

Quantifying the Power of Pets:

The Development of an Assessment Device to Measure the Attachment

Between Humans and Companion Animals

by

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Abstract

This study developed and evaluated a 34-item scale designed to measure human and companion animal attachment. A total of 398 individuals, ranging in age from 18 to 87, who have a pet completed the Pet-Attachment Scale (PAS). These individuals also completed the Companion Animal Bonding Scale (CABS), which asks respondents how much caretaking they devote to their pets. The PAS and the CABS were highly correlated, $r = -.68$ ($p < .001$), with an overlapping variance of 46%. The inter-item consistency or Chronbach's Alpha of the PAS was .961, compared to a Chronbach's Alpha of .862 for the CABS.

The factor analysis of the PAS revealed two factors; Companionship (12 items) and Emotional Fulfillment (7 items). Thus, the PAS can be shortened to 19 items for follow-up research. The factor analysis for the CABS revealed only one factor (i.e., caretaking), and the analysis suggested the scale could be reduced from 8 to 3 items. The strong correlations between the PAS and the CABS suggest concurrent, convergent, and construct validity for the PAS.

A stepwise regression for the PAS revealed three significant predictors: 1) responsibility, 2) favorite pet chosen, and 3) gender. Women who were responsible for their pet, and did not select a particular pet as their favorite, scored highest on attachment to their pets. A stepwise regression for the CABS revealed four predictors: 1) responsibility, 2) favorite pet chosen, 3) live with this pet, and 4) gender. These predictors for the CABS were the same as for the PAS, with the addition that those who lived with their pet gave more caretaking than those who did not.

Analysis of variance was used to explore the effects of the predictor variables on the PAS and the CABS. These analyses revealed significant effects of gender and age category on both pet attachment (PAS) and pet caretaking (CABS). Women in the middle age category were most attached to their pets (PAS) and gave the most caretaking to their pets (CABS). The unique feature of the PAS, not measured by the CABS, was an Emotional Fulfillment factor. Future research should distinguish between pet attachment as companionship versus emotional fulfillment.

To all my pets, particularly my cat Goldie and my pony Lady, the two who taught me the most about the meaning of companion animal love.

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