

# THE STUDY ABOUT PRELIMINARY DATA IN KINDERGARTEN 21<sup>TH</sup> OF KOMBINAT TO SOCIAL BEHAVIORS INCREASE IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM (ASD) IN THE PRESENCE OF COMPANION ANIMALS

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## Abstract

We studied on the results of interview and monitoring of imported autism children behavior in Kindergarten 21<sup>th</sup> Kombinat, Tirane, as well as collecting preliminary data about improved social behaviors increase in children with autism (ASD) in the presence of companion animals. Productive and positive interactions between dogs and humans have been documented in studies using dogs trained as companion animals and as assistants for people with disabilities. In our study, the effects of the presence of a dog on social interactions between six 3-6-year-old children with developmental disabilities and their teacher at an 21th Kindergarten, Kombinat, Tirane were analyzed. A single-case experimental design with repeated measures and with replicated effects across participants was employed to assess changes in interactions from baseline to an intervention condition. During baseline, interactions were assessed in the social environment of a room adjacent to the classroom, which had a toy dog and other play materials, during time with the teacher. The experimental change introduced sequentially and systematically across the participants was the additional presence of an obedience-trained dog, a German Shepherd/Labrador Retriever cross which interactions between the children and their teacher were examined in our Veterinary Small Animals clinic during morning sessions using reliable direct observation interval recording procedures. All participants demonstrated an increase in overall positive initiated behaviors (verbal and non-verbal) toward both the teacher and the dog. The children also showed an overall decrease in negative initiated behaviors. In addition, observational ratings showed positive generalization of improved social responsiveness by the children in their classroom following the completion of the experimental sessions. This study supports the position that children with developmental disabilities benefit from the use of skilled dogs as teaching assistants and therapeutic adjuncts.

**Keywords:** *children, autism, dog, teacher, veterinary clinic*