

The Healing Place of the Soul: Is Bibliotherapy Helpful in Dealing with Youth Disturbances?

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Abstract: This review aims to help readers who are interested in reading and clinical consultation better understand the history, the values and limitations of bibliotherapy. Key words like bibliotherapy, youth and the others were taken on searching engines like Google Scholar and Baidu Scholar for a better selection over topics about the relative literature with visualization analysis. As a result, the review provides a new look at bibliotherapy from the perspectives of cognitive development and clinical treatment of youth psychological problems and disorders. At the end of, future discussions for potential bibliotherapeutic solutions, with an option of adjuvant technology is provided.

1. Introduction

Tracing back to ancient Greece, the words "The Healing Place of the Soul" were engraved on the door of Thebes Library. The use of storytelling and reading as a therapeutic tool has been widely discussed in the course of the 20th century, although it was mainly used for religious connotation, educational and librarian application. At the beginning of the 20th century, the American Library Association actively established medical libraries in hospitals and other treatment institutions. In the 1930s, Carl and William Menninger, the Menninger Clinic, was one of the first persons to use literature, especially books as tools to help individuals solve neurosis or alcohol problems. Moreover, literature was used as support for patients' relatives and parents of those children that need help. In view of the positive response of readers, reading therapy can be advocated during the treatment process. In 1962, Library Trends started to focused on the research topic of reading as a treatment method. Sixteen years later, 35% of the articles published related to bibliotherapy were published in library journals, and 65% of the articles were published in such journals as psychology, education, nursing and occupational therapy [1]. In fact, the clinicians that were interested in reading self-help books have led many psychiatric hospitals to offer reading therapy as a treatment method. However, it is strongly recommended not to issue mental health literature to patients with a mental illness, patients with anxiety or obsessive-compulsive disorder, and patients undergoing psychoanalysis (See Table 1 as below).

Table 1. Researches of Target Audiences and Problems
Bibliotherapy helped in the past 50 years

Target Audience/ Problems	Researchers of Article	Years of Publication
School counselors	McMille & Pehrsson	2005
Social workers	Pardeck & Pardeck	1998a
Teachers	Morawski	1997
	Jackson	2006
	Ogrenir	2013
Librarians	Bernstein & Rudman	1989
Cancer care nurses	Bálint & Magyari	2020
Alienated children	Lim	2016
Immigrant children	Gomm	2012
Minority children	Gomm	1992

Orphans and vulnerable children	Theron	2017
Disabled children	Aguinaldo & Guzman	2014
Cancer patients	Balint & Magyari	2020
	Drzewiecka	2017
Children with Mental Retardation	Efendi, Fadhillah & others	2018
Obesity	Mckay	1978
Anxiety	Kendall and Gerow	1996
	Harryson	2007
	Perini, Wuthrich & Rapee	2013
	Brown	2014
	Rapee, Lyneham & others	2017
Depression	Jacob	2015
	Jacob & Guzman	2016
	Lewinsohn, Rohde & Seeley	2014
	McCann & Songprakun	2012
	Weimerskirch	1965
	Zentner	1972
Bullying & Aggressive Behavior	Adeyeye & Oyewesi	2019
	Anders	2007
	Antila	1009
	Flanagan, Hoek & others	2013
	Gregory & Vessey	2014
	Hanley	2016
	Moulton, Prater & Dyches	2011
	Nix	2013
	Newman	2015
	Stevens	2015
Disruptive Behavior	D'Amico	2016
Attention Deficit Disorder	Kathleen	1998
Autism Spectrum Disorder	Turner	2013
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder	Krebs & Turner	2019
Emotional Behavior Disorder	Taft & Hotchkiss	2016
Anorexia	Camacho	2018
Drug abuse and addiction	Allred, Bejarano & Ward	2016
	Shehu	2019

2. Method

2.1 Data Resource Search

This study takes the periodical data of Google Scholar and Baidu Scholar knowledge service platform as the data sources and takes the title = ("reading therapy" + "Bibliotherapy" + "Therapeutic reading") or keywords = ("reading therapy" + "Bibliotherapy" + "Therapeutic reading" + "youth" + "children" + "literature therapy") "for professional retrieval as of 2020. The search date is September 20, 2020. After a manual cleaning of the search results, 669 results satisfying the requirements are obtained after removing irrelevant information such as solicitation. Overall, this study mainly uses a method of documenting and visual analysis in the form of knowledge map.

2.2 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Literature on bibliotherapy with youth, articles on its operation process and relative advantages, and those summarizing therapeutic techniques were included in this paper to provide a comprehensive review in order to assist clinical professionals in exploring treatment stages, benefits, methods, effectiveness and possible limitations of bibliotherapy in practice. To have an overall look at relevant literature, books of credential devotion and peer-reviewed journals were the focus. Literature and research studies that were conducted with youth of 16-25 years old and young adults were included

for review. Additionally, topics were taken into account on general therapeutic process of bibliotherapy and relative techniques, as well as a couple of specific experiences that stand a chance of leading to trauma (e.g., immigrated, talented, experienced parental divorce or children with a disability).

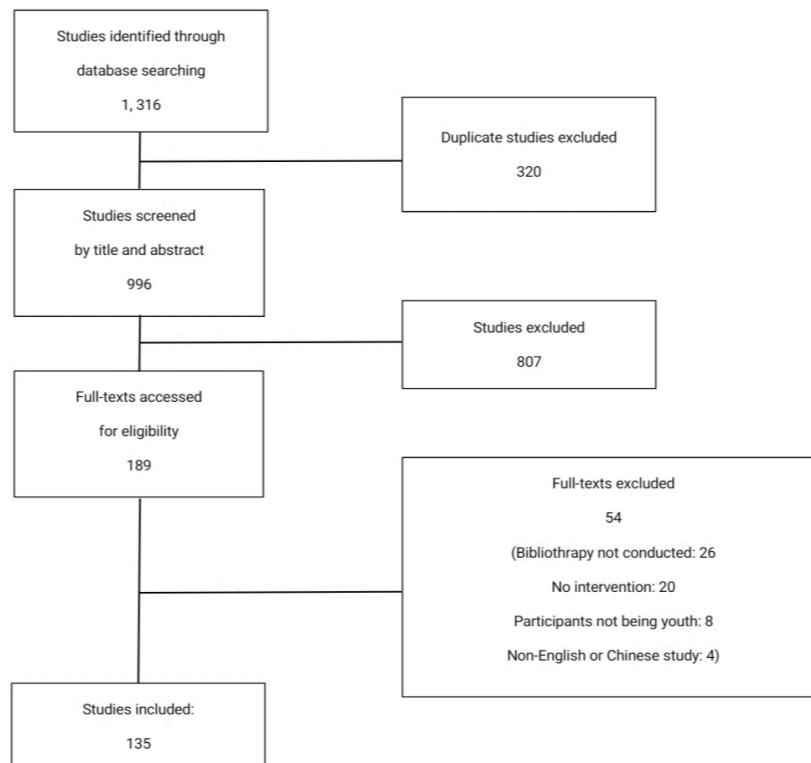


Figure 1. Flow chart of study selection procedure

Studies considered within this review were inclusive of all types, including randomized control trials; mixed methods, and case studies. Books and articles to get a clearer understanding of specific disabilities, such as autism, were also included.

3. Results

3.1 Research on Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is interdisciplinary; it involves the combination of knowledge and skills of two disciplines, namely cognitive developmental science and clinical therapeutic research, for which multidimensional perspectives should be and have been considered in terms of its effectiveness and application. Another way to understand the practice environment is to look at the number of articles relevant to bibliotherapy in various fields of literature over the past 20 years, as shown in Table 1.

In the comparison of past and present literature, considerable empirical evidence supports the view that reading has a positive effect on mental issues in general, and indirectly provides beneficial help for physical health of young people. Studies have found a link between individual youth disabilities and disorders, with particular focus on how bibliotherapy can become an alternative to the primary focus of treatment, or at least provide support to the major activities or practices in counseling or social work professions and of how it might give rise to better adjustment for children in self-identity development by meeting their social and emotional needs. In particular, researchers have attempted to explore how bibliotherapy can help the gifted vulnerable youth reduce their social inadequacies such as relationship problems, labels, loneliness and perfectionism, and provide intervention for the young people who are traumatized to cope with anxiety and depression.

3.2 Fictional or nonfictional?

Fiction and nonfiction books can be used when treating young clients with bibliotherapy.

Many supported the effectiveness of self-help books in clinical practice. During the 1980s, fourteen studies were conducted on the effects of bibliotherapy as a tool for changing behavior through self-help books. Of these studies, four reported that bibliographic therapy may be a useful tool for changing adolescent misbehavior [1]. Self-help manuals were found to be effective for treating insomnia. Behavior-based self-help books can effectively treat obesity and chronic headaches. Among studies using comparative treatment groups, one found that self-help books can effectively change children's behavior, and another found that they are useful for improving conversation skills.

Although in the eighties of last century, Conner argued that self-help books did not better interpersonal skills [2], and Giles reported that reading stories describing reinforcement contingencies did not immediately shape a child's behavior, and even some people objected to the effectiveness of novels in clinical treatment [3]. Researchers began to clarify the effectiveness of novel reading. In the next decades, many studies analyzed the influence of novels and other related reading materials on changing individual physical and psychological problems, all of which reported success in the application of novels [4]. Novels and other non-behavior- oriented self-service reading are reported to effectively improve the emotional adaptability of clients [5].

4. Values

4.1 Therapeutic Mechanisms of Bibliotherapy

The bibliotherapeutic approach through fiction and poem consists of three phases: 1) identification and protection; 2) ab-reaction and catharsis; and 3) insight and integration.

a) Identification and projection

During the first stage, the therapist helps the client identify a book character who faces a problem similar to the clients. The practitioner's role in this process is to assist the client in interpreting the motives of the story character and to provide insight into the relationship among various book characters. During the stage the practitioner helps the client make inferences regarding the meaning of the story and its application to the client's problem [6].

b) Ab-reaction and catharsis

Table 2. Number of Youth Bibliotherapy Articles Published in Various Disciplines 2001-2020

Years	Number
Education (GoogleScholar/BAIDUScholar)	72
Psychology (GoogleScholar/BAIDUScholar)	41
Medicine (GoogleScholar/BAIDUScholar)	1
Healthcare (GoogleScholar/BAIDUScholar)	8
Library (GoogleScholar/BAIDUScholar)	13
TOTAL	135

Once identification and projection have occurred, the practitioner moves the client to the ab-reaction and catharsis stage of bibliotherapeutic process. In order for catharsis to occur, the client must experience an emotional release that is expressed in various ways, both verbal and nonverbal. The involvement of the practitioner at this stage of the treatment process is important and is unique to bibliotherapy in comparison to the normal reading process. During the ba-reaction and catharsis stage, the therapist must monitor the client's reaction to the reading, the degree of similarity between the client's emotional experience and the problem being treated, and the emotional experiences of the client throughout the process of his or her identification with the book character [7].

c) Insight and Integration

After the ba-reaction and catharsis stage, the client is guided by the therapist to recognize solutions to a problem through the book being read. The client uses this process, with help of the therapists, to develop new strategies for dealing with a confronting problem [7].

These classic six key elements have been inherited and continued used in the bibliotherapy process for many years. They are emphasized as a theoretical framework in the interventions of child's developmental and psychological issues, and proved to have a positive emotional impact on the reader [8]. It is important to further explore this mechanism for a better recruitment of bibliotherapy as a

method to carry out clinical application.

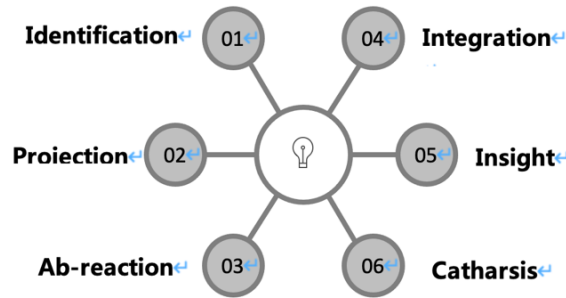


Figure 2. The mechanisms of bibliotherapeutic treatment

4.2 Research on the neurological function and brain networks

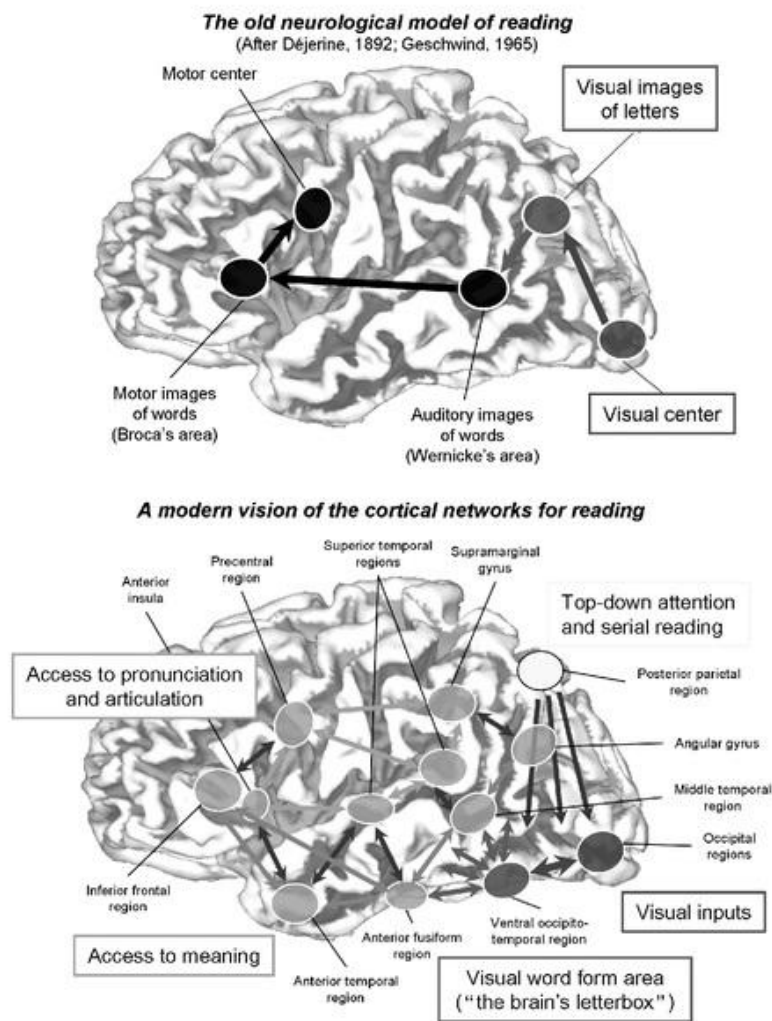


Figure 3. Two kinds of reading neurological models and "the Brain's Letterbox" (Source: Reading in the brain: the new science of how we read. 2009 by Stanislas Dehaene.)

In current research, even the cutting-edge cognitive psychology has started to recognize the mechanism of reading. The classic reading neural model (top picture) has now been replaced by a parallel processing "interlaced" model (lower picture). The "text box area" in the occipitotemporal region of the left hemisphere distinguishes the visual form of the string, and then transmits this constant visual information to many regions distributed throughout the left hemisphere, which encode the meaning, phonetic pattern and pronunciation of words respectively. All the light gray areas are not special for reading, they are mainly used for spoken language processing. Therefore, the learning process of reading is to establish an effective connection between the visual area and the language area.

All connections are bidirectional [9]. Language is the life bricks of culture and has a strong association with the reflection of emotion. This research, therefore, initiated a new study direction of exploring biological explanations on why literature reading is likely to have the emotional influence on readers and help them understand individual and cultural differences in ideologies and emotional feedback.

4.3 Choosing Books

Several Criteria need to be considered when selecting books for treatment. A general model is provided that clinicians may find useful. First, the reading level of a book must be matched with the client’s reading ability and the skills in the book must be in a language that the client can read and understand. A second point to be considered is the number of issues and problems covered in the book suggest that the more issues dealt with, the better the overall quality of the book. Clients will also more likely read a book that parallels their own experience, which helps in establishing self-projection and comparison. It is also important to understand participants’ social/emotional challenges. Appropriate text fosters common thinking and discussion about the topic, guides its reader to a deeper understanding of him- or herself, and it can develop directly his or her self-knowledge, social and emotional skills [10]. A third factor is the quality of the advice offered. Ideally, as is the goal of most therapists, a number of possible solutions should be presented. The specific techniques provided in the book are a major part of the therapeutic relationship. Thus, a client, with the support of the practitioner, can use the bibliotherapeutic approach to come up with individualized solutions to presenting problems. A fourth area to consider is a well-balanced perspective in providing solutions from fiction for a realistic problem. Fictions in this way are better in providing segmented imagination of scenarios so as to project emotions of clients, as adolescence usually have a larger mental realm of imagination and creativity than older adults. Then, there is always a requirement during and in the end of consulting to help clients tell the boundaries between reality, expectation and imagination. Finally, technologies have to be standardized; that is, they apply to many people, not just one person and the proposed technology must have a relatively low level of risk for children.

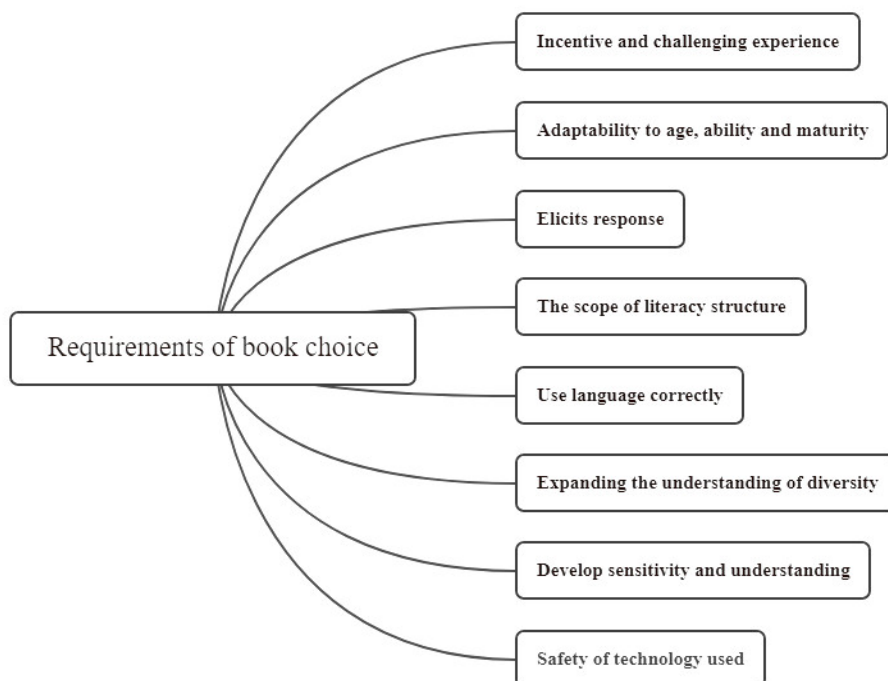


Figure 4. The selection criteria of bibliotherapeutic text

4.4 Using books in treatment

When it comes to the choice of books, practitioners who prefer fiction and poem are more likely to be grounded in a psycho-dynamic orientation to therapy; those who have a cognitive-behavioral approach to practice are more apt to use books.

There are some strategies recommended for using books in treatment [11], specified as follows.

First of all, the self-administered approach is a treatment strategy that involves the client receiving written material from the practitioner with no additional contact with the therapist beyond the initial session. This approach ends with a final assessment. Second of all, the minimal-contact self-help approach involves the therapist providing reading materials to the client; however, the therapist's role is expanded to the written correspondence, phone calls, and infrequent meetings with the client. Third of all, therapist-administered books are those which the client receives during the beginning of treatment followed by regular meetings with the practitioner. During these meetings, the written materials are discussed and the ways they can be applied to the presenting problem are reviewed. Lastly, the therapist-directed approach involves weekly treatment with the therapist. Books are used as part of the weekly treatment. This treatment approach used during the therapeutic session is often reinforced in the book. In some self-help books, self-monitoring forms are available which are designed to help the client to continue to work on a problem between treatment sessions. This is quite useful when clients are young who are more likely to lose focus and self-discipline than older adults.

4.5 Bibliotherapy Assessment Tool

The development of bibliotherapy assessment tool (BET) stems from an extensive review of mental health and education literature, emphasizing materials published since 1990. The authors have used books and literature in a number of academic and clinical settings, and their clinical experience has further facilitated the development of the tool. The research settings include universities, schools, mental health institutions, industry, hospitals and private clinics. In addition, the author also used bibliotherapy to help some people, including school-age children, traumatized children, adult depression patients, elderly inpatients, disabled children, clinicians and college students.

5. Effectiveness

Bibliotherapy is a useful intervention for young. Through well-chosen books, readers may increase their self-knowledge and self-esteem, gain relief from unconscious conflicts, clarify their values, and better understand other people. By identifying with characters in books, children may come to realize that they are part of humanity; that they are not alone in struggling with reality. Reading increases personal knowledge and invites the readers to consider themselves objectively.

If children who are experiencing difficulties can read about others who have solved similar problems, they may see alternatives for themselves. By presenting possible solutions, books can help prevent some difficult situations from becoming full-blown problems. Through encountering frustrations and anxieties, hopes and disappointments, successes and failures in fictional situations, children may gain insights applicable to situations they meet in real life.

Bibliotherapy is currently being used to help children who are experiencing a variety of emotional and developmental difficulties. These difficulties include controlling aggression, managing stress, and initiating and maintaining social relationships. Children having difficulties with these socio-emotional issues often are viewed as having more generalized difficulties in emotional intelligence. In addition, all children can benefit from being taught a literature bibliotherapy lesson because students are likely to encounter similar issues during their school years. For example, a student may not be confronted by a bully or teased today but may experience similar problems later. Research findings related to changes in students' attitudes and efficacy beliefs may create a new motivation among peer groups, which in turn may reduce bullying in and out of the classroom. This emerging dynamic can use the strength of peer groups to fight bullying by encouraging the sense of responsibility for conflict and interaction with peers and the perceived efficacy of children in intervening in bullying victims [12]. The intervention had a positive effect on the experimental class, and prevented the non-intervention group from reporting the intervention behavior, but it was not effective in transforming the anti-bullying attitude into the actual intervention behavior and making the students respond to bullying [13].

Evidence also shows that Bibliotherapy (self-help) improves the initial treatment for certain disorder, such as youth anxiety. Books are found in bookstores, in libraries, and through online retailers. Thanks to its accessibility, those families living in neighborhood without psychological treatment may get help easily. In a recent study of nine youth with an updated version of the book (parents read the

text to young children), eight of the nine children showed meaningful reductions in their anxiety symptoms. Results indicated that participants (primarily adolescents) found the website of bibliotherapy trustworthy and that it increased their knowledge of anxiety, depression, and treatments. Although there are still many empirical observations to be scientifically verified, previous studies have shown that bibliotherapy is an important part of health care and should be incorporated into clinical practice [14].

6. Discussions and directions

There are a number of limitations and precautions one should be aware of when using bibliotherapy as an intervention.

Conventionally, treatments taken in clinical environment were regarded as a solution to mental problems, such as depression and anxiety, like in the case of Harvard Critical Behavioral Therapy, behavioral adjustment are suggested to be taken together with medicine, positive thinking and physical activities. Each treatment is supposed to target the treatment of certain or a group of symptoms associated with disorders. The truth is that depression, anxiety and other problems turn out to be a byproduct of certain trauma, for which the traumatized experience that is quite individualized is something more important in considering the way a counselor are to go. However, the hope is that literature might be one channel to parallel the participant's personal experience with stories in books and articles, like what has been mentioned in the process of bibliotherapy. Evidence has been provided in novels and personal cases listed in self-help books that an understanding in similar what a person experience can be essentially critical in tearing down the wall between participants and the counselors. The story is similar in the process of projection, awareness-awaking and re-identification. A technique is needed to provide intelligent match of participant's trauma-related profiling according to the detailed descriptions in reading therapy.

More researches need be designed to precisely assess the influence of bibliotherapy in applying intervention and treatment. Also, more statistical models are expected to be created to form a digitized feedback and logical explanation of its effectiveness in and after the treatment.

One of the most important limitations to bibliotherapeutic intervention is that it should never be used as a single approach to treatment but rather as an adjunct [15]. First, the empirical support for the use of fiction in the bibliotherapeutic approach is mixed; however, the evidence suggests that nonfiction, when used as part of the bibliotherapy process, in the form of self-help books, has sound scientific support. Secondly, individuals, including consulting professionals and clients who are not inveterate readers may have difficulty benefiting from bibliotherapy, for whom audio-book might be an alternative. However, bibliotherapy can be conducted successfully with the nonreader through talking books as well as other innovative strategies. Bibliotherapy appears to be most effective with children and young adults who are in the habit of reading. Therapists should also know how to judge the client's reading and interest levels, taking age performance and features into consideration. If the match between the client's reading and interest levels is incorrect, the reading material may appear frustrating to the client [7].

As for the population reading less regularly, technology often inspires the mind. A long-awaited advance to artificial intelligence and digital/audio books, for example, could shed new light on bibliotherapeutic application [16]. The continuous progress of new media and network technology had a great impact on the traditional reading environment and methods. People have generally begun to use mobile phones/pad and other intelligent terminals to read, which is a problem that reading therapy research must take into consideration for future direction. How to introduce these technologies into the field of reading therapy research is expected play a concurrent role. Take Virtual reality reading as an example, it uses perception, interaction and 3D graphics to create a realistic virtual book world. Users can read books through a variety of senses such as vision, hearing and touch. Virtual reality reading therapy is based on the goal driven of readers. The treatment mode can realize the immersive psychological experience and deep-seated virtual interactive experience. Hopefully, a combination of VR and bibliotherapy can help increase participation in reading specified literature for treatment, accelerating the realization of principles, and establishing an effective connection between the visual

area and the language area [9].

Another concern of bibliotherapy is that the client may intellectualize about a problem when reading about it. The client may fail to identify with a character in a fiction book, resulting in a form of projection that can only serve to relieve the client of any responsibility for a resolution to the problem [7]. Bernstein concludes that there is a danger in relying on books too much. Bibliotherapy cannot solve all problems and may even reinforce some problems and promote rationalization in place of change. One must keep in mind that bibliotherapy is not a magical cure for all problems [15]. The possibility that the relationship with the therapist and not the reading material is the reason for a client resolving a problem must also be considered.

Conventionally, treatments taken in clinical environment were regarded as a solution to mental problems, such as depression and anxiety, like in the case of Harvard Critical Behavioral Therapy, behavioral adjustment are suggested to be taken together with medicine, positive thinking and physical activities. There is a conventional bias that each way to treat is supposed to live up to a certain or a group of symptoms associated with disorders. The truth is that depression, anxiety and other problems turn out to be a byproduct of certain trauma, for which the traumatized experience that is rather individualized is something more important in considering the way a counselor are to go.

Literature for reading is one channel to parallel the participant's personal experience with stories in books and articles. Therefore, there is a calling for attaching intelligent match of participant's profiling to the detailed descriptions in reading process.

As found for other therapeutic modalities, this can best be monitored by careful assessment of the effect of the therapeutic relationship versus the impact of bibliotherapy on the client's problem [6]. If the above points are considered, practitioners will find bibliotherapy to be a creative tool that can support the therapeutic process. Taking historic and current findings in account, it is hard to distinguish between observed intervention effects and any nonspecific effects of treatment without positive circumstances. And, because one therapist manages all, it is impossible to exclude the influence of therapist's specific effect, demand characteristics or observe effect in the treatment process and evaluation.

In addition, independent raters did not have the expertise to assess the quality of treatment. Relying solely on self-report is another research limitation, which is partly associated with difficulties addressing the trauma of young participants lack of readiness for continuing with clinical visit.

Future studies should evaluate interventions based on positive control conditions, including independent ratings of treatment quality and the affinity and competence of the therapist and the use of clinician managed diagnostic assessments by independent assessors. Reading therapy is an interdisciplinary research field. The personnel engaged in the research and practice of reading therapy need not only the relevant knowledge of Library and information science, but also the knowledge and skills of psychology, medicine and other related fields. However, there are few talented individuals who master these knowledge and skills required at the same time, therefore, researchers have attached great importance to the education and personnel training of reading therapy [17].

Various treatments, assisted by books, are also used, such as group, individual, psychological education and counseling. Literary works have been integrated in a variety of ways, such as reading, storytelling, story writing, oral reading by therapists, silent reading, shared reading, designated reading, information collection and response writing. The depth of analysis of each category has been improved due to an extensive literature experience in therapeutic interactions. To develop the tool, several categories were suggested and used, including theme, structure, the level and adaptability of reading, text and images, stages of development, context and environment or use of situation. General information is also recorded, including the author, illustrator, publisher, and date of publication. Students were asked to provide their overall impression, comments and suggestions after completing the classification. This process has greatly improved the product. The web-based version is still in usability testing and improvement stage, and as students and practitioners use the tool, the evaluation database will continue to grow. Reading therapy education project website, available, which provides access to the Bibliotherapy Evaluation Tool, is: <http://bibliotherapy.library.oregonstate.edu>.

7. Conclusion

As previously emphasized in this work, although bibliotherapy is well-acknowledged in library reading and education, fields bibliotherapy have not traditionally been considered as part of the practice of psychiatry and psychological professionals. The goal of this article is to provide a thorough analysis of the targeted reading therapy that clinical consulting professionals should find useful, who will also find that many of the strategies taken in librarian and educational practices are effective in various clinical problems.

In a sense, bibliotherapy has become one of the experiences since the creation of books. Many mental health practitioners now realize that individuals tend to use books as an initial source of understanding problems, and this insight has led to the acceptance of bibliotherapy as a medium to carry out health care and auxiliary treatment for diseases. With the help of technology in the coming years, therapeutic model in a digital context, is expected to further enhance the assessment and treatment process by achieving immersive psychological experience under virtual interactive circumstances.

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