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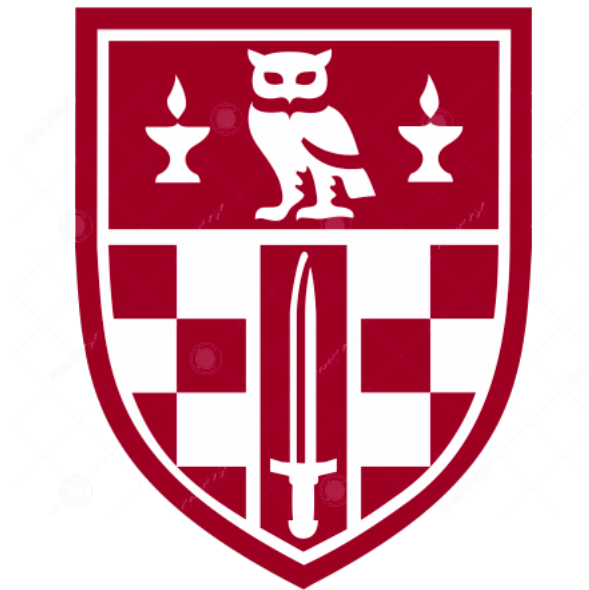
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# **Dog-friendly Workplaces: What Works, What Does Not, and What Lessons Have Been Learned**

Submitted by Eloise Warrilow

Birkbeck College, University of London



November 2023

Supervised by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Professional Doctorate in  
Organisational Psychology (DOrgPsy)

# Acknowledgements

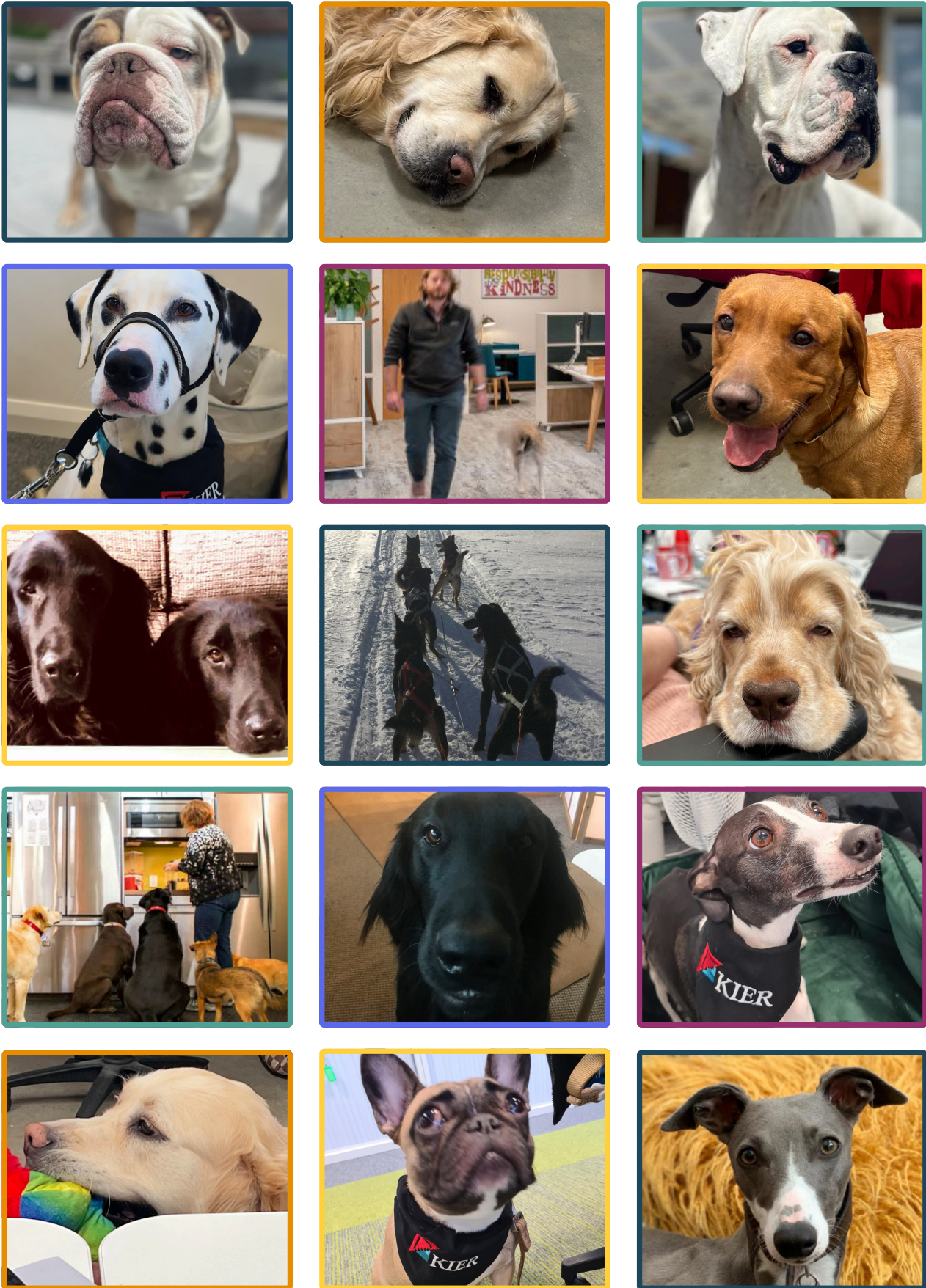
I would like to thank Dr Jo Yarker and Dr Rachel Lewis for their support throughout the Doctorate. Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to join the programme. It has been a privilege to learn from you both. In addition to being outstanding and inspiring professionals, you also have been encouraging and supportive and helped to develop my self-belief as a practitioner. I would also like to thank Dr Libby Drury for her supervision throughout the process: for supporting me when I needed to make difficult decisions, and for giving me a deeper understanding of ethics in research and its importance. You each gave me the confidence to pursue an area of study which was a little unconventional.

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To the participants, whose stories I loved hearing, I thank you for your openness, generosity of time and willingness to share your experiences. I have learned so much from you and would have not been able to complete the Doctorate without your contributions. I am truly grateful. Some of the dogs from our shared stories can be seen in Figure 1.

Thank you to everyone who let me talk about dogs for much longer than they probably wanted to listen. I also thank my peers, friends, Nigel King, Rowena Murray, my sister, Sarah, and my parents, from whom I have inherited my love of learning along with my focus and determination. Thank you all for your support. And finally, my flat-coated retrievers, who were both constant companions and (mostly) wonderful, non-judgemental colleagues throughout the Doctorate.

I wholeheartedly encourage you all to consider the benefits a pet-friendly office can offer.



**Figure 1: Some of the Dogs who Made This Study Possible**

# Abstract

There has been an exponential growth in companion dog ownership in the UK, both at a societal level and within the working population. The recent global pandemic caused a seismic shift in how people live and work, acting as a catalyst for the adoption of new flexible working practices that employees are reluctant to give up, such as working alongside their pets. While some attention has been given to the pros and cons of dog-friendly workplaces, evidence has not kept pace with changes, despite numerous calls for more research. This thesis consists of two papers: a systematic literature review and an empirical study.

The first study of this thesis is a systematic literature review of published research pertaining to the intersection of companion dogs and organisational life. The aim of this review is to understand the current state of research on the effects of companion dogs on employees and the workplace. No known systematic literature review has been conducted in this area, despite several calls for research, although various narrative reviews have reported on the phenomenon. A limited number of studies were found in this area, with only nine identified studies meeting the inclusion criteria. The findings indicate promising positive consequences for companion dog owners and, in some cases, their colleagues, in terms of well-being levels, work engagement, commitment, and quality of life. Additionally, there is evidence that pet-friendly practices can serve as a mechanism to signal organisational values and culture. However, further research is needed here, preferably using a longitudinal approach with objective measures to increase confidence in the findings. Methodological limitations and contextual factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, hindered the robustness and replicability of the research. Implications for practice are discussed alongside suggestions for future research.

The second study of this thesis addresses some of the gaps identified in the systematic literature review and seeks to answer what works, what does not, and what lessons can be learned about pet-friendly offices in a post-pandemic context. A qualitative study was adopted, using semi-structured interviews with 14 participants who had worked in companion dog-friendly offices. Participants included dog owners, non-dog owners, and subject matter expert groups from targeted backgrounds. Reflexive thematic analysis yielded six themes: first, the psychosocial impact of dog presence; second, the need for organisational congruence, in terms of having a dog-friendly office status; third, power dynamics engendered by dog-friendly offices, highlighting the ethical need to identify and manage stakeholders impacted by the decision to become a dog-friendly office; fourth, presentation to the outside world, understanding that pet-friendly practices are a mechanism for communicating organisational values, person-environment fit and a readiness to support practices which support work adjustments; fifth, continuous responsibility, an antecedent for sustainable practices, considering both human and non-human agency; and sixth, forethoughts and expectations –

recognising the importance of agreeing with and adhering to clear expectations and consequences, mitigating risks through careful planning with subject-matter experts and workforce representatives.

This thesis advances understanding of what employees expect from their organisations in terms of flexible working and work-life integration, with a particular focus on the opportunities for working in the presence of companion dogs. Furthermore, it builds on previous work highlighting the need for more research into how those who have implemented pet-friendly practices have overcome perceived problems. It also addresses the call for guidance to be developed by multidisciplinary teams. The thesis provides several avenues for future research. It outlines a conceptual framework for decision-makers and encourages future researchers to test the model's utility. It also lays the foundation for the development of a toolkit intended to assist decision-makers in determining the feasibility of becoming a companion dog-friendly office.

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# Professional Practice Statement

This body of work marks the end of a four-year journey of learning. Having completed part one of the Professional Doctorate (Professional Practice Portfolio) in Years 1 and 2, I registered with the Health and Care Professions Council as a practitioner psychologist with the modality of occupational psychology. This thesis satisfies the requirements for part two and represents two-years part-time study. The following statement provides a summary of how my professional practice informed this thesis.

I completed a Master of Science (MSc) in occupational psychology in 2010, gaining a distinction. After transitioning from a career in educational psychology, my first role as a psychologist within a work context was in selection and assessment, working for the occupational psychology team of a luxury automotive brand during a time of rapid growth. This experience gave me insight into the design and delivery of assessment and development centres. It also provided me with the opportunity to develop my competence within the core areas of learning, training and development through designing and delivering assessor skills training courses. During this time, I became interested in how psychometric assessment and work sample exercises can be used in conjunction with other methods to identify knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics as well as to predict performance for diverse populations, ranging from manufacturing line operatives to executive leaders.

Building on this practical experience, I joined Europe's leading publisher of psychology journals, books, and psychometric assessments in a senior consultancy role in 2014. I consider myself fortunate to have been mentored by Wendy Lord, a world-renowned expert on the NEO-PI-3 five-factor model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992). With her guidance, I gained a deeper insight into the theoretical underpinnings of psychometric assessments. I applied my combined experience from the core areas of psychological assessment at work and learning, training and development to develop and deliver accreditation training for the organisation's flagship personality assessment tool. I also worked with Wendy Lord to deliver Test User: Occupational Ability and Personality training courses. Working towards becoming an independent practitioner, I worked autonomously on short-term and medium-term projects for a broad range of selection contexts. In collaboration with authors, I delivered sessions at the Division of Occupational Psychology conferences on big five-factor assessment and the design and application of implicit attitude measures. During this time, I also worked with a regulatory body to deliver training on unconscious bias in decision-making and worked with the organisation to implement an intervention.

My most recent role has been working with an intergovernmental agency whose aim is to shape the development of Europe's space capability and ensure that investment in space continues to deliver benefits



to the citizens of Europe and the world. I feel well equipped to work directly with the Director General and member state representatives as an autonomous professional, exercising sound judgement and adhering to evidence-based practice principles. A change programme within the organisation coincided with my undertaking of the MRes. This was a timely opportunity to apply the skills I had recently acquired, thus supporting the organisation to make better decisions by adopting the principles of evidence-based practice within their leadership selection and assessment activities. During this time frame, I co-developed a competency framework with the intergovernmental organisation and developed an aligned suite of assessment centre exercises and interview guidelines for four different leadership levels.

By undertaking the professional doctorate, I have developed my skills across the entire consultancy cycle as well as within research and analysis. The combined focus of both research and practice has, in the past two years, empowered me to lead projects across each of the core areas of occupational psychology. I am committed to lifelong learning and supervision and prioritise my continuous development and reflective practice, ensuring I am working effectively within the scope of my practice. In the past three years, I feel my identity as a psychologist has shifted. I have transitioned from being a practitioner with an 'operational' mindset into becoming a reflective practitioner psychologist.

# Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 explores the broader field of human-animal interaction (HAI) studies, encompassing the relationships and interactions between animals and humans, before moving to a workplace context. It establishes the thesis's context and justifies the need for further research, emphasising the importance of studying pet-friendly practices from a scholarly perspective.

Chapter 2 communicates the epistemological standpoint that underpins the research design and methodological approach employed in this study.

Chapter 3 encompasses the first study within the thesis, which is a systematic literature review focusing on the intersection of companion dogs and organisational life. This review investigates the effects and implications of such interactions. The findings and insights derived from this review inform the design of the subsequent study.

Chapter 4 is the second study, which employs a qualitative, reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) method. It explores the phenomenon of pet-friendly offices post-pandemic, examining what practices are effective, what challenges arise, and what lessons can be learned.

Chapter 5, the final chapter, provides an overview of both studies, discussing their limitations, implications, and contributions to the existing body of evidence. The chapter concludes with final reflections and conclusions drawn from the research.

# Chapter 1: Dogs and Their Contribution to the Workplace

*“Such short little lives our pets have to spend with us, and they spend most of it waiting for us to come home each day...” (Grogan, 2005)*

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by introducing how I arrived at the topic, my relationship with the topic, and the justification for studying the phenomenon of companion dog-friendly workplaces.

The introduction encompasses a broad range of studies and themes within the domain of human-animal interaction (HAI). Additionally, it explores a broader typology of the specific roles that dogs have played, recognising that evidence from other domains can be extended to benefit industrial, work, and organisational psychology. Subtopics include animals who work alongside humans, animals who are the focus of organisations, companion dogs that stay at home while their owners are at work, and, finally, employees’ companion dogs that are brought into the workplace. In this thesis, the terms ‘companion dog’ and ‘pet dog’ are used interchangeably. Companion dogs, as defined by Varner (2002), receive the affection and care typically given to pets and, beyond this, experience enhanced levels of social interaction. These dogs choose to stay with their owners, partly for the sake of companionship (Varner, 2002).

## 1.2 The Increase in Pet Ownership in the UK

Historically, pandemics have had profound implications for the future of work (Rudolph et al., 2021). Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, I observed how neighbours of mine who were part of the working population adopted new routines, with some acquiring pet dogs for the first time. During the pandemic, interactions with dogs were more frequent. In their UK-based survey, Christley et al. (2021) indicated that during the lockdown phase of the pandemic, 58% of dogs were not left alone for more than five minutes during a day. Data sourced from the ‘UK Pet Food Survey’ (2023) indicates that 31% of UK households own a dog, resulting in an estimated 12 million dogs in the UK.

As individuals faced the prospect of returning to the workplace, they were confronted with the need to make plans for their dogs. Discussions surrounding what to do with the ‘pet dog problem’ seemed ubiquitous. Some of the discourse I heard troubled me. In parallel, the owners of a local ‘dog play park’, where I attended training lessons with my dog, shared news of their business shifting towards a ‘day-care model’ to accommodate the growing number of dogs whose owners were returning to work. Witnessing additional

cages being installed for these dogs saddened me. I also became aware of concerns expressed by animal charities regarding the risk of increased dog relinquishment, due to new owners not fully considering the long-term consequences when they returned to work. When the call to return to work happened, animal welfare researchers such as Packer et al. (2021) highlighted the harm that animals could face due to staying at home as well as the risk of relinquishment.

According to call data from the Dogs Trust between August and December 2022, approximately 1000 people are making the call to give their dog up every week (Dogs Trust, 2023). This aligns with findings from the 'UK Pet Food Survey' (2023), where it was reported that 13% of households admitted to relinquishing a pet within the previous 12 months, with 47% of those being dogs.

### **1.3 A Practice-to-Theory Approach to the Topic**

As a practitioner, my natural inclination has been to find resolutions to problems. It became evident to me that there might be a middle ground between the three options I had heard: leaving dogs at home for extended periods, placing them in day-care facilities, or relinquishment. This realisation sparked my interest in exploring whether it would be feasible for dogs to accompany their owners to the workplace. As a reflexive researcher, I come to the subject of companion-dog-friendly workplaces with an awareness that my values, personal perspectives, beliefs, and subjectivity play a role in how I have approached my topic of research. Acknowledging that researcher identity can be complex and messy, I am cognisant that I embody a combination of both insider and outsider perspectives, as explored by Hayfield and Huxley (2015), Hellawell (2006), Obasi (2014), Paechter (1998; 2013), and Tuhiwai Smith (2021). I do not neatly fit into the 'insider researcher' category as I have never worked in an office with established pet-friendly practices. However, I also do not consider myself a pure 'outsider researcher.' With a previous career in the educational psychology sector, I have experienced how human-animal interactions have led to breakthrough moments and provided psychosocial benefits for some students.

When coming to the topic, I initially felt concerned about the lack of theoretical grounding in this area of study and whether it would be considered worthy of scholarly attention. As a registered occupational psychologist, I bring a distinct perspective to this topic of exploring the phenomenon of companion dog-friendly workplaces by taking a practice-to-theory approach, wherein the focus is more on the explicit integration of practitioner knowledge into academic theory, as advocated by Ployhart and Bartunek (2019). An increasing number of academics from the domain of industrial, work, and organisational psychology have made pertinent contributions to the 'research-practice gap' and the 'rigour-relevance debate'. Campbell and Wilmot (2019) highlighted the limited utilisation of theoretical research by practitioners, adding to the

criticisms previously expressed by Burke et al. (2004), Rousseau (2012), Rynes et al. (2001), and Rynes, et al. (2002). When addressing complex, real-world problems faced by managers and organisations, such as the ‘pet dog problem’, rigour should not come at a price where the “voice of practice” is lost (Thomas & Wilson, 2009, p. 678). The empirical study in this thesis adopts Ployhart and Bartunek’s (2019) viewpoint, emphasising the necessity of building academic theory on practice and grounding it in phenomena, as this can lead to the development of novel and insightful theories (Ployhart & Bartunek, 2019, p. 496). “There is nothing so theoretical as good practice” (Ployhart and Bartunek (2019, p.493). The next section explores the broader context, typologies, debates, and gaps used to inform the research focus.

## **1.4 A Typology of the Ways in Which Animals Intersect with Organisations**

Dogs make a wide and diverse contribution to organisational life. There is a spectrum of nuanced behavioural, physiological, and structural characteristics they require to perform specific roles. Given that there is no framework to conceptualise the ways in which animals intersect with organisational life, Kelemen et al. (2020) proposed the following typology: first, animals that work alongside humans; second, animals which are the focus of organisations; third, companion dogs that stay at home; and fourth, employee companion dogs brought into the workplace. In Chapter 3 of this thesis, the focus is on the latter category, which is discussed in depth along with the scholarly literature related to these animals, looking at the intersection of companion dogs and organisational life as well as the effects, and implications of this practice.

### **1.4.1 Dogs who Work Alongside Humans**

Several systematic literature reviews have focused on human-animal interaction (HAI) research and animal-assisted interventions exploring their psychological and psychosocial benefits for humans. Rodriguez and colleagues (2020) published a review of the effects of assistance dogs on psychosocial health and wellbeing. Whilst assistance dogs are trained for functional tasks relating to a medical or physical disability, positive outcomes have been observed in psychological, social, quality of life, and vitality domains. This accords with the earlier review by Lundqvist et al. (2017) on dog-assisted interventions (DAI) using therapy dogs within healthcare. Positive effects were reported on psychological well-being, physical outcomes, enhanced social interaction, and contributions to the atmosphere.

Military working dogs are specifically trained to perform specialised and refined tasks such as detecting explosives and supporting humanitarian military operations under the direction of their handler. “Their breeding, training, maintenance, and preparation require extensive time and economic investment” (Spinella

et al., 2022, p. 2). Although that study did not mention factors alluding to human-animal interaction, others have distinguished between the mutual and dynamic exchanges between humans and animals compared to their psychophysiological effects on humans (Griffin et al., 2012). The role of non-human animals, specifically police dogs, made a valuable contribution to HAI studies. Knight and Sang (2019) explored human-animal dualism and highlighted a dichotomy between a dog being seen as a pet at home if living with their police handler compared to being a work colleague and “right arm” at work. This study provides an interesting insight into human-animal relationships which transcend home and work boundaries. Although these studies are from outside the domain of industrial, work, and organisational psychology, researchers such as Cunha and colleagues (2019) have highlighted the opportunity to leverage the HAI evidence base and extend it towards industrial, work, and organisational psychology, “bringing the logic of human-animal interaction to the field of organisation studies” (p. 793).

#### **1.4.2 Animals who are the Focus of Organisations**

The corresponding scholarly literature on this subject, which deals with professionals who safeguard and care for animals (e.g., veterinarians, animal control employees, and wildlife biologists) as well as organisations that use animals for entertainment purposes (e.g., zoos and aquariums), is scant. However, Schrabram and Maitlis (2017) offered valuable insights into the emotional, psychological, and behavioural outcomes for individuals who view their work with animals as a 'calling'. This research also fills a gap in the literature concerning how employees respond to challenges in animal friendly workplaces, a topic that has yet to be extensively explored in industrial, work, and organisational psychology. It emphasises the significance of problem-focused coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which are intended to manage, reduce, or eliminate the problem. Additionally, the concept of 'employee voice' has been identified by Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) as essential for empowering employees to articulate challenging perspectives on work-related issues. They indicated that constructive coping with challenges is more likely when employees feel empowered to adjust their work environments. Equally important is that employees vary in how they interpret challenges and must be aware of the resources at their disposal (Dong et al., 2014). As this section is peripherally related to the research, it is mentioned to give context, but will not be further discussed.

#### **1.4.3 Companion Dogs That Stay at Home While Their Owners are at Work**

Many people regard their companion animals as family members (Cohen, 2002) and as a unique category of kin (Barcelos et al., 2020). Taylor et al. (2006) reported that 85% of respondents to a US national survey considered their companion dogs to be part of the family, with 94% conceding that they felt closer to their

dogs than to some family members. It has also been suggested that companion animals may play a particularly important role in marginalised communities due to the formation of meaningful relationship bonds (Schmitz et al., 2021). A scoping review by Siegel et al. (2023) has the potential to add to the existing body of evidence through an exploration of the role of animal companionship on mental health and well-being within LGBTQ+ populations, who may fall outside traditional notions of family, kin, and companionship (Hammack et al., 2019).

Leaving dogs at home without supervision can create a complication in dog ownership. Behaviours exclusively exhibited in the absence of owners are thought to be separation-related behaviour (Appleby & Pluijmakers, 2003; Borchelt & Voith, 1982; McCrave, 1991; Sherman & Mills, 2008; Voith, 1985). Reported problematic behaviours include prolonged vocalisations, destructive behaviour, and house soiling (Sherman & Mills, 2008). Stephan and colleagues (2021) used a video-based study to explore dogs' coping mechanisms when left at home by their owners for several hours. They concluded that further research is required to ascertain whether having an additional dog might aid in coping with human separation. However, given that the lifetime cost of dog ownership is estimated to be between £10,000 and £16,000 (IBISWorld, 2022), acquiring another dog might not be financially viable for everyone. Considering the human perspective, Kelemen et al. (2020) highlighted the need to consider how having a stay-at-home pet might affect employees' work-related outcomes when animals were a central focus for so many during the pandemic.

#### **1.4.4 Employees' Companion Dogs Brought into the Workplace**

Industrial, work, and organisational theory to date has mostly been an exclusively human discipline (Cunha et al., 2019). The presence of animals, and specifically dogs, in the workplace is not a new phenomenon, although research that deals with it has been "relatively scattered and disorganised" (Kelemen et al., 2020, p.1) and mostly ignored by organisational theory (Cunha et al., 2019). To date, there have been no systematic literature reviews and only a small number of narrative reviews concerning the phenomenon of companion-dog-friendly workplaces. Wilkin et al. (2016) contributed to this evidence, citing their general review as "the first to provide a detailed account of the pet-friendliness trend" (p. 86). Tentative findings suggested that the presence of companion dogs led to improved employee retention, enhanced employee health, increased employee productivity, and positive bottom-line results, as well as enhanced attraction and recruitment. Links have also been made between pet-friendly organisations and attracting millennials who are pet owners, viewing such policies as a way to gain a competitive advantage (Zimmermann, 2016).

Previous researchers have indicated that companion dogs are a source of social support (Bowen, 2021;

Brooks, 2018) and social capital (Colarelli et al., 2017), since they can increase positive emotions at a team level, leading to more pro-social behaviours and making group environments socially and emotionally warmer. Companion dogs can offer a unique combination of factors, such as physical contact, being emotionally responsive, and non-judgemental. Cunha et al. (2019) asserted that these characteristics could be leveraged by organisations, capitalising on the ability of dogs to fulfil different human needs over time. The recent global pandemic highlighted the role companion dogs can play during times of crisis and isolation (Bowen et al., 2021).

Wilkin et al. (2016, p. 101) have suggested that, since pets are considered part of employees' personal lives, "it is a reasonable extension to offer policies and practices pertaining to pets". However, these researchers anticipated that a lack of evidence would delay the widespread adoption of pet-friendly workplaces until this practice could be empirically linked to organisational performance. This thesis answers the call from Kelemen et al. (2020) for more knowledge-generating research that would allow organisations to "better appreciate and benefit from animals in the workplace" (Kelemen et al., 2020, p. 3). The next section outlines the pertinent questions that will be addressed.

## **1.5 Key Aims of the Thesis**

The aim of this thesis is to establish what is already known about the effect of companion dogs (also referred to as pet dogs) in the workplace and the current state of knowledge in the scientific literature, following Wilkin et al.'s 2016 narrative review. It seeks to explore the settings in which existing research has been conducted, utilised research designs, the benefits and challenges identified for organisations and employees, and the organisational culture and conditions that optimise the benefits of pet dogs at individual, group, and organisational levels. In this way, gaps, opportunities for theory building, and future directions can be identified.

Additionally, the study aims to investigate whether there has been a shift in the needs and expectations of working companion dog owners in a post-pandemic context, particularly concerning the accommodation of dogs in the workplace. It also aims to identify the antecedents of sustainable pet-friendly practices, as well as the factors contributing to unsuccessful attempts to accommodate pet dogs in the workplace, the challenges that have been encountered, and what lessons can be learned. To achieve these objectives, questions were asked to elicit the perceptions and experiences of organisations, subject matter experts, leaders, and individuals who have lived experience with dog-friendly offices.



# Chapter 2: Methodology

This thesis consists of two studies: a systematic review of the existing literature on the impact of companion dogs on organisational outcomes, and a qualitative study that focuses on investigating pet-friendly offices in the post-pandemic era, examining effective practices, ineffective approaches, and highlighting valuable lessons for organisational implementation.

## 2.1 The Systematic Literature Methodology

The systematic literature review, Study 1, was approached from a positivist epistemological perspective. Epistemology relates to what constitutes meaningful and valid knowledge, what we think it is possible to know, and how we should try to go about trying to know it (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 175). Positivism is a philosophical tradition associated with the quantitative paradigm and scientific method that generates objective, value-free knowledge about reality.

### 2.1.1 The Case for Systematic Literature Reviews

Briner and Denyer (2012) described systematic literature reviews as procedures that address specific research inquiries and where explicit and transparent methods are used to “allow reasonably clear conclusions about what *is* and *is not* known” (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009, p. 671). Historically, systematic reviews were confined to medicine. They aimed to answer the call from Cochrane’s (1972) seminal text ‘Effectiveness and efficiency’ for more evidence-based medicine. Gough et al. (2017) suggested the systematic literature review was previously used as a tool within the context of evidence-based medicine to settle any viewpoint divergences. However, Sackett (1996, p.2) defined the evidence-based approach as the “conscientious, explicit, judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions”.

The systematic review process is still relatively young; methods of reviewing have not yet been developed for all areas of science (Gough et al., 2017). In terms of moving beyond medicine, the approach initiated by Cochrane (1972) was subsequently mirrored by Oakley et al. (2005), who pioneered the use of rigorous, theoretically grounded research in other fields such as social sciences, health promotion, and education through her work with the ‘EPPI Centre’ (Evidence for Policy and Practice Information Centre). The feasibility of using a systematic review methodology to promote evidence-based policy and social interventions has also been discussed by Rojon et al. (2011). Other researchers have proposed that the method could contribute to innovative research (Gough et al., 2017). It is evident that systematic literature reviews have evolved in terms of how they are applied in practice.

Historically, applying the traditional systematic literature review approach to a social science context has been criticised (Hammersley, 2001). More recently, the guidance from medical science for conducting a systematic literature review was adapted by Denyer et al. (2008), who provided a step-by-step guide to meet the needs of researchers in the industrial, work, and organisational psychology domain. They argued that this method contributes to informing policy and practice as well as creating and building knowledge. Denyer et al. (2008) conceded that although recommendations and findings may be more heuristic than algorithmic, researchers could follow a systematic series of questions to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to provide clear guidelines for practice.

It is evident that the prevalence and application of the systematic literature review process have gained momentum in the last two decades. Rojon et al. (2021) found that systematic literature reviews have been keenly embraced by UK academics but less so in other countries. This contrasts with an earlier Rojon et al. (2011) study, where it was postulated that researchers operating in the domain of industrial, work, and organisational psychology had yet to embrace the methodology. In their 2021 paper, Rojon and colleagues identified 391 systematic reviews published in management research journals. Snyder (2019) explored literature reviews as a research methodology. Although she conceded the task was increasingly complex, she highlighted the need for academics to both build on research and relate it to existing knowledge. She asserted that the acceleration of business research and its fragmented interdisciplinary state made it vital to ensure that literature reviews can serve as a basis for knowledge development, provide evidence about an effect, and, if robustly instigated, have the capacity to engender new ideas and directions for particular fields.

### **2.1.2 Alternatives to Systematic Literature Reviews**

The discussion in this section has so far focused on systematic literature reviews. However, it is prudent to acknowledge they are not the only approach to reviewing previous research. Rojon et al. (2011) compared systematic literature reviews with traditional narrative reviews. They suggested that adhering to a systematic literature review process limits researcher bias and provides the level of detail necessary for enabling replication, transparency, and explicitness. They proposed that the utilisation of precise inclusion and exclusion criteria, in addition to a continued focus on the review questions, ensures quality while minimising digression. Snyder (2019) compared the systematic literature review process to semi-structured reviews, also referred to as narrative reviews. She suggested that narrative reviews are more suited to detecting themes, theoretical perspectives, or common issues, thus creating an agenda for further research or a historical overview. Additionally, she considered the utility of integrative reviews, which have historically suited a more creative collection of data. She suggested that these reviews are more beneficial for combining insights

from different fields or research traditions. Therefore, the systematic literature review process is better suited to areas where the appraisal and summarising of evidence can be seen as a key step for providing reliable findings from which conclusions can be drawn.

Tranfield and colleagues (2003, p. 209) suggested that systematic literature reviews:

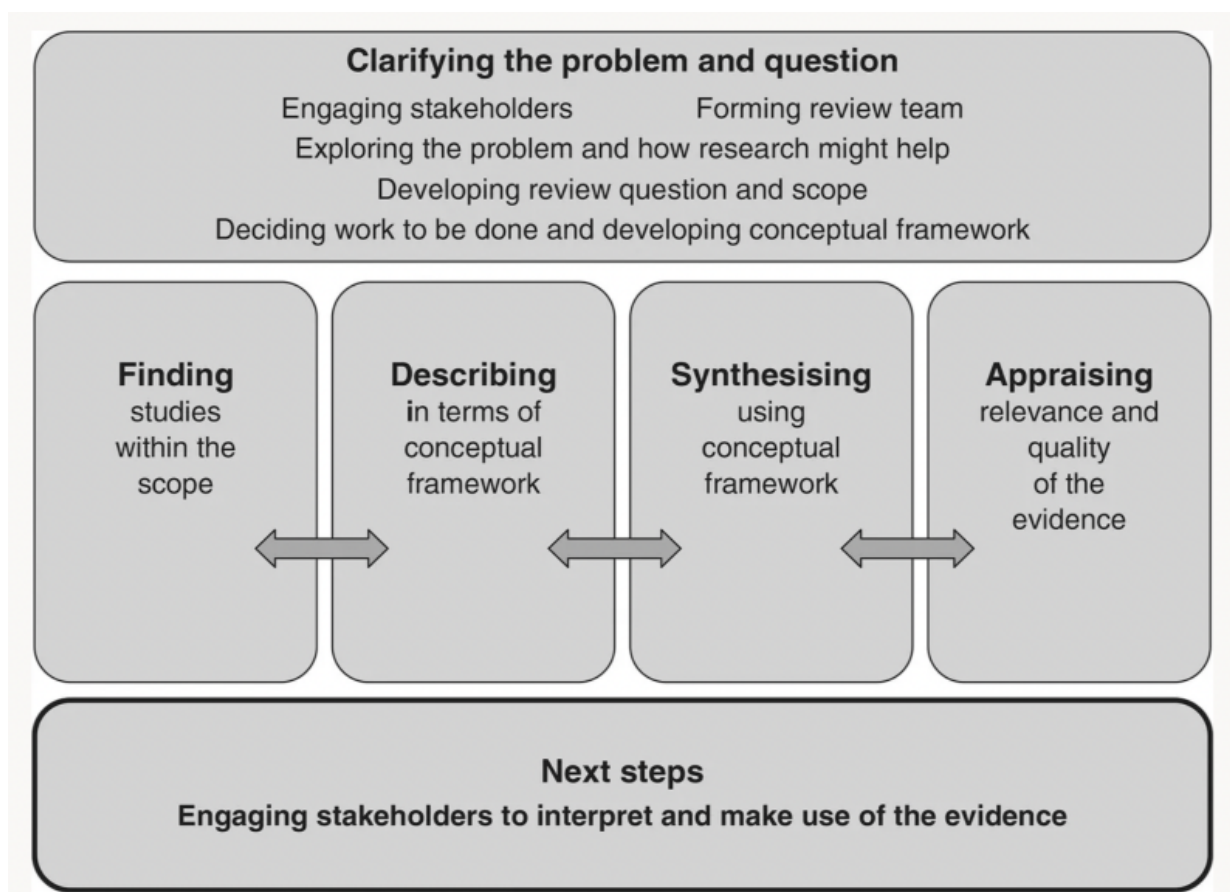
“...differ from traditional narrative reviews by adopting a replicable, scientific and transparent process, in other words a detailed technology, that aims to minimise bias through exhaustive literature searches of published and unpublished studies and by providing an audit trail of the reviewers’ decisions, procedures and conclusions”.

Due to their ability to identify existing knowledge and support the evaluation of research gaps, a systematic literature review was the most appropriate research method for Study 1.

A crucial step in the systematic literature review process is considering whether it is appropriate to also undertake a meta-analysis. Deeks et al. (2021) highlighted the following potential advantages to properly conducted meta-analyses: they improve precision when individual studies are too small to provide convincing evidence about intervention effects, answer questions not posed by individual studies, settle controversies arising from conflicting studies, and can generate new hypotheses. As the studies in this systematic literature review were limited in number and highly heterogeneous, a quantitative meta-analysis was not possible.

## **2.2 The Systematic Literature Review Process**

The current systematic literature review followed the protocol described by Briner and Denyer (2012) and outlined in Gough et al. (2017), as depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Stages of the Systematic Literature Review Process (Adapted from Gough et al., 2017, p.16)**

### 2.2.1 Clarifying the Problem and Question

The initial stage of a systematic literature review involves clarifying the problem and developing the review question(s). Briner and Denyer (2012) proposed that consulting with advisory group experts, subject matter experts, and users can help formulate questions. They argue that a well-formulated and answerable question forms the basis of a good systematic review (Briner & Denyer, 2012). The importance of the question was similarly emphasised by Counsell (2017, p. 381), who cautioned, “ask a poor question and you will get a poor review”. The review question for the current study was developed through extensive reading around the topic areas and then refining the primary review question and sub-questions with a research supervisor. The expert guidance of the subject librarian was sought to discuss potential search terms. To focus the question, the study design, participants, interventions, and outcomes (SPIO) framework, adapted from Richardson et al. (1995), was used.

Before commencing the search for relevant studies, a protocol must be developed to ensure a review is “systematic, transparent, and replicable” (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006, p. 44). Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, along with search terms using a Boolean structure, must be established. The step was taken to pilot

the search terms to ensure that the search strategy was effective. All iterations of the search were recorded.

### **2.2.2 Finding Studies Within the Scope**

Decisions were also made concerning the databases and sources to be searched, period, language restrictions, and inclusion of grey literature. Snyder (2019) warned that limiting search terms or breadth of journals could lead to a flawed or skewed sample. Additionally, important studies could be overlooked, impacting the depth and rigour of the review. Briner and Denyer (2012) support the inclusion of unpublished data and grey literature to mitigate publication bias. As noted by Geyskens et al. (2009), studies with data supporting a theory are more likely to get published than those with data that contradict expectations or yield mixed results. Briner and Denyer (2012) have recommended a proactive approach, suggesting that, beyond searching electronic databases, references in published reviews should be checked via hand-searching, citation searches conducted, and institutes known for conducting research relevant to the question contacted. In the current systematic literature review, authors were contacted as well as the Royal Veterinary College.

### **2.2.3 Describing in Terms of a Conceptual Framework**

The next step in the process involved reviewing the papers for their inclusion or exclusion in the final study. To manage the volume of papers, titles were reviewed, followed by a review of the abstracts. This approach carries some risks, as unclear or poorly written titles and abstracts may result in relevant papers being overlooked. To mitigate this risk, a second researcher reviewed a random selection of 10% of the papers and abstracts to ensure agreement on their inclusion/exclusion status. Once the relevant papers were identified, the study details were extracted and assessed for quality. All relevant study characteristics were extracted and reported, following the principles outlined by Liberati et al. (2009). The study characteristics were mapped using the SPIO framework. Alternative frameworks such as 'PerSPecTIF' (perspective, setting, phenomenon of interest, environment, comparison, time/timing, findings) (Booth et al., 2019) and 'SPICE' (setting, perspective, intervention or phenomenon of interest, comparison, evaluation) (Booth, 2004) share similar principles around structuring the extraction process to facilitate interpretation. However, it was felt that PerSPecTIF was more suited to complex intervention reviews, while SPICE would not sufficiently highlight outcomes, which were of fundamental importance to this study. SPIO was therefore chosen as it targeted the relevant components of the study and questions.

## 2.2.4 The Synthesis Stage

The synthesis stage involves transforming the data from each of the primary studies into a ‘connected whole’, thus generating new knowledge and gaining new understanding in response to the research question (Gough et al., 2017). There are four main techniques for synthesis: aggregation, integration, interpretation, and explanation (Rousseau et al., 2008). Aggregative approaches focus on combining effects to increase sample sizes and reduce bias. These methods are typically used in quantitative studies that employ homogeneous methods. Integrative approaches combine qualitative and quantitative studies, often to examine the appropriateness of an intervention. Interpretative synthesis entails bringing together research findings to construct theoretical frameworks or models. Explanatory synthesis can be utilised to generate explanations and theories. It is often pragmatic in nature, aiming to provide information for decision-making. According to Briner and Denyer (2012), narrative synthesis is the most common approach in the field of industrial, work, and organisational psychology. Narrative synthesis combines various aspects of a phenomenon to create a comprehensive picture or story. Given that the current systematic literature review aimed to identify patterns from a range of mixed-method studies, an explanatory-narrative synthesis approach was deemed the most appropriate method.

## 2.2.5 Appraising the Relevance and Quality of the Evidence

Briner and Denyer (2012, p.351) affirmed that a quality appraisal is required to ascertain the weight of confidence that “can or should be placed on the review’s findings”. However, for the purposes of this review, the researcher decided to slightly adapt the standard MMAT (see Appendix J). This adaptation involved adding an item from the GRADE approach proposed by Snape, Meads, Bagnell, Tregaskis and Mansfield (2017): that is, “have ethical issues been taken into consideration?” (p. 30). This decision was guided by the wish to adhere to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2021) and the general principles applicable to all research contexts.

The MMAT tool serves as a checklist for evaluating studies included in systematic literature reviews, covering a range of research types including original qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies. According to Hong and Pluye, the MMAT has been employed in over 100 reviews. Its validity has been supported by the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (NCCMT), as well as by Crowe and Sheppard (2010) in their critical review of the development of quality appraisal tools. The MMAT was initially formulated in 2006 and subsequently refined in 2018 through a Delphi study (Hong et al., 2019). The 2018 version reflects the evolution in Hong and Pluye’s thinking, also assimilating the results of a Delphi study. As stated in the current User Guide, “It is discouraged to calculate an overall score from each

criterion” (Hong et al., 2018, p. 1). They maintain that such scoring “is not informative” (Hong, 2020, p. 1). Rather, they propose a more comprehensive explanation of the reasoning for an overall rating over a numerical score. In their review, Hong and Pluye (2018) suggest researchers using the MMAT should appraise the following three dimensions of quality: methodological quality (trustworthiness), conceptual quality (insightfulness) and reporting quality (accuracy, completeness and transparency). This thesis adheres to the authors current thinking in the reporting of individual studies.

An alternative approach would have been to employ the quality appraisal framework proposed by Snape et al. (2017), which has been employed in research by Daniels et al. (2021) and Donaldson-Feilder (2018). However, the MMAT is distinct in its focus on a limited set of core criteria for quality appraisal, diverging from the approach of many other appraisal tools (Pluye, 2013). The tool is both concise and targeted, leading to increased efficiency in the appraisal process. The focused and streamlined nature of the MMAT arguably provides benefits for individuals undertaking systematic literature reviews.

## **2.2.6 Reporting and Dissemination**

The final stage of the systematic literature review process is reporting and dissemination. Briner and Denyer (2012) emphasised the importance of this stage, which is critical for ensuring that the review findings reach the relevant audiences and optimise the potential impact of the research. Disseminating systematic reviews in other academic disciplines has been acknowledged as challenging, even if reviews produce “relatively unequivocal findings” (Briner & Denyer, 2012, p. 358). This is due to the gap between research and real-world application. However, it is considered that difficulties of disseminating industrial, work, and organizational psychology review findings are further exacerbated as there is limited consensus on what counts as evidence (Rousseau et al., 2008) and the costs of not using the evidence are not tangible (Briner & Denyer, 2012, p. 358). To address this latter point, a transparent approach was taken to ensure that the results were clearly presented and all steps of the review process documented, enhancing study replicability. For example, the findings of this systematic literature review were recorded using EPPI-Mapper (Digital Solution Foundry and EPPI Centre, 2023), a 'living' systematic map of research which future researchers can engage with and update. Additionally, this study followed the [Cochrane Dissemination Checklist](#) (Glenton et al., 2021). It is anticipated that the review findings will be disseminated at the Health and Wellbeing at Work 2025 Conference, the Division of Occupational Psychology Conference 2025 and the International Companion Animal Welfare Conference, as well as through podcasts about HAI studies.

The findings of this systematic literature review will be a stepping stone to Study 2. Chapter 3 of this thesis demonstrates the implementation of the systematic literature review process to explore the phenomenon of

dog-friendly workplaces.

## **2.3 Empirical Study (Study 2)**

### **2.3.1 Philosophical Approach**

While it was appropriate to employ a positivist approach for Study 1, an alternative epistemology was required for Study 2, which adopted a qualitative paradigm. Qualitative methodologies emerged as part of an “interpretative turn” in social sciences (Sullivan & Rabinow, 1979, p. 29), in opposition to the dominance of ‘positivism’ in knowledge production (Willig & Rogers, 2017). Researchers such as Kelly and Cordeiro (2020) have asserted that qualitative methods have become more widely accepted as a valid approach. Rather than seeking to minimise bias, as is done in a positivist approach, qualitative approaches, specifically Braun and Clarke’s (2019) reflexive thematic analysis, which was adopted for Study 2, acknowledge the role of the researcher as “an active agent in the production of knowledge” (Trainor & Bundon, 2021, p. 707). Qualitative researchers should recognise that their values are inherent in *all* phases of the research process, necessitating the need for researcher reflexivity.

### **2.3.2 Personal Reflexivity**

Personal reflexivity has been described as the practice of “bend[ing] back upon oneself” (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 20), where “the mind observes and examines its own experiences and emotions, intelligent self-awareness, [and] introspection” (Sherry, 2013, p. 283). It involves reflecting on one’s assumptions, expectations, choices, and actions throughout each stage of the process (Finlay & Gough, 2003) and the unpacking of the “partial, positioned, and affective perspectives we bring to the research” (Lazard et al., 2020, p. 1). The Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS) (APA, 2020) for qualitative research recommend that researchers indicate how their understanding of the topic and sociodemographic characteristics might influence data collection and analysis, moving towards developing critical subjectivity. This is indicated in the following section.

In terms of my social positioning, I identify as white, European, female, and single. I have grown up around companion dogs and have always had gun-dog breeds. Despite needing medical treatment after being bitten by a family pet as an infant, I have not developed a fear of dogs, but understand they can be unpredictable. Based on Varner’s (2002) framework, I identify as living in a household where dogs are viewed as family members and have a high level of inclusion in my life. I am cognisant that existing literature indicates that females form stronger bonds with their pets. I am also aware that white dog owners are more likely to treat



their pets as family members than non-white owners (Hunt & Padilla, 2006). However, I do not have a fixed schema. I have lived experience of being part of cultures where dogs are not treated as pets. I have personal links to communities in the region of Sápmi, Sweden, where people use sled dogs and engage in the sport of dog mushing, after which the Siberian huskies are tethered on running chains outside the Lavvu, a Sami tent, during arctic temperatures. When staying with Sami communities, I accept this as a cultural norm and have myself used sled dogs to travel across Arctic Sweden. I have also lived in Bahrain, where dog ownership was rare at the time. I tend to agree that female animal owners experience grief more intensively than males (Brown & Symons, 2016). Recently, I experienced grief associated with the death of my eldest dog. Consistent with the findings of Hughes et al. (2022) in their recent systematic narrative synthesis, I experience a similar level of grief when my dogs pass away as when a human dies.

As a self-employed individual with a high degree of autonomy, I have crafted my role so that I can work from home with my dog(s). I have both the time and means to care for my dog(s) and have never needed to worry about dynamics which could affect my role as a dog owner. I have the freedom to bring my dog to work and have not endured any factors which could lead to relinquishment. However, I cannot identify as an 'insider researcher' since I have not worked in a companion-dog-friendly office environment for a minimum of six months, as was a stipulation for participation in this study. It was important to consider these aspects in relation to my topic and participants and be cognisant of how they might influence my data collection and analysis.

In addition to considering the relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon of interest, researchers such as Braun and Clarke (2022) have highlighted the importance of harmony and coherence between the assumptions in which the research is embedded. Criticism has been levelled at researchers using thematic analysis who have neglected to discuss their stance (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The failure to do so increases the risk that reflexive thematic analysis is perceived as atheoretical rather than theoretically flexible.

### **2.3.3 Ontological Position**

An ontological position and philosophical stance of critical realism underpins Study 2. This approach is attributed to Bhaskar (1975), making it a relatively new position. Terry and Hayfield (2021) suggest that critical realist analysis is positioned between the realist position, which assumes the existence of objective reality, and the relativist position, which rejects the idea of an objective singular reality, alternatively viewing realities as the product of human action and sense-making (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Critical realists draw on elements of both, “where an underlying relativity might be recognised but seen as mediated through

the multiple social realities of participants and the wider culture” (Terry and Hayfield, 2021, p.9). This conceptualisation aligns with the views of Bergin and colleagues (2008, p.170), who refer to the approach as a “third way”. Those who consider critical realism to be a progeny of realism and relativism suggest the approach takes the best of both worlds and combines them to form an uber-meta theoretical position (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Although some researchers classify it as an epistemology or even an onto-epistemology, it should be noted that Braun and Clarke (2021) classify critical realism as an ontology.

## **2.4 Data Collection Method**

This study utilised semi-structured interviews. There are several justifications for using this approach. First, it provides an opportunity to probe and ask follow-up questions. Second, such interviews provide access to situated, interpreted realities, rather than simple, decontextualised truths (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Third, this approach enables the researcher to grasp realities by working from interviewees’ accounts of their understanding and experience (Edwards & Holland, 2013). In the context of this study, it was crucial to speak to participants who had lived experience of the phenomenon of working in dog-friendly workplaces, those who had diverse views and professional knowledge, and those who represented the agency of both humans and animals. When participants are personally invested in a topic, the interview method of data collection can elicit the type of in-depth and detailed data that is ideal for thematic analysis (Breakwell et al., 2012; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Willig, 2013). An alternative to face-to-face interviews is video interviews, which were employed in this study. They have been found to provide minimal difference in data quality (Hanna & Mwale, 2017; Novick, 2008).

## **2.5 Data Analysis Method**

Thematic analysis has been defined as a “flexible analytical method that enables the researcher to construct themes—meaning-based patterns—to report their interpretation of a qualitative dataset” (Terry & Hayfield, 2021, p. 3). Contrary to common misconceptions, it is not a singular qualitative framework for analysis but is better considered an umbrella term. There are three distinct schools of thematic analysis. First, the coding reliability versions that are associated with Boyatzis (1998), Guest et al. (2012), and Joffe (2011). The second school is codebook versions (King, 2012). This study employed the third school; the methodology originally outlined by Braun and Clarke in 2006 and refined in 2019, which has subsequently evolved into reflexive thematic analysis. The core tenets of reflexive thematic analysis include its theoretical flexibility, a rigorous qualitative process, an emphasis on the reflective contribution of the researcher, and themes that are multifaceted and consist of meaning-based patterns.

## 2.6 Methodological Ethical Considerations

A formal proposal to conduct research involving human participants was submitted and approved, following a rigorous ethical approval process at Birkbeck, University of London. It is documented as Ethics Approval Number OPEA-22/23-05. When planning this empirical study, in-depth consideration was given to informed consent, data confidentiality, and privacy. Additionally, wider considerations relating to ethical qualitative research were checked with a second researcher.

Research must be conducted in an atmosphere of safety, trust, and respect (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). After a review of the pre-research survey, individuals who met the criteria were contacted as part of the participant onboarding process. They were fully informed about the purpose of the research, the style of the interview, and how the information would be used. To ensure potential participants could make a fully informed decision, they were given an option on both the consent form (Appendix F) and Participant Information Sheet (Appendix D) to request a further conversation with the researcher. Any questions were answered honestly. Although the study was risk-assessed as ‘routine’, rather than ‘sensitive’, details of support in case of any negative feelings arising due to participation in the study were made available. All participants provided electronic consent before proceeding to the semi-structured interview stage of the research process. All data are stored securely and will be subsequently destroyed in accordance with GDPR requirements, as outlined in the data management plan submitted as part of the ethical approval process.

Braun and Clarke (2022) stated that ethical thinking should primarily revolve around responsibilities to participants and the power dynamics inherent in representing their voices and stories. Additionally, Miller et al. (2002, p.1) highlighted the complexities of “researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena.” These aspects were discussed in depth with a second researcher to ensure that ethical integrity was maintained throughout all stages of the research process.

## 2.7 Data collection Procedure

An interview schedule was developed, keeping the research question in mind (see Appendix B). It was informed by reviewing the questions posed by previous researchers, particularly Hall et al. (2017) and Wagner and Cunha (2021) and gaps identified in the literature. A benefit of an interview schedule is to help the researcher stay on track, ensuring that the data obtained is relevant to the research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). For this study, the design of the interview schedule began with the construction of topic areas, followed by the development of broad questions and potential follow-up questions for further probing. The interview schedule became more specific as it progressed. The questions were submitted for approval to the

Birkbeck, University of London ethics committee and were then piloted with a peer using Microsoft Teams.

## **2.8 Participant Recruitment**

Braun and Clarke (2022) have acknowledged that there is no straightforward way to consider all data-related elements such as depth, richness, and complexity when determining the appropriate size of the dataset for reflexive thematic analysis. Although data saturation has been suggested as a gold standard for determining sample size by researchers such as Bowen (2008), Braun and Clarke (2022) have argued that, in reflexive thematic analysis, where themes are generated rather than emergent, the concept of saturation is not particularly relevant. Terry and Hatfield (2021) suggested that interviewed participants tend to provide substantial information, so they propose that 6-10 participants may be sufficient. However, for survey methods where the opportunity for in-depth responses is limited, they recommend at least 15-30 participants.

This study took a pragmatic approach and recruited 14 participants predominantly through the professional networking platform LinkedIn, using a participant recruitment flyer (see Appendix C) that was submitted as part of the 'Proposal to Conduct Research Involving Human Participants' and subsequently approved in line with the procedures set out by the College Ethics Committee. The participants were homogenous in terms of all having had exposure to working in an office with pet-friendly practices for a minimum of six months. This decision was made to allow for habituation and mitigate the influence of novelty. Dog owners, non-owners, and subject matter experts were all encouraged to participate to ensure inclusivity. However, an unexpected subcategory was later identified. Some participants identified as dog owners who worked in dog-friendly offices but chose not to bring their dogs to the office.

The Microsoft Teams Video Conferencing platform was used to conduct the interviews, which were recorded using the Microsoft Teams record function.

## **2.9 Transcribing Data**

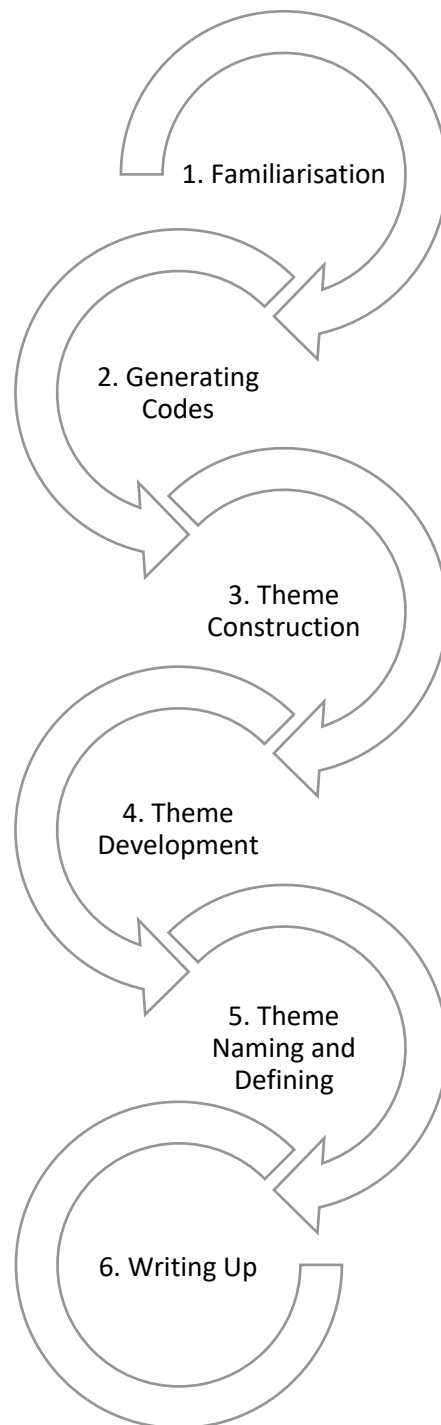
Transcription was completed using a professional service. Good transcripts are central to high-quality analysis and, while time-consuming, this task must be completed thoroughly and to a high standard since errors during this process can inadvertently change the meaning of the data (Terry & Hatfield, 2021). A transcription protocol was developed and agreed upon between myself and the transcription service. An alternative approach would have been for me to manually transcribe the data or use Transana, a qualitative analysis software for researchers. It is important that researchers do not relinquish responsibility for the

accuracy of the transcripts. As suggested by MacLean and colleagues (2004), I spot-checked the transcripts against the original recordings. The anonymised data was securely stored in SharePoint on my personal computer and protected with two-factor authentication.

## **2.10 Data Analytic Strategy**

This study followed the six-phase process for reflexive thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2019), as illustrated in Figure 3. The thematic analysis coding management macro developed by Babbage and Terry (2023) was used at each stage to manage the data during the analysis.

## The Six Phases of Reflective Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019)



**Figure 3: The Six Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Terry, 2023), Adapted From “Introduction to Thematic Analysis [Workshop]” by G. Terry, Presented at the Auckland University of Technology, April 22/26, 2023.**

### **2.10.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation with the Dataset**

This stage involved reading and re-reading each transcript and listening to the recording at least once. Brief notes were made about any analytic ideas related to each item and the dataset. Familiarisation doodles, as discussed by Braun and Clarke (2022, pp. 46-47) and utilised by Quinn (2023) and Wood (2016) were also used to foster engagement with the transcript. This process was free-flowing, capturing thoughts and reflexive dispositions towards the unfolding events from the interviews without the pressure of reaching any conclusions.

### **2.10.2 Phase 2: Generating Codes**

This stage required a more fine-grained and systematic approach as it involved engaging with the data at a deeper level. Terry and Hayfield (2021) suggested that coding serves two key purposes: interpreting and adding meaning to chunks of text and reducing the volume of text to a list of codes. In this study, an inductive, bottom-up approach to coding was taken, where the codes and themes were generated directly from the data. The code labels were intended to convey key points about the data without the need to refer to the original text to understand the meaning. Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest that this requires using short phrases or pithy labels to capture meanings that are important in the data. Coding in reflexive thematic analysis has two levels: semantic and latent.

Semantic codes, also known as descriptive codes, identify and summarise the content of the data, reflecting participants' meanings. They capture the *surface* reading of the data but can still provide depth beyond mere description. Latent codes, also known as interpretative codes, go beyond participants' meanings and delve into the *underlying* patterns and stories in the data. They allow the analyst to bring their theoretical frameworks to bear on the data and provide interpretations.

### **2.10.3 Phase 3: Theme Construction**

This stage involves identifying patterns across the data set as well as uniting different coded elements and seemingly abstract entities that share implicit ideas and give concrete meaning to the research question. There is a consensus amongst reflexive thematic researchers that themes do not 'emerge' from the data fully formed. Constructing themes is an active process. Phase 3 of the process involves organising codes into potential themes and perhaps 'promoting' a big code into a theme. Additionally, 'bucket themes', also called 'domain summaries' (Terry, 2021), can be generated if the researcher is not sure where the code belongs. Similar codes are clustered together and coded data is re-read to help define prototype themes. Thematic maps can be generated by hand or electronically, as was the case in this study. They have three key

purposes: 1) to facilitate thinking about the provisional themes, 2) to explore the inter-relativity of the themes, and 3) to begin thinking about the relationship between the themes and the overall story.

#### **2.10.4 Phase 4: Theme Development**

In this stage, a clarifying, questioning, and evaluating mindset was needed. This is the stage when the researcher can start to identify the nature or character of the potential themes and central organising concepts. During this step, I considered the quality of the themes and their boundaries, meaning what they did and did not include, and whether there was enough meaningful data to support the theme. It was important to return to the data to ascertain whether the themes worked in relation to both the coded extracts and the entire dataset. At this stage, it was important to be able to let some ideas go and acknowledge that radical revision is still a possibility.

#### **2.10.5 Phase 5: Theme Naming and Defining**

According to Terry and Hayfield (2021), this stage is important for fine-tuning the analysis and ensuring each theme is clearly demarcated and built around a strong concept or essence. This stage can act as a check that the existing themes have the conceptual depth to lead to a coherent written passage, without divergence from the central theme. This phase also allows the overall story of the themes to become clear. At this stage, Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest a maximum of six themes. Again, it is important to consider whether further development is needed; if so, the researcher must be prepared to pause this stage of the analysis and move back to Phase 4. I used Braun and Clarke's (2022) 15-point checklist for good reflective thematic analysis (see Appendix G) as a quality measure to reflect on the level of rigour, systematic approach, and the reflexive analytic process used in the study.

#### **2.10.6 Phase 6: Writing Up**

The aim of this phase is to present a cohesive story which enriches the overall understanding of the topic. To make an argument, I intended to balance analytic narrative and data extracts, with approximately half of the content dedicated to each. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the data while providing meaningful insights. The analytical commentary presented in the study offers original and novel interpretations, contributing to a deeper understanding of the data's importance.

The analysis demonstrates a strong alignment between the data and the analytical claims, indicating a robust and reliable interpretation of the findings. Each identified theme has a clear and distinctive central organising concept, enabling a coherent representation of the data. The presentation of themes is



appropriate, ensuring that all relevant aspects are adequately addressed and each theme is given sufficient depth and detail, allowing for a thorough examination of their individual characteristics. By working together, the identified themes collectively weave a compelling narrative that accurately represents the underlying data. Chapter 4 of this thesis demonstrates the implementation of Braun and Clarke's six-phase process (2006; 2019) to explore the phenomenon of dog-friendly workplaces: what works, what does not, and what lessons can be learned.

The next chapter, Chapter 3, presents the first study within this thesis: a systematic literature review on the intersection of companion dogs and organisational life.

# Chapter 3: The Intersection of Companion Dogs and Organisational Life: A Systematic Literature Review of Effects and Implications

## 3.1 Abstract

An estimated 3.2 million new pets were purchased during the lockdown phase of the pandemic by UK households, many of whose owners were working from home. In 2022, it was estimated that 33% of UK households owned dogs, compared to pre-pandemic figures of 23%. The dog population rose from 9 million (2018-2019) to 13 million in 2022. As employers request that workers return to their offices, this increase in pet ownership has led to a demand for pet-friendly workplaces. Employees are becoming more vocal about the support they expect from their employers which will facilitate changes to their lifestyle, including accommodating their acquisition of companion (or pet) dogs. However, it is unclear what benefits or risks having pets in the office brings, or what pet-friendly practices should be put in place. This systematic literature review was conducted to identify, summarise, and evaluate studies examining dog-friendly practices in workplaces post-2016, and to distil findings pertinent to work outcomes, organisational culture, and the conditions that optimise the benefits of dog-friendly practices at individual, group, and organisational levels. In the last two weeks of July 2022, a computerised literature search was conducted across six databases. The initial search identified 318 studies, of which nine were included in the final review. Studies were limited to the working population and pets; therefore, assistance dogs (guide dogs, hearing dogs, and service dogs) were excluded. Findings indicated that the presence of companion dogs positively influences owners' well-being. There is promising evidence that benefits extend to the well-being of the teams in which the dog-owners work and that pet-friendly practices influence work engagement, organisational commitment, and organisational identification. The findings also offered clarity on the organisational antecedents required for sustainable pet-friendly practices. Despite this, there is still not adequate evidence to support those making decisions about pet-friendly workplaces. There is a need for qualitative researchers to explore what works for whom, how, and to what extent. Additionally, high-quality replication studies to corroborate these nascent findings are encouraged. Future research would benefit from enhanced methodological rigour and increased controls to minimise gender and selection bias. Additionally, future researchers must balance the needs of dog owners with non-dog-owning peers, adopting a more extensive approach.

## **3.2 Background and Introduction**

### **3.2.1 The Problem Being Addressed and its Potential Impacts**

The recent global pandemic has caused a seismic shift in how people live and work (Caprino, 2020; Spratt, 2020). The adoption of new work-from-home practices has provided an opportunity for people to work alongside their pets, which many are reluctant to give up (Hollowood, 2021; Starling, 2021). Industry research conducted by IBISWORLD (2022) on industry trends confirmed that, during the government-imposed lockdown to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, dogs surpassed cats as the preferred pet among UK households. Some 87% of UK dog owners who purchased puppies during the pandemic attributed the acquisition to having more time to care for the animals (Packer et al., 2021). With pet ownership among millennials and Gen Z – the two youngest generations of the working population – also increasing, employers would benefit from taking a long-term perspective on how to facilitate opportunities for employees to work alongside their pets.

As lockdown restrictions eased and the emphasis on working from home reduced, Packer et al. (2021) anticipated the need for increased provision to prevent dogs from being left alone for extended periods. Scarlett et al. (2010) had previously identified a lack of time to care for companion dogs as a contributing factor to their relinquishment. This risk was exacerbated as dog owners faced financial difficulties during the global economic downturn. The concerns raised by the animal welfare science sector highlight the need to explore the relationship between pet-friendly workplaces and pet relinquishment. To date, research and practice in this area have been dominated by human-animal interaction (HAI) research and have focused on dogs with specific training. However, the field of industrial, work and organizational psychology can, both practically and theoretically, contribute to a deeper understanding of how companion dogs intersect with organisational life. Adopting an organisational psychology lens could offer new insights to support decision-makers in the implementation of evidence-based, dog-friendly working practices.

### **3.2.2 Current Psychological Understanding of and Empirical Evidence About the Problem**

The presence of animals, specifically pet dogs, in the workplace is not a new phenomenon. It has been over 20 years since Wells and Perrine (2001) explored the perceived psychological and organisational effects of pets in the workplace, marking the first academic paper and exploratory study on the subject. More recently, Wilkin et al. (2016) were the first to provide a detailed account of the pet-friendliness trend by examining pet-friendly workplaces in a narrative review. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis, their nascent findings highlighted potential benefits associated with pet-friendly practices, such as enhanced attraction and

recruitment, improved employee retention, enhanced employee health, increased employee productivity, and positive bottom-line results. Although they advocated for employers to adopt approaches that contribute to better lives for employees and pets, Wilkin et al. (2016) anticipated a delay in the widespread adoption of pet-friendly workplaces until they could be empirically linked to organisational performance. However, it is evident that different pushes and pulls come into play concerning the intersection of dogs and organisational life.

### **3.2.2.1 Psychological Contract**

According to Schiavo (2021), since the pandemic, employees are becoming more vocal about the support they expect from their employers which will facilitate changes to their lifestyle, such as pet-friendly workplaces. Authors of the Banfield Pet Hospital Survey (2021) suggested that half of Gen Z respondents and a third of millennials would rather resign from their jobs than be forced to leave their pets alone full-time. Additionally, anecdotal reports have highlighted the growing trend of employees refusing to return to the office if their dog is not permitted (Rubino, 2022). These developments may put pressure on organisations to make urgent decisions and renegotiate psychological contracts, which are often unwritten agreements with employees. Referring to post-pandemic shifting psychological contracts, Lopez and Fuiks (2021) elaborated on the implicit factors individuals may feel their employer has an obligation to provide, such as compensation, benefits, organisational support, resources, and work-life balance, in exchange for the provision of their talent, output, loyalty, and commitment to the organisational objectives. Since the psychological contract is an “ongoing dynamic exchange” (Conway & Briner, 2005, p. 61), it could be argued that leaders should consider making changes to working practices that respond to changes in the socioeconomic landscape, such as considering pet-friendly working practices, thus ensuring the alignment of employee needs and organisational culture.

### **3.2.2.2 Human Animal Interaction and Work, Industrial, and Organisational Psychology**

Despite animals becoming more present in organisational life, existing research on the subject has been met with criticism for failing to keep pace with such changes (Kelemen et al., 2020, p. 1). Cunha et al. (2019) proposed that dogs are important actors within organisations and that their presence is more than a fad. They assert that dogs are a “deserving object of study” and boldly conclude that “dogs can be the next indicator of organisational diversity” (p.793). However, they make the point that, despite a rich evidence base of human-animal interaction studies – which includes systematic reviews on the effects of assistance dogs on psychosocial health and well-being (Rodriguez et al., 2020), the association between dog ownership and mental health outcomes in older adults (Maurice et al., 2023), and the positive effects of dog-assisted interventions on psychological well-being, physical outcomes, and enhanced social interaction within the

healthcare sector (Lundqvist et al., 2017) – dogs have been mostly ignored or kept at the margins by organisational theorists. Cunha et al. (2019) recognised an opportunity to extend human-animal interaction studies in the direction of industrial, work and organizational psychology.

### **3.2.3 Systematic Literature Review Aim**

The brief review above suggests that companion-dog-friendly workplaces could potentially benefit dog owners, organisations, and perhaps also companion dogs. The primary objective of this systematic literature review was, therefore, to understand the evidence about how companion dogs impact employees and the workplace, taking a broad academic perspective. The study deliberately avoided limiting the scope to specific psychological theories, models, or critical perspectives. The research questions were as follows:

*The primary research question:* What is known in the scientific literature about the effect of pet dogs in the workplace?

- a) In what settings has research in this area been conducted?
- b) What research designs have been used?
- c) What benefits and challenges to the organisation and employees have been identified?
- d) What is known about the organisational culture and conditions in which pet dogs in the workplace optimise benefits at the individual, group, and organisational levels?

## **3.3 Method**

A systematic approach was applied to this literature review, as outlined in Briner and Denyer (2012) and applied by Donaldson-Feilder et al. (2019) and Rodriguez et al. (2020). This approach followed the steps previously outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, suggested by Gough et al. (2017).

### **3.3.1 Search Strategy**

In June 2022, a study protocol was developed a priori to establish the search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and data extraction elements. It was formulated based on a review of existing literature, creating a hierarchical structure of search terms using the Business Source Elite database and consulting with experts in literature search techniques. The chosen terms were utilised in an initial search to set the

search parameters. They were designed to maximise the relevance of the results (sensitivity) while minimising the number of irrelevant outcomes (specificity), as informed by Lefebvre et al. (2022). Following this pre-test of the search terms, it was identified that the search term 'pet' had a dual meaning, and studies where 'PET' referred to the polymer 'polyethylene terephthalate' were screened out.

Parameters used were as follows: dog OR pupp\* (including puppy and puppies) OR companion dog OR visitation animal OR visitation dog OR pet OR emotional assistance dog OR human-dog relationships OR human-animal AND dogs in organi\* (including organizations and organisations) OR work\* (including working, workplace, workforce, and work environment) OR office OR pet-friendly policies. The search strategy was implemented, and a computerised literature search was conducted across six databases in the last two weeks of July 2022.

### **3.3.2 Information Sources**

The following databases were searched: Scopus, APA PsycINFO (EBSCOhost), Coronavirus Research Database (ProQuest), Elicit (Semantic Scholar API), and CAB DIRECT. These span the fields of work, industrial, and organisational psychology as well as applied life sciences, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of the topic. Additionally, as part of the search strategy, a 'citation pearl growing' process, as outlined by Heneghan et al. (2014), was undertaken, whereby the reference lists of all the papers included in the final selection were examined to identify additional studies for inclusion. As an additional measure, once the search was conducted, it was saved, and an automatic alert linked to the search terms was activated, informing the author when new items matching her search were added. Duplicate records were removed before the selection process using Zotero reference management software's duplicate detection function. Mendeley and Zotero were used to store and manage the identified studies and eliminate any duplications.

### **3.3.3 Eligibility Criteria**

Studies were selected for inclusion based on criteria related to study design, participants, interventions, and outcomes (SPIO). SPIO is a variation on PICO (population, interventions, comparison, and outcomes). A detailed breakdown of the inclusion and exclusion criteria can be found in Table 1. The study population comprised employees who brought their dogs into their place of work (including working from home) and employees who did not own dogs but worked in organisations that permitted dogs in the workplace. The study encompassed companion dogs, visitation dogs, or emotional assistance dogs that held pet status and were not specifically trained to fulfil crucial roles to assist their owners. Only English-language papers published since March 2016 were considered. The rationale for selecting this as a cut-off date was based on

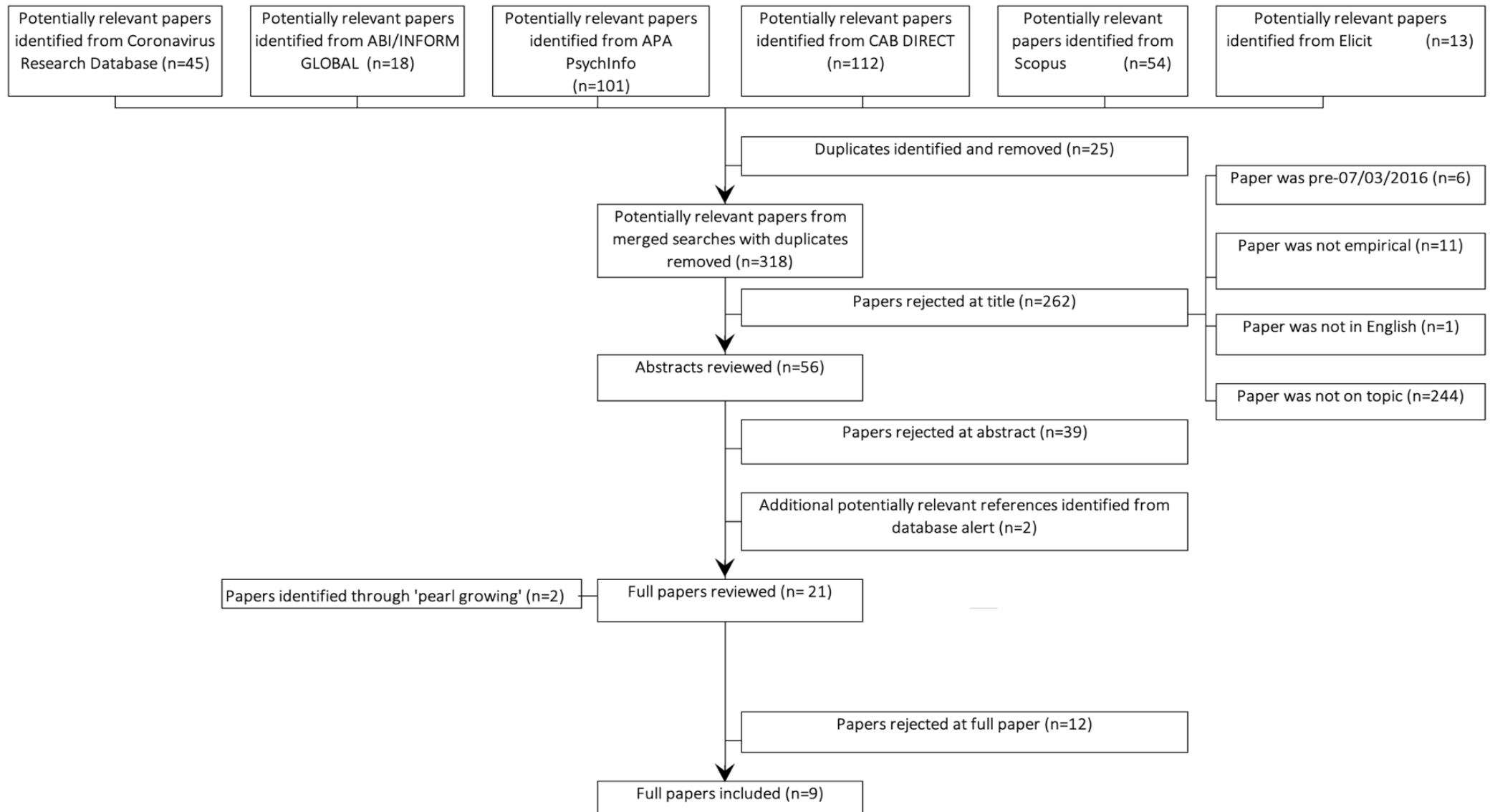
the author's knowledge of the narrative review by Wilkin et al. (2016), which was regarded as the first detailed account of the pet-friendliness trend.

<b>SPIO</b>	<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
<b>Study design</b>	All English-language empirical evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, reported in peer-reviewed journals	Not published in peer-reviewed journals Purely theoretical or descriptive, including 'incubator' articles
<b>Population</b>	Working population subjects only All work environments are included including home-based workers	Non-work samples and students Studies conducted in work environments where the intervention involves prisoner populations, students, or patients
<b>Intervention (phenomenon of interest)</b>	All interventions which examine the effects of pet dogs on workplace outcomes and the working population	Studies which include interventions with dogs trained for specific roles (guide dogs, hearing dogs, service dogs, working dogs)
<b>Outcomes/findings</b>	The inclusion criteria were purposely broad and included but were not limited to, both positive and negative outcomes involving psychological well-being, engagement, psychological commitment, job satisfaction, the impact on work relationships, work-life balance, and performance-related outcomes Outcomes at the individual, team, and organisational level were of interest.	All studies that were not focused on factors that affect the outcomes/findings

**Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Using SPIO Framework**

The screening process followed the phases outlined in the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, using the 2020 version initially introduced by Moher et al. (2009). The results of the sifting process are depicted in the PRISMA Flow Diagram (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: PRISMA Flow Diagram**





### **3.3.4 Selection Process to Determine Whether a Study met the Inclusion Criteria**

As illustrated in Figure 4, the initial database searches identified 343 papers. Upon removal of duplicates, 318 remained. At each sequential stage of the screening process – namely, the title sift, the abstract sift, and the final sift, which involved reading the full remaining papers – all studies were reviewed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in Table 1. This was to ensure the evidence was generalisable and applicable to the context of the systematic literature review.

Firstly, the titles of peer-reviewed articles identified in the search were reviewed to assess their relevance to the characteristics outlined in the SPIO framework (Table 1). A second researcher independently assessed a 10% sample of titles for relevance based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Agreement between the two researchers was 84.375% (Cohen's K: 0.58), calculated using the kappa statistic (McHugh, 2012). Discrepancies and disagreements were resolved through discussions moderated by a third researcher. Numerous references were excluded due to the involvement of therapy dogs used in animal-assisted interventions or working dogs. The final sift, which entailed the full paper screening process, was independently conducted by the lead author, who used an excel spreadsheet to extract the data. The final list of papers was reviewed and agreed upon by the second and third researchers, which resulted in the exclusion of several studies.

### **3.3.5 Data Extraction Process**

Data were extracted using the SPIO framework, and so were organised according to key elements such as study design, population, interventions, and outcomes. Study-related items included the first author, year, title, journal, DOI, and study location. Population details were sample size, employment location, age, sex, work sector, organisation type and size, and pet ownership status. Specifics about companion dogs, such as breed, size, age, training, temperament, and workplace exposure duration were also noted. To elicit the context, specifically the 'office type' used by the population (both human and animal), the definitions from Bodin Danielsson and Bodin (2009) shown in Table 2 were applied. The psychological theories underpinning each study were also extracted.

**Table 2. Office Definitions (Bodin Danielsson & Bodin, 2009)**

<b>Definition of office type</b>
One-person cell office
Shared room office (2 or 3 people)
Small open-plan office (4 to 9 people)
Medium open-plan office (10-24 people)
Large open-plan office (holds more than 24 people)
Flex office (an open-plan layout where employees are not allocated personal workspaces)
Combi office (no strict spatial definition, defined by teamwork and the sharing of common facilities)

### **3.3.6 Final Data Set**

Since the results of the literature search yielded a small number of interventions ( $N=9$ ), a quantitative meta-analysis was not feasible. Therefore, the findings are presented in a narrative format. Data synthesis was completed by the primary researcher, and a second researcher sampled a selection to verify overall consistency. The quality assessment ratings for each of the nine studies are succinctly outlined below, with a more detailed evaluation available in Appendix J.

### **3.3.7 Assessment of Study Quality**

All included peer-reviewed papers ( $n=9$ ) were appraised using Hong and Pluye's (2018) Mixed Methods Appraisal tool (MMAT), where it is suggested that researchers assess three dimensions: methodological quality, conceptual quality, and relevance. Each paper was assessed across these dimensions with a yes/no/cannot tell rating. To increase reliability and minimise bias, a sample of 20% of the papers was independently assessed by a second researcher to check the quality grading. There was 100% agreement.

- Five studies were deemed to be of 'moderate' quality: Junça-Silva et al. (2022); Junça-Silva (2022); Sousa et al. (2022); Hall and Mills (2019); and Wagner and Cunha (2021). Further research is likely to increase our confidence in the estimate of effect.

- Three studies were evaluated as ‘low quality,’ meaning further research is likely to impact confidence in and change the estimate of the effect. These were Hall et al. (2017); Hoffman (2021); and Foreman et al. (2019).
- One study, by Rambaree and Sjöberg (2019), was graded as ‘very low quality,’ where any estimate of the effect is very uncertain.

### **3.4 Findings**

A summary of the nine studies is provided in Table 3, which outlines the study design and population, and in Table 4, which details the phenomenon of interest, psychological theory, and the standardised psychometric measures used as well as outcomes, antecedents, insights, and findings. Note that since the body of studies for consideration did not contain ‘intervention studies’, one of the four elements in SPIO, the primary and second researcher agreed to instead use ‘phenomenon of interest’, alongside study design, participants, and outcomes to identify and synthesise the findings. For ease, the papers are numbered, and the corresponding key can be located at the bottom of both Table 3 and Table 4.

**Table 3. Summary of Study Design and Participant Population (Human and Non-Human)**

STUDY DESIGN				POPULATION					
Paper *	Country of origin	Methodological approach	Was a comparison group used?	Population Size	Age	Gender (% female)	Occupational setting	Pet owner characteristics	Pet characteristics and pet-friendly status (years/months)
1	Portugal	Quant	No	208	M=30.18 years	54%	Not specified	Mixed (companion dog owner 51%)	
2	Portugal	Quant	Teleworkers who own pets and non-owners	401	M=31.87 years (pet owner) M=32.09 years (no pet)	59% overall (62% of pet owners 49% no pet)	Teleworking (working from home)	Mixed: 320 companion dog owners (80%) 81 no pets	
3	Germany	Qual	No	12	Not specified	Not specified	Creative sector	Mixed (dog owners and non-dog-owners)	Length of time since implementation of pet-friendly practices: 3 mths; 5 yrs., 9 yrs., 20 yrs., 20 yrs. (5 organisations).
4	Portugal	Quant	Presence of animals in a scenario versus non-inclusion	177	M=38.56 years	78%	Education, administration, store operation, technical assistance	75.7% pet owners	
5	USA	Quant	Experience of working from home with pets versus working in the office	454	M=41.3 years	51%	Teleworking (working from home) (Not self-employed)	Mixed 150 companion dog-only owners 97 cat-only owners 54 own both dogs and cats 153 no dogs or cats	
6	USA	Quant	Comparisons across 3 sites: Counseling, engineering, and media studies	138	68% of sample were 25-54 years of age	51%	University (administrative, staff faculty, and graduate teaching assistants)	Mixed: 122 participants have had a dog at some point in their lifetime	Labrador retriever, standard poodle, Labrador/poodle X. Dogs have attended the workplace: Approx. 3 months to approx. 1 year
7	Sweden	Qual	No	22	Not specified	77%	University	Mixed: staff and students with companion animals and staff and students without companion animals	

8	UK, 92%; N. America, 5.6%; Europe, 2%, AUS, NZ, 0.13%	Quant	Dogs owners who often, sometimes, and never brought their dogs to the office.	749	18-25 years, n=124 (16.5%) 26-35 years, n=273 (36.4%) 36-45 years, n=149 (19.8%) 46-55 years, n=141 (18.85) 56-65 years, n=60 (8%) 66 years +, n=2 (0.2%)	90% overall	Not specified	Dog owners (owners of companion dogs and working dogs e.g., shepherding and gun dog work)	Single (pure breed). Single cross (e.g., Labrador x poodle). Multiple mixed crosses. Reported on dog age, size, training, and neuter status.
9	UK, 71%; USA, 14.7%; Finland, 3.1%; AUS, 2.3%; NLD, 1.5%; Brazil, 1.3%; 3.5% not spec.	Qual	No	776	16-18 years, n=1 (0.1%) 19-25 years, n=31 (4%) 26-35 years, n=243 (31.3%) 36-50 years, n=371 (47.8%) 51 years +, n=124 (16%) n=6 did not provide age (0.8%)	Not specified	Not clear. It included owners whose work does not directly involve animals	Dog owners	

\* Corresponding papers: 1=Junça-Silva (2022), 2=Junça-Silva, Almeida, & Gomes (2022), 3=Wagner & Cunha (2021), 4=Sousa, Esperança, & Gonçalves (2022), 5=Hoffman (2021), 6=Foreman, Poland, Meade and Wirth (2019), 7=Rambaree & Sjöberg (2019), 8=Hall & Mills (2019), and 9=Hall, Wright, McCune, Zulch, & Mills (2017)

### 3.4.1 Study Characteristics

#### 3.4.1.1 Study Design

In summary, all nine studies, outlined in Table 3, three of which were qualitative and six quantitative, employed a cross-sectional approach, capturing data at a single point in time. While this design offers insights into the phenomena under scrutiny, it restricts the capacity for causal inference or longitudinal tracking.

There was noticeable heterogeneity across the study designs. Among the three qualitative studies, contrasting methodologies were used. Hall et al. (2017) used a qualitative interview approach to generate survey items for an online qualitative survey, analysing the results using inductive thematic analysis, citing the principles of Braun and Clarke (2006). Wagner et al. (2021) adopted a grounded theory approach, following the principles outlined by Gioia (2013) to analyse semi-structured interview data from interviews conducted in person. In contrast, Rambaree et al. (2019) employed abductive thematic network analysis previously employed by Rambaree and Faxelid (2013), to analyse data from in-person focus groups.

Among the six quantitative studies, Junça-Silva (2022) utilised a cross-sectional questionnaire to examine the correlation between pet-friendly practices, life satisfaction, and positive well-being among workers. In a separate study, Junça-Silva and colleagues (2022) tested a model that mediated between telework, positive affect, and self-reported job performance, using a questionnaire. They considered the potential moderating role of companion dog proximity and human/companion dog emotional bond on this mediation pathway. Sousa et al. (2022) employed a novel experimental design, randomly assigning both pet owners and non-pet-owners to two scenario conditions – inclusion or non-inclusion of animals in the workplace –using online and in-person questionnaires. They aimed to investigate the influence of pets on perceptions of social responsibility and organisational commitment. Hoffman (2021) used a within-subjects design to compare individuals' perceptions of working from home versus the office and the role cats and dogs play in the teleworking experience. Foreman et al. (2019) employed a survey design to gather data at a single point in time. Their online questionnaire assessed perceptions of benefits, hazards, and risks associated with the presence of visitation dogs in the workplace. Lastly, Hall and Mills (2019) employed a survey design to gather responses from three distinct groups of dog-owning employees who: (1) never, (2) occasionally, and (3) frequently brought their dogs to work. The survey sought insights into employees' perceptions of quality of life, work engagement, turnover intentions, assessments of friendships, and pet attachment.

### **3.4.2 Participants**

In summary, there was also considerable variation across the studies in terms of the number and type of participants, their occupations and pet ownership status, and country of origin. Studies were heavily skewed towards female participants and a broader category of pet owners rather than companion dog owners. In addition, age and occupational demographics were often not efficiently or meaningfully captured.

#### **3.4.2.1 Participants' Industries and Occupations**

Regarding employment by industry and occupation, Wagner and Cunha (2021) included participants from the creative agency sector, specifically marketing agencies, film production companies, and a public relations agency. Their case study contained managers and employees across five different organisations. The studies by Foreman et al. (2019) and Rambaree and Sjöberg (2019) were based on university campuses. The latter's study included a mixed sample of faculty staff members and students. In Sousa et al's. (2022) study with 177 participants, 17.5% worked in education, 11.3% in administration, 8.5% in store operations, and 6.8% in technical assistance. Junça-Silva et al. (2022) and Hoffman (2021) utilised participants who were working from home due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. In both cases, individuals transitioned from traditional office settings to remote work. Hoffman (2021) excluded self-employed individuals from their participant population, although specific industry and occupational demographics were not provided.

Hall et al.'s (2017) sample of 776 participants consisted of individuals working in office settings who did not directly work with dogs, but no further occupational sector details were provided. Junça-Silva (2022) sampled working adults but did not provide a breakdown of participant characteristics. Lastly, Hall and Mills (2019) mentioned that their participants brought their dogs to work in an office environment at least once a week. Only Hall et al. (2017) reported on whether individuals had their own office or worked in a shared office.

#### **3.4.2.2 Pet Ownership and Pet Characteristics**

The nine studies encompassed a diverse range of participant populations, exploring pet ownership patterns beyond the dichotomy of dog owners and non-dog-owners. Several authors examined a broader spectrum of pet ownership. Junça-Silva (2022) conducted a study with 208 participants who were all pet owners. Some 51% of the participants owned dogs, while 23% owned cats. The remaining owned fish, birds, reptiles, and hamsters. In another study by Junça-Silva et al. (2022), of the 401 participants surveyed, 320 of the pet

owners had dogs. Eighty-one workers, 20% of the total sample, reported not being pet owners. Wagner and Cunha (2021) focused on participants in the workplace, including employees with dogs, managers with dogs, and managers without dogs. Sousa et al. (2022) reported that 75.7% of 177 participants were pet owners. Of the 401 participants in the Hoffman (2021) study, 150 were companion-dog-only owners, 97 were cat-only owners, 54 owned both dogs and cats, and 153 reported not owning any dogs or cats. Foreman et al. (2019) conducted a study involving staff and students who encountered visitation dogs in their workplace. Notably, owners of the three visitation dogs were not prevented from participating in the study, potentially biasing the sample. In contrast, Rambaree and Sjöberg (2019) conducted a study on a university campus where companion animals were not permitted. Participants included staff members and students, both with and without companion animals. Hall and Mills (2019) surveyed 749 participants, all of whom were owners of companion dogs. Hall et al. (2017) conducted a study with 776 respondents, all of whom were dog owners. Only 12% were allowed to take their dogs to work; 85% were not allowed, and 3% were unsure.

Only two studies reported on animal demographics. Foreman et al. (2019) reported that the three visitation dogs were a Labrador retriever and a Labrador/poodle cross, that had been coming into the office for approximately a year, and a standard poodle that had been attending the organisation for approximately three months. Hall and Mills (2019) reported detailed demographics, including dog age, length of ownership, dog sex and neuter status, breed type, dog training, and dog weight category.

### **3.4.2.3 Contextual Information**

As depicted in Table 3, there was heterogeneity in the geographical location of these studies, which originated from five different countries. Three were from Portugal (Junça-Silva., 2022; Junça-Silva et al., 2022; Sousa et al., 2022), one was from Sweden (Rambaree & Sjöberg, 2019), two were from the United States (Foreman et al., 2019; Hoffman, 2021), two were from the United Kingdom (Hall & Mills, 2019; Hall et al., 2017), and one was from Germany (Wagner et al., 2021).

### **3.4.3 Phenomenon of Interest and Theoretical Underpinnings**

As shown below in Table 4, there was heterogeneity in terms of the phenomenon of interest and the problems being explored. The nine studies also demonstrated variability in their theoretical underpinnings. While most studies employed psychological theories, some did not consider their topics through a psychological lens, and a minority were atheoretical.



Hoffman (2021) used models relating to both positive and negative job-related affective well-being in their study of remote working with pets. Hesketh and Cooper (2019), propose four key tenets of wellbeing: psychological, societal (including comparisons of living conditions in different countries) physiological, and financial (focusing on periods of hardship relating to income, expenditure and disposable income).

Junça-Silva (2022) explored the effects of pet-friendly practices on workers well-being, drawing on social exchange theory and organisational identification theory. As discussed by Junça-Silva (2022), social exchange theory proposes that employees behaviour is informed from evaluating the benefits and costs that they expect to receive, e.g., socio-emotional rewards such as flexibility or concrete rewards e.g., pay. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) suggest the benefits can improve the relationship between employees and employers across four conditions: first, the costs do not outweigh the perceived reward; second, there is trust between both parties; third, the reciprocal exchange is deemed fair; fourth, there is a mutual psychological commitment to adhere to expectations.

Junça-Silva (2022) additionally used Organisational Identification (OI) Theory to explore the role between OI and wellbeing outcomes. As detailed by Weisman et al, (2022), research on the antecedents of Organisational Identification has focused on the following four areas: personal attributes (the need or desire to use the organisation to form a social identity), second, policies and practices (employees reviewing what is offered and judging whether they are valued organisational members), third, organisational characteristics (using the organisational identity to define and evaluate who they are) and lastly, social belongingness (evaluating perceived treatment and interactions with others as indicators of whether they fit and belong in the organisational environment).

The study by Junça-Silva and colleagues (2022) was about the relationship between remote work, positive affect, and job performance, influenced by theories of job performance and attachment theory. This was influenced by the work of Bowlby (1952), more prevalent in the domain of developmental psychology, although impacting on adult relationships as evidenced in the work of Hozan and Davis (1994). Drawing from the domain of psychotherapy, pets have been used as “clinical adjuncts” (Brickel, 1982), and it was proposed that for some, animal-human attachments can be more reliable than human-human attachments. In terms of job performance, Abramis’ (1994) model proposed three dimensions for job performance: technical performance (task management, accuracy and prudent decision making), social performance (work harmoniously with others) and attendance (the absence of lateness or absenteeism).

Sousa and colleagues (2022) framed their findings on pets at work using social responsibility and organisational commitment theories. They investigated how organisations offering pet-friendly practices affect employees' perceptions of social responsibility in relation to the organisation. According to Carroll's (2016) pyramid of corporate social responsibility, there are the following four tenets: economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities and philanthropic responsibilities. In relation to organisational commitment, the three-component conceptualisation of organisational commitment by Meyer and Allen (1990), suggests three components of organisational commitment: first, affective, the degree to which an individual feels emotionally linked with the organisation, second, instrumental, where an individual remains within an organisation, recognising the costs associated with leaving; and third, normative, feeling a moral duty to stay in the organisation.

Rambaree and Sjöberg (2019) explored the potential for companion animals to support a health-promoting work-life, using social support theory which has four tenets: emotional support, instrumental support (practical help), informational support, and appraisal. Social Support is defined as "overall levels of helpful social interaction available on the job from both co-workers and supervisors" (Karasek & Theorell, 1990, p. 60). However, Rambaree and Sjöberg (2019) posited the theory was well-placed to explore *all* forms of relationships, including human-animal relationships, specifically, in stress reduction and health promoting work life, despite this not being the norm.

Hall and Mills (2019) considered work-related outcomes among dog owners in different work settings, assessing impacts on work engagement, commitment, and quality of life. The latter two concepts have been discussed in relation to other studies in this section, therefore the focus of this paragraph is on work engagement theory. In the model proposed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), the construct of work engagement "a positive fulfilling work-related state of mind" is characterised by three dimensions: first, vigour which relates to energy and resilience and the willingness to invest effort in work, second, dedication relating to deriving significance from one's work and feeling enthusiastic, inspired and challenged, and third, absorption, becoming happily immersed and engrossed in one's work.

Wagner and Cunha (2021) did not explicitly identify their theoretical framework, but seemingly drew from theories of employee satisfaction and organisational culture, social cohesion, and psychological well-being. Foreman et al. (2019) explored attitudes towards dogs in workplaces, alluding to well-being, but largely remaining atheoretical. Finally, Hall and colleagues (2017) conducted a largely atheoretical study, focusing on the practical pros and cons of dogs in the workplace. The standardised measures detailed in Table 4, used to explore the phenomenon of interest are well tested and possess robust psychometric properties.

**Table 4. Summary of Phenomenon of Interest/Study Aims, Psychological Theory, Psychological Measures and Outcomes**

*	PHENOMENON OF INTEREST/STUDY AIMS	PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY	PSYCHOMETRIC MEASURES AND PROPERTIES	ANTECEDENTS/FINDINGS/OUTCOMES IN RELATION TO DOG PRESENCE
1	A study to explore the positive effects of allowing employees to bring their pets to work	Social exchange theory Organisational identification theory Life satisfaction Psychological well-being	Ryff Psychological Wellbeing scale (PWB; Ryff et al., 2007), measuring six aspects of well-being and happiness: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Satisfaction with Life scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). The six-item Organisational Identification questionnaire (OIQ; Rubin et al., 2004). The psychometric instruments used had a Cronbach's alpha of > .70.	Pet-friendly practices can influence subjective and psychological well-being as well as organisational identification
2	A study to explore the role of pet dogs in the relationship between telework and performance via effect.	Positive affect, Performance Emotional attachment Quality of life	The Lexington Attachments to Pets scale (LAPS). Multi-affect Indicator (Warr, 2014) The E-Work Life scale (Grant et al., 2010)	Working From Home alongside companion dogs may increase positive affect, positively influencing self-reported job performance
3	A multiple case study to identify how dogs influence the work environment and the factors for requiring pet-friendly policies	Employee satisfaction Organisational culture Social cohesion Psychological well-being	N/A	ANTECEDENTS: Flexible organisational culture and policies, trial and error mentality, open communications, autonomy in job design POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON: Job satisfaction and climate, stress release, communication improvement, social cohesion, appreciation and commitment, person-job fit.
4	A unifactorial scenario-based study to explore how pets at work influence perceptions of social responsibility and organisational commitment	Organisational commitment Social responsibility	N/A	PERCEPTIONS: Pets at work influence organisational commitment N.B There is a weaker link between pet presence and perceived corporate social responsibilities than the authors suggest

*	PHENOMENON OF INTEREST/STUDY AIMS	PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY	PSYCHOMETRIC MEASURES AND PROPERTIES	ANTECEDENTS/FINDINGS/OUTCOMES IN RELATION TO DOG PRESENCE
5	A within-subject comparison of the role pets play in the teleworking experience	Job-related positive affective well-being Job-related negative affective well-being	The Positive Affective Well-Being (PAWB) and Negative Affective Well-Being (NAWB) subscale items which have strong internal consistency; > 80, from the Job-Related Affective Well-Being scale (JAWS; Van Katwyk et al., 2000).	Dogs and cats can be a distraction, but conversely encourage physical activity when WFH
6	A study to explore employee attitudes about the impact of visitation dogs in situ on a college campus	Social support, Stress Perceptions of organisation mediated by pet-friendly practices, Risk perceptions	58-item survey, which included the 18-item Pet Attitude scale-modified (PAS-M; Munsell et al., 2007). This scale boasts a high level of reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92.	PERCEPTIONS: The benefits outweigh the risks. Dogs were perceived to present minimal risks, observations from staff of increased well-being and decreased stress levels among students. Strong anti-dog options must be listened to
7	A feasibility study to explore the potential for having companion animals in the workplace (University of Gävle)	Social support theory	N/A	INSIGHTS: (+) Animals can: play a "forcing function", support interpersonal interactions, support the development of social skills. (-) Animals can cause issues for others, can be a liability and cost concern
8	A between-group study to explore work-related outcomes between dog owners who often, sometimes, and never brought their dog to the workplace	Employee engagement Work-based friendships. Quality of life Commitment to work	Work-related Quality of Life (WRQoL; Easton & van Laar, 2012), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2006), Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6; Roodt, 2004), Friendship Assessment Scale (Hawthorne, 2006) and the Pet Attachment questionnaire (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011)	Employees who regularly take their dogs to work report higher work engagement, work-related quality of life, high work-based friendship acuity, and a lower turnover intent
9	A study to assess perceptions about dogs in the workplace	Atheoretical	N/A: survey items generated from qualitative interviews	Identification of pros and cons of dog presence and perceived barriers to adopting pet-friendly practices

\* Corresponding papers: 1=Junça-Silva (2022), 2=Junça-Silva, Almeida, & Gomes (2022), 3=Wagner & Cunha (2021), 4=Sousa, Esperança, & Gonçalves (2022), 5=Hoffman (2021), 6=Foreman, Poland, Meade and Wirth (2019), 7=Rambaree & Sjöberg (2019), 8=Hall & Mills (2019), and 9=Hall, Wright, McCune, Zulch, & Mills (2017).

## 3.5 Outcomes (Benefits and Challenges)

### 3.5.1 Health and Well-Being at Work Outcomes

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states, “health is a state of complete physical, mental, and societal well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (1948, p. 100). This definition incorporates the concept of well-being, which Cooper and Hesketh (2019) discussed in terms of four tenets: psychological, societal, physiological, and financial. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought this into sharper focus for organisations needing to adapt to meet the needs of employees who faced increased demands on their mental health (Tinline & Davis, 2023). The costs of poor employee well-being have been well-documented, with the global prevalence of anxiety and depression increasing by 25% during the pandemic according to the WHO (2022). The majority of studies in this review identified outcomes relating to well-being.

Hall and Mills (2019) used the well-validated Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) scale (Easton & van Laar, 2012) to examine the effects of bringing a dog to work on general well-being. They found a significant difference in self-reported levels of general well-being among three groups: those who often, sometimes, or never brought their dogs to work. The ANOVA results indicated a significant main effect, with the frequency of taking a dog to work accounting for 3.4% of the observed variance in well-being ( $F(2, 746) = 13.25, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.034$ ). Post-hoc comparisons further confirmed that individuals who frequently took their dog to work reported significantly higher well-being scores compared to those who never did so ( $p < 0.001$ ). Hall and colleagues (2017) identified outcomes relating to dog presence on team-level outcomes. In terms of positive discourse from colleagues, respondents reported being aware of comments from colleagues about the stress-reducing effects of dogs (17.2% of the data set).

Junça-Silva and colleagues (2022) tested a model that was intended to mediate between telework, positive affect, and self-reported job performance. They employed an aggregate questionnaire-based survey comprised of five surveys. Emotional attachment was assessed through 11 selected items of The Lexington Attachments to Pets scale (LAPS; Johnson et al., 1992).

The E-Work Life scale (Grant et al., 2018) was employed to measure remote working experiences in relation to job effectiveness, organisational trust, the interference between personal and work life, and flexibility. The positive effects of telework on self-reported job performance, mediated by positive affect, were influenced by both physical closeness and emotional attachments to pets. A statistically significant moderated mediation effect was observed (index = 0.26, 95% CI [0.02, 0.52]). This finding is consistent

with prior research conducted by Hall and Mills (2019), who found that individuals who frequently brought their dogs to work exhibited lower levels of ‘anxious attachment’ to their dogs compared to those who occasionally or never brought their dogs to work. This highlights the potential implications when individuals with a strong emotional bond with their pets cannot be close to them while working.

The themes that emerged from Rambaree and Sjöberg's (2019) study, through the use of abductive thematic network analysis, indicate that companion animals can serve as a “forcing function”(p.8) for initiating health-promoting activities. The authors argued that having companion animals in the workplace can contribute to health-promoting work-life by providing social support, reducing stress, and encouraging physical activity. Hoffman (2021) used the Positive Affective Well-Being (PAWB) and Negative Affective Well-Being (NAWB) subscale items which have strong internal consistency of  $> 80$  from the Job-Related Affective Well-Being scale (JAWS; Van Katwyk et al., 2000). They also found that individuals with dogs reported socialising more with others ( $\beta = 0.62$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), increased physical activity ( $\beta = 0.70$ ,  $SE = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and a higher likelihood of taking at least one 15-minute walk during the workday ( $\beta = 0.93$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Two studies reported on potential negative effects of dog presence on well-being outcomes. Hoffman's (2021) findings suggest that individuals with dogs report a higher likelihood of work-life interference ( $\beta = 0.91$ ,  $SE = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In Wagner and Cunha's (2021) study, a theme called “dogs add responsibilities” (p.11), both generally and within a work context was identified. Participant discourse from the small sample indicated that dogs can be a burden during high-stress periods and conceded that they require constant consideration. It was also suggested that dogs can cause disturbances that may lead to complaints, and that the responsibility of managing dogs during work hours can be a source of stress.

### **3.5.2 Risk Management and Safety at Work Factors**

Employers are expected to protect employees and others from harm. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) include a duty to identify hazards, assess risks, control risks, record findings, and review controls. However, an unexpected finding in the reviewed studies was the lack of pet-friendly policies in organisations.

Hall and colleagues (2017) assessed perceptions of dogs in the workplace and outcomes related to workplace safety and risk management. A significant majority of their participants indicated an absence of formal policies within dog-friendly organisations. Specifically, 63.85% reported no formal policies in place, and 65.9% indicated no policy restrictions. Interestingly, only a small fraction of respondents were cognisant of various policy guidelines. A mere 10.1% were aware of guidelines pertaining to dog behaviour, while

7.2% knew of policies specifying times and days for entry. Similarly, spatial restrictions were known to 7.2% of respondents, risk assessment to 5.8%, and cleanliness clauses to just 2.9%. Hall et al. (2017) also captured concerns expressed by colleagues. While 63.3% of respondents had no concerns, 16.7% expressed a dislike of dogs, followed by concerns about cleanliness (6.7%), allergies (5%), personal attitudes (5%), and distractions (3.3%). Regarding reasons for prohibiting dogs in the workplace, the key themes identified were: firstly, a lack of environmental suitability (44%), which was further subdivided into the specific nature of work (62.1%) and unsuitable building/office (37.9%). Secondly, maintaining a healthy and safe workplace was cited as a reason by 31.3% of the dataset, further broken down into health and safety (83.7%) and hygiene (16.3%) concerns. Thirdly, dogs not being accepted was provided as a barrier to dog presence by 8.7% of the dataset, with 59% uncertain why, 25.6% citing managerial choice or policy, and six respondents attributing this to cultural norms. Company policy was noted by 6.4% as a reason for not permitting dogs.

In relation to workplace safety and risk management, Foreman et al. (2019) highlighted between-group differences in risk perceptions. Engineering employees self-reported higher risk perceptions compared to their peers in media studies and counselling centres ( $T = 17.0293$ ,  $p = 0.0002$ ). Despite the existence of robust protocols, 8% of engineering respondents held strong views – shaped by cultural and personal beliefs – that animals should not be permitted on campus.

### **3.5.3 Employee Engagement Outcomes**

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) described engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption” (p. 295). They position engagement as the opposite of burnout and consider it to be predicted by available resources. Employee engagement is commonly associated with work engagement, organisational commitment, and organisational identification (Cioca et al., 2021).

Hall and Mills (2019) employed a survey design which incorporated standardised measures. These included the Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL; Easton & van Laar, 2012), Utrecht Work Engagement scale (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2004), Turnover Intention scale (TIS-6; Bothma & Roodt, 2013), Friendship Assessment scale (Hawthorne, 2006) and the Pet Attachment questionnaire (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2011). They assessed work engagement across several dimensions: vigour, dedication, absorption, and total work engagement. Notably, employees who often brought their dogs to work reported higher-than-average work engagement on all factors. They exhibited significantly higher levels of vigour ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), dedication ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = 0.09$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), absorption ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and total

work engagement ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) compared to the group that never brought their dogs to work. Even the group that sometimes brought their dogs to work showed higher levels of vigour ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 0.15$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ) and total work engagement ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.13$ ,  $p < 0.04$ ) compared to those who never did so. A positive association between the frequency of dogs' office presence and multiple dimensions of engagement can be inferred. Wagner and Cunha's (2021) study lends further support to this notion, specifying that dog presence contributes to motivation and engagement.

Hall and Mills (2019) challenged previous findings that dogs in the workplace may cause distractions (Hall et al., 2017; Wells & Perrine, 2001). Building on this, Foreman et al. (2019) also revealed overall positive effects of dogs in the workplace. Their research pointed to a perceived increase in productivity and morale across three distinct departments that were exposed to visitation dogs. The study produced the following mean scores: counselling registered at 0.92, engineering at 0.55, and media studies at 1.07.

### **3.5.4 Organisational Commitment Outcomes**

Regarding the importance of organisational commitment, meta-analyses by Harrison et al. (2006) and Meyer et al. (2002) included modest correlations between commitment levels and key performance indicators such as absenteeism and turnover. Further evidence suggests that committed employees may exhibit higher well-being and better stress management (Kobasa, 1982).

The 2022 study by Sousa and colleagues enhances our understanding by indicating that pet-friendly practices in workplaces can positively affect organisational commitment. The researchers utilised a 19-item Organisational Commitment questionnaire, originally developed by Meyer and Allen (1997), which had been adapted into Portuguese by Nascimento et al. (2018). The psychometric instruments used had a Cronbach's alpha of  $> 80$ . Sousa et al. (2022) found statistically significant differences in both overall organisational commitment ( $t(174) = 1.235$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) and in the specific dimension of normative organisational commitment (an employees' feelings of obligation to remain with their organisation) ( $t(174) = 1.280$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ). This evidence points to the beneficial role of pets in the workplace, particularly in enhancing organisational commitment.

### **3.5.5 Organisational Identification Outcomes**

Organisational identification (OI) is defined as "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organisation" (Mael & Ashworth, 1992, p. 104). OI holds significance for organisations, as it has been shown to predict employee turnover intentions and is positively correlated with job satisfaction (Ng, 2015; Riketta, 2005). Moreover, OI has been found to be a predictor of employee attitudes toward organisational



change initiatives (Drzensky et al., 2012) and can motivate employees to exhibit ambassadorship and brand-congruent behaviour (Lohndorf & Diamantopoulos, 2014). Furthermore, it has been found to weakly predict both psychological and physiological well-being (Steffens et al 2017).

Junça-Silva's (2022) findings supported the hypothesis that pet-friendly practices have a positive impact on well-being through organisational identification. Junça-Silva (2022) used a cross-sectional questionnaire design containing items from the Ryff Psychological Wellbeing scale (PWB; Ryff et al., 2007), which measures six aspects of well-being and happiness: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. The questionnaire incorporates items from the five-item Satisfaction with Life scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). Organisational identification was measured with the six-item Organisational Identification questionnaire (OIQ; Rubin et al., 2004). The psychometric instruments used had a Cronbach's alpha of  $> .70$ . Pet-friendly practices were significantly related to elevated levels of organisational identification ( $B = 0.93$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , CI 95% [0.26, 1.06]). Moreover, organisational identification was found to fully mediate the effects of pet-friendly practices on both life satisfaction (indirect effect = 0.29, 95% CI [0.10, 0.57], explaining 11% of variance) and psychological well-being (indirect effect = 0.15, 95% CI [0.02, 0.38], explaining 5% of variance).

### **3.5.6 Pet-Friendly Practices and Corporate Social Responsibility**

Within an organisational context, social responsibility has been described as the activities carried out by organisations which transcend legal and compliance requirements, for the good of society (McWilliams & Wright, 2006). In their review, Aguinis and Glavas (2012) suggested that social responsibility is an important consideration for organisations as it links to outcomes relating to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviours, organisational identification, engagement, and job performance.

Sousa et al. (2022) aimed to demonstrate how pet-friendly practices in the workplace influence perceptions of social responsibility relating to organisations. They used questionnaire items from a Portuguese adaptation of the three-dimensional 16-item Perception of Social Responsibility scale (Duarte & Neves, 2014) that examined social responsibility practices towards employees, the environment, and the community, as well as economic social responsibility. No statistically significant difference was observed between the means ( $p > .05$ ). It was concluded that their assertions regarding the correlation between pets presence at work and social responsibility perceptions were not substantiated by their evidence.

### **3.5.7 Organisational Culture Outcomes**

The concept of organisational culture, as articulated by Trice and Beyer (1984), encompasses rituals and ceremonies, stories, and symbols that reflect the deeper values and language of the organisation. Wagner and Cunha (2021) added to our understanding of the required antecedents for implementing sustainable, pet-friendly practices within organisations. One of the key antecedents Wagner and Cunha (2021) identified related to organisational culture. They identified the need for organisations to adopt flexible policies and practices, a trial-and-error mentality, open communication, and autonomy in job design.

Wagner and Cunha (2021) also identified the theme of ‘symbolism at work’, emphasising the role that dog-friendly workplaces play in projecting an organisation's values and signalling alignment between potential applicants and the company. A pet-friendly workplace was seen to epitomise a culture of openness and flexibility, while also indicating that the organisation places a high value on meeting its employees' needs.

### **3.6 Evidence Statements**

The Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development, and Evaluation (GRADE) approach was employed to consider the body of evidence across the nine studies, as outlined in the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions (Higgins et al., 2023) and by Snape and colleagues (2017). As evidenced below, in this review, the maximum rating given to an evidence statement was ‘moderate’. There is a hierarchy of evidence classification (Shadish et al., 2002; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). As previously mentioned, all studies were cross-sectional, which inherently limits the confidence we can place in the body of evidence. A sample of 20% was checked by a second researcher as a quality assurance measure.

**Table 5. Evidence Statements**

<b>Evidence statement</b>	<b>Quality rating</b>	<b>Reasoning</b>
There is well-defined evidence of the settings and organisational sectors where pet-friendly practices are beneficial.	Unclear evidence	One exploratory study in the creative industry
Companion dog-friendly work practices improve dog owners' well-being (benefits)	Moderate evidence	Multiple cross-sectional studies which have limitations in their design and execution
Companion dog-friendly work practices improve non-dog-owners' well-being (benefits)	Promising evidence	Supported by a single study of moderate quality
There is clear evidence of how perceived problems associated with pet-friendly work practices have been overcome and risks minimised (challenges)	Unclear evidence	Two studies identified the reasons why dogs are not accepted and associated concerns, but not mitigating actions
Companion dog-friendly work practices require a flexible organisational culture to be sustainable (organisational culture and conditions)	Promising evidence	One moderate-quality paper with a limited sample size
Companion dog-friendly work practices signal organisational values (organisational culture and conditions)	Promising evidence	Three studies, one of which is deemed moderate quality, but both are limited in their design and execution
Companion dog-friendly work practices influence levels of engagement (via work engagement, organisational commitment, organisational identification) (benefits)	Moderate evidence	Three moderate-quality papers and one weaker paper; one is an exploratory study using scenarios and another has a limited sample size
Companion dog-friendly work practices influence social responsibility perception (benefits)	Unclear evidence	One exploratory study with unclear findings

### 3.7 Discussion

The aim of the systematic literature review was to offer an analytical overview of existing research concerning the effects of pet dogs in the workplace. The review had four key areas of focus: firstly, it identified the settings where research in this area has been conducted; secondly, it outlined what types of research designs have been used; thirdly, it considered the benefits and challenges to both the organisation and its employees that have been identified; and finally, it scrutinised what is known about the organisational cultures and conditions that allow pet dogs in the workplace to optimise benefits at the individual, group, and organisational levels.

### 3.7.1 Settings

The nine studies under review demonstrated a high degree of heterogeneity across multiple dimensions. They spanned diverse sectors and adopted various work modalities (e.g., onsite, remote work from home). Some targeted heterogeneous populations and some concentrated on distinct subsets. This variability complicates the task of synthesising findings and calls into question the extent to which these studies can be collectively interpreted or generalised to understand what works for whom and how.

Two of the studies, including the one by Rambaree and Sjöberg (2019), were conducted on university campuses. Their study notably lacks clarity regarding the composition of its sample, neither specifying the number of students and staff involved nor detailing their range of experience with the subject matter. Such ambiguities necessitate caution when considering the generalisability of these findings to the wider context and demographics under review in this systematic literature review. Transitioning to another concern about settings, Sousa and colleagues (2022) utilised a descriptive scenario methodology where participants were exposed to hypothetical descriptive written scenarios which varied according to the inclusion of dogs in a workplace versus non-inclusion and in considering the impact on social responsibility and organisational commitment perceptions. While such an approach is endorsed by psychologists such as Ramirez et al. (2015) for its scholarly rigour, a ‘scenario’ study design raises questions about the ecological validity of the results. Specifically, the applicability of these scenario-based findings to real-world situations is a contentious issue.

Two studies which involved participants working from home – Hoffman (2021) and Junça-Silva and colleagues (2022) – were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic's mandatory confinement phase, a period of extraordinary stress and lifestyle changes. Such specific conditions could have significantly influenced variables such as affect, well-being, and mental health, thereby confounding results. Additionally, the inability to control additional factors influencing the setting, such as the presence of children or other family members could have skewed the results. Considering the principles of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the findings in these studies are not replicable and may not have meaning for individuals in other settings.

Hall and Mills (2019) highlighted an association between the frequency with which employees bring their dogs to work and the total number of employees in an office. In smaller offices, with just one or two people, it was more common for workers to frequently bring their dogs, as evidenced by adjusted positive residuals of 2.6 and 2.7. Conversely, in offices comprising 11-20 employees, the adjusted negative residuals of -4.1 suggest that individuals were less inclined to bring their dogs regularly. The study falls short in exploring

the link between office size and dog presence. While these findings highlight some behavioural trends, they also highlight the need for additional research to understand the antecedents influencing the presence of dogs in the workplace in relation to occupational settings. Overall, the studies lacked specificity regarding whether challenges varied by office set-up, such as open-plan offices versus smaller single-cell offices, or if these factors could be mitigated through adaptations to the design of the environment. The findings suggest that we cannot be certain of which work settings are more suited to companion dog presence.

### **3.7.2 Research Design**

The studies reviewed utilised a cross-sectional approach, gathering data at a single time point, which inherently restricts the depth of analysis. Furthermore, across the nine papers, no two studies examined the same intervention, leading to a breadth of nascent findings rather than extending, validating, or refuting the findings of others. The methodology relied heavily on self-reported data, a limitation that compromises both validity and reliability (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). None of the nine studies explored the effects of dog-friendly workplaces using a longitudinal design, which could offer richer insights into the impact of companion dog presence in a work environment and work-related outcomes.

Hoffman (2021) claimed to utilise a within-subjects design to explore the differences between working from home and in an office. However, the methodology appears to be flawed. Requiring participants to recall actions and emotions from three months prior introduces a considerable risk of recall bias. The accuracy of such retrospective accounts is questionable, undermining the study's reliability.

Hall and colleagues (2017) purported to use the principles of Braun and Clarke (2006). However, they used a version of thematic analysis which does not reflect Braun and Clarke's current thinking and which is "purely descriptive" and "summative" (Terry et al., 201, pp.17-34) . Their analysis was very broad and shallow and did not provide the rich insights which could have been expected if they had followed the six-stage process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019).

### **3.7.3 Positive Consequences for Workers' Well-Being**

Collectively, these studies suggest we can place a moderate degree of confidence in the association between pet-friendly practices and enhanced well-being. Eight of the studies reported on well-being benefits, although not all of them contributed to a comprehensive understanding of how the presence of companion dogs affects well-being. The majority of studies reported that dogs can reduce stress levels and offer emotional support. This finding is consistent with earlier research from Barker et al. (2012), who highlighted the positive impact of employees' dogs' presence on stress. A welcome, yet surprising, finding is the extent

to which dog-friendly practices can benefit not only the dog owners but also their non-dog-owning colleagues (Hall et al., 2017).

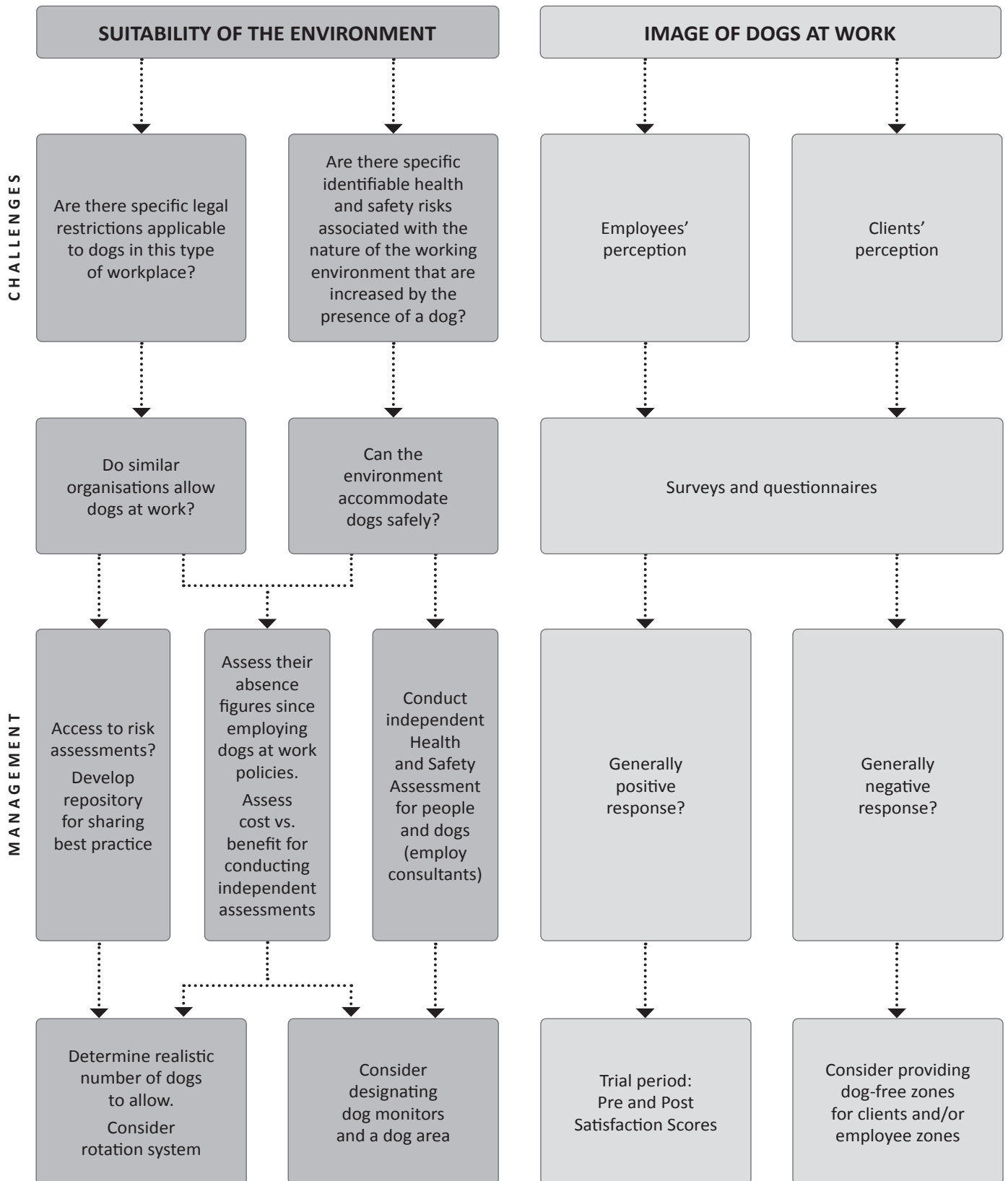
It is important to note that the synthesis of these studies reveals some gaps. From a psychological perspective, these studies offer useful insights into the potential benefits of pet-friendly workplaces but may not fully address individual differences in how people respond to animals in a work environment. The existing evidence, while encouraging, is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. The reliance on self-reported measures lacks the depth required to capture the full scope of well-being or the unique settings in which these pet-friendly practices occur. For example, less attention has been paid to employees who may be hesitant to adopt pet-friendly practices. Moreover, the lack of data on resistance to pet-friendly practices or the animals' perspectives calls for a more comprehensive approach to research and a focus on well-being for all.

#### **3.7.4 Managing Risks and Safety at Work**

The lack of policies and procedures to support sustainable pet-friendly practices is surprising. Wagner and Cunha (2021) stated that their key aim was to identify the circumstances under which organisations can benefit from a policy, yet they neglected to do this. Further exploration is needed to understand what is known about company culture and conditions where policies are not felt to be necessary. From a critical standpoint, the research largely focuses on the positive aspects of pet-friendly workplaces.

Hall et al. (2017) provided a graphical representation of how workplaces can access their potential to integrate companion dogs into the workplace. They also provided suggestions to overcome associated challenges and management of risks and concerns (Figure 5). Although Hall et al. (2017) provide a basic framework, it is static, lacking feedback loops or room for adaptations. While it addresses the 'Suitability of the Environment' and 'Image of Dogs at Work', it fails to address the agency of the dog or how to manage the various stakeholders throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of pet-friendly practices. The diagram oversimplifies the complex processes and decisions. The current evidence base does not advance our understanding of how to address challenges and minimise risks related to implementing such practices. Additionally, it falls short in equipping decision-makers with a comprehensive view, leaving them ill-prepared to assess the feasibility and implications of becoming a pet-friendly organisation.

**Figure 5: An Illustration of Stages Involved in Developing ‘Take Your Dog to Work Policies’ (Hall, Wright, McCune, Zulch & Mills, 2017, p. 301)**



### **3.7.5 Organisational Culture Antecedents for Sustainable Pet-Friendly Practices**

Wagner et al. (2021) and Hall and Mills (2019) provided nascent findings relating to antecedents for sustainable pet-friendly organisations. They highlight the need for a flexible organisational culture and policies with a trial-and-error mentality, autonomy in job design, and open communication. However, their findings warrant closer scrutiny. The question then arises of how practical this trial-and-error approach is across different types of organisations outside of the context of their study, the creative industry, which they propose has a history of supporting pet-friendly practices. Further research is needed to identify the required antecedents for pet-friendly practices at multiple levels: organisational, team, and individual, for both dog owners and non-dog-owners.

### **3.7.6 Dogs as a Mechanism for Communicating Organisational Values**

The adoption of pet-friendly workplace practices can be viewed as a signal that the organisation is attuned to the needs of pet owners. Theories such as signalling theory (Spence, 1973) and person-environment fit theory (Edwards et al., 1998) offer frameworks for understanding the positive ramifications of these policies. Wagner and Cunha (2021) expand upon this by arguing that, for such symbolic gestures to be effective, they need to be authentic, serving as a mechanism to genuinely reinforce an organisation's brand and values.

### **3.7.7 A Strategy for Promoting Work Engagement Through Organisational Commitment and Organisational Identification**

Sousa and colleagues (2022) provided new insights into the potential mediating effects of pet-friendly practices on organisational commitment. These are significant for organisations, given that organisational commitment has been identified as a key factor in organisational growth and success (Gul, 2015). Adding further weight to this finding is the turnover intent expressed by the participants in Hall and Mills' (2019) study who often took their dog to work, which was significantly lower than in comparison groups. Additionally, Hall and Mills (2019) identified that employees who frequently brought their dogs to work reported higher than average work engagement on all factors: vigour, dedication, and absorption. This suggests that dogs may increase motivation and attention to tasks, rather than being distracting.

Together, these findings present a promising avenue for organisations and leaders interested in retaining talent and enhancing work engagement, as well as strengthening organisational commitment and identification. Crucially, however, these results are preliminary and predominantly based on self-reported measures. Therefore, a more rigorous, objective approach is necessary to substantiate these nascent findings.



### **3.7.8 Social Responsibility**

Limited information was found relating to pet-friendly practices and perceptions of social responsibility. This was unexpected. As previously mentioned, there has been an increase in the relinquishment of companion animals due to incompatibility with the work environment (Packer et al., 2021). This has been further impacted by the economic crisis, which has made keeping a pet unaffordable for some (Bawden, 2022). It was anticipated that organisations offering pet-friendly practices would be viewed as socially responsible. Sousa and colleagues (2022) aimed to establish a connection between pet-friendly workplaces and employees' perceptions of their organisation's social responsibility; however, this link was not observed. Age has been found to be a significant factor in influencing personal attitudes towards social responsibility (Titko et al., 2021), yet Sousa and colleagues (2022) did not consider using age as a variable in their study, merely reporting that participants were aged between 20 and 64. Thus, further research with clearer participant demographics and a study design that elicits participants' perspectives is warranted to explore these potential links.

### **3.8 Limitations of This Systematic Review**

This review adhered to the process outlined by Briner and Denyer (2012). Following this process minimises bias and increases both rigour and transparency. However, this study is not without limitations. First, several studies explored pet ownership patterns beyond the dichotomy of dog owners and non-dog-owners. Only five of the studies restricted their non-human participants to companion dogs. Despite the promising findings of two studies, Sousa et al. (2020) and Junca-Silva (2022), which were deemed to be of moderate quality, the fact that they looked at the broader category of pets rather than companion dogs suggests their generalisability is limited. This review might have benefited from excluding these studies and using narrower inclusion criteria. Another limitation was the gender imbalance across the majority of studies that provided a breakdown by gender. As Herzog (2021) noted, the lack of male participants could compromise the validity of many studies on human-animal relationships. In line with this, Hall and colleagues (2017) produced encouraging results, but it should be highlighted that approximately 90% of their sample was female. The studies did not adequately control for gender representation, nor did they mitigate volunteer bias, which is more likely to skew studies connected with human-animal relationships due to women's higher propensity to volunteer for research (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1976).

As the search was limited to work published in or after 2016, this meant potentially influential papers were ineligible. Specifically, a well-regarded quantitative preliminary investigation by Barker et al. (2012) which used a longitudinal design and a pre-post/between-group design with repeated objective measures, was

excluded. Arguably, subsequent studies have not matched the rigour of this study. However, even extending the search parameters to 10 years previously would have still excluded this study.

### **3.9 Implications for Research and Theory**

The rapidly changing landscape of workplace norms, notably the increasing prevalence of dog ownership has highlighted a disconnect between existing literature and current realities. In line with the views of Kelemen et al. (2020), it was noted that existing evidence has not kept pace with the changes in the workplace, particularly in relation to the exponential growth in dog ownership among the working population. Furthermore, across the nine papers, no two studies used the same psychological theories, leading to a breadth of nascent findings rather than extending, validating, or refuting the findings of others using a psychological lens. Most studies in this review were conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, a watershed moment that has likely transformed employee expectations. As such, research is required to understand the evolving needs and preferences of the workforce in a post-COVID world.

To address the over-reliance on self-report methodologies, which raises questions about the objectivity of the findings, future studies should consider how to incorporate more objective measures to assess the association between pet-friendly practices and health benefits. It is suggested that the next logical step for Sousa and colleagues (2022) is an experimental study with the actual presence of pets in an organisation. Additionally, a comparative study in a parallel organisation which does not have pet-friendly practices could explore differences in terms of satisfaction, productivity, well-being, motivation, and stress reduction. Despite Barker et al.'s (2012) methodology being highly replicable, this has not yet happened. Replication studies in larger organisations with larger sample sizes are needed to enhance confidence in the estimate of the effect of the role of pet dogs in the workplace as a buffer against the impact of stress for their owners. Furthermore, a replication study could test the relationship between the presence of dogs in the workplace on job satisfaction among employees within the organisation, irrespective of their pet ownership status.

Future researchers should aim to collect clear and insightful demographic information that addresses the identified limitations. This includes controlling for gender to ensure a more balanced representation in the sample. Additionally, it would be beneficial to gather information on office types, such as open-plan offices or individual cell offices, to understand how different work environments may influence the effectiveness of dog-friendly practices. Furthermore, researchers should aim to consistently and sensitively collect wider demographic data, exploring the implications of dog-friendly practices for various groups. This includes considering variables such as age, race, ethnicity, culture, attitudes toward dogs, and additional dog-related demographics. As suggested by Hall et al. (2017) and Kelemen et al. (2020), further research is needed to

explore the downsides and risks of pet-friendly practices and expand on how organisations could mitigate them. This could be addressed by a qualitative study with participants who have lived experience of dog-friendly offices.

Only three of the papers which met the inclusion criteria for this review were qualitative. As previously mentioned, one of these was particularly broad and shallow. Better, richer qualitative research, beyond pro and con analysis studies based on psychological theory is needed to understand the realities of pet-friendly practices as well as the antecedents and outcomes from those with lived experience of such practices. Suggestions for future research are outlined in Table 6, below.

**Table 6. Future Research Suggestions**

<b>Suggestions for Future Research Based on the Findings of the Systematic Literature Review</b>
Further investigate the antecedents required at the organisation, team, and individual levels for the design and implementation of sustainable pet-friendly practices.
Transition from cross-sectional studies to longitudinal assessments to evaluate the impact of companion-dog presence on the well-being of both dog owners and non-dog-owning colleagues.
Further explore the role of pet friendly practices on wellbeing and an individual, team, and organisational level, drawing upon HAI theory to extend theory and practice within a work, industrial and organisational domain.
Develop a better understanding of how perceived problems have been overcome and risks minimised through qualitative studies.
Gain clearer insights into how dog-friendly policies influence organisational identification and employee commitment.
Explore how the presence of companion dogs can serve as a mediating or moderating factor for post-COVID-19 issues, building upon existing research on assistance animals.
Broaden the scope of research on the role of companion dogs as a mediating factor in shaping perceptions of an organisation's commitment to social responsibility.
Investigate the influence of dog-friendly policies on job applicants and public perceptions of an organisation.

### 3.10 Implications for Practice

This systematic literature review builds upon the general review conducted by Wilkin et al. (2016), which proposed that organisations would hesitate to adopt widespread pet-friendly practices until there is empirical evidence linking these practices to organisational work outcomes. As suggested by Weiss (1979), a

systematic literature review should have an “enlightenment effect”(p.429). However, while there is a growing trend for dog ownership, the current body of evidence does not yet provide a strong and coherent foundation for evidence-based decision-making regarding pet-friendly practices and policies.

From a practical standpoint, it is essential to incorporate ethical principles, including beneficence, respect, and justice for both humans and non-humans into the formulation of plans as well as the implementation and monitoring of decisions relating to pet-friendly practices. Authors of one of the reviewed studies flippantly mentioned a quote which likened having a dog in the office to having a “plant or water source” (Sousa et al., 2022, p.145). Conversely, researchers such as Foreman et al. (2017) outlined the complexities facing decision-makers who are considering whether or how to become a dog-friendly organisation. The decision should not be taken lightly.

In conclusion, the existing body of evidence does not deal adequately with animal agency, nor does it adequately consider opposing views from individuals who believe pet dogs do not belong in the workplace. Concurring with the views of Hall and colleagues (2017), the need for a multidisciplinary team approach that draws on the expertise of occupational psychologists, animal behaviourists, health professionals, and veterinarians is proposed. A multidisciplinary group will lessen the risk of decisions being made that are skewed or disadvantage either animals or employee groups. Future studies should seek to include diverse perspectives which reflect all sides of the debate about dogs in the workplace. It must also have an impact agenda and equip decision-makers to make balanced, evidence-based decisions which support sustainable pet-friendly practices in the work environment. There is also scope to gather evidence from practitioners who have implemented pet-friendly practices and allow them to reflect critically on their lived experiences and lessons learned, using a qualitative design. Additionally, it would be beneficial to gather insights from organisations that have successfully implemented sustainable pet-friendly practices. By doing so, real-life lessons about what works, what does not work, and lessons learned can be elicited. It would also be useful to ascertain how internal, connected, and external stakeholders’ interests have been affected by the decision to work in a pet-friendly workplace in terms of downsides, benefits, and the extent to which they feel empowered to influence such a decision.

### **3.11 Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares that this research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## **Chapter 4: Empirical Study**

# **Pet-Friendly Offices Post-Pandemic: What Works, What Does Not, and What Lessons can be Learned?**

### **Abstract**

### **Background**

The recent global pandemic has shifted how people work, with some employees preferring to work alongside their companion dogs. Employers are expected to align this with organisational culture. While the future of work has changed, research lags behind. Despite increased scholarly interest in pet-friendly practices, gaps exist in understanding their real-world impact and how to minimise risk. Existing research also overlooks the agency of non-dog-owners and animals in work environments.

### **Aims**

This study examines companion-dog-friendly offices post-pandemic, focusing on perceived antecedents and outcomes of sustainable pet-friendly practices. It also investigates how challenges have been met and risks reduced. Drawing on expertise from the animal welfare and psychology sectors, and with input from experts and employees – both dog owners and non-dog-owners – the study recognises human and non-human agency. It aims to identify what works, what does not, and lessons learned, as well as resources that can support decision-makers in the development, implementation, and evaluation of dog-friendly workplaces.

### **Method**

Employing a qualitative approach, this study utilised semi-structured, one-hour interviews with 14 participants who had experienced working in a dog-friendly office for a minimum of six months. The sample for this study comprised dog owners who brought their pet dogs to the office, dog owners who opted not to bring their pet dogs to the office, and non-dog-owners who worked alongside colleagues who brought their pet dogs to the office. Analysis followed the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

The findings suggest that companion dogs offer multiple positive contributions to the workplace, beginning with the provision of social support and enhanced social cohesion among colleagues. Companion dogs act as protective factors, supporting their owners in dealing with stress management. Moreover, such organisations are perceived as progressive and motivated to meet their employees' needs. Organisations that offer dog-friendly practices may safeguard the financial well-being of dog owners, alleviating the need for them to use expensive daily dog care facilities. A flexible work culture is an antecedent for sustaining dog-friendly practices, while tolerance from building owners, organisations, leaders, and employees is essential. Inclusive decision-making, involving representatives from multiple stakeholder groups, is crucial for collaboratively developing effective strategies, policies, and boundary conditions. An evidence-based, multidisciplinary approach emerged as vital for the successful implementation of sustainable pet-friendly practices. The option to bring a companion dog to work can be considered an innovative reasonable adjustment, an element in a return to work plan, or a component in an organisational well-being strategy.

Keywords: pet-friendly offices, post-pandemic, workplace practices, pet dogs, companion dogs, qualitative study, reflexive thematic analysis.

## 4.1 Introduction

Throughout history, pandemics have shaped how work is understood, carried out, and organised (Rudolph et al., 2021). Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has catalysed shifts in employee expectations and created opportunities for organisations to innovate and adopt new working practices. This includes practices that support companion-dog-friendly work environments.

### 4.1.1 Pressure and Opportunities to Adopt new Working Practices

There was a significant surge in pet dog ownership during the pandemic, referred to as the 'pandemic puppy' phenomenon (Packer et al., 2021). Data from *The UK Pet Food's Annual Survey* indicated that the percentage of UK households owning a dog increased from 25% during 2017-2018 to an estimated 34% in 2022, equating to a total of approximately 13 million pet dogs. Anderson et al. (2023) reported that 48% of dogs acquired during the pandemic were purchased by individuals aged between 18 and 44, an age bracket that traditionally represents a significant proportion of the working population. This demographic shift in dog ownership coincided with a substantial shift in work patterns, as reported by the University of Essex Institute for Social and Economic Research. In their second edition of *Understanding Society: COVID-19 Study (2020)*, the proportion of respondents who reported working from home 'always or often' rose from 13.2% to 43.7% after the pandemic. This situation temporarily offered individuals the time and opportunity to care for a dog.

The increasing trend in dog ownership among the working population has posed challenges, particularly when employees were encouraged to return to their physical workplaces as lockdown restrictions began to ease. A lack of time is a well-documented risk factor for dog relinquishment (DiGiacomo et al., 1998; Dolan et al., 2015; Edwards et al., 2019; Mondelli et al., 2004; Salman et al., 1998; Scarlett et al., 1999; Weiss et al., 2014). This is compounded by the escalating cost of dog care, which has surged by an estimated 74% over the past three years (Bawden, 2022). Consequently, there is a heightened risk of increased relinquishment rates should workplace cultures prove unsupportive in adapting to the accommodation of companion dogs. Recognising the challenges as lockdown restrictions began to ease, Packer et al. (2021), who are veterinary and animal welfare professionals, foresaw the need for “enhanced support mechanisms for pandemic puppy owners” (p. 23) to mitigate risks of relinquishment and long periods of solitude for dogs when their owners returned to their workplaces.

As pandemic restrictions started to lift, the phenomenon of pet-friendly workplaces gained increasing attention from the media, which had messages of advice for employers. For example, ‘The Guardian’ ran the

headline, "Want employees to return to the office? Let them bring their pandemic pets along: Pet-friendly offices and insurance for animal companions could be the trending post-pandemic employment perks" (Marks, 2021). Opinion pieces highlighted the potential predicament for employers. Starling (2021) wrote, "How 'fur baby culture' took over the workplace: In this post-pandemic world, employers are under increasing pressure to consider their workers' four-legged friends." Another example: "More people want to bring their dogs to work since the pandemic hit, and bosses are divided: With returning workers reluctant to leave their pets at home, some offices are adopting a more dog-friendly policy" (Hollowood, 2021). The media also reported on how some organisations had evolved to meet employee needs; for example, in "Bring your dogs to work, elite city law firm tells staff", Foy (2022) discusses Slaughter and May's recent adoption of a pet-friendly policy in their historically conservative institution. However, the concept of dog-friendly work environments is not new. For instance, authors of *The Rover UK's Best Dog-Friendly Companies Report* evaluate dog-friendly offices based on benefits such as dogs being allowed in the office, support for pet insurance and/or adoption, paid time off for pet bereavement or adoption, and amenities such as treats, dog gates, and dog beds. Notably, the e-commerce company Kurgo® (Figure 6) has been named the world's most dog-friendly office by Inc. Magazine. Their office, completed in 2015, was designed to accommodate employees with companion dogs (Lagorio-Chafkin, 2016). Each employee with a dog is provided with an individual workspace equipped with a baby gate. This setup ensures that dogs have a designated space for resting while also preventing interactions with other dogs that could potentially disturb them and others.





**Figure 6: Kurgo® Office, Salisbury, Massachusetts (Permission Given)**

#### **4.1.2 Evolving Employee Needs and Their Implications for Employers**

Schiavo (2021) asserted that employees have expressed a growing need for support from their employers to accommodate changes in their lifestyles, including the ability to work alongside the companion animals that helped alleviate loneliness and social isolation during the pandemic. In their narrative review of pet-friendly workplaces, Wilkin et al. (2016, p. 101) concluded that as pets are considered part of employees' personal lives, “it is a reasonable extension to offer policies and practices pertaining to pets.” The acquisition of companion dogs by the working population is one part of a much wider picture regarding employees' changing needs since the global pandemic. To accommodate these changing needs and priorities, organisations need to look at designing work arrangements that consider both individual human concerns, such as the need for companion-dog-friendly workplaces alongside institutional objectives (Gratton, 2021, p. 68).

### 4.1.3 What we Know About Dog-Friendly Work Environments From Scholarly Literature

Having explored anecdotal evidence suggesting there is a push for dog-friendly work environments, the focus now shifts to empirical evidence. Warrilow et al. (2023) recently conducted a systematic literature review in which the existing evidence base was critically examined and synthesised, extending the narrative review conducted by Wilkin et al. (2016). The systematic review's primary objectives were to provide insights, identify key issues and debates, clarify knowledge gaps, and highlight practical needs in the field. This section outlines Warrilow et al.'s findings.

First, a quality review of the evidence, adhering to the GRADE approach proposed by Snape et al. (2016), was conducted as part of Warrilow's review. Moderate evidence was then identified that supported a positive influence on dog owners' well-being when they can work alongside their companion dogs. This is supported by findings that dogs in the workplace help with stress release and coping as identified by Wagner et al. (2021), and that pet-friendly practices have a positive impact on life satisfaction and well-being, as highlighted by Junça-Silva (2022). The ability of dog presence to decrease stress levels and provide emotional support was reported by Foreman et al. (2019). Moreover, Hall and Mills (2019) proposed that dogs can uplift moods and alleviate depressive symptoms. These findings align with Barker et al.'s (2012) influential account of employees' dog presence on stress and organisational perceptions. Additionally, Hall et al. (2017) suggested that the benefits of dog-friendly practices also extend to non-dog-owners who interact with dogs in the workplace. Although promising, further research is required to increase confidence in the effects of dog-friendly workplaces on well-being. Studies have disproportionately focused on the experiences or attitudes of dog owners or the broader category of pet owners, overlooking other segments of the workforce. Additionally, the use of cross-sectional studies and scenario-based studies, rather than real-life settings, inherently lacks longitudinal depth and limits which claims can be made about the causality between pet-friendly workplaces and well-being.

Second, findings from the review by Warrilow (2023) provided moderate evidence to suggest that companion-dog-friendly workplaces are a novel strategy for promoting work engagement, commitment, and quality of life. Preliminary findings from Sousa and colleagues (2022) indicate that pet-friendly practices may have mediating effects on pet owners' commitment to their organisations. However, additional studies are needed to validate these results, which were derived from a study using scenario-based methodologies; the authors acknowledge that this approach may struggle to measure attitudinal variables accurately. Their findings are consistent with those of Hall and Mills (2019), who discovered that participants who frequently brought their dogs to work had significantly lower turnover intent and higher levels of work engagement, including vigour, dedication, and absorption. Both Hall and Mills (2019) and Wagner et al. (2021) have

indicated that the presence of dogs can contribute towards social cohesion and integration while enhancing job satisfaction. Contrary to concerns that dogs may be distracting in the workplace; these authors suggest that dog presence may enhance motivation and attention to tasks. As previously mentioned, while the media has extolled the benefits of pet-friendly practices for organisations seeking to bring employees back to the office, academic studies have not sufficiently explored this among workers.

Third, the review by Warrilow (2023) identified potential antecedents for the implementation of sustainable pet-friendly practices within organisations. Wagner et al. (2021) initially suggested that a flexible organisational culture, coupled with a willingness to adopt a trial-and-error approach, serves as a prerequisite. Additionally, empowering dog owners by granting them a level of autonomy to address dog-related issues during the workday was found to be essential. Open communication and candid discussions concerning challenges and impacts were also highlighted as crucial factors. However, study limitations include its focus on the creative sector and an absence of demographic details related to occupation, thereby reducing the generalisability of the findings. Future research is needed to strengthen confidence in the association between organisational culture and pet-friendly practices across a broader range of occupational settings.

Finally, Warrilow's review suggests that organisations with a pet-friendly status can serve as a mechanism to communicate organisational values and a signal of organisational support for employees' needs. Signalling theory (Spence, 1973) and person-environment fit theory (Edwards et al., 1998) have been utilised to explain the positive impact of pet-friendly practices. Wagner and Cunha (2021) highlighted the symbolic functions of dog-friendly offices, emphasising their role in reinforcing brand identity and values. The communication of pet-friendly policies can be viewed as meeting the expectations of millennials, who represent the largest upcoming generation of pet owners.

#### **4.1.4 Gaps and Knowledge Needs**

The existing literature on the impact of companion dogs in the workplace has notable gaps. Future researchers should consider the perspective of non-dog-owners and the agency of dogs, perspectives that have often been overlooked in previous research. Given the increasing number of dog owners, and assuming that dog-friendly workplaces are more than a fad, there is a need for further research to deal with real-life scenarios. While there is some promising evidence of benefits, it is debatable whether the existing evidence base supports decision-makers in developing policies and practices that are evidence-based and have the potential to maximise benefits and minimise risks. There is also a need to strengthen the evidence base by incorporating the insights of subject matter experts, practitioners, organisations, and stakeholders who have

experience with pet-friendly practices in the workplace.

#### **4.1.5 Debates Around the Phenomenon of Dog-Friendly Practices.**

The phenomenon of dog-friendly workplaces has not been without controversy. Debates surrounding the topic can be broken down into three categories: academic, practical, and ethical. A criticism of the existing literature on the intersection of animals and organisations is that it is "relatively scattered and disorganised" (Kelemen et al., 2020, p. 1). Furthermore, despite the wealth of evidence in the field of human-animal interaction studies, which is a relatively new discipline, there has been a lack of cross-pollination between this domain and the field of work, industrial, and organisational psychology. This criticism has been raised by DeMello (2012), Hosey and Melfi (2014), and Shapiro and DeMello (2010). Two decades after the publication of the first academic paper on the topic by Wells et al. (2001), animals are becoming more present in organisational life and are playing a more significant role in employees' lives. However, research is failing to keep pace with such changes (Kelemen et al., 2020).

At a practical level, Hall et al. (2017) have suggested that health and safety is used as a convenient justification for not allowing companion dogs in the workplace, despite a lack of literature supporting the assumption that dogs increase safety risks. It is estimated that 2.5-5% of the population are sensitive to pet-related allergens, compared to the estimated 10-20% of the population who are allergic to pollen (Custovic et al., 2003; Plaschke et al., 1996; Ramadour et al., 2005). As noted by Hall et al. (2017), plants are rarely banned from the workplace despite the potential for allergic reactions. The integration of assistance dogs in the workplace can be considered a precedent. Assistance dogs are highly trained to support individuals by performing specific responses and tasks. There is a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate individuals accompanied by assistance dogs, as outlined in guidance and mitigation from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2017). By drawing upon these precedents and considering the legal obligations and accommodations already in place for assistance dogs, it is possible to address concerns regarding health and safety while allowing for the inclusion of companion dogs in the workplace.

It is important to consider the views of employees who hold strong opinions that dogs should be kept separate from the workplace. Additionally, there is an argument for fairness regarding allowing companion animals other than dogs into the workplace, such as snakes and lizards, although these may make some individuals uncomfortable or even fearful (Kelemen et al., 2020). The recent case of a US-based doctor licensing a 5.5 ft alligator as an emotional support animal (Salam, 2022) is an interesting example. While it was not specified that the alligator entered a workplace setting (August 29, 2022), this highlights the potential complications that may arise when attempting to be inclusive of a wide range of animals as

workplace companions.

#### **4.1.6 Study Aims and Objectives**

This study aimed to examine the question: Pet-friendly offices post-pandemic: What works, what does not, and what lessons can be learned?

The sub-questions are:

- What are the perceived outcomes of pet-friendly practices, including benefits and disadvantages?
- What are the perceived antecedents of sustainable pet-friendly practices?
- How have perceived problems been overcome, and risks minimised?
- What resources do employees perceive to be necessary so that decision-makers can develop and implement dog-friendly workplaces?

#### **4.1.7 Target Audience**

The aim of this study is to support organisational decision-makers and practitioners who are contemplating the implementation of companion-dog-friendly practices in the workplace. Additionally, the study findings are expected to contribute to the development of a training programme from the UK's largest dog welfare charity. Their programme, currently being developed, will provide guidance and support for organisations seeking to implement pet-friendly practices. The study's transdisciplinary nature may appeal to the work, industrial, and organisational psychology sectors, as well as those with an interest in human-animal interaction (HAI).

### **4.2 Method**

Regarding the reporting of the methodology and findings, this study adhered to the American Psychological Association's Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS; APA, 2020), as implemented in previous research by Clarke (2022) and Shaw et al. (2019).

#### **4.2.1 Researcher Description**

As a reflexive researcher, it is important to acknowledge my approach to the study. In this case, I do not solely adopt an emic or an etic perspective in relation to the phenomenon of companion dogs in the workplace. As suggested by Gair (2012) and Griffith (1998), it is not unusual for researchers to occupy a

position somewhere along the ‘insider-outsider’ researcher continuum. I share a common ‘insider’ characteristic with the participants in this study, having spent more than six months working alongside companion dogs (albeit in a home office, rather than a shared office). This allowed me to have first-hand experience and understanding of certain aspects of the research context. However, there are other characteristics I do not share with the participants in this study. For instance, I have not needed to deal with detractors. Additionally, I have not needed to adhere to a rotation system, nor have I experienced the fear of losing the opportunity to work alongside my dogs. In this respect, I appear more of an outsider in my position. A more in-depth account of my reflexivity is provided in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

## **4.2.2 Participants and Other Data Sources**

Fourteen participants took part in the study, resulting in 14 transcripts to be analysed. All participants were from the working population, and all had worked in dog-friendly offices for a minimum of six months. There were five male and nine female participants, 13 of whom worked in the UK, while one worked in Australia. Six were between the ages of 18-34, two were between 35-44, five were between 45-54, and one was between 55-64. Of the 14 participants, six regularly brought their dog to work, three occasionally brought their dog to work, two owned a dog but did not bring it to the office, and three did not own a dog but worked in a dog-friendly office. Six participants worked in large open-plan offices with 25 or more people. Three participants worked in medium-sized open-plan offices, two in small open-plan offices, and two in their own offices. One participant worked in a flex office with no personal workstations.

The fourteen participants worked in a variety of sectors, including construction (n=1), wholesale and retail (n=1), financial and insurance (n=1), education, social and health care (n=4), animal welfare (n=2), business consultancy (n=1), digital creation and marketing (n=2), advertising (n=1), and media (n=1). The participants had a diverse range of job titles, including senior HR business partner, senior people manager, managing director, technical veterinarian and product manager, clinical animal behaviourist, administrator, national sales manager, office manager, healthcare assistant, and creative. The researcher did not have any direct relationships with the participants. Three participants were affiliated with the same organisation, which introduced additional ethical considerations. To uphold the BPS Ethical Principles, the researcher adhered to the Chatham House Rule to create an environment that fostered open and candid discussions, while protecting the anonymity of the participants.

### **4.2.2.1 Participant Recruitment**

The ethics application form submitted to obtain approval for conducting research involving human participants included a detailed protocol for participant recruitment. This protocol was accompanied by a

comprehensive risk assessment, which aimed to identify and address potential ethical concerns. The researcher's expertise, professional competence, and boundaries were clearly outlined within this assessment. It was emphasised that the researcher did not possess expertise in animal behaviour nor could provide human resources advice. Additionally, it was stated that the researcher was not equipped to address individuals' fears or aversions to dogs.

#### **4.2.2.2 Participant Selection**

The study utilised a purposive recruitment strategy, predominantly recruiting participants through LinkedIn, a business and employment-focused social media platform. Specific subject matter experts were targeted, including veterinarians, clinical animal behaviourists, human resources professionals, health and safety practitioners, legal professionals, ergonomics experts, and occupational health specialists. Additionally, dog owners and non-dog-owners with experience of working in dog-friendly offices were targeted. Five of the participants were second-degree connections of the researcher and were referred by the researcher's immediate connections.

The recruitment flyer (see Appendix C) invited participants to take part in one-to-one recorded video interviews held over Microsoft Teams, with an expected duration of approximately one hour. The recruitment flyer was published in March 2023. The first participant was interviewed on March 27, 2023, and the final participant interview was completed on May 11, 2023. No payments or incentives were offered during the recruitment process. However, after each interview, the researcher expressed gratitude for the participant's time and offered to make a donation to a charity of their choice as a token of appreciation.

Potential participants were provided with the information form (Appendix D, which clearly communicated the purpose of the study. After reading this form, they were asked to complete a self-administered electronic demographic form using Microsoft Forms (Appendix E). This form included filter questions designed to determine if the prospective participant had been exposed to a companion-dog-friendly work environment for a minimum of six months. The researcher received alerts upon completion of each form and checked the eligibility of participants. In cases where there were response errors or uncertainties, the researcher emailed the participants and invited them to engage in a brief screening conversation. The purpose of this conversation was to manually verify their eligibility for the study. Subsequently, participants were asked to sign the consent form (Appendix F), indicating their voluntary agreement to participate in the research. As an occupational psychologist registered with both the British Psychological Society and the Health and Care Professions Council, the researcher ensured adherence to the ethical standards outlined by these professional and regulatory bodies throughout the study.

### **4.2.2.3 Communication of Study Purpose**

At the beginning of the interview, the study purpose was reiterated to the participants, who were informed that they would be invited to share their experiences of dog-friendly workplaces, including any benefits they observed, challenges that needed to be addressed and lessons that could be learned. Furthermore, participants were informed in advance that they would be encouraged to discuss the potential resources that may assist decision-makers in developing and implementing companion-dog-friendly workplaces.

## **4.3 Data Collection**

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences. As suggested by Kvale (1983), qualitative interviews are well-suited to capturing descriptions of interviewees' worlds and their interpretations of the meanings associated with the phenomenon under study.

### **4.3.1 Evolution of the Data Collection Protocol**

To guide the interviews, the researcher developed a protocol and interview guide (Appendix B). The design of the questions acknowledged a priori that certain aspects of the participants' experiences would be prioritised. The questions were informed by a systematic literature review conducted by Warrilow (2023) that explored relevant topics. The interview guide covered a range of broad categories, including evidence used to inform decisions; concerns, policy, and procedure development; iterations made after the implementation of dog-friendly practices; perceived benefits and challenges for individuals and colleagues; critical incidents; barriers to speaking up; design of the environment and health and safety aspects; the perceived utility of a toolkit for decision-makers; potential toolkit resources; measurement of outcomes; and any other information participants wished to discuss. The interview guide used open-ended questions to encourage participants to provide in-depth responses, as well as follow-up probes to elicit more detail about the participants' perspectives. The interview schedule began with the broadest topics before becoming more specific. Prior to conducting the interviews, the interview protocol was piloted and refined. The researcher familiarised herself with the question schedule to enable her to effectively monitor what had been covered and avoid repetition.



### **4.3.2 Scheduling the Interviews**

The researcher facilitated a scheduling process in which each participant was presented with five possible time slots, collectively amounting to a total of 70 reserved hours, to accommodate their availability. However, as 14 participants were invited to partake in the 60-minute interview session, only 14 hours of allocated interview time were needed. The researcher allocated an additional hour for pre-interview communications with each participant to ensure they felt informed and comfortable before the interview process began.

### **4.3.3 Data Saturation**

Although data saturation has been proposed as a gold standard for determining sample size by researchers such as Bowen (2008), Braun and Clarke (2021) argue that, in reflexive thematic analysis, where themes are generated rather than emergent, the concept of saturation is not relevant. In this approach, themes are not expected to reach a point of complete saturation, as they are developed through an iterative and reflexive process. Considering interviews as a rich source of information, Terry and Hatfield (2021) propose that a sample size of 6-10 participants may be sufficient to gather substantial data.

### **4.3.4 Time Intensiveness of Data Collection**

One-on-one interviews were conducted with each of the 14 participants, with an average duration of 49 minutes. The shortest interview, lasting 26 minutes, was conducted with 'Eli', a managing director who made the personal decision to bring their dog to work, as opposed to their office having pet-friendly status. Since 'Eli' was the sole individual with a dog in an office that didn't have pet-friendly policies or incidents to explore, the interview was completed in a shorter timeframe. The longest interview, spanning 71 minutes, was with 'Morgan', a clinical animal behaviourist. Initially, it was anticipated that all interviews would be concluded by the week commencing Monday, April 3rd. However, the interview period had to be extended due to some participants' unavailability due to holiday commitments. To ensure that a variety of perspectives, knowledge, skills, abilities, and values (KSAOs) were represented, the researcher needed to extend the interview period to accommodate the availability of participants who represented the agency of the animal.

### **4.3.5 Alterations to the Data Collection Strategy**

After each interview, the researcher reflected on the new topics or themes that emerged, as suggested by King (2006), as well as what went well and what could be improved. This process allowed for the

modification of the interview guide as needed, including the addition of new probes or topics. For example, discussions around the process of removing dogs from the organisation when they have been deemed unsuitable for office life were included based on participant insights. Furthermore, the researcher omitted certain questions during interviews when it became apparent that participants did not possess the necessary insight to answer them. For instance, if participants shared that they had joined the organisation after the decision to become pet-friendly was made, questions related to the initial decision-making process may not have been relevant to them. As suggested by Kidder and Fine (1987), participants do not have to be asked exactly the same set of questions.

#### 4.4 Management of Reflexivity in the Data Collection Process

This section explores the management of reflexivity in the data-collection process, using two examples. Prior to their interview, one participant, 'Alex,' expressed their opposition to having companion dogs in the workplace. Although this viewpoint differed from mine, as the researcher, I was committed to ensuring that my views did not influence Alex's disclosure or moderate their responses. In my pre-interview communications with Alex, I emphasised the importance of hearing multiple viewpoints. I also highlighted the value of hearing the potential downsides of implementing pet-friendly practices in the workplace, an aspect which has not been adequately addressed by the existing literature. Before the interview, I took time to reflect on whether or how I should introduce my stance on the matter. When comparing the transcripts, it is noticeable that I introduced the topic of interest and agenda with Alex without sharing my stance. This contrasted with how much of myself I shared with Max, who worked for a UK animal charity.

Researcher: I'm Eloise. I'm a researcher, and I'm going to say I own one dog, but that's not strictly true...My new puppy was born on Coronation Day...another flat-coat retriever

Max: Oh my gosh. Adorable...

During the data collection stage, there was an additional disclosure that was not possible to plan for. I had lost one of my dogs two months prior to the interview, which had resulted in me taking time away from my research. At the start of the interview with 'Vic,' I learned they had also experienced a similar loss.

Researcher: I think you mentioned [on the demographic form] that you take your dog to work regularly.

Vic: Unfortunately, he just passed away just before Christmas, so I'm very upset about that, but, yes, he came every working day of his life. Every day that I went to work, he came, yes.

Researcher: Are you still okay to continue the interview, to talk?

Vic: 100%. Yes, course. I love talking about him.

This disclosure took me by surprise. I fought to control a sudden emotional and physiological response, feeling a 'lump in my throat'. While the participant seemed composed and able to talk about their experience despite their loss, I was cognisant of the need to monitor my emotional responses. This was a reminder of how inextricably linked I am with the subject. The role of researcher reflexivity is addressed in more depth in the discussion section of this thesis.

#### **4.5 Recording and Data Transformation**

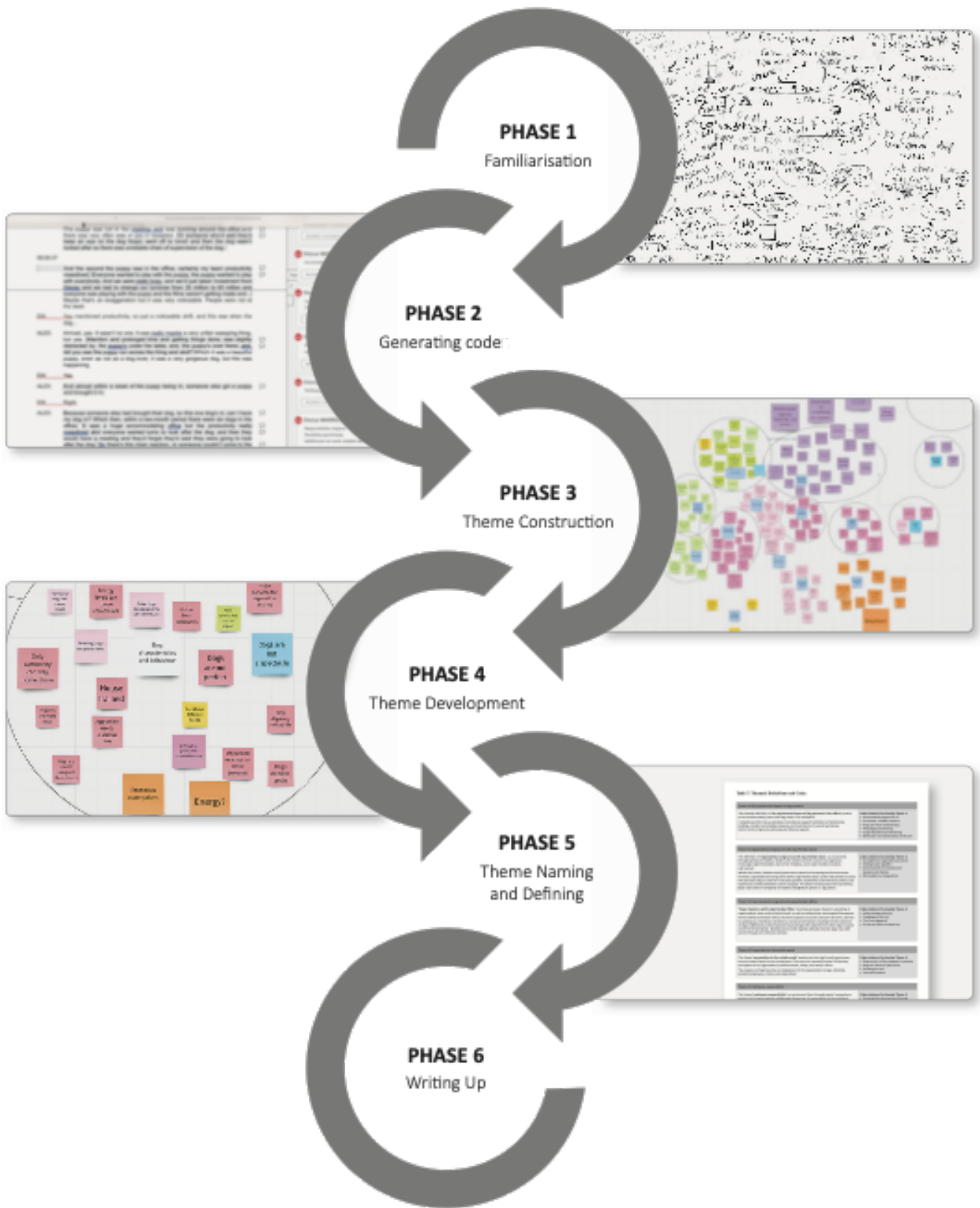
A data management protocol was developed in accordance with the institution's ethical guidelines. The protocol was reviewed and approved by the institution's data protection officer and research data support officer and was submitted as part of the ethics application for this study. At the start of each Microsoft Teams video interview, the researcher obtained additional verbal consent to record the conversation. Once consent was given, the 'record and transcribe' function was activated. At the end of each interview, the MP3 audio file was downloaded by the researcher and assigned a unique, gender-neutral pseudonym to protect the participant's anonymity. The file was then uploaded to the secure portal of a GDPR-compliant audio-to-text service for verbatim transcription. The completed transcript was subsequently downloaded by the researcher and secured on her University SharePoint. Afterwards, the researcher checked the transcript for any additional identifiers, such as names and organisations, and removed them to ensure participant anonymity. To ensure accuracy, the researcher conducted spot checks on the transcriptions by comparing a sample with the original video recordings, following the suggestion of MacLean and colleagues (2004).

#### **4.6 Data-Analytic Strategy: Reflexive Thematic Analysis Phases**

The study utilised Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis, primarily employing an inductive approach to derive meaning from both latent and semantic codes, allowing the data to drive the analysis. The analysis was conducted from a critical-realist perspective, as described in depth in Chapter 2, which acknowledges an underlying relativity while recognising the influence of participants' realities and the broader cultural context. Figure 7 illustrates snapshots from each stage of the analysis, providing a visual representation of the process. Following the diagram, a narrative description is provided for phases 1-5.

Note that phase 6 refers to the 'writing up' phase for the report yet is also viewed as an integral part of the analytic process (Braun & Clarke, 2019). N.B. A link to a sample coded transcript can be found in Appendix

H.



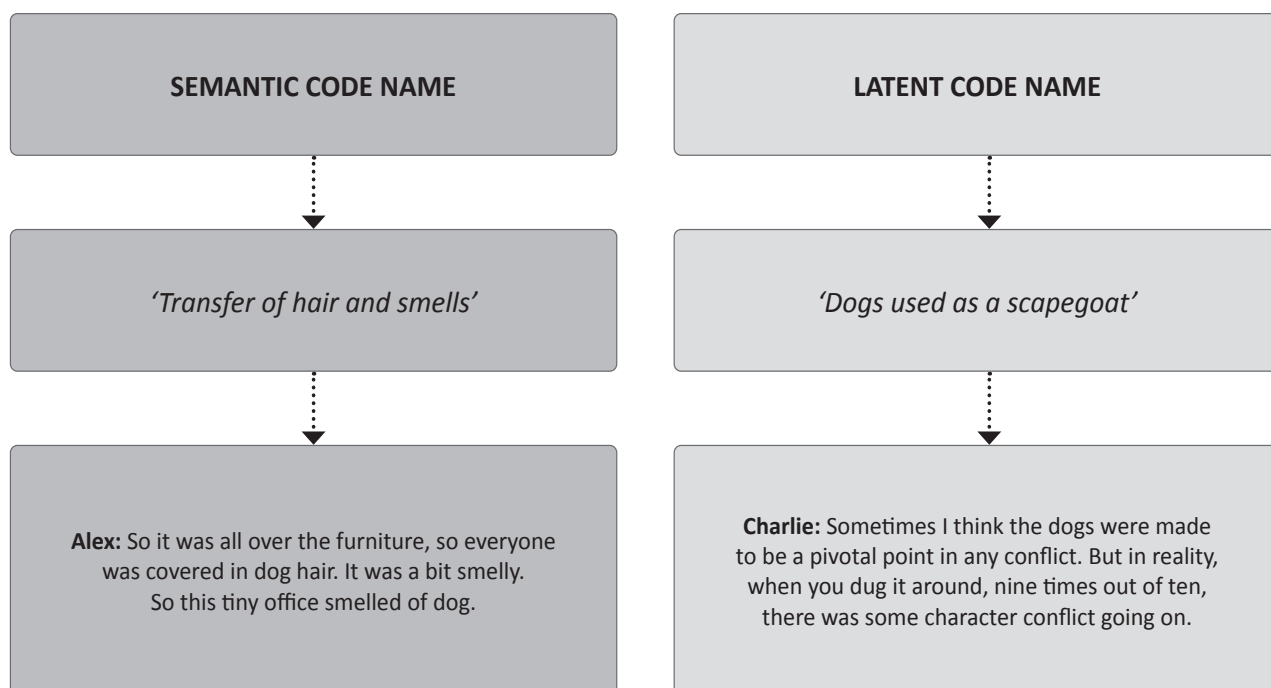
**Figure 7: The Six Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019)**

### 4.6.1 Phase 1: Familiarisation

In phase 1, referred to as ‘familiarisation’, the researcher engaged in a focused listening of each participant interview video recording. During the second round of listening, with a more critically questioning mindset, the researcher used text and doodles as analytical tools (see Figure 7) to capture her ideas and reactions, and to generate questions.

### 4.6.2 Phase 2: Generating Codes

Phase 2, ‘generating codes’, involved systematically working through the entire dataset. The researcher created pithy labels using the comment box in Microsoft Word to represent each key feature of the data that related to the overarching research question guiding the analysis. To accomplish this, a thematic analysis coding management macro developed by Babbage and Terry (2023) was utilised to transfer the codes from the Microsoft Word transcripts to Excel (see Figure 7). The codes encompassed both the semantic and conceptual interpretation of the data, as demonstrated in the excerpts shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8: Semantic and Latent Coding Example**

### 4.6.3 Phase 3: Theme Construction

During phase 3, theme construction was carried out using Miro®, a digital workspace for innovation. This platform facilitated the clustering of codes, enabling the identification of several initial strong conceptual

ideas that bound the codes together (see Figure 7). This recursive and iterative phase involved revisiting the data, deconstructing and reconstructing it. Codes with significant support and substantial depth, such as ‘continuous responsibility,’ were promoted to the status of prototype themes. It is important to note that the themes in this analysis were constructed by the researcher, rather than emerging organically. The intention was that these themes should have the potential to narrate the story. They should be both distinct and interconnected within a larger context.

#### **4.6.4 Phase 4: Theme Development**

During phase 4, known as theme development, the clustered codes were combined where appropriate (see Figure 7). For instance, several similar codes that addressed leaders' concerns with the subjectivity and defensiveness of dog owners were merged to create a new code called ‘the perils of pet parents.’ This newly formed code was comprehensive enough to encompass the meanings of similar codes.

It was necessary to take a step back and examine the dataset as a whole. As proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019), there were two key questions to consider during this stage. First, it was important to determine whether the codes associated with each theme could cluster around its centralising concept. Second, reflection on what this prototype theme conveyed about the dataset and the research question was crucial. At this stage of analysis, the prototype theme ‘dog sphere versus work sphere’ was deemed more suitable as a sub-theme than a primary theme and was subsequently demoted. Similarly, the prototype theme ‘intersection of dogs and organisational life’ was regarded as a meta-concept and, as a result, was disbanded. The codes previously associated with this meta-concept were merged with other themes.

#### **4.6.5 Phase 5: Naming and Defining Themes**

During phase 5, ‘naming and defining themes,’ themes were refined. In this process, a ‘domain theme’, also known as a ‘bucket theme’, went through several iterations. It began with the descriptor ‘implications for well-being,’ which then transformed into ‘psychosocial benefits,’ further evolved into ‘enhanced well-being and quality of life,’ and eventually solidified as a theme named ‘the psychosocial impact of dog presence’.

Thematic definitions were developed for the final six themes and sub-themes, to provide clarity. These definitions, along with the corresponding codes which were clustered to develop the themes are presented below in Table 7.

**Table 7. Thematic Definitions and Codes**

Theme 1: The psychosocial impact of dog presence	Theme 2: Organisational congruence with dog-friendly status	Theme 3: Power dynamics engendered by dog-friendly offices
<p><i>The thematic definition of ‘the psychosocial impact of dog presence in the office’ pertains to the transformative power that dogs have in the workplace. It emphasises their role as providers of emotional support, facilitators of relationship building, constant and reliable presences, and contributors to overall well-being, both in terms of general well-being and financial aspects.</i></p> <p><i>Codes clustered to develop Theme 1:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An emotional support for all</li> <li>▪ A constant, reliable presence</li> <li>▪ Dogs can foster relationships</li> <li>▪ Physiological well-being</li> <li>▪ Supporting financial well-being</li> <li>▪ Distraction and productivity continuum</li> </ul>	<p><i>The definition of ‘organisational congruence with dog-friendly status,’ as constructed through participant realities, relates to the extent to which a culture is progressive, encourages experimentation, learns from mistakes, and is open-minded, inclusive, and tolerant. Within this culture, leaders actively promote a relaxed and accepting work environment. However, organisational incongruence with a dog-friendly status can be indicated by a culture that perceives dogs as a barrier to business growth, implements zero-tolerance policies, and experiences conflicts between culture and goals. This theme encompasses two sub-themes: (a) an extra level of complexity for leaders and (b) work sphere vs. dog sphere.</i></p> <p><i>Codes clustered to develop Theme 2:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A progressive organisational culture</li> <li>▪ Solving issues together</li> <li>▪ An extra level of complexity for leaders (sub-theme)</li> <li>▪ Work sphere versus dog sphere (sub-theme)</li> <li>▪ Zero tolerance is not sustainable</li> </ul>	<p><i>‘Power dynamics within dog-friendly offices’ encompasses power dynamics operating at organisational, team, and individual levels, as well as relationships involving building owners. At the individual and team levels, the theme explores inclusion/exclusion dynamics, barriers to speaking up, emotional connections, and social interactions resulting from the presence of dogs. Additionally, some employees may leverage their attachment to their dogs to assert control in the workplace. Building owners with negative attitudes towards dogs may exert control through zero-tolerance policies.</i></p> <p><i>Codes clustered to develop Theme 3:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undermining authority</li> <li>▪ Treading on thin ice!</li> <li>▪ The “pro dog gang”</li> <li>▪ A time and place to speak up</li> </ul>

Theme 4: Presentation to the outside world	Theme 5: Continuous responsibility	Theme 6: Forethought and expectations
<p><i>The theme 'presentation to the outside world' emphasises that dog-friendly workplaces have an impact beyond current employees. They serve as a powerful signal, influencing perceptions of an organisation's professionalism, safety, and overall culture. The presence of dogs becomes an integral part of the organisation's image, attracting potential employees, clients, and stakeholders.</i></p> <p><i>Codes clustered to develop Theme 4:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dogs as part of the company's narrative</li> <li>▪ Dogs as a factor of job choice</li> <li>▪ Showing we care</li> <li>▪ Farcical situations</li> </ul>	<p><i>The theme 'continuous responsibility', as constructed from the participants' perspectives, pertains to the enduring and multifaceted dimensions of responsibility at the individual, team, and organisational levels, as well as the duty of care to dogs in companion-dog-friendly offices. The boundaries of this theme extend from the initial assessment of the office environment's suitability for dogs to the decision to discontinue their presence. Overall accountability lies with the owners. Participant discourse highlighted the need to establish reliable supervision chains and clear expectations when delegating caregiving responsibilities to colleagues while avoiding overburdening them. Active monitoring of dogs' impact on the environment and, conversely, how the environment is impacting the dogs, is important.</i></p> <p><i>Codes clustered to develop Theme 5:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surviving (the journey) and thriving</li> <li>▪ Being 100% responsible</li> <li>▪ An unreliable chain of supervision</li> <li>▪ Recognising when it is not working</li> </ul>	<p><i>The theme 'forethought and expectations' in dog-friendly offices encompasses the importance of careful planning and anticipating challenges. It highlights the need for clear policies to avoid complications and aim for a smooth integration of dogs into the office without disrupting the existing ecosystem. Onboarding dogs requires time and consideration. This theme, constructed from participant discourse, suggests that dogs in the workplace are considered a perk rather than a right. The theme has a sub-theme that relates to health and safety.</i></p> <p><i>Codes clustered to develop Theme 6:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A lack of policies leads to complications</li> <li>▪ Integration of dogs needs time and consideration</li> <li>▪ A perk not a right!</li> <li>▪ Creating the right boundaries</li> <li>▪ Health and Safety (sub-theme)</li> </ul>



## 4.7 Findings

This section presents the findings of the reflexive thematic analysis, highlighting the six constructed themes: 1) the psychosocial impact of dog presence, 2) organisational congruence with dog-friendly office status, 3) power dynamics engendered by dog-friendly offices, 4) presentation to the outside world, 5) continuous responsibility, and 6) forethought and expectations. As indicated in Table 7, some themes have sub-themes that focus on specific aspects while sharing the central organising concept of the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

This findings section provides a more interpretative account of the themes. The incorporation of pictorial images, with participants' permission, adds a visual dimension that enhances the exploration of these themes. The discussion section expands on this by exploring theoretical, scholarly, wider contextual interconnections, and implications. It is recommended that the reader familiarises themselves with the 'thematic definitions' provided in Table 7 before proceeding.

### 4.7.1 Theme 1: The Psychosocial Impact of Dog Presence

#### 4.7.1.1 An Emotional Support for All

Unanimously, participants acknowledged dogs as a crucial source of emotional support, not only to their owners but also to colleagues. The interviews elicited numerous compelling stories about the profound impact of dogs' psychosocial support, making it challenging to choose specific examples. Charlie highlighted the role of dogs in aiding the recovery of a fractured workforce following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Charlie: And so many businesses...have had really big difficulties after the pandemic with a lot of post-pandemic stress, people with long COVID. And I think we really saw the benefit of the dogs...

Vic highlighted the contrast between dogs existing in a rapidly changing world and their innate ability to provide support to humans, even in ways that humans may find challenging.

Vic: We're no longer, if we ever were, a society where people are free to touch each other or anything anymore, but a dog doesn't know that. A dog just comes straight up to you, puts its head in your lap, and wants to be patted or stroked, and for some people, a lot of people, I think it's a really nice thing.

Nat provided insight into their perception of the positive impact that others experience through their interactions with dogs in the office.

Nat: I have people that will come from the other side of the office just to come over to stroke [dog's name], because they're having a difficult day...I think people are reassured by her presence...She's a very calming presence for them...I think she's a stress relief for people.

#### **4.7.1.2 A Constant, Reliable Presence**

Several participants described the therapeutic nature of the bond between humans and dogs when discussing the impact of dog presence. Their discourse revealed the profound ways in which dogs provided emotional support, acted as calming influences, and offered unwavering companionship in the workplace.

Nat: For me, it's almost like a therapy dog. Work can be very stressful, and [dog's name] is always happy. She's like the calm in the storm at times...I know she's always there. No matter how hard things get, she's always happy to see me and supportive...

Dylan: ...I always feel at a bit of a loss if [my dog is] not next to me, so it's nice to have that companionship.

#### **4.7.1.3 Dogs can Foster Relationships**

Dogs can play a significant role in fostering relationships in the office. Several participants emphasised that dogs served as catalysts for social connections. Figure 9, shared by Nic (not pictured), which portrays colleagues engaged in an interaction with an 'office dog', exemplifies this aspect. Both Nat and Nic shared experiences of how their dogs facilitated connections with colleagues and supported their integration into new groups within their organisations.

Nat: ...[dog's name] has been great for me to form conversations with other people...Because I'm not a natural sociable person. I find it quite difficult. [Dog's name] helped me open those doors and connect with other people and approach people, because she's become the topic of conversation. That's been really good.

Nic: ...when I first started [in my new job], one of the big benefits for me was how dog people like dog people, so if I brought my dog in, everybody wanted to bond over that. That was really nice as well...a bit of an icebreaker.



**Figure 9: Colleagues Interacting with an Office Dog at a Digital Marketing Agency in Lincolnshire, UK (Permission Obtained)**

#### **4.7.1.4 Physiological Well-Being**

Several participants highlighted the role of both their own and others' dogs in encouraging physical activity. This concept is exemplified in Figure 10, which depicts Kurgo® employees participating in a collective walk. Additionally, two participants expanded upon this by emphasising the connection between exercise and opportunities for bonding with colleagues, as well as the potential for exercise to alleviate stress-related emotions.

Dylan: ...I go out and walk with my colleagues' dogs and go with them when they go out for a walk, and you get that bonding time when you're out for a walk...it's something about walking, it helps to encourage communication with colleagues and building relations.

Charlie: ...if someone was really stressed, we'd give them a dog and send them for a walk, or, we'd lend somebody a dog or things like that. And we have had a policy of, I think, being very open about things like mental health issues and so on.



**Figure 10: Kurgo® Colleagues Walking Office Dogs in Salisbury, Massachusetts (Permission Given)**

#### **4.7.1.5 Supporting Financial Well-Being**

For certain individuals, the importance of a pet-friendly workplace went beyond emotional support, extending to financial considerations. This was the case for Nat, who worked at an organisation supporting pet-friendly practices. They faced a particular challenge when their organisation relocated to new premises and the leaseholders did not endorse pet-friendly policies. Nat was cognisant of the potential financial implications this could have for them.

Nat: ...I don't think it was ever going to be a thing, because obviously I'd brought my dog in, moved offices, and it was like, I have to bring her in, I can't afford day-care... [dog's name]... has been the determining factor of where I work. I won't work for a company that doesn't allow dogs.

In Dylan's discourse, significant emphasis was placed on the financial aspects associated with pet care, particularly in the context of limited resources and rising prices charged by external care providers during the post-COVID era. They highlighted the challenges encountered in finding suitable dog caregivers and the subsequent increase in pet care expenses. This highlights the heightened financial burden faced by pet owners in securing reliable care for their animals, especially if taking their dogs to work is not an option.

Dylan: Trying to get people to look after dogs at the moment is really difficult, and because there's a scarcity, then the expense of it is also massive...It used to cost £10- £15 for someone to come in for half an hour, an hour, feed [the dog], play with her in the garden, do those kinds of

things, and maybe take her for a walk with three to four other dogs. And now, it's easily £30 or more...

#### **4.7.1.6 Distraction and Productivity Continuum**

A divergence of viewpoints emerged regarding the impact of companion dogs on distraction and productivity. Nat, for instance, who shared a deep bond with their dog, believed that having their dog present in the workplace enhanced productivity and creativity. Their account continued as they were asked about the perceived benefits of having their dog with them.

Nat: ...I feel that the quality of the work has got better since [dog's name] has been there. I might be biased, because as a creative role, you can see the quality of the work that's being produced, and I feel it has got better.

Nat presented a contrasting narrative to that of Alex, who also works in the creative sector. While Nat's account is about an environment where pet-friendly practices were already well-established, Alex portrayed a different reality, where the presence of dogs in the workplace was a novelty.

Alex: Everyone wanted to play with the puppy, the puppy wanted to play with everybody. And we were really busy, and we'd just taken investment from [worldwide entertainment company] and we had to change our turnover from 30 million to 60 million and everyone was playing with the puppy and the films weren't getting made...

### **4.7.2 Theme 2: Organisational Congruence With Dog-Friendly Status**

#### **4.7.2.1 A Progressive Organisational Culture**

One crucial factor that appeared to contribute to the alignment of organisations with dog-friendly policies was the presence of a progressive organisational culture, characterised by open communication, trust, and respect. Sam and Charlie, who both held leadership positions in organisations they described as start-ups, emphasised the importance of evaluating the compatibility of pet-friendly policies with the company's interests and culture.

Sam: I always think of things from the inside out. So first...does this [dog-friendly] policy serve the company, do we want to do this? Does this make sense with our culture and office style that we have and if so, let's implement something that makes sense for [our people].

The wider context of Sam's discourse centred around an organisational culture that empowered individuals to tailor their work arrangements to suit their needs. This included providing opportunities for dogs to accompany employees to the office on a daily basis. Such a culture fostered an environment where employees were encouraged to explore flexible arrangements and embrace a dog-friendly policy as part of their integration of work and personal life. Sam highlighted the organisation's emphasis on trust and flexibility, recognising that these factors contribute to improved job performance: "We offer a lot of flexibility, so you can do your job better...we like to trust people."

Charlie demonstrated a proactive attitude to taking calculated risks, embracing alternative approaches, and adapting quickly to changing circumstances. This mindset was particularly evident in their experience of setting up a new venture.

Charlie: We absolutely were really progressive in looking at learning from mistakes and getting people to dare to try things. It's the only way the business would survive in the early days.

Charlie's discourse highlighted a readiness to construct job roles and conditions tailored to their employees' talents and needs, including the integration of pets into work environments.

Charlie: ...it used to be that you created a job, and then you found someone to fit the job. It's now almost that you find a talent, and you create the job around that talent, and you create your team that way. And again, I think the whole dog thing...has come from all of that.

Discourse from multiple participants indicated a potential association between the formality level of the office environment and the adoption of pet-friendly practices. As Nic said, "because we have such an informal atmosphere, it definitely lends itself to being more pet-friendly than a more formal office environment, for sure."

While Max's overall discourse conveyed their support for pet-friendly workplaces, they also acknowledged that such environments may not be suitable for every organisation. Max implied that if maintaining a pet-friendly status requires a significant ongoing allocation of resources after the implementation phase, it may not be practical or sustainable for the organisation.

Max: ...It [having pet-friendly office practices] shouldn't be a job; it shouldn't be a full-time job to have to look at implementing or running any of this. If that's the case, it's not working.

#### 4.7.2.2 Solving Issues Together

Most participants whose organisations had sustainable dog-friendly office practices shared a norm of collaboratively addressing 'dog-related issues.' For instance, Lee mentioned that their team would tend to "have a discussion...to see what...would resolve [the issue] or not." Charlie emphasised the importance of fostering an environment where employees felt comfortable expressing their concerns and feelings. Charlie specifically mentioned that employees should feel able to say, "Your dog has been a right pain today." They advocated for a collaborative approach to addressing issues, encouraging employees to work together to find a resolution.

Dylan gave a strong example of organisational citizenship behaviours, as the entire office collaborated to address an issue with a colleague's rescue dog that had separation anxiety. The 'office' approached the challenge by considering the well-being of both the human and the dog, demonstrating effective teamwork, support, and tolerance in finding a resolution.

Dylan: ...it's actually [about] reassuring the owner that we're not upset when the dog is whining, the problem is when the owner feels anxious and guilty...and so, the whole office worked together to build it up and [it] got used to being left by its own...the dog's fine now and she's really settled. But it's having the people who have the understanding to work through that.

#### 4.7.2.3 An Extra Level of Complexity for Leaders

Although most participants viewed dogs as a positive addition to office life, some acknowledged that they created an additional level of complexity for leaders. Some leaders found it more challenging to address dog-related issues with owners than to provide feedback on employees' performance. Charlie conceded that "some of those [dog] conversations can be really tricky... [as] pets are, to all intents and purposes, like their children". Alex echoed this sentiment, emphasising that dogs intensified existing difficulties: "...Put the dog in there, and that becomes an infinitely more complicated conversation". Alex's discontent with the need to handle dog-related issues instead of focusing on what they considered the 'real' priorities was evident throughout their narrative.

Alex: ...This company's got to double in size, and I am now in my eighth meeting about dogs...We might have to make staff changes, and we're talking about whether the dog can or cannot come into the meeting room and whether someone else can bring their dog.

#### 4.7.2.4 'Work Sphere' Versus 'Dog Sphere'

The work sphere versus dog sphere debate revolves around belief systems about the fundamental question of whether companion dogs belong in the workplace. This topic elicits diverse opinions from both dog owners and non-owners. Some people firmly believe dogs do not belong in the workplace and should not be allowed, while others argue for the inclusion of dogs in work environments. For example, Rowan had some doubts, stating, "...I'm not totally convinced that an office with multi-household dogs is a great place to take a dog." Alex mentioned their shock upon seeing dogs in the workplace. According to their schema, dogs belong in other people's houses and perhaps parks, but not offices.

Alex: ...personally, to walk into an office with a dog is always a shock for me...I gear myself up to go to the park, I can't even take my son to the park. To walk into an office space and there's a dog there and I don't think companies say that enough.

#### 4.7.2.5 Zero Tolerance is not Sustainable

All participants whose organisations had sustainable pet-friendly practices shared a common understanding that dogs are not perfect, acknowledging the occurrence of occasional issues. Max conceded, "...even if dogs are fully house-trained, they will have accidents." Several participants alluded to the inevitability of encountering behavioural challenges when having dogs in the workplace. Rowan, a dog owner, acknowledged this by stating, "Obviously, dogs can cause trouble."

Most organisations took occasional accidents and low-level behavioural incidents in their stride. Participants outlined the preventative measures and planned mitigations they had in place, as well as the relationships that helped maintain pet-friendly practices.

Morgan: ...dogs had to have been house-trained for at least six months, and there was a toolkit in place because accidents happen. Dogs are dogs...But as long as the accident is limited to a wee on the carpet and not a person getting bitten, I'd say it's all right. We also made sure to communicate openly with our office cleaners and worked with them to ensure that dealing with these incidents did not become more burdensome for them.

The following account describes Morgan's recollections of their response to a zoonotic disease in the workplace during the pilot week of the dog-friendly office project. A zoonotic disease is defined as a "disease or infection that is naturally transferable from vertebrate animals to humans" (WHO, 2023, p. 1).



Morgan: ...one of my colleagues' dogs came in, and she asked me, "What's this on the dog's skin?" And I replied, "That's ringworm." So, in the first week, we encountered a zoonotic disease. But... we had everything in place.

### **4.7.3 Theme 3: Power Dynamics Engendered by Dog-Friendly Offices**

#### **4.7.3.1 Undermining Authority**

Alex joined a senior executive team and had an ambitious remit. They identified as being “really scared of dogs” and had not been included in how pet-friendly office practices were implemented or how they evolved. Their following discourse suggests they saw the presence of dogs as a barrier to engaging with their team.

Alex: To feel that I am then isolated...because of an animal who isn't working...I kept coming back to, well I am a senior person with a team of 100, who now cannot go to that part of the building because of a dog...

Alex also shared a significant incident where they had to inform an employee that their dog could no longer be brought to work. The employee used their emotional bond with the dog as a means of asserting control, stating, "...I just cannot work in this office if I can't bring my dog..." This challenging situation ultimately led to a no-win outcome, resulting in both the dog and the individual leaving the organisation.

#### **4.7.3.2 Treading on Thin Ice**

Building owners with negative attitudes towards dogs may enforce control by implementing zero-tolerance policies, which can cause anxiety for dog owners in the workplace. Nat described their response to a critical incident, acknowledging the potential consequences that could arise if the ‘incident’ was discovered, potentially meaning they could no longer bring their dog to work.

Nat: ...[the new policy] is very strict. You literally have one warning and you're out!...I remember the first day I took [dog's name] back into the office. She was so excited to see everyone that she threw up because she was overwhelmed with excitement...Luckily, I was in a part of the office where no one saw...I was on edge, very stressed, and unable to relax.

### 4.7.3.3 The “Pro-Dog Gang”

One participant’s account highlighted a division in the office environment between dog lovers and non-dog lovers, resulting in an "us vs. them" dynamic. According to Alex, this resulted in the formation of "pro-dog gangs." Expressing a dislike for someone's dog is met with incredulity from subordinates, who question, "Why wouldn't you like my dog?"

### 4.7.3.4 A Time and Place to Speak Up

Participants stressed the importance of empowering employees to voice their preferences and take control of their daily interactions with dogs in the workplace. For example, "it's about...giving...people more choice as to being able to separate themselves [from dogs] if they don't want that and to feel comfortable with speaking out if it doesn't feel right for them” (Max). Morgan asserted that "the biggest problem [is] when people don't feel heard".

While exploring the feasibility of pet-friendly office status within their organisation, one participant engaged in consultations with a part-time team member who expressed a dislike for dogs. This was done to gauge the intensity of their feelings and guide future actions and decisions.

Jules: I just want to know how she feels about it being a dog-friendly office and if it will stop her from coming in...if she's adamant that she will not come in if there's any dogs in the office, we'll need to maybe just choose the days [she is not in the office to] be dog-friendly...so that it's fair for everybody.

## 4.7.4 Theme 4: Presentation to the Outside World

### 4.7.4.1 Dogs as Part of the Company’s Narrative

Several participants emphasised how pet-friendly practices shaped external perceptions of their organisations. Specifically, Charlie said, "I think it helped people understand who we were and what we stood for." Working in the animal health sector, Charlie suggested that pet-friendly practices are congruent with the organisation’s values. They elaborated: "...from the employer point of view... it's a very overt symbol of your animal friendliness and ethics." This narrative is reinforced by their organisation’s welcome board (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Welcome Board, Animal Health Company in Oxfordshire, UK (Permission Given)

#### 4.7.4.2 Dogs as a Factor of Job Choice

Rowan, Dylan, and Charlie positioned pet-friendly practices as a unique selling proposition (USP) for organisations serving to attract new talent, reduce employee attrition, and influence applicant decision-making.

Dylan: I think it's a good USP to have as a business, because not everyone is offering it...If you're choosing between two jobs...[in addition] it is a good way to protect your colleagues from leaving.

Charlie revealed that an “aspirational dog owner” was influenced to relocate to their organisation largely due to their pet-friendly status, meaning they could fulfil that ambition.

#### 4.7.4.3 Showing We Care

Sam, an employee at an organisation recognised as one of the UK's best dog-friendly companies by Rover.com, suggested that their organisation's pet-friendly practices signal a genuine commitment to the well-being of its employees.

Sam: ...I do think it shows that we care for people genuinely, it's not just about what you bring to the table...we want to make sure that you and your family [including dogs] are in a good position.

Sam's broader discourse suggests that their pet-friendly practices signal the organisation's dedication to creating a work culture that values work-life balance and recognises the importance of family, where dogs are seen as an extension of family.

#### **4.7.4.4 Farcical Situations**

Alex secured a role in an organisation characterised by a "family-run...vibe". They were entrusted with the mandate of steering the organisation towards a "slicker...and sharper" operational framework. Alex recounted how a situation extended beyond the confines of the office, impacting the public domain: "...clients coming in, and it was like a scene from Mr. Bean with dogs running around or a poo in reception...".

Alex highlighted the consequences that can ensue when the delineation between public and private domains is breached, leading to outsiders being exposed to practices that can impact perceptions of professionalism.

#### **4.7.5 Theme 5: Continuous Responsibility**

##### **4.7.5.1 Surviving (the Journey) and Thriving**

Max, who worked in Central London, emphasised the necessity of assessing how dogs would cope with the commute before even considering bringing them to the office. Once in the office, Morgan, a clinical animal behaviourist, emphasised the need for dogs to be able to "settle" and "switch off." Furthermore, the subject matter experts within the participant group suggested that a dog exhibiting separation anxiety at home would probably experience similar challenges in the office. It is the owner's responsibility to ensure their dog can adapt to and thrive in both the commute and the office environment.

##### **4.7.5.2 Being 100% Responsible**

Several participants suggested that responsible ownership was a protective factor for mitigating the potential burden on human resources functions within pet-friendly offices.

Max: ...if people are very responsible with [bringing their dog to work] and have the right

guidance on how, as owners, they can be responsible for this and do it in a really responsible way, it shouldn't be an industry...

Jules emphasised the essential requirement of responsible ownership for dogs to be allowed in the office, stating, "the owners have to be responsible; otherwise, their dogs are not permitted in the office."

#### **4.7.5.3 An Unreliable Chain of Supervision**

Participants detailed how they had overcome perceived problems and minimised risks associated with pet-friendly practices. However, one detailed the irreversible breakdown of their pet-friendly office status. Alex described how, over the trial period of implementing pet-friendly practices, the issue of unreliable supervision continued to escalate.

Alex: And the person who brought [the dog to the office]....maybe underestimated how many times they're in meetings and how inappropriate it was to have the dog in meetings...someone who'd said they'd keep an eye on the dog forgot, went off to lunch and then the dog wasn't looked after so there was an unreliable chain of supervision of the dog...The crescendo was that scene with the six dogs...it was just pandemonium...we cannot have dogs.

While the concerns raised by Alex did not align with the experiences shared by the other participants, it is important to learn from them. Alex's account highlighted the need to address and evaluate the issue of inadequate supervision.

#### **4.7.5.4 Recognising When it is not Working**

Interestingly, even though they had the opportunity to bring their dogs to work in pet-friendly offices, at least three participants consciously decided against this. They acknowledged that it would not be the optimal choice for themselves or their dogs.

Participants recognised the importance of addressing situations where they perceive that pet-friendly practices are not functioning effectively, as emphasised by Vic.

Vic: A staff member brought her two Siberian huskies into the office...she worked in an open-plan area, and those dogs were a little bit too boisterous and disturbed other people. And I said to her...you need to keep them under control...one or two people spoke to her and just said, look, this is not working...she stopped bringing them in.

## **4.7.6 Theme 6: Forethought and Expectations**

### **4.7.6.1 A Lack of Policies Leads to Complications**

The account provided by Alex, a senior leader in a newly assumed role, illustrated how the rapid influx of additional dogs into the office within a month, without any controls or additional space, alongside an increase in employee headcount, led to increased conflict between different employee dyads and the dogs themselves. When difficult decisions needed to be made, Alex found that "...there was no policy, no boundary, no right to remove".

### **4.7.6.2 Integration of Dogs Needs Time and Consideration**

Participant discourse about lessons learned emphasised the importance of allocating adequate time and consideration to facilitate a smooth integration and positive experience for new dogs entering a different environment, as well as for other established office dogs and the broader office ecosystem. Charlie candidly acknowledged that the absence of an integration plan had led to situations such as "whining dogs and dogs jumping pen gates."

To mitigate risks, Morgan, adhered to a transparent and staged approach to the integration of dogs into the office, with clear roles and responsibilities for owners, organisations, and clinical animal behaviourists. This involved completing an 'is your dog ready for the office' self-assessment, a 'dog temperament assessment,' and evaluating behaviour using a 'dogs in office' probation checklist.

### **4.7.6.3 A Perk not a Right**

Establishing clear expectations and fostering a shared understanding were identified as antecedents for sustainable pet-friendly practices. Vic emphasised the necessity of "setting out rules at the beginning", while Charlie highlighted the importance of clearly conveying that "bringing your dog to work is a privilege, not a right."

### **4.7.6.4 Creating the Right Boundaries**

Dogs without boundaries and the freedom to roam in the workplace raised concerns among some participants, including Alex, who is scared of dogs; Robin, who expressed wariness towards unfamiliar dogs; and Dylan, a dog owner who felt their personal space was invaded by other people's dogs.

Robin: And there is also a bit of the psychological thing of even if you [have]...a bit of a fear of dogs that you don't know...you're going to spend at least the first few hours of that day being very wary and keeping an eye on the dog more than whatever it is you're doing.

Alex's account illustrates how encountering dogs without boundaries exacerbates their anxiety and discomfort.

Alex: ...so I'm sat with anxiety...and looking out, is the dog near me?...I don't trust them, so I'd lock it out.

Dylan indicated that dog owners themselves may experience a sense of personal space invasion when dogs are allowed to roam freely in workplaces.

Dylan: ...that dog [has] no personal space either...you've got this dog wandering up. And because of its size it gets its head on the desk and if you're trying to eat or drink anything, it nudges you and it slobbers all over you. And I'm very dog-centric...but even I find it a bit annoying.

Several participants referred to the agency of dogs, emphasising that dogs also need boundaries and stressing the importance of not treating dogs as mere spectacles.

Max: So it's about that respect piece, and that kind of works both ways as well... understanding that, yes, it's lovely to have the dogs here, but if they're asleep and they're calm, let's leave them...they might need...some breathing space.

#### **4.7.6.5 Health and Safety**

Several participants proposed that although risks needed to be proactively mitigated and processes adhered to, the addition of dogs in the office did not require extensive additional considerations for health and safety or insurance liabilities beyond a typical office environment.

Morgan: ...health and safety is a big thing obviously, but dogs don't really add that much to it...yes, people are more likely to trip over a dog than if there's no dog there, but actually if the dogs are secure, we just mitigate that risk...I...think we're sometimes so scared of the repercussions, that no one does [dog-friendly offices].

## **4.8 Discussion**

This study makes four central contributions to the understanding of dog-friendly offices in terms of what works, what does not, and what lessons can be learned. Firstly, to our knowledge, this is the first study to contain a diverse sample and multiple perspectives: subject matter experts who represent the agency of animals, dog owners who bring their dogs to work, dog owners who do not, and non-dog-owners. Secondly, it highlights the potential mediating and moderating role that dog presence plays in the post-COVID world of work, influencing psychosocial outcomes, to a greater extent than suggested in pre-COVID studies. This indicates the need for additional investigation concerning the role that dog presence could play in strategies for work adjustment and employee well-being. Thirdly, it reinforces previous empirical studies, providing further support for their validity, specifically that an antecedent for sustainable practices appears to be organisational congruence. Fourthly, it highlights certain previously unknown aspects such as an indication that pet-friendly practices can bring an additional layer of complexity for leaders and that a further antecedent for sustainable practices is for organisations and diverse stakeholders to agree and adhere to mutual expectations and responsibilities, and for owners to remain fully accountable for their dogs at work.

## **4.9 Interpretation of the Findings**

This section outlines the contributions of six themes constructed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019): 1) the psychosocial impact of dog presence, 2) organisational congruence with dog-friendly office status, 3) power dynamics engendered by dog-friendly offices, 4) presentation to the outside world, 5) continuous responsibility, and 6) forethought and expectations, highlighting where the findings challenge, elaborate upon, and support previous research of dog-friendly workplaces.

### **4.9.1 The Psychosocial Impact of Dog Presence**

This study contributes to the existing body of evidence regarding the psychosocial benefits of pet-friendly practices. The magnitude of findings that supported the positive psychosocial impact of dogs in the workplace in this study exceeded those reported by Hall et al. (2017), Wagner and Cunha (2021), Hall and Mills (2019), and Foreman (2019), as identified in Study 1. The discourse from participants in this study emphasised the instrumental role of companion dogs in supporting their daily coping mechanisms, offering non-judgmental support, enhancing interpersonal relationships, and positively impacting the psychological and physiological well-being of both dog owners and their colleagues. An additional unexpected insight from this study, relevant to the current economic context, is the suggestion that dog-friendly workplaces could act as a protective factor for employees' financial well-being. Such workplaces eliminate the need for



employees to outsource the care of their dogs to expensive external providers. As highlighted by Hesketh and Cooper (2019, p. 14), financial stress can rapidly affect other dimensions of well-being. During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals across the globe experienced heightened levels of loneliness, isolation, fatigue, stress, and anxiety (Bennett et al., 2021; Conroy, 2021). These effects were anticipated to have profound and enduring impacts on the mental health of the population (O'Connor et al., 2020). The need for organisational leaders to reimagine well-being in the workplace and explore ways to support and engage their employees has gained attention and significance (Dundon et al., 2023). The findings of this study suggest it could be pertinent to consider dog-friendly work practices.

#### **4.9.2 Organisational Congruence With Companion-Dog-Friendly Office Status**

The findings of this study support Wagner and Cunha's (2021) prior finding that a flexible work culture and the willingness to adopt a trial-and-error approach are antecedents for sustainable pet-friendly practices. Wagner and Cunha (2021) emphasised the need for authentic alignment between the norms, values, beliefs, and behaviours of the organisation and pet-friendly practices. However, the findings of the current study indicate that although pet-friendly practices may align with an organisation's current operational framework, they may not be compatible with the organisation's future direction. For sustainable pet-friendly practices, there is a need to consider both the current and future organisational context.

The current study's findings extend the existing literature by highlighting a new layer of complexity for organisational leaders. In addition to their remit, leaders must navigate complex and contentious issues around dogs in the workplace, requiring them to engage with and address the concerns of 'pet parents'. In alignment with Karasek's (1979) job demand-control model of occupational stress, for one participant, these new demands proved to be incompatible with their existing job demands, resulting in reported tension and the need to develop the mental agility to balance both human and dog-related concerns.

#### **4.9.3 Power Dynamics Engendered by Dog-Friendly Offices**

The findings of this study include the previously unexplored theme of 'power dynamics engendered by pet-friendly offices.' While Morgan detailed their organisation's proactive approach to assessing the potential impact on diverse stakeholders and implementing appropriate measures, some participants suggested that the needs and opinions of stakeholders with 'influence and interest' in pet-friendly practices had been overlooked. Regarding the supervisor-subordinate relationship, Alex, a leader with a fear of dogs, felt that their legitimate power and authority were compromised by subordinates who formed "pro-dog gangs." Complexities in power dynamics also arose between organisations with a long-standing pet-friendly status

and their new building owners, who did not support such practices. These new owners imposed rigid conditions, leading to employees feeling a diminished sense of control over outcomes. Participant discourse emphasised the importance of proactive management of these relationship dyads to mitigate the effects of power dynamics.

#### **4.9.4 Presentation to the Outside World**

Consistent with the findings presented by Wagner and Cunha (2021), the current study suggests that companion dogs in the workplace serve as a symbolic function in two distinct ways. Firstly, they facilitate an alignment between job seekers and the organisation. Secondly, they communicate organisational values and implications, conveying messages about the organisation's culture and priorities.

Although not the central focus of their pet-friendly practices, several participants acknowledged that these practices fulfil two functions. Firstly, they act as a signalling mechanism (Spence, 1973) for attracting new talent, enabling individuals – such as job seekers – to make informed decisions (Stiglitz, 2002). Secondly, participants suggested that, by communicating a pet-friendly status, organisations convey a commitment to addressing employee needs and supporting the integration of employees' work and personal lives, as discussed by Friedman (2020). Several participants considered pet-friendly practices an integral part of their organisation's value proposition. Their discourse was congruent with the person-environment fit theory (Edwards et al., 1998), highlighting the importance of compatibility between individuals and their environment. Although most participants perceived dog-friendly workplaces as sending positive signals, a minority were mindful of the potential repercussions that uncontrolled practices could have on the organisation's reputation and levels of perceived professionalism.

#### **4.9.5 Continuous Responsibility**

The findings of this study challenge Wagner and Cunha's (2021) suggestion that dogs add to the burden of responsibility. In contrast, participants in this study overwhelmingly viewed dogs as valuable additions to the office and active contributors, fulfilling important functions. Participants conceded that dogs have needs that may momentarily distract their owners from their work; however, this was not seen as negative. Instead, it was largely perceived as an opportunity for owners to take a break, reset, and achieve a better work-life balance.

The theme of 'continuous responsibility' emphasises the need for conscientious care of companion dogs on a daily basis, spanning the entire lifecycle of pet-friendly practices within an organisation. Participant discourse highlighted that responsible ownership is an antecedent for sustainable pet-friendly practices. This

involves maintaining overall accountability for dogs and avoiding overburdening colleagues with excessive care responsibilities. As was evident from one participant's insights, challenges arose within the organisation when responsible ownership was neglected.

Although participant discourse from dog owners did not suggest that their colleagues had any responsibilities towards their dogs, engaging in organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) could be an antecedent for sustainable dog-friendly offices. Congruent with Organ's (1988) findings, participants outlined the discretionary behaviours that contributed to the effective functioning of the pet-friendly status of their organisations. In this current study, instances of such behaviours were observed in acts of altruism, such as looking after a dog while their owner was on holiday or attending a meeting. Owners demonstrated courtesy by recognising and addressing any inconvenience caused by their dog, and colleagues displayed tolerance during the adjustment period when a dog was settling into the workplace.

#### **4.9.6 Forethought and Expectations**

In partial agreement with Wagner and Cunha's (2021) conceptual model, the findings of the present study suggest that a flexible culture is an antecedent for a dog-friendly office. However, this study identified an additional antecedent for sustainable practices that does not appear in other conceptual models. Specifically, the importance of establishing and agreeing upon boundaries and explicit expectations. Participant discourse contributed to the formulation of the theme 'forethoughts and expectations'. To safeguard the well-being of all employees and avoid permissive practices, consultation with relevant professionals is imperative. This should cover aspects related to animal well-being, health and safety, insurance, and legal considerations before implementing pet-friendly practices. This necessity is highlighted by Alex's account of a critical incident where a visitor experienced anaphylactic shock due to the presence of dogs and the failure to adequately mitigate risks.

Elaborating on the findings of Hall et al. (2017), who suggest that the implementation of appropriate policies can help overcome negative employee perceptions, the present study posits that there is a need to go further. Instead of treating employees as passive recipients of pet-friendly office initiatives, it is important to actively involve them in shaping, managing, and taking ownership of these programmes.

This section has interpreted the six themes identified through reflexive thematic analysis. Subsequently, the next section will proceed to consider the findings within a broader context, taking a reflective stance at the strengths and limitations of the study, its generalisability, transferability, and implications for both theory and practice.

## **4.10 Strengths and Limitations**

This study is believed to be the first inclusive qualitative investigation into pet-friendly offices, incorporating a diverse array of stakeholder voices. Participants came from a variety of backgrounds, including dog owners, non-dog-owners, subject matter experts, and individuals with both favourable and unfavourable attitudes towards pet-friendly practices, as well as advocates for animal agency. This diverse range of perspectives has contributed to a more robust and nuanced analysis of pet-friendly offices.

However, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the participant recruitment protocol may have skewed towards individuals already supportive of pet-friendly practices, potentially limiting the transferability of the findings. It is crucial to note, however, that all participants were encouraged to discuss challenges, frustrations, and critical incidents openly. Secondly, the researcher chose not to capture the racial or ethnic distribution of the participants. Given that previous research by Wilkin et al. (2016) has indicated that pet attachment can be influenced by religious beliefs, the study might have missed nuances in perspectives related to pet-friendly practices. Lastly, in relation to the interpretation of the findings, it is important to reflect on the methodological choices made. As noted by Braun and Clarke (2019), the inherent nature of reflexive thematic analysis means that researchers cannot entirely divorce themselves from their epistemological stances, values, and personal experiences. Consequently, data coding cannot be entirely unbiased. This acknowledgement is framed as a methodological choice rather than a limitation.

### **4.10.1 Generalisability and Transferability of Findings**

Guba and Lincoln's (1985) TACT Framework identifies transferability as one of the four tenets of qualitative data quality, alongside trustworthiness, auditability, and credibility. While this research focuses specifically on the office context, the thesis provides a detailed description of the phenomenon under study, the methodological process (including the researcher's reflexivity), and the characteristics of the participants. This thorough detailing enables other researchers to extrapolate the findings to different professional environments, as supported by Polit and Beck (2014).

## **4.11 Ethical Considerations**

A small number of ethical considerations and dilemmas were encountered during this study. Firstly, during an interview, the researcher discovered that, like herself, one of the participants had recently experienced the death of their dog. The ethical obligation to avoid causing harm to either party necessitated sensitive handling of this situation. From a transactional analysis (Hay, 2009) perspective, it was crucial to ascertain if

both parties were in an ‘I’m OK, you’re OK’ position and if moving forward with the interview was in the best interests of both, which in this case it was. Secondly, the process of selecting participant extracts presented an ethical dilemma regarding how much detail to disclose about participants’ job roles and sectors. Achieving a balance between enriching the extracts and maintaining participant confidentiality was paramount. This was particularly important given the potential overlap of organisations among participants. As previously mentioned, three participants were affiliated with the same organisation, which introduced additional ethical considerations. To uphold the BPS Ethical Principles, the researcher adhered to the Chatham House Rule to create an environment that fostered open and candid discussions, while protecting the anonymity of the participants. To further address this issue, the study avoided revealing extensive organisational details and used gender-neutral pseudonyms. While this approach preserved anonymity, it may have introduced a degree of depersonalisation to the accounts. Future researchers should consider obtaining explicit participant permission to share more demographic information to enhance study comprehension. A final ethical consideration relates to the photographs shared by the participants with the researcher. Written consent was obtained for the use of all the materials within this thesis/

## **4.12 Future Research**

This study employed semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis to explore discourse on dog-friendly offices. Future research could extend this study by continuing to leverage the multi-disciplinary backgrounds of the participants. One approach is to use a participatory action research approach (PAR), which involves researchers and participants working together to understand a problem and produce knowledge. The objective would be to develop a multi-disciplinary toolkit to support organisational decision-making in the design, implementation, and evaluation of dog-friendly practices in UK offices. This method builds on Leask's (2019) work, which promotes the participation of affected individuals in the research process, an approach also adopted by Raynor (2019) in their work with early-career researchers.

An alternative avenue for future research could involve recruiting a small number of organisations considering the adoption of companion-dog-friendly practices to participate in a six-month mixed-methods longitudinal study. Pre- and post-implementation standardised measures could evaluate constructs identified in the current study. This could be in parallel with observational studies examining the day-to-day impact of dog presence in the office. By combining existing qualitative interviews with new quantitative surveys and observational data, a more comprehensive understanding of the subject could be achieved, thereby advancing knowledge in this domain.

## **4.13 Implications for Theory and Practice**

### **4.13.1 Implications for Theory**

In 2020, Norgate and Cooper called for the integration of science and policy to design flexible working for future healthier lives. They argued that for flexible working to be successful, employees need more control over how and where they work. The landscape of flexible work has evolved, along with the existing body of empirical literature, which now considers flexible work practices in relation to different age groups (Atkinson, 2020; Kotey & Wark, 2020), blended families (Schaefer et al., 2020), and individuals with visible and invisible disabilities (Giovanis & Ozdamur, 2020). Despite these advances, there remains a need to consider employees who are recovering from the impact of the pandemic. This study suggests that dog-friendly workplaces should be acknowledged by researchers, practitioners, and organisations as a form of flexible working. There is potential for dog-friendly practices to contribute to the design of healthier lives for individuals and new work patterns under the right circumstances.

In terms of opportunities for theory building, while Kelemen et al. (2020) recommended employing the

person-environment fit theory (Edwards et al., 1998) to investigate the positive impacts of pet-friendly policies, this study's findings suggest that the theory of work adjustment (TWA; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984) may be more suitable. The foundational concepts of TWA are to seek and maintain satisfaction and satisfactoriness (Woodend, 2019). Proponents of TWA emphasise the reciprocal relationship between individuals and their work environments (Bizot, 1993), which is useful for predicting the "maintenance of tenure" between individuals and those environments (Woodend, 2019, p. 498). Although TWA encompasses broader variables, this study's findings align with two out of the six key strands of TWA, indicating that the presence of dogs in the work environment influences a) the level of comfort and reduced stress, and b) the safety of a dependable and predictable work setting for some, under the right conditions.

This study's findings are congruent with the rich body of literature on the links between emotional support animals and improvements in individual mental, emotional, and physical health (Hoy-Gerlach et al., 2022), and their contributions to enhanced security levels (Canady, 2020). Pertinent to this, the discourse from two leader participants in this study underlined the role of companion dogs in supporting workforce members still dealing with the aftermath of the pandemic. These leaders posited that dogs can offer emotional support in ways that may transcend human limitations. Similarly, most participants shared accounts of emotional well-being enhanced by their companion dogs, to the benefit of both themselves and the wider team. Given the role of companion dogs in augmenting individual well-being, there is a compelling argument to suggest they could serve as a factor in the work adjustment process.

#### **4.13.2 Implications for Practice**

Schwartz (2021) highlighted the unique opportunity presented by the COVID-19 pandemic to reimagine work practices. Similarly, Hill and Hill (2021) have asserted that the pandemic has led to two realisations for organisations: that they can enact rapid change and remove barriers to flexible working. It is anticipated that this study's findings will inform decision-makers who are contemplating the adoption of pet-friendly practices in their organisations, encouraging them to explore the potential benefits within their specific context. These findings provide a rationale for organisations that are congruent with dog-friendly practices to consider the inclusion of companion dogs as a component in a progressive well-being strategy and as a reasonable adjustment.

The ACAS (2023) guidance on reasonable adjustments for mental health at work suggests that simple changes to people's working arrangements could be enough to help them remain in their roles and perform well. The term 'reasonable' in this context pertains to whether the adjustment can effectively remove or mitigate disadvantages, as well as whether it is both practical and affordable to implement. Implementing

pet-friendly practices emerges as a cost-effective strategy, significantly benefiting both individual employees and teams, while also signalling an organisation's commitment to employee well-being. The evidence collected in this study indicates that, with the appropriate planning and support, pet-friendly practices are straightforward to implement. However, when considering potential reasonable adjustments, there is a need to consider the safety of others (ACAS, 2023).

The findings of the present study indicate that it would be useful to conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise, as outlined by Barends and Rousseau (2018, p. 231), before implementing dog-friendly practices. This exercise would aim to ascertain: 1) the individuals who could affect this decision, its implementation, or its outcomes; 2) those potentially affected by the decision; 3) individuals who may experience harm from this decision; and 4) those who stand to benefit from the decision to adopt pet-friendly office practices.

#### **4.14 Summary and Conclusion**

Dog-friendly offices can play a significant role in positive psychosocial outcomes for dog owners and their colleagues. They should be seen as a legitimate component of flexible working practices and a potential workplace adjustment. For pet-friendly practices to be sustainable, there needs to be congruence between the organisation's culture and pet-friendly practices. Dog owners must maintain full accountability for their dogs and demonstrate responsible ownership. Perceived problems can be mitigated by effective planning and agreeing on boundary conditions between impacted stakeholders. A stepwise, multi-disciplinary approach with representation from all impacted stakeholders should be taken for the design, implementation, and evaluation of dog-friendly practices to mitigate potential risks.

The next chapter (Chapter 5: Conclusion) seeks to amalgamate the overall thesis by offering an overview of the findings spanning both the systematic literature review (Chapter 3) and the empirical study (Chapter 4), as well as discussing the overall contributions, strengths and limitations, and the implications of this thesis as a whole for theory, research, and practice.



# **Chapter 5: Implications of Research for Future Theory, Research, and Practice**

The aim of this concluding chapter is to bring together the findings and insights from the preceding four chapters. This chapter revisits the research aims and research questions to assess the extent to which the thesis objectives have been met. It provides a summarised synthesis of the key findings from both Study 1, the systematic literature review, and Study 2, the empirical study (as shown in Table 8). It highlights the contribution to knowledge, and the creation of a Conceptual Model: Antecedents and Outcomes of Dog-Friendly Practices (Figure 12), as well as the Procedural Step Diagram for the Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Companion Dog-Friendly Office Interventions (Figure 13a) and the Framework for the Integration of Companion Dogs in Office Settings (Figure 13b). Lastly, the chapter outlines avenues for future research before providing a summary.

## **5.1 Restatement of the Aims of This Thesis**

In Study 1, a systematic literature review was carried out to establish what is known about the effects of companion (or pet) dogs in the workplace. The review also provided an update on the state of the literature since Wilkin et al.'s (2016) narrative review, which emphasised the speculative nature of the benefits associated with pet-friendly practices.

Study 2 aimed to address some of the gaps identified in the systematic literature review. It explored the experiences of 14 participants, including subject matter experts, leaders, and individuals, all of whom had lived experience of working in dog-friendly offices. This study had several interrelated objectives. First, it aimed to elicit perceptions of the benefits and outcomes of dog-friendly offices. Second, it identified the perceived antecedents required for sustainable pet-friendly office practices. Third, it explored how perceived problems have been overcome and risks minimised. Finally, it sought to increase understanding of the resources required to assist decision-makers in the development, implementation, and evaluation of companion dog-friendly offices and practices. The following section begins by presenting a synthesis of findings from both studies, presented in a table format.

## **5.2 Synthesis of Findings From Both Studies**

Table 8, below, includes the high-level findings from Study 1 (the systematic literature review) and Study 2 (the empirical study), mapped against the SPIO Framework.

**Table 8: Summary of Findings from Study 1 and Study 2**

	<b>STUDY 1 (SLR)</b>	<b>STUDY 2 (EMPIRICAL STUDY)</b>
<b>Study Aims</b>	To understand what is known in the scientific literature about the effect of pet dogs in the workplace.	To explore Pet-Friendly Offices Post-Pandemic: What Works, What Does Not, and What Lessons Can Be Learned.
<b>Method</b>	A Systematic Literature Review of an initial 318 peer-reviewed papers.	A qualitative research study using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019). The mean length of the semi-structured interviews was 49 minutes, with the shortest at 26 minutes and the longest at 71 minutes.
<b>Participant Sample</b>	Nine peer-reviewed papers were identified by the researcher that met the predefined inclusion criteria.	Fourteen participants who had lived experience of working in a companion dog-friendly offices.
<b>Guidance to Inform Evidence-based Decision Making and Real-World Decisions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A paucity of studies which provide evidence-based guidance, largely confined to pro/con analysis.</li> <li>• Existing staged approaches are overly simplistic and exclude animal agency.</li> <li>• A lack of evidence of how perceived challenges have been overcome and risks minimised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence-based guidance in forming a stepwise approach on how to design, implement and evaluate dog friendly office practices, balancing human and animal agency.</li> <li>• This study elicited the antecedents for sustainable dog-friendly office practices (mediated by the participants realities).</li> </ul>
<b>Theme: The Psychosocial Impact of Dog Presence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dog owners who regularly take their dogs to work reported high levels of well-being.</li> <li>• Pet owners who have strong bonds with their pets and work from home experience positive affect.</li> <li>• Companion dogs serve as a “forcing” function to promote exercise and movement.</li> <li>• If the work environment lacks support or tolerance, owners can feel stressed about their dogs’ negative behaviours.</li> <li>• Can enhance social cohesion.</li> <li>• Enhanced quality of life.</li> <li>• The literature indicates that pet-friendly practices positively influence well-being through organisational identification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An emotional support for all in a post pandemic world and a constant, reliable presence.</li> <li>• Individuals viewed pet-friendly workplaces as a mechanism to protect against VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) factors.</li> <li>• Almost all non-dog owners recognised the benefits of dog friendly workplaces to their well-being.</li> <li>• Dogs are a forcing function to take breaks, enhancing physiological well-being, and also provide the opportunity “to reset”.</li> <li>• Dog-friendly practices are a factor in conserving resources and protecting financial well-being.</li> <li>• Dogs can foster relationships, enhance social bonds and improve office morale.</li> </ul>

**Table 8: Summary of Findings from Study 1 and Study 2 (continued)**

	STUDY 1 (SLR)	STUDY 2 (EMPIRICAL STUDY)
<b>Theme: Organisational Congruence with Dog-Friendly Office Status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An authentic alignment between organisational culture and dog-friendly practices is an antecedent for sustainable practices.</li> <li>• A trial and error mentality.</li> <li>• Dog-friendly offices can serve as a mechanism to signal organisational values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational Congruence with Dog-friendly office status is an antecedent for sustainable practice.</li> <li>• Culture and Climate: Pet-friendly practices align with progressive organisations that are attuned to the “future of work.”</li> <li>• Fixed schemas that dogs do not belong in the office are a barrier to sustainable practices.</li> <li>• Dog Friendly practices can be an extension of Flexible Working.</li> <li>• Dog Friendly practices are a valid reasonable adjustment.</li> <li>• Leaders perceived dog-friendly workplaces as a means to moderate post-pandemic challenges.</li> <li>• Pet friendly practices can lead to an additional layer of complexity for leaders, needing to deal with ‘pet parents’ and pet related grievances.</li> <li>• A trial and error mentality.</li> </ul>
<b>Theme: Power Dynamics Engendered by Dog-Friendly Offices</b>	<p>The Systematic Literature Review did not elicit findings on the interplay between dog-friendly offices and stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An antecedent for sustainable practices is understanding the influence of power dynamics on dog-friendly practices.</li> <li>• It requires effective relationship building and management with internal, external, and connected stakeholders, understanding:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the stakeholders who can affect the decision to implement dog-friendly offices,</li> <li>2) who could be affected by the decision,</li> <li>3) who may experience harm from the decision,</li> <li>4) who could benefit from the decision.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• An antecedent for sustainable practices is for people to feel empowered to speak up.</li> <li>• Draconian rules are a threat to dog owners’ psychological safety.</li> <li>• There is a need to involve detractors in decision-making processes.</li> </ul>

**Table 8: Summary of Findings from Study 1 and Study 2 (continued)**

	STUDY 1 (SLR)	STUDY 2 (EMPIRICAL STUDY)
<b>Theme: Forethought and Expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of organisations lack formal policies.</li> <li>• Health and Safety can be used as a knee-jerk response to justify a “no”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The absence of policies and agreed-upon expectations leads to serious complications.</li> <li>• Dog-friendly offices are closely intertwined with the psychological contract between employers and employees, as well as perceptions of justice.</li> <li>• A lack of boundaries and proactive mitigations is a risk to the well-being of individuals who prefer a dog-free environment.</li> <li>• Workplace safety and risk management: There is a responsibility to ensure that all employees feel physically and psychologically safe, including addressing potential risks associated with dogs in the workplace.</li> <li>• Dogs’ well-being/zoonotic considerations need an evidence-based plan.</li> <li>• There is a responsibility at all levels to safeguard the well-being of animals and monitor effectively.</li> </ul>
<b>Presentation to the Outside World</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a pet-friendly status signals an employee brand and values.</li> <li>• Employees identify with organisations that have similar values (person-environment fit).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dog-friendly offices can serve as a mechanism to signal the organisation’s values and a readiness to meet employees’ needs.</li> <li>• Dog-friendly workplaces are a factor in job choice.</li> <li>• Poorly implemented pet-friendly practices can impact perceived levels of professionalism.</li> </ul>
<b>Continuous Responsibility</b>	The Systematic Literature Review did not elicit any findings on the link between responsible ownership and sustainable practices.	A readiness to take full accountability for the dog and its behaviour is a key antecedent for sustainable practice.
<b>Design of Work Environments</b>	The Systematic Literature Review did not elicit any findings relating to the design of environments and sustainable practices.	Minimal adaptations can minimise disruption for both humans and dogs in the workplace.
<b>Productivity</b>	The evidence regarding pet-friendly practices and their impact on productivity is mixed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dog owners feel they can focus better when their dogs are with them.</li> <li>• When dogs become the focal point, they can detract from organisational priorities and “steal time” from work activities.</li> <li>• Dogs should not be treated as mere spectacles; people need to move beyond the novelty aspect and allow for a settled environment for both humans and dogs.</li> </ul>

**Table 8: Summary of Findings from Study 1 and Study 2 (continued)**

	STUDY 1 (SLR)	STUDY 2 (EMPIRICAL STUDY)
<b>Work Engagement and Commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees who frequently bring their dogs to work reported higher levels of vigour, dedication, absorption, and total work engagement.</li> <li>• There is a positive influence on job satisfaction and work climate due to pet-friendly practices.</li> <li>• A reduced intent to leave a role which supports pet-friendly practices.</li> </ul>	New “progressive” work patterns that support work-life balance and accommodate pet ownership are viewed as maximising people’s potential.

### 5.2.1 Findings From Study 1: Systematic Literature Review

Study 1 was a systematic literature review aimed at providing an analysis of the current research on the impact of companion dogs on employees and the workplace. A search was conducted across six databases. Of the 318 papers considered, only nine met the specified inclusion criteria. Perhaps due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the peer-reviewed papers, the psychological theories underpinning the research were not always made explicit. The studies that were underpinned by psychological theory demonstrated heterogeneity. Theories included social support theory (Williams, Barclay, & Schmied, 2004) social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976), social responsibility theory (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, 1956), organisational commitment (Becker, 1960), conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2011), organisational identification (Tavares, 2016) and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). Additionally, most papers focused on well-being (Ryff, 1989; Van Katwyk et al., 2000) and, to a lesser extent, work-related quality of life (Mayo, 1960), and work engagement (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter and Taris, 2008).

Overall, the findings of Study 1 offer promising evidence that the presence of companion dogs in workplaces can have a positive impact on the well-being of dog owners and non-dog-owners. The benefits are particularly pronounced for dog owners who regularly take their dogs to work. The review also highlighted how important it is for individuals with a strong attachment to their pets to be able to remain in close proximity to them.

The findings emphasised the lack of formal policies in place and highlighted individual differences in terms of risk perceptions associated with dog-friendly work environments. It was suggested that 'health and safety'

may serve as a convenient pretext for prohibiting pet-friendly practices. There was evidence that dogs can add responsibilities and, at times, be a burden for both owners and colleagues. Dog-friendly practices can serve as a mechanism to communicate an organisation's values and readiness to meet employee needs. There was encouraging evidence that dog-friendly practices influence levels of engagement through increased organisational commitment and identification.

A surprising finding was that employees who frequently brought their dogs to work reported higher levels of work engagement, including vigour, dedication, and absorption, as conceptualised by Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) model, compared to dog owners who brought their dogs to work less frequently or not at all.

One small-scale study by Wagner and Cunha (2022) provided insights into the antecedents required both at the organisational level and amongst team members. The findings indicated a need for the organisation to have a flexible organisational culture and policies, a willingness to engage in trial-and-error practices, and open communication, as well as the willingness to allow for autonomy in job design.

### **5.2.2 Limitations of the Systematic Literature Review**

The reviewed studies were assessed to be a mixture of moderate, low, and – in some cases – very low quality. The level of confidence that can be attributed to these study findings was limited by several constraints: relevance, methodological limitations, coherence, and adequacy. Regarding study relevance, it is important to reaffirm that the phenomenon of interest was companion dogs. However, four studies included a broader range of pets, while one incorporated assistance and working dogs that had received specialised training. Therefore, it could be suggested that the samples were not fully representative of the target population. Additionally, the perspectives were largely from dog owners, neglecting non-dog-owners, the rest of the working population, and those with legitimate concerns. One study included university students in a sample with university employees. This may not represent the working population, posing generalisability concerns. Furthermore, some studies were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic with individuals working from home, potentially limiting their relevance and replicability.

All of the studies were cross-sectional, and so lacked a temporal dimension. As such, the synthesised body of evidence cannot identify cause and effect. It was often difficult to ascertain the researchers' epistemology and how this may have influenced their findings. Regarding adequacy, several studies were atheoretical, focusing on pros, cons, attitudes and, to a lesser extent, experiences. This could be seen as 'thin data',

lacking sufficient detail for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest, making it challenging to synthesise the findings. While there was some evidence of antecedents at the team and organisation levels, the requirements of dog owners to support sustainable pet-friendly practices remained unclear. The nine studies were heterogeneous in terms of the phenomenon of interest, settings, and participants. There was also a lack of consideration of animal agency and what was in the best interest of the animals across the studies, although Hall and Mills (2017) considered the link between dog health issues, anxious attachment, and frequency of dog's presence in the workplace.

There is still a need to explore real-life experiences, how perceived challenges have been effectively addressed, and risks minimised, using a qualitative approach. Looking across the whole dataset, it is difficult to ascertain what works, for whom, and under what circumstances. The existing evidence base is not equipped to support evidence-informed decision-making.

### **5.3 Findings From Study 2: Empirical Study**

The empirical research study aimed to examine dog-friendly offices in a post-pandemic context to explore what works, what does not, and what lessons can be learned. It had several aims. First, to understand the perceived outcomes of pet-friendly practices, including benefits and disadvantages. Second, to explore the perceived antecedents of sustainable pet-friendly practices. Third, to understand how perceived problems have been overcome and risks minimised. Finally, to explore what resources employees perceive as being necessary for decision-makers to develop and implement dog-friendly workplaces.

The participants, all of whom had lived experience of a minimum of six months working in an office which supported companion dog-friendly practices, comprised a purposive sample. They included subject matter experts, veterinarians, clinical animal behaviourists, HR professionals, leaders, and employees. Diverse views about dog-friendly practices were encouraged. The video interviews were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The empirical findings will now be discussed in accordance with the study's sub-research questions, incorporating findings from Study 1 where appropriate.

## **5.4 Research Question: What are the Perceived Outcomes of Dog-Friendly Practices?**

### **5.4.1 The Psychosocial Impact of Dog Presence**

This thesis provides further evidence to suggest that companion animals have a positive impact on perceptions of psychosocial support, social cohesion, subjective well-being, and psychological well-being, as previously reported by Wagner and Cunha (2021) and Junça-Silva (2022). Perhaps reflecting its post-COVID-19 context, a salient finding in this study is the amplified importance placed on the role of dogs in providing psychosocial support. Most participants in the present study felt that their companion dogs made important contributions to office life, contrasting with findings in the systematic review, which suggested they could be burdensome (Wagner & Cunha, 2021). Rather than viewing dogs as a distraction, the need to attend to dogs' basic needs was viewed by many participants in the current study as an opportunity to 'reset', forcing owners to take a break and instil balance in their workday. Introducing more breaks into the working day is a broad intervention for improving well-being (Tinline & Davis, 2023). The concept that dogs in the workplace provide opportunities for owners and colleagues to go for walks was mentioned by Hall et al. (2017) although, due to limitations of their study design, this was not explored in terms of psychosocial outcomes.

Participants' ability to bring their dogs to work alleviated the pressure of needing to find alternative care and feelings of guilt when the dog had to be left alone. Individuals with a high degree of attachment to their dogs felt that they could relax when their dogs were near. This aligns with the findings of Junça Silva et al. (2022), who suggested that working alongside dogs can enhance self-perceived performance for individuals who have a high degree of attachment to their pets.

Well-being at work has never had a higher profile (Tinline & Davis, 2023). This was evident in the accounts of the leaders within the participant group, who discussed the challenges of managing a vulnerable post-pandemic workforce. Companion dogs were seen as capable of transcending emotional barriers, and expressing affection in ways that employees might have hesitated to do, given concerns about personal boundaries and political correctness. The findings suggest that the benefits of dog presence extend even to non-dog-owning colleagues. Dogs were credited as having a role in fostering relationships with colleagues with whom individuals may otherwise not have sought to form a connection.



The findings suggest that, for many, companion dogs made an invaluable contribution by providing unwavering companionship and non-judgment which, in some cases, assisted employees in navigating personal challenges. Dogs were viewed as a constant and reliable presence in a time of uncertainty. It is pertinent to consider whether companion dogs could be used as a resource to support their owners and help them deal with job demands. It was found that pet-friendly workplaces can help support employee financial well-being, an aspect acknowledged for its significant impact on overall welfare (Hesketh & Cooper, 2019). The insight, which has not appeared in previous literature, broadens our understanding by suggesting that dog-friendly practices not only hold potential consequences for employees' financial stability but could have a bearing on their overall well-being, particularly in a time of economic downturn, when resources are threatened. This finding strengthens the business case for pet-friendly practices.

#### **5.4.2 Presentation to the Outside World**

This thesis provides a greater understanding of dog presence and its role in external communication, both pros and cons. Positive discourse from participants indicated that a dog-friendly culture helped to convey the company's narrative, resonating with the person-environment fit theory (Edwards, 2008). Several participants also suggested that pet-friendly practices transmitted ideas about progressive leadership within the organisation.

The implementation of pet-friendly policies was interpreted as a sign that the organisation was supportive. The communication of associated benefits, such as offering healthcare benefits related to pets, was interpreted as an indication that the organisation cared about what its employees valued. Although participants did not go as far as suggesting that pet-friendly practices were synonymous with communicating corporate social responsibility, which was one of the focuses of Sousa et al.'s study (2022), findings suggested a readiness to flex to meet employees' needs, changes in their lifestyle, and new priorities, as mentioned in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Pet-friendly practices have the potential to attract new talent and minimise the risk of attrition. However, if such practices are poorly implemented or monitored, as illustrated by Alex's account, there is a risk to the organisation's reputation and perceptions of professionalism.

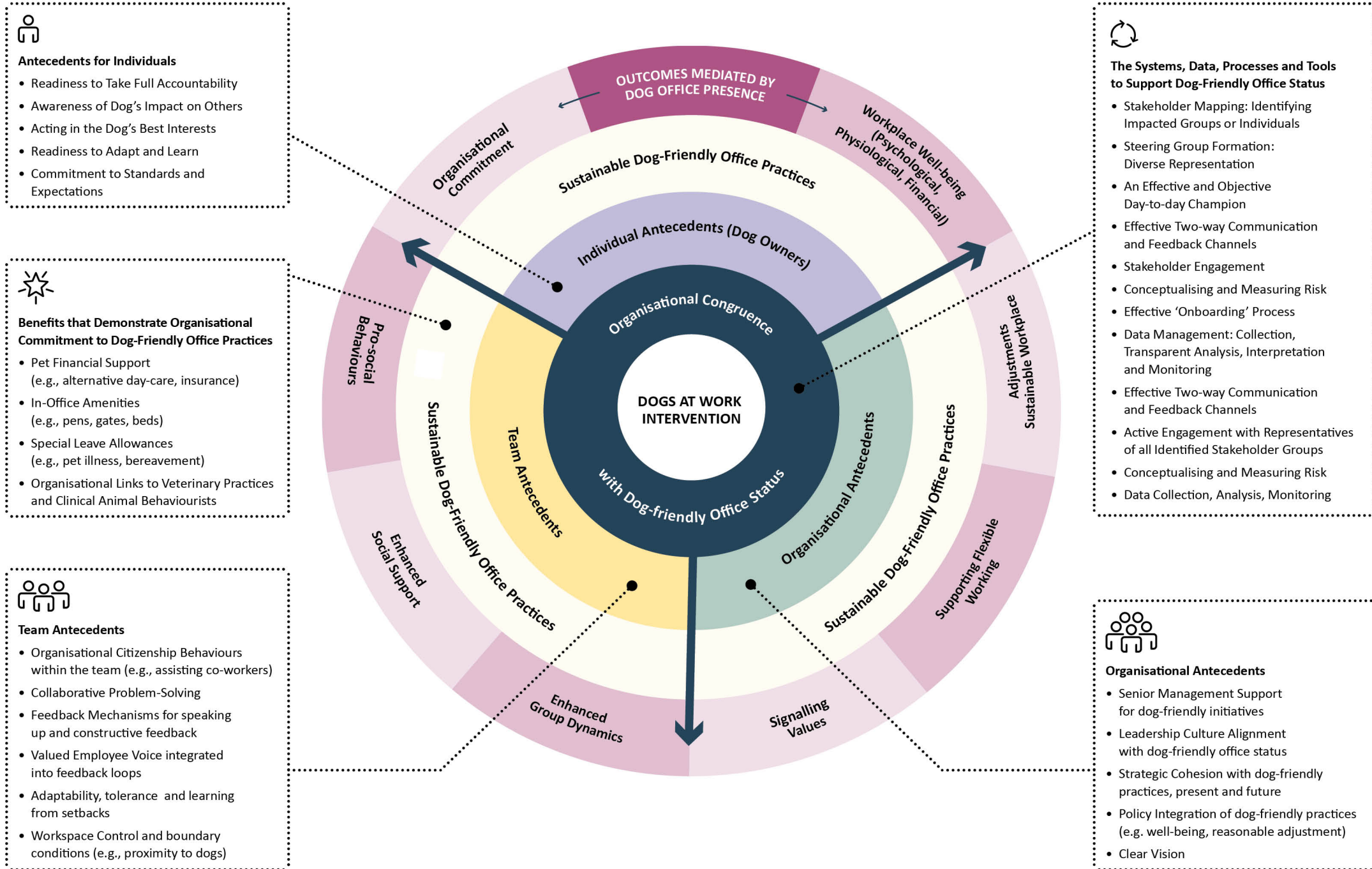
## **5.5 Research Question: The Perceived Antecedents for Sustainable Dog-Friendly Practices**

An important contribution of this thesis is the construction of a conceptual model of antecedents and outcomes of dog-friendly office practices (Figure 12; Warrilow, 2023). This is based on the synthesised findings from Study 1 and Study 2.

The model shows how the antecedents and outcomes fit together and guide the initiatives needed across individual, team, organisation, and system levels to support a dog-friendly office. At the core of the model is the need for organisational congruence with dog-friendly office status. Additional antecedents are broken down into antecedents for individuals, antecedents for groups, and antecedents for the organisation.

The outer circle of the model highlights the potential benefits that can be realised when the antecedents are in place, as identified from the synthesised findings of Studies 1 and 2. These antecedents are discussed in turn in this section.

**Figure 12: A Conceptual Model: Antecedents and Outcomes of Dog-Friendly Practices (Warrilow, 2023)**



### **5.5.1 Organisational Congruence With Dog-Friendly Practices**

In agreement with Wagner and Cunha (2021), for pet-friendly practices to be sustainable, there must be an authentic alignment between the organisation's culture, its leaders, and pet-friendly practices. Risks to the sustainability of pet-friendly practices may arise when leaders who have a fragile affinity with these policies perceive a negative correlation between pet-friendly practices and employee goal-related behaviour.

Participant discourse suggested that an affinity exists between a progressive organisational culture and sustainable pet-friendly practices. It is conceded that pet-friendly practices can introduce a level of complexity for leaders. However, sustainability is enhanced if there is a commitment to teams solving issues together, and if team members do not have a fixed schema that dogs intrinsically do not belong in the workplace.

Participant discourse also reflected the evolving nature of organisations. It was suggested that organisations which were downsizing their office space to embrace flexible working practices, as well as those that were scaling up staff numbers in the same office space, had complicated organisational congruence with pet-friendly practices. Thus, congruence with both present and future organisational goals and strategic direction is necessary.

### **5.5.2 Dog-Owners' Need to Demonstrate Continuous Responsibility**

This thesis enhances our understanding of what is needed from dog owners to support sustainable practices. In concurrence with the findings of Cunha and Wagner (2021), who highlighted that dogs add responsibility, this study identified 'continuous responsibility' as a key theme. Interestingly, both non-dog-owners and dog owners expressed the view that dog owners may not always consider the impact of their pets on others. Thus, responsible ownership entails a reflective and responsible approach. While at work, responsible ownership necessitates maintaining a reliable chain of supervision for dogs, avoiding burdening colleagues excessively, and monitoring the dog's well-being.

The responsibility also extends to the dog owner's duty to provide an environment where their dogs can thrive and, even before entering the office, consider the impact of the journey to work on the dog. Owners must be willing to recognise and accept when their dogs' presence in the work environment is detrimental to the dog, themselves, and others.

## **5.6 Research Question: What Lessons Have Been Learned?**

### **5.6.1 The Need to Deal with Power Dynamics**

This study highlighted an additional factor which has not been previously explored in the literature. Those initiating dog-friendly practices need to be cognisant of stakeholders, both inside and outside their organisation, who may be affected by the decision to adopt pet-friendly practices. It is important to consider who may benefit, who may be harmed, who else could be affected, and who could affect the decision, its implementation, or its outcomes. For some participants, this entailed negotiating directly or indirectly with building owners and commercial cleaners, who were perceived as having the authority to stop the practices.

Participants shared lessons learned about ensuring that all individuals across the hierarchy need a time and place to be able to share their concerns and provide feedback on their perceptions of pet-friendly practices. Mechanisms must be put in place to manage challenging dynamics and minimise the risk of 'them and us' types of divisions, reminiscent of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). The way pet-friendly practices were implemented made some participants feel excluded from certain areas of their office, impairing their ability to do their roles.

For leaders, pet-friendly practices can bring a level of complexity pertaining to the challenges of managing 'pet parents' and the need to disentangle issues. The ability to traverse diverse dyads is essential for fostering sustainable dog-friendly working practices.

### **5.6.2 The Need for Forethought and Agreeing Expectations**

Distinct from the studies considered in the systematic literature review, this current study identified boundary setting to be a critical factor in sustainable pet-friendly practices. Specifically, it was recognised that individuals who were less inclined towards dogs in the workplace needed to feel empowered to set their own boundaries. Additionally, those boundaries must be respected.

Boundaries played a key role in reducing anxiety and mitigating potential risks. Clear delineation of these boundaries provided dog owners with a sense of understanding and clarity around where the line should be drawn. Lessons learned from participants touched on how the 'onboarding' of new dogs can impact existing office dynamics. This necessitates a stepped approach as well as patience and tolerance from all parties involved.

There is also a need for leaders to navigate additional employee expectations relating to the psychological contract. To minimise the risk of breaching the psychological contract defined by Rousseau as “individual beliefs in a reciprocal obligation between the individual and their organisation” (1989, p. 121), there is a need to be clear with employees and agree on expectations and consequences from the outset. In retrospect, the leaders in the sample wished they had set the expectation that benefiting from an organisation offering dog-friendly practices is a perk, rather than a right.

The findings also highlighted a potential tension arising from resource scarcity, linked to realistic conflict theory (Sherif, 1966) where competition for limited resources could breed hostility. As more employees expressed a wish to bring their dogs to work, those who already benefitted from the practice grew concerned that, instead of their dogs accompanying them daily, they would be expected to adhere to a ‘rota system’ in order to share resources (e.g. office space, desks, or pens ring-fenced for owners and dogs) with other owners. This presents a risk to the psychological contract with original pet owners and must be considered in implementation plans.

There was a surprising lack of policies relating to dogs in the workplace in participants’ organisations. One participant highlighted the lessons learned when they had to tell a dog owner that they could no longer bring their dog to work. This participant found that there were no processes or procedures to support the difficult conversation and, ultimately, the difficult actions. A lack of policies leads to complications which can escalate.

One participant recounted how they had supported their organisation in dealing with a zoonotic disease; that is, “any disease or infection that is naturally transmissible from vertebrate to humans” (WHO, 2020). Their discourse highlighted the importance of planning ahead, developing robust procedures and processes, and utilising existing links between their organisation and subject matter experts, in this case, a veterinarian. These embedded plans and processes enabled the participant to manage the incident and follow the necessary actions in a timely manner, containing the issue.

## **5.7 The Required Resources for Decision-Makers in the Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of Companion Dog-Friendly Office Practices**

The systematic literature review identified a lack of evidence to support individuals deciding whether their organisations should adopt dog-friendly practices and how to go about it. To address this gap, this study included a research sub-question regarding the resources perceived as necessary by employees for the

development and implementation of dog-friendly workplaces, drawing on the knowledge, skills, attributes, and lived experiences of the study participants.

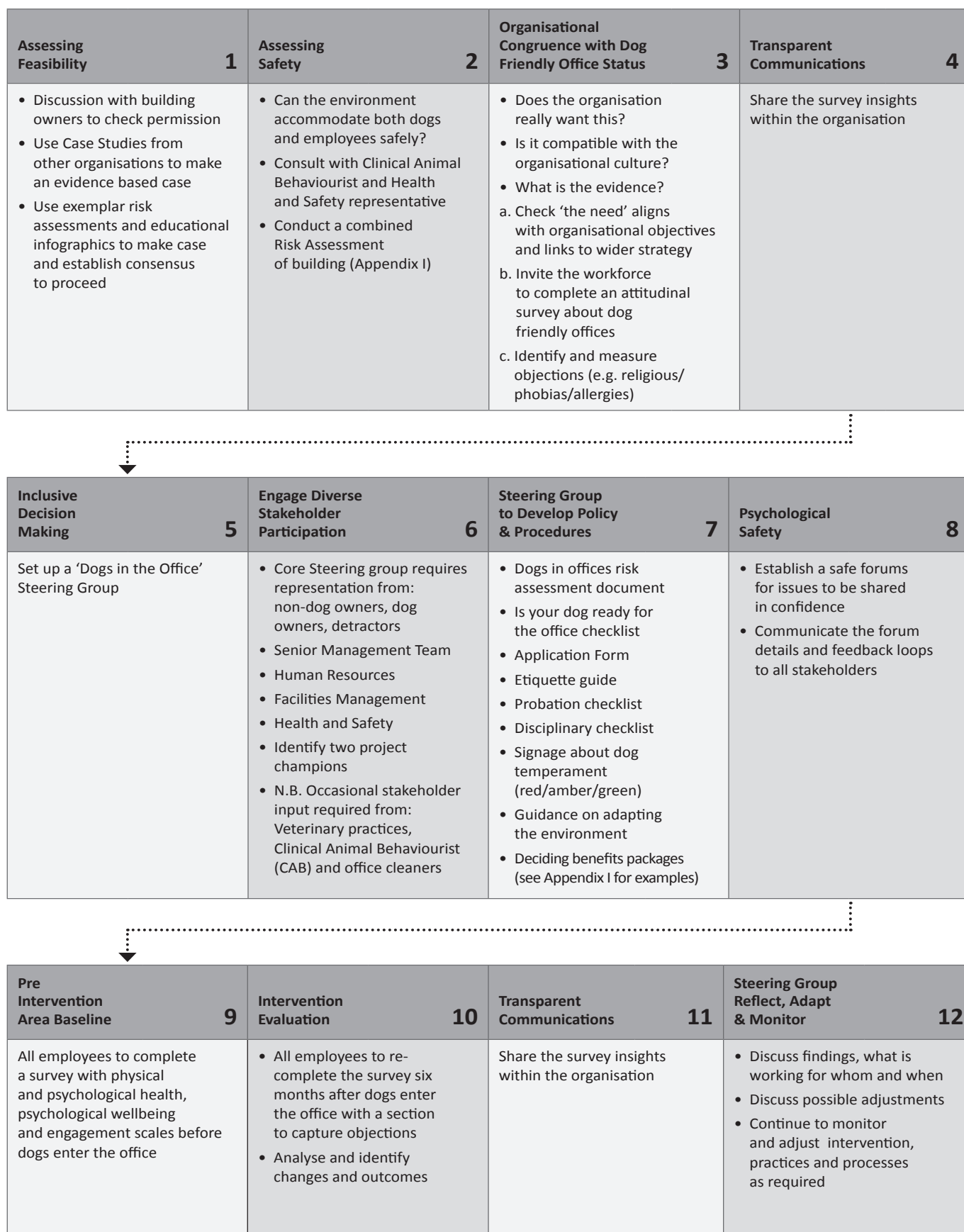
### **5.7.1 Procedural Step Diagram for the Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Companion Dog-Friendly Office interventions**

The lived experiences of the multi-disciplinary participants in Study 2 suggest the process is more intricate than Hall et al. (2017) depicted, as discussed in Chapter 3. Figure 13a reflects the mediated realities of the participants who participated in Study 2. It includes additional considerations such as psychological health, psychological well-being, engagement scales, and attitudes toward dogs. The 12- step diagram also incorporates strategies for organisational reflection on the congruence between its cultural practices, probing the evidence, and the 'need'. It suggests mechanisms for measuring attitudes and objections and advocates for a multi-disciplinary steering group which includes both key members and those from whom it is important to have occasional input and two-way communication.

The diagram in Figure 13a emphasises monitoring the well-being of all and analysing the impact of dogs on all office employees with pre- and post-measures. This step could provide evidence for an interesting case study. It also highlights the need to reflect, adapt, and monitor, making this a working diagram which could evolve to meet changing needs, rather than a static process, as in Hall et al.'s (2017) model (depicted in Figure 5 in Chapter 3).

Policies and procedures for the implementation and evaluation phases of a dog-friendly intervention are detailed in Step 7 of the model referred to as Figure 13a, with examples of these documents provided by a Clinical Animal Behaviourist in Appendix I.

**Figure 13a: Procedural Step Diagram for the Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Companion Dog-Friendly Office Interventions (Warrilow, 2023)**



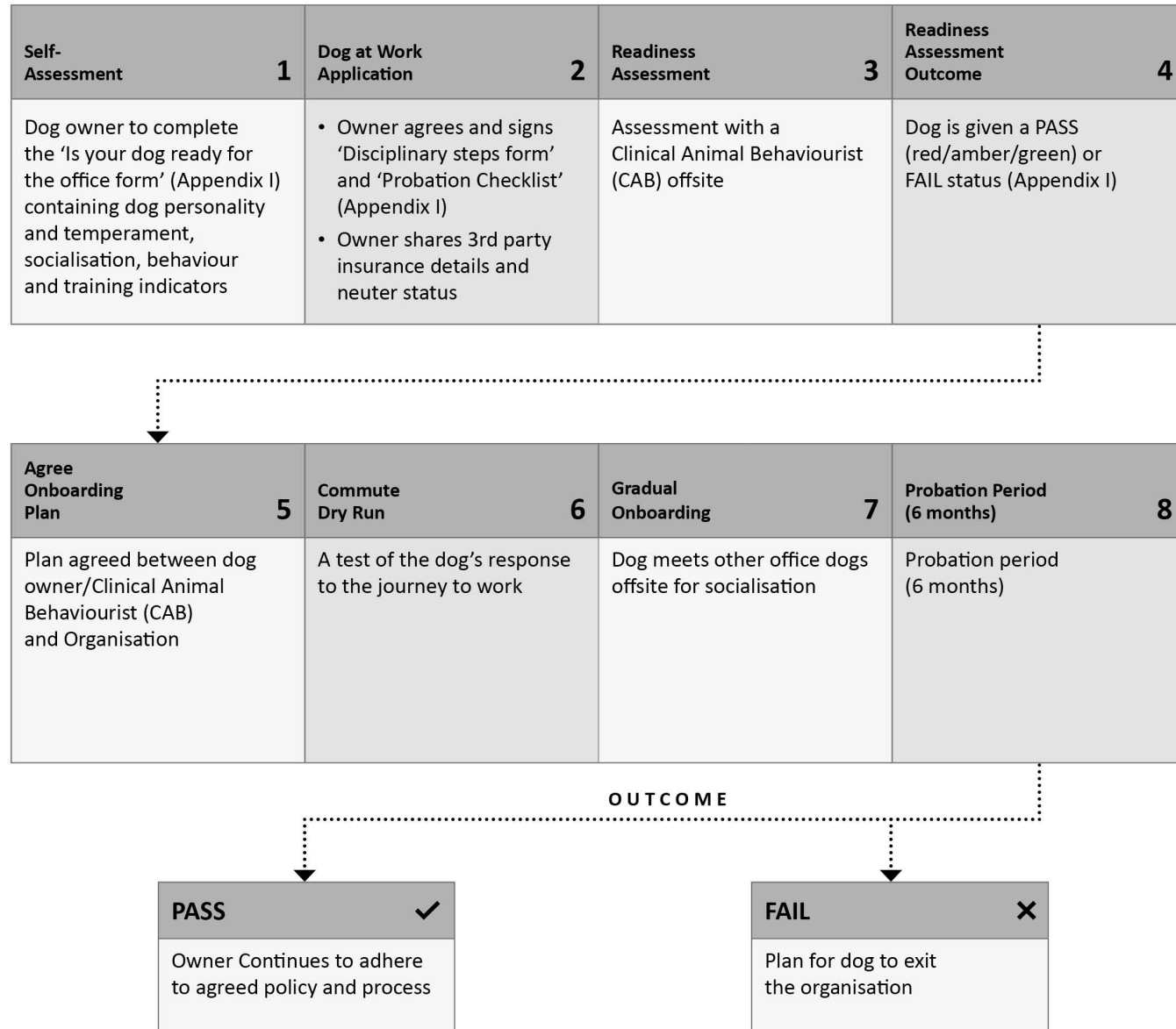


### **5.7.2 An Onboarding Process for Companion Dogs in the Workplace**

The practical considerations around how to plan to bring dogs into the work environment were not addressed in the studies in the systematic literature review. However, plans are needed for a smooth integration. Only a few participants felt equipped to judge whether a companion dog was suitable for the environment in terms of readiness and temperament, yet there were few controls or processes to guide such decisions in participants' organisations. One of the reflexive thematic analysis codes which was in the cluster that formed theme 6 – 'forethoughts and expectations' – was titled 'integration of dogs needs time and consideration'. Participant discourse highlighted the lessons learned when an ad hoc approach had been taken.

The participants' accounts, particularly from human resources professionals, clinical animal behaviourists, and veterinarians, informed the 8-step process (Figure 13b) for onboarding dogs into the office environment. This is a new and important contribution to practice.

**Figure 14**



## **5.8 Strengths and Limitations**

### **5.8.1 Strengths**

This thesis provides valuable insights into the evolving role of companion dogs in the workplace, highlighting their important and active contribution to office life and outcomes, contingent upon the antecedents discussed earlier in this chapter.

The practice-to-theory approach employed in this study is a strength as it effectively bridges the gap between real-world organisational practices and theoretical frameworks. By grounding the study in the realities of the workplace and incorporating practical perspectives, the research outcomes hold direct implications for practitioners, enhancing the potential for meaningful and actionable recommendations.

A further strength of this research is its inclusivity and the representation of diverse voices that have often been overlooked or given less agency, such as employees who are against dog-friendly practices and subject matter experts from the animal welfare sector who have an embedded understanding of animal ethics and an obligation to act in the interests of the animal. This approach has advanced the existing research, responding to the call made by Hall and colleagues (2017), by using practitioners' voices to gain insights into how perceived problems have been overcome and risks minimised. A final strength of the thesis lies in the combination of the systematic literature review's rigour and the integration of its findings with the subsequent empirical investigation.

### **5.8.2 Limitations**

First, it is important to recognise that the scope of this study was confined to office environments and the employees within them, predominantly within a UK context. Therefore, the generalisability and transferability of the findings to other settings may be limited and caution should be exercised when applying these findings to different contexts.

Second, some limitations of the individual studies have been discussed in earlier chapters. For example, the data restrictions in the systematic literature review could have resulted in relevant peer-reviewed papers published prior to 2016 being missed. Arguably, steps could have been taken to identify unpublished literature and grey literature instead of filtering it out. Regarding publication bias, as highlighted by Kepes and McDaniel (2012), there is a tendency for published studies to only report positive results, leading to the

omission of studies which highlight negative outcomes. This is known as the ‘file drawer problem’, as discussed by Banks et al. (2015). Therefore, it should be considered whether the omission from the systematic literature review of findings from studies with less positive outcomes might have resulted in only considering evidence which was skewed in nature.

Third, it is important to acknowledge the possibility of biases influencing the studies. Some biases were identified and addressed during the course of the study, while others were beyond the scope of the research. As discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, proactive measures were taken to manage researcher bias, acknowledging researcher reflexivity and its management.

The recruitment strategies employed in the empirical study were intended to ensure a balanced representation of viewpoints. However, it should be noted that the sample across both studies included a significantly larger number of participants in favour of pet-friendly workplaces than those against. Additionally, a small proportion of the Study 2 sample were participants who had initiated the implementation of pet-friendly practices. These individuals may have downplayed any difficulties, potentially introducing bias. Volunteer bias, as described by Rosenthal and Rosnow (1975) and Hertzog (2021), is also a valid consideration. Women are more likely to volunteer for research in general, particularly for animal-related studies, which was the case in both studies conducted in this thesis and proved difficult to control for. These factors highlight the risk of overestimating the perceived benefits of having dogs in the office.

Lastly, as a reflective researcher, it is important to consider how the researcher’s presence during data gathering – which is often unavoidable in qualitative research – might have influenced participants’ responses. Particularly, in one transcript, it appeared that a participant may have moderated their answers to align with what they believed was socially acceptable to the researcher.

## **5.9 Implications for Practice and Research**

As mentioned earlier, Weiss (1979, p. 429) considers research to have the capacity for an “enlightenment effect” through finding new ways of conceptualising problems, understanding issues, and suggesting potential solutions. The introduction section of this thesis set the context, acknowledging that the world of work has changed forever and how compounding factors have led to the increased relinquishment of dogs (Bawden, 2022; Packer et al., 2021). Research does not occur in a vacuum; this thesis is situated in a post-pandemic context and a time of economic hardship and uncertainty for many members of society. Gough et

al. (2017) have reminded us of the importance of making use of evidence, suggesting that, for most people, research evidence does not make up a large component of decision-making. While the findings of this thesis do not suggest that dog-friendly practices are a panacea, they do make the following contributions.

First, the findings have practical implications for organisations seeking to create pet-friendly environments. This thesis can support organisational decision-makers in determining whether to adopt pet-friendly practices. Incorporating research into the decision-making process makes decisions more evidence informed. It is anticipated that the findings will have practical value for animal charities at the early stages of ‘dogs at work’ projects and with the aim to roll out best practices. This ensures that the phenomenon of interest is considered from multiple perspectives. The researcher has already disseminated initial findings and commits to sharing the full results, with plans to collaborate with organisations to make a global impact. The aim of this research is to offer clarity and direction for decision-makers, possibly leading to increased adoption of pet-friendly practices.

Second, as previously mentioned, a distinction exists between assistance and companion dogs. However, it is pertinent to draw parallels between the findings of the current study and the systematic literature review conducted by Rodriguez et al. (2020), referenced earlier in this thesis. Rodriguez et al. (2020) found that, in addition to fulfilling specific functional tasks to assist handlers with medical or physical disabilities, interactions with assistance dogs contribute positively to psychological, social, quality of life, and vitality outcomes. The findings of this thesis suggest that comparable benefits can be observed in the companion dog-owner dyad. The following paragraph considers how these benefits can be leveraged.

Third, in relation to policy, this thesis provides structured guidance on the factors required to develop, implement, and evaluate pet-friendly practices effectively. There has been a call for “creative solutions” to address the delivery of health and well-being support to employees and extend the capacity and capability for dealing with emerging health impacts (Boorman, 2023, p. 73). The findings of this thesis suggest that organisations could consider incorporating dog-friendly practices as a ‘creative’ component in their well-being and return-to-work strategies, as well as in flexible working practices for meeting individuals’ needs. The findings of this thesis can be used to make a case for allowing companion dogs in the workplace within a work adjustment framework. This argument draws on the psychological theory of work adjustment (Davis & Lofquist, 1964), and is further supported by the insights of Hesketh and Griffin (2005) and Woodend (2019). According to the Department of Health (2019), ‘work adjustments’ are defined as “a change or adjustment unique to a person’s needs that will enable them to do their job”. Discussions around adjustments have been extended to the whole workforce, enabling people to have more control over their work-life

balance (Giovanis & Ozdamar, 2023).

## **5.10 Future Research Suggestions**

The empirical study in this thesis drew from multiple perspectives to understand what works, what does not, and what lessons can be learned around dog-friendly work practices. There was unanimous support for the development of a toolkit among the participants in Study 2. As previously mentioned, existing guidance is scarce in this area; participant discourse in Study 2 highlighted the need for a multidisciplinary approach. An extension of Study 2 could be to develop an evidence-based, multi-component toolkit aimed at further supporting the decision-making processes. This could involve a participatory action research (PAR) approach that aligns with the principles of co-creation (Leask et al., 2019) to facilitate decision-making around pet-friendly practices. In line with suggestions by Hall et al. (2017), the co-creation group should comprise end users, occupational psychologists, occupational health professionals, veterinary research professionals, clinical animal behaviourists, health and safety professionals, and legal professionals who can provide a comprehensive perspective.

The researcher, an occupational psychologist, and the clinical animal behaviourist who participated in this study have discussed continuing to work together. As a first step, they have contributed draft materials for a prototype toolkit, which needs further discussion (see Appendix I).

It would be valuable for future researchers to use objective measures, thereby reducing criticisms of reliance on self-report methodology and single measurements. These could measure the psychological benefits highlighted in this thesis using a longitudinal design to enable causality to be established.

## **5.11 Conclusion**

There is promising evidence to suggest that companion-dog-friendly practices positively impact various outcomes, including psychological, physiological, and financial well-being. These practices have been shown to offer enhanced social support to dog owners and improve group dynamics. Additionally, they serve as an effective mechanism for communicating organisational values and augmenting organisational commitment.

However, the realisation of these benefits is contingent upon several antecedents. Most prominently, there must be a high level of congruence between the organisation's culture, leadership support, and pet-friendly

practices. Dog owners must also be prepared to assume full responsibility for their pets, while team members should feel empowered to set boundaries. At the same time, flexibility and the demonstration of organisational citizenship behaviours are essential.

A multidisciplinary approach is vital for the implementation of sustainable and healthy pet-friendly practices. Prior to the pandemic, Cunha et al. (2019, p. 793) suggested that “dogs [in the workplace] can be the next indicator of diversity.” Building on this notion, the findings of this thesis indicate that companion-dog-friendly practices have the potential to serve as a creative solution for facilitating work adjustments and accommodating the emerging needs of employees who seek flexible working environments.

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*N.B. Bold references marked with an asterisk are the studies which formed the basis of the SLR*

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# **Appendix A: Reflective Assessment**

**REDACTED BY DOCTORAL CANDIDATE**

## Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

### Pet friendly offices post-pandemic: What works, what does not and what lessons can be learned.

<p>Introduction (approx. 15 mins)</p>	<p>Introduce self            Take time to build rapport, make participants feel welcome            Briefing: revisit content on information sheet            Reiterate that the researcher is interested in the participants' unique experience/expertise relating to dog-friendly offices            Ask participants if they would like to introduce themselves using their first name.            Set and agree ground rules (please silence phones if possible)            Invite clarifying questions before starting            Consent to participate and record</p> <p>Notes: Proceed if satisfied that participants fully understand the requirements/ contents of the information sheet and voluntarily participate</p>	<p>Notes / Observations            Reflections: what questions worked well / less well</p>
<p>Ice breaker question (10 minutes)</p> <p>Q. How many dogs are currently in your office?</p>	<p>Follow up questions            What breed are the dogs?            How long have they been coming to the office?</p>	
<p>Q. Thinking back, before your office became dog-friendly, who participated in the decision making of whether to become a dog friendly office?</p>	<p>Follow up questions            Actions: How was the decision approached?            Thinking: Why was it done in that way?            Outcome: What was the result?            Lessons learned: What was learned at this stage?            Probe            In retrospect, who else could have been consulted?            e.g. Dog owners? non-dog owners? Those with concerns? professionals?            /Subject Matter Experts</p>	

<p>Q. Thinking back, what evidence/information was used to inform the decision to become a dog-friendly office?</p>	<p>Follow up questions  In retrospect, what additional information would have been useful to consider before making the decision?  How were opinions and attitudes elicited?</p>	
<p>Q. What were some of the concerns raised before becoming a dog friendly office?</p>	<p>Follow up questions  Actions: How were the concerns dealt with?  Thinking: Why was it done in that way?  Outcome: What was the result?  Lessons learned: What was learned at this stage?</p>	
<p>Q. Before pet dogs entered the workplace, what policies and procedures were developed?</p>	<p>Follow up questions  Did these policies/procedures meet all requirements?  Were they adapted in any way?... Tell me more  What additional policies/procedures have since been implemented?  What aspects of work do the current policies/procedures relate to?(e.g. onboarding, H&amp;S, behaviour of pets, monitoring?).</p>	
<p>Q. Once the dogs entered your workplace, what changes did you need to make?</p>	<p>Follow up questions  Re: The ‘onboarding’ of dogs, what went better than expected?  What needed to be revised?  What aspects needed additional thinking or to be revisited?  What aspects were entirely overlooked?</p>	
<p>Q. What have been some of the benefits for you of having a dog-friendly office?</p>	<p>Look for: (5 CORE AREAS OF OCCUPATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY + SLR themes)  Wellbeing and work/stress  employee engagement  job satisfaction  work motivation  organisational commitment  Work/life balance  Feeling a sense of belonging at work  work performance / productivity  Employee attraction</p>	

<p>What have been some of the benefits your colleagues have mentioned of having a dog-friendly office?</p>	<p>Probe (5 CORE AREAS OF OCCUPATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY + SLR themes)  Wellbeing/stress  Feeling a sense of belonging at work  work performance / productivity  organisational commitment  employee engagement  job satisfaction  work motivation  Employee attraction</p>	
<p>Q. What challenging conversations/issues relating to dogs in your workplace have happened?</p>	<p>Follow up questions  Actions: How were these issues dealt with?  Thinking: Why was it done in that way?  Outcome: What was the result? Was it effective? Was it dealt with satisfactorily? What was the follow up?  Lessons learned: What was learned at this stage?</p>	
<p>Q. If you could change one thing about how your dog-friendly office operates, what would it be?</p>	<p>Follow up questions  How easy is it for you to suggest changes/give feedback  Is there an established mechanism to capture ongoing feedback/suggest improvements?</p>	
<p>Q. How useful do you feel a toolkit for dog-friendly offices could be?</p>	<p>Follow up questions  How useful for employees/teams/the wider organisation?  Who else could it benefit?</p>	
<p>Q. What resources relating to dog-friendly offices are in publication that you find valuable?</p>	<p>Prompts (Environmental scan)  What already exists?  Who is delivering best practice?  Who are the trail blazers in this area?</p>	



<p>Q. If we were to create a toolkit to support more offices in becoming dog-friendly, what should the toolkit include?</p>	<p>Prompts          (Note to researcher: ensure to structure the discussion, but not dominate)          Structure discussion around Stages of employee life cycle.          Brand attraction: How to share being a dog-friendly employer? (How to track whether being dog-friendly attracts new talent)          Recruitment: (What training does the dog require? Should there be an agreed trial period/probationary period? What expectations should be established?          Onboarding: How could we check organisational readiness? (self-assessment tool? Policies? Onboarding strategy? Risk Management, Risk Assessments, controls, policies and procedures, Design of the environment?)          Development: How can we measure impact (both positive and negative) on levels of job satisfaction, productivity, team cohesion, Organisational citizenship.          Do we need Continuous improvement procedures (plan-do-check-act).          Measurement tools to collect anonymous data from all employees.          Monitoring and Evaluation plans? What outcomes need to be measured?          Retention: How does being dog-friendly impact on retention, engagement?          How do we measure this?          Offboard/exit: How could dogs be exited from the organisation whilst retaining the employee? (honest appraisals/ exiting process/agreement in place?)</p>	
<p>Q. What specific considerations have been given to the design of the environment in your organisation to make it dog friendly?</p>	<p>Prompts          Lighting/acoustics, ventilation, Hygiene factors</p> <p>Follow up questions          How have workstations been adapted? Who was consulted to inform these decisions?          Actions: What actions were taken to ensure the environment was dog-friendly?          Thinking: Who was consulted about these actions?          Outcome: What was the result? Was the workstation designs/environmental adaptations appropriate? What was the follow up?</p>	

	Lessons learned: What was learned at this stage?	
Q. What specific considerations have been given to the risks associated with dogs in the workplace and health and safety?	Follow up questions Actions: What actions were taken to ensure the office adhered to health and safety legislation? What was done to identify and manage risks? (slips and trips, diseases etc) Thinking: Who was consulted about these actions? Outcome: What was the result? What was the follow up? Lessons learned: What was learned at this stage?	
Q. What, if anything, has prevented you or others speaking up about challenges associated with dog-friendly workplaces?	(Listen for evidence of power dynamics)	
Q. How could we measure the overall success of the toolkit?	Follow up questions Where should the (non-cost) toolkit be hosted? How could we disseminate the findings of this study?	
Q. Is there anything that you feel we should have talked about, but have not?		
Close (7 mins)	Debrief Summarise main ideas Any questions	

**N.B: Note for researcher: Remain neutral and avoid imposing your views.**

# Appendix C: Participant Recruitment Flyer



## PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

*AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH: Exploring office workers experiences of pet dog-friendly offices*

**Aim:** As an output of my study, I hope more organisations will explore the possibility of pet dog friendly offices and see how perceived barriers and concerns have been navigated by organisations who have already implemented sustainable pet-dog friendly working practices.

Criteria to take part: Are you

- A dog owner who has experience of bringing their pet dog(s) to work in a pet friendly office for 6+ months?
- or*
- A non-dog owner who has experience of working in a pet-friendly office where colleagues have brought their pet dog(s) to work for 6+ months?
- or*
- A Vet, Clinical Animal Behaviourist, Health & Safety, legal or a Human Resources professional who has supported the implementation of dog friendly offices.
- Motivated to use your insights to support others to develop sustainable pet friendly practices at work?
- Able to commit to attending a 1-hour interview conducted using Microsoft TEAMS in March/ April 2023? You would be guided and supported by an Occupational Psychologist

**Next Steps:** Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or think you would like to take part in this research, please contact the researcher, Eloise Warrilow: [ewarri01@student.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:ewarri01@student.bbk.ac.uk)

You will then be asked to complete a brief demographic form and then participate in a short one-to-one conversation via Microsoft Teams with the researcher to decide if participation is right for you.

N.B. The researcher is interested in hearing about a range of experiences, both successes and challenges.

**Ethical Approval:** This research has received full ethical approval from Birkbeck, University of London and is being supervised by Dr Libby Drury, Dr Jo Yarker and Dr Rachel Lewis.



# Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet



## **Pet friendly offices post-pandemic: What works, what does not and what lessons can be learned.**

This research project is part of my Organizational Psychology Professional Doctorate thesis at Birkbeck, University of London. This project has already received ethical approval. To make an informed decision on whether you wish to take part in this study, please take a few minutes to read this information sheet.

### **Who is conducting this research?**

The research is being conducted by Eloise Warrilow, a registered Occupational Psychologist, and an Organizational Psychology Professional Doctorate candidate, under the guidance of supervisor Dr. Libby Drury and Course Directors Dr. Rachel Lewis / Dr. Jo Yarker, both from Birkbeck, University of London

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The aim of the study is to explore pet friendly offices and what works, what does not and what lessons can be learned.

### **Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited as you are an employee within a dog-friendly organisation and/or have the Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Other characteristics to explore the phenomenon of dog-friendly workplaces and act in an advisory capacity.

### **What are the procedures of taking part?**

If you decide to take part, there is a link to a short **demographic questionnaire** in this email. This will gather biographical information. You will then be given the opportunity to have a one-to-one conversation to meet the researcher, find out more about the study and ask any questions you may have.

You will then be invited to participate in a 1-hour individual interview. This will explore your personal experience of dog-friendly workplaces, the benefits you have experienced and the challenges that needed to be overcome. We will explore what resources may help decision makers develop and implement dog friendly workplaces. The 1-hour interview will be conducted using Microsoft TEAMS ([a link to the privacy policy can be found here](#)).

### **What are my participation rights?**

Participation in this research guarantees the right to withdraw, to ask questions about how your data will be handled and about the study itself, the right to confidentiality and anonymity, the right to refuse to answer questions, to have recordings turned off and to be given access to a summary of the findings.

### **What if I want to withdraw my information?**

You are free to withdraw your participation from the study at any time.

### **What will happen to my responses to the study?**

Data collected in this study will be analysed and used for the research student dissertation. Data may also be used for academic publications. No identifying information would be released. All responses and contributions will be anonymised in the reporting of results. Findings of the research will be shared with Birkbeck College as part of the doctoral thesis.

### **Will my responses and information be kept confidential?**

All information will be treated with the strictest confidence throughout the study. All information will be kept in secure folders on a password protected computer, or a secure filing cabinet. Access to such information will only be allowed to the researcher, the research supervisor and the transcription service that will be used which is fully GDPR compliant. During the marking process, external examiners of my project may also have access. General themes will be reported in the researchers' thesis, viva, conference presentations and publications. To protect the anonymity of participants, no personal identifiers e.g., name of the participant or name of their organisation will be reported.

### **What are the possible risks to taking part?**

The interview will explore your experiences of dog-friendly work environments. It is recognised that this may highlight challenges you have encountered and negative situations you may have personally experienced. If through the discussion participants recognise that they are experiencing significant challenges in relation to dog-friendly workplaces, they are encouraged to raise these issues with their HR / Occupational Health department. In the case of phobias, participants may also wish to access resources and assistance from mental health support organisations such as NHS ([www.nhs.uk/mental-health](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health)) and MIND ([www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)).

### **Any further questions?**

If you have any questions or require more information about this study before or during your participation, please contact either:

Eloise Warrilow  
[Ewarri01@student.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:Ewarri01@student.bbk.ac.uk)  
Research Student

Dr. Libby Drury  
[l.drury@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:l.drury@bbk.ac.uk)  
Research Supervisor

Programme Directors- Dr Jo Yarker and Dr Rachel Lewis  
Shared email address: [op-pdop@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:op-pdop@bbk.ac.uk)  
Department of Organizational Psychology,  
Birkbeck, University of London,  
Clare Management Building,  
Malet Street, Bloomsbury,  
London.  
WC1E 7HX

For information about Birkbeck's data protection policy please visit: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/about-us/policies/privacy#9>

If you have concerns about this study, please contact the School's Ethics Officer at: [BEI-ethics@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:BEI-ethics@bbk.ac.uk)  
School Ethics Officer

School of Business, Economics, and Informatics  
Birkbeck, University of London  
London WC1E 7HX

You also have the right to submit a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office <https://ico.org.uk/>

Thank you for reading

# Appendix E: Participant Demographic Questionnaire (Microsoft Form)



## Demographic Questionnaire

**Pet friendly offices post-pandemic: What works, what does not and what lessons can be learned.**

N.B. Please note that all information captured will be stored confidentially and only be seen by the researcher. The information you provide will enable a more detailed interpretation of the findings. Your name is requested here solely to enable the matching of data provided in questionnaire with data collected during our conversation. You are fully entitled to leave your name blank if you would prefer to do so.

\* Required

What is your name?

What is your gender? \*

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

What is your current age? \*

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

Which country do you work in? \*

What is your current job title? \*

Enter your answer



What sector best represents your organisation's business? \*

- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Wholesale and retail
- Professional, scientific and technical
- Administrative and support services
- Education, health and social care
- Transport and storage
- Public administration and defence
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Financial and insurance

What statement best matches your experience? \*

- I am a dog owner and regularly bring my dog(s) to the office
- I am a dog owner and occasionally bring my dog(s) to the office
- I own a dog but do not bring the dog to the office
- I do not own a dog but work in a pet friendly office

Have you worked in a pet dog friendly office for more than six months? \*

Yes

No

What office type do the pet dogs stay in? \*

Own single office

Shared office with 2-3 people

Small open plan office with 4-9 people

Medium sized open plan office with 10-24

Large sized open plan office with 25 + people

Flex office with no personal work stations

Combi-office, defined by teamwork and sharing of facilities

10. Would you like a quick call with Eloise (the researcher) before the scheduled Microsoft Teams session to talk over any questions or concerns or just to meet her and talk more about the study?

No thank you

Yes please

# Appendix F: Informed consent form (Microsoft Form and DocuSign)



## Pet friendly offices post-pandemic: What works, what does not and what lessons can be learned.

N.B. Please read the following items and tick the appropriate boxes to indicate whether you agree to take part in this study. Thank you.

\* Required

Full name \*

I have read the information sheet in full, and I understand the purpose of this research is to explore Pet friendly offices: what works, what does not and what lessons can be learned. \*

Yes

No

I can confirm that I am not a former or current employee of Birkbeck or its subcontractors. \*

Yes

No

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and I understand I may ask further questions at any time. \*

\*

Yes

No

I understand what is involved in participating, that it is voluntary, and that I may withdraw without consequences. \*

Yes

No

I agree to the interview being recorded by Eloise Warrilow \*

Yes

No

I understand that I have the right to ask for the recording to be turned off at any time during the interview.

\*

Yes

No

I understand the data will be transcribed word-by-word by MS Teams. \*

Yes

No

I understand the research results as a summary report (excluding all identifiable personal information) will be shared with relevant tutors on the Organizational Psychology Professional Doctorate programme, Birkbeck, University of London. \*

Yes

No

I understand the results may be used for academic publications, such as dissertation, thesis or journal articles. \*

Yes

No

I have been informed of who I can talk to if I have any concerns or worries relating to my participation in the study \*

Yes

No

If you are happy to give your full consent, please could you kindly sign your name in the below box. \*

## Appendix G: 15-Point Checklist for Good Reflective Thematic Analysis (Source: Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 269)

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
Analysis	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
	7	Data have been analysed - interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other - the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.
Overall	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done - i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as <i>active</i> in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

## Appendix H: Example Coded Transcript for 'Alex'

ALEX: Pet-Friendly Offices Post-Pandemic: What Works, What Does Not, and What Lessons Can Be Learned?

Recording 97976bf3b56ec43f2acc60c77a172c8a11b72f4fd6b205e1309e7381280d5689 1

Below is a link to my SharePoint and a sample coded transcript for the participant with the pseudonym 'Alex'. (N.B. PERMISSION REQUIRED FROM THE RESEARCHER TO ACCESS THE TRANSCRIPTION)

[Appendix H Example coded transcript for Alex.docx](#)

# **Appendix I: Prototype Multidisciplinary Toolkit Materials for Dog-Friendly Offices**

**REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT PURPOSES**

# Appendix J: Quality Assessments of Individual Studies

## Qualitative Papers

			Statements from MMAT (Hong et al, 2018)							Question from Snape et. al. (2017)
			SCREENING QUESTIONS		1. QUALITATIVE STUDIES					
Authors	Year	Title	S1. Are there clear research questions?	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis, and interpretation?	1.6 Have ethical issues been taken into account? (N.B. not scored)
Hall, Wright, McCune, Zulch, and Mills	2017	Perceptions of Dogs in the Workplace: The Pros and the Cons	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Can't tell	Yes	No	Yes
Wagner and Cunha	2021	Dogs at the Workplace: A Multiple Case Study	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Rambaree and Sjoberg	2019	Companion Animals in Health-Promoting Work life	No	Can't tell	Can't tell	Can't tell	Can't tell	Can't tell	Can't tell	Yes



<b>Rationale for Quality Assessment of Individual Studies (Qualitative Papers)</b>					
<b>Study</b>	<b>Methodological Quality (Trustworthiness)</b>	<b>Conceptual Quality (Insightfulness)</b>	<b>Reporting Quality (Accuracy, Completeness, Transparency)</b>	<b>Supporting notes</b>	<b>Quality Assessment per Study</b>
Hall, Wright, McCune, Zulch, and Mills	Low quality	Low/ Moderate quality	Low quality	This atheoretical study purported to be an exploration into the advantages and disadvantages of dogs in the workplace. However, the questions claimed to be derived from content analysis did not align with the scope of the research questions (pros for dog owners missing). Furthermore, the formulation of questions was not designed to effectively elicit attitudes. While the authors indicated adherence to the basic principles of the earlier version of Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis, rather than the updated 2019 version which emphasises 'reflexivity', this claim is not supported by the content of the paper, particularly concerning the majority of stages in the six-stage model. The findings presented were 'thin' and lacked contextual depth. Although there was transparency in reporting the results, transparency in the process of Thematic Analysis (TA) and the stages was notably absent. The study produced some interesting insights, specifically about barriers to pet-friendly practices. Despite these criticisms, the study did offer a simple conceptual model, which has been elaborated upon in this thesis. It also successfully highlighted pertinent areas for future research. The epistemological stance of the researchers was unclear.	Low Quality
Wagner and Cunha	Moderate quality	Moderate quality	Moderate quality	A Case Study within the Creative Industry. The aims of the study were twofold. The collected data only allowed one question to be answered; it did not identify the circumstances under which companies can benefit from a pet-friendly policy. The question sets used were fairly weak, although they appeared to elicit rich discourse. There was transparency in the participant quotes, which led to the formation of categories. There was completeness in the reporting. The findings are substantiated by data. The grounded theory approach outlined is replicable. There is coherence between all elements. It presents insightful findings on antecedents and some on outcomes. However, as one of the aims was not adequately addressed, this study did not fully deliver on its purpose. The rationale for interviewing managers who are not dog owners but not interviewing non-dog-owning employees was not explained. It seems they adhered to ethical issues. As it is a case	Moderate quality

				study, there are limitations in how much confidence we can place on the findings and the level of trustworthiness. The epistemological stance of the researchers was unclear.	
Rambaree and Sjoberg	Low quality	Very low quality	Very low quality	<p>The identification of clear research questions is difficult to identify within the scope of the study. However, broad aims are presented in the methods and materials section. The data collected incorporated a sample of students, which may not represent the most appropriate participants for exploring the potential of companion animals in health-promoting work life. The researchers claimed to utilise an "Abductive Thematic Analysis" framework they had developed, which is suitable to address research questions <i>provided questions</i> are well-defined and there are clear links to existing theory. Despite purporting to conduct a literature review, the report lacked essential details, resulting in an absence of clarity.</p> <p>The interview questions were not disclosed. It cannot be ascertained whether they were sufficient for the research aims. The researchers affirmed adherence to social research guidelines, including voluntary participation, anonymous reporting, and obtaining consent. However, the information provided was did not enable transparency about the finding or interpretation. This compromised the ability to appraise whether the findings were accurately derived. It was not possible to assess the conceptual depth and breadth of the findings.</p> <p>Interestingly, despite utilising a employee and student sample (the exact number of each remains unspecified), the study's conclusions were framed in terms of outcomes for employees. Such a discrepancy raises questions regarding the credibility, generalisability and applicability of the study's results. The epistemological stance of the researchers was unclear.</p>	Very low quality

## Quantitative Papers

Authors	Year	Paper	SCREENING QUESTIONS		4. QUANTITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES					
			S1. Are there clear research questions?	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	4.4. Is the risk of non-response bias low?	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	4.6. Have ethical issues been taken into account?
Hall and Mills	2019	Taking Dogs into the Office: A novel Strategy for Promoting Work Engagement, Commitment and Quality of Life	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Foreman	2019	Employee Attitudes about the Impact of visitation dogs on a college campus	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Hoffman	2021	The experience of Teleworking with Dogs and Cats in the United States during COVID-19	No	Can't tell	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Junça Silva	2021	Friends with Benefits: The Positive Consequences of Pet-Friendly Practices for workers' well-being	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Junça Silva, Almeida and Gomes	2022	The Role of Dogs in the Relationship between Telework and Performance via Affect: A Moderated Moderated Mediation Analysis	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

### Rationale for Quality Assessment of Individual Studies (Quantitative Papers)

Study	Methodological Quality (Trustworthiness)	Conceptual Quality (Insightfulness)	Reporting Quality (Accuracy, Completeness, Transparency)	Supporting Notes	Quality Assessment per Study
Hall and Mills (2019)	Moderate quality	High/moderate quality	Moderate quality	Robust and conceptually appropriate psychometric measures were used. The study has strong theoretical underpinnings. It offered interesting and important insights into the presence of dogs and influences on work engagement, commitment, and quality of life. However, this study was the most skewed in terms of demographics, with female participants accounting for approximately 90% of the sample. The reporting was transparent, and the study is highly replicable. The transparency of reporting and data provided would enable further analysis. It is, however, reliant on self-report measures. Given the numerous variables, the paper does not go into detailed analysis.	Moderate quality
Foreman	Low quality	Low quality	Moderate quality	A study on employee attitudes about the impact of dogs on a college campus was conducted. The comparison across locations was not reliable as it meant some employees had only been exposed to the presence of dogs for 3 months (susceptible to the novelty effect and perhaps impeding participants from making informed responses) and others for 12+ months. Robust and appropriate psychometric measures were employed. The contents of the survey are clearly explained with accurate reporting. It utilised a convenience sample. The findings do not add to the existing evidence base but reinforce the need to consider diverse perspectives. As the study aimed to explore attitudes, a qualitative approach would have been more appropriate.	Low quality
Hoffman	Low quality	Low quality	Low/Moderate	This study aimed to measure the experience of teleworking with dogs and cats during COVID-19 when individuals were compelled to work from home (WFH). The study is not grounded in psychological theory and the hypotheses lack clarity. It claimed to employ a within-subjects design to explore working from the office and WFH, yet the data was collected at one point in time. Participants were asked to 'remember' how they felt 3 months earlier, introducing recall bias. Time affects recollections. The	Low quality

				methodology introduces many confounding variables. It was unclear whether the participants were permitted to take their pets to the office. They did not explain the characteristics of the pets. Consequently, it is challenging to draw any definitive conclusions from the analysis, and it does not add to our understanding.	
Junça Silva	Moderate quality	Moderate quality	Moderate quality	<p>The paper explores the positive consequences of pet-friendly practices for workers' well-being, with clear theoretical underpinnings. It adds to our understanding of how pet-friendly practices influence well-being perceptions via organizational identification. The findings suggest individuals who can take their pets to work are more identified with their organization's and are happier.</p> <p>The study includes only 208 working adults but is one of the studies which has a balanced gender ratio in the sample. The category of pet ownership is too broad — are owners of hamsters and fish likely to take their pets to work? Can parallels be drawn between dog ownership and the psychosocial outcomes and that of a fish as a pet? The authors acknowledge this and suggest future studies look at the specific roles animal species play.</p> <p>Robust data analysis is presented. It would have been useful to narrow the scope of pets and to additionally test the direct relationship between pet-friendly practices and wellbeing. Only owners were part of the sample, potentially biasing the findings..</p>	Moderate quality
Junça Silva Almeida and Gomes	Moderate quality	Moderate quality	Moderate/High quality	The reporting quality was sound. For transparency, the items in the surveys were provided, enabling replication. There were clear hypotheses, although only 1 (H3) relates to dogs. The study is grounded in COR theory. It provides interesting insights on outcomes, for example, attachment to pets, suggesting those with a high degree of attachment report enhanced self-reported performance and quality of life when working close to their pets. The authors acknowledge it is a preliminary study and self-report. It also contains a non-probabilistic sample, so it is not easily generalisable.	Moderate quality

Sousa, Esperança and Goncalves	Low/ Moderate quality	Moderate quality	Moderate quality	<p>An interesting study looking at the influence of organization's that pet-friendly support pet friendly practices on Social Responsibility Perceptions and Organisational Commitment. The methodology is interesting, yet there is an overrepresentation of female participants. Some interesting insights about OC, although the authors stretch the implications of their weaker findings about Social Responsibility. In light of the available literature, the demographics they use are fairly weak and not adequately segmented to explore nascent links (e.g., younger employees placing more importance of organisations who demonstrate social responsibility. The insights suggest there could be a case for organisations to consider implementing such practices. It is an exploratory study using scenarios rather than 'real organisations' who have these practices and 'real' employees. This limits the amount of confidence we can place on the findings.</p>	Moderate quality
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