Summary:

The main theme of this work is a relationship between substance users who visits low-threshold services in Prague and their dogs. Many of these people own a dog and their relationship hasn’t been described yet. This ownership brings some specific limits – for example taking care of the dog (feeding, health, training), accepting the responsibility and moreover, a pet can represent an obstacle in accommodation or treatment. On the other side, a dog has a very positive impact on a human mental state and averts the feeling of loneliness. A dog can be a factor to the increase of money made during begging and is a protector and a friend to a human in their life.

The aim of this thesis is to describe relationship between substance user and his dog. Research questions ask how important the dog is in the life of a drug user and what positives and negatives a dog brings in his life. I implemented a semi-structured interview in a terrain outreach program for drug users for bigger authenticity of the statements acquired. I had a chance to see how respondents manipulate with their dogs in their natural surroundings and sometimes the conditions they are living in.

Interviews were recorded with the agreement of the participants and then I transcribed them. I deleted all interviews after processing data. The analysis was made through a combination of two methods in qualitative research. The result is that a dog has more roles in the life of a substance user – a dog can be the one who protects them, gives them certainty, some people talk about their dog as if they were their own children. For some of my responders a dog represents the meaning of life. Some of them even give up on the opportunity of treatment or accommodation. However, there are limits too.

The results should serve as one of first look into this topic and the research provides a basic insight. It should be followed by subsequent and deeper exploration. This research should initiate the expansion of programs and organizations including activities with dogs.

Keywords:
Dog – drug user – relationship – canistherapy - qualitative research - low-threshold services