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**EFFECTIVENESS OF HORSE THERAPY TOWARDS
BEHAVIOUR CHANGES OF AUTISM CHILDREN**

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of horse therapy towards the changes of behaviour of autism children. This study was guided by the following research objectives: (i) to identify the level of autism severity of the respondents, (ii) to identify the behaviour of the autism children before and after horse therapy, and (iii) to examine the effectiveness of horse therapy towards the behaviour of autism children. Thirty children aged four to eleven years with autism who registered under two horse riding club were recommended by Ministry of Education for this horse therapy program. This study used pre-post Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist (ATEC) questionnaire which was answered by the parents of the autism children. The questionnaires were distributed on the first session of the five weekly sessions of the therapy. The behaviour of the autism was assessed on three different subscales: (i) speech/language, (ii) sociability and (iii) health/physical behaviour. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents (53.3%) were having moderate level of severity. Meanwhile for the health/physical behaviour component, revealed to be the highest ($M=3.44$, $SD=0.14$) before the horse therapy. After the therapy, speech component ranked the highest ($M=3.44$, $SD=0.24$) compared to the sociability and health/physical behaviour component. Results of this study showed significant improvement in their behaviour, (t 29= 16.89, $p= 0.001$). Therefore, the parents perceived the improvements were due to the horse therapy treatment received. Based on these findings, horse therapy can be one of the effective treatments for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in term of changing their behaviour.

Keywords: horse therapy, behaviour, autism, speech/language, sociability, health/physical behaviour

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