of therapy.

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