

Psychology
Higher level
Paper 3

Friday 16 November 2018 (morning)

1 hour

Instructions to candidates

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the passage carefully and then answer all the questions.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[30 marks]**.

The stimulus material below is based on a research article that addresses the possible physical, social and psychological benefits of dog ownership for the elderly in the UK.

As the number of elderly people is expected to rise in the near future, it is important to ensure that they stay healthy as they get older. One way in which this can be done is through exercise. According to the researchers of this study, dog ownership may be a good way of encouraging the elderly to walk and stay fit.

- 5 The aim of this qualitative study was to investigate how elderly dog owners believe their physical and mental health is affected by having a dog. A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit 24 dog owners from popular dog-walking sites in the south of England. Seventy-five percent of the participants were female and the mean age was 60. They all signed informed consent before joining the study.
- 10 The researchers conducted four focus group interviews, each with six different participants. The facilitator used an interview protocol with some prepared questions to encourage discussions. Examples of these questions are: “What does your dog mean to you?” and “What are you looking for in a walk?” Each interview lasted around 1.5 hours and did not end until participants agreed that all important topics had been discussed. The interviews were audio-recorded and
- 15 transcribed verbatim to prepare for inductive content analysis (thematic analysis).

The analysis of the transcripts revealed three higher-order themes related to participants’ beliefs of dog ownership:

- Physical benefits: participants saw walking the dog as good for their health. They were motivated to walk, even when in ill health, or when the weather was bad and they did not really feel like it.
- Psychological benefits: participants found that the dog gave them comfort and companionship. Some said the dog helped them when they felt depressed or lonely – especially after the death of a partner.
- Social benefits: participants found that socializing with other dog walkers helped participants feel that they were part of a group.

The researchers concluded that owning a dog may increase physical and psychological health for the elderly and therefore lead to them having a better quality of life. However, more research is needed, as this is a new research area.

[Source: Based on Knight, S. and Edwards, V. (2008) In the Company of Wolves: The Physical, Social, and Psychological Benefits of Dog Ownership. *Journal of Aging and Health*, **20**, 437–455]

Answer **all** of the following three questions, referring to the stimulus material in your answers. Marks will be awarded for demonstration of knowledge and understanding of **qualitative** research methodology.

1. Evaluate the purposive sampling technique used in this study. [10]

 2. Describe how researchers in this study used inductive content analysis (thematic analysis) on the interview transcripts. [10]

 3. Discuss the use of focus group interviews in this study. [10]
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