

BIBLIOTHERAPY IN EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract

This systematic review aims to synthesize and analyze existing evidence on the practices of bibliotherapy in the educational setting. A systematic literature search was conducted using four leading databases. The PRISMA guidelines were followed to ensure the articles' relevance in the review. Articles that involved bibliotherapy or reading therapy for teachers, teacher candidates, students, and children were included in the review. All included studies were peer-reviewed and published between 2006 and 2021 to ensure credibility and relevance to present practices. A total of 35 articles were included in the review based on specified inclusion and exclusion criteria. These articles were focused on the following themes: perceptions and practices of bibliotherapy; socio-emotional outcomes; academic outcomes; self-esteem, resilience, hope, and mindfulness outcomes; and stress, trauma, anxiety, and depression outcomes. Perceptions and practices of bibliotherapy showed how teachers and teacher candidates saw the value of the practice but lacked training for it. Outcomes in various domains showed that bibliotherapy might be implemented for different goals, such as improving social skills, emotional awareness and expression, empathy, academic achievement, learning ability, self-esteem, resilience, hope, and mindfulness, as well as a reduction in aggressive behaviors, stress, depression, anxiety, and trauma effects. These findings highlight the utility of bibliotherapy in education as support for the academic, socio-emotional, and psychological development of various types of students. This systematic review's findings contribute to the literature gaps regarding the lack of a unified framework for bibliotherapy.

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Bibliotherapy has been utilized in various fields and settings throughout history; however, there remains to be a lack of a unified framework for its practice (Hamdan et al., 2020). The etymology of bibliotherapy stems from the Greek words *biblus* or *biblion*, meaning books, and *therapeio*, meaning therapy, which can be understood as providing psychological assistance (Gallagher, 2020; Mandas et al., 2018). Bibliotherapy can be understood as using books to assist readers regarding their problems (Mandas et al., 2018).

The main settings for bibliotherapy are the educational and clinical settings (Lindeman and Kling, 1968). In the former, developmental bibliotherapy is used primarily to aid the development of children or adult students (Rozalski et al., 2010). Developmental bibliotherapy may thus be used even in the absence of psychological or behavioral issues (Lindeman & Kling, 1968). In clinical settings, therapeutic bibliotherapy is a more targeted intervention to treat mental health problems (Lindeman & Kling, 1968; Rozalski et al., 2010). Regardless of these differences, however, the main elements of bibliotherapy are the interactions between the one reading the text, the process of reading, and the text itself (Lindeman & Kling, 1968; Mandas et al., 2018).

Much of the literature on bibliotherapy focuses on therapeutic bibliotherapy (Suvilehto, 2019). Although therapeutic bibliotherapy may also be used in the educational setting for students with psychological or behavioral problems, there is substantially less research regarding developmental bibliotherapy (Suvilehto, 2019). Furthermore, there is a need for a unification of empirical evidence to understand and maximize the effects of bibliotherapy (Troscianko, 2018). The purpose of this systematic review is thus to synthesize and analyze existing evidence on the practices of bibliotherapy in the educational setting.

Literature Review

History of Bibliotherapy

Researchers have indicated that bibliotherapy has been a part of human activity since ancient times (Bankar & Patil, 2021; Stip et al., 2020; Troscianko, 2018). Sharing stories has allowed humans throughout history to process information and simulate actions without the actual risk of performing the action itself (Troscianko, 2018). During the ancient period, scholars and philosophers have advocated reading as therapy. Inscribed on the doors of the ancient Ramses II library in Thebes, as well as in the medieval library of the abbey of St. Gall, were the words that could be translated as healing place of the soul (Davis, 2019; Kuriakose & Harsha, 2016; Stip et al., 2020). The Greek philosopher Aristotle was also cited as a prominent advocate of bibliotherapy, as he utilized texts to stimulate healing for himself and his students (Bankar and Patil, 2021). These ancient artifacts represent the earliest recordings of the practice of bibliotherapy.

In the Elizabethan and Victorian eras, physicians prescribed texts for treatment within psychiatric wards and prisons (Suvilehto et al., 2019). Further evidence of bibliotherapy during those times involved using religious texts (Stip et al., 2020). In 1916, the term bibliotherapy first

appeared in text in an Atlantic Monthly article by Samuel Crothers (Davis, 2019). He described bibliotherapy to connect individuals with problems through books.

It was not until the 1930s and 1940s that bibliotherapy was applied to non-clinical cases (Davis, 2019; Suvilehto et al., 2019). During this time, librarians began to compile recommended books for their patrons. During this time, developmental bibliotherapy also began with Sister Mary Agnes, who compiled children's books to aid children in overcoming their personal problems (Suvilehto et al., 2019). In 1961, Webster released a dictionary definition of bibliotherapy as "the use of selected reading materials as a therapeutic adjunct in medicine and psychiatry," which has been accepted by the American Library Association (Kuriakose and Harsha, 2016, p. 22). Since then, bibliotherapy has been tested on various populations with various goals.

Although bibliotherapy can vary, the main principles of bibliotherapy remain the same, including identification, catharsis, and insight (Kuriakose & Harsha, 2016; Rozalski et al., 2010). Identification describes how the reader relates to a character or situation within the text. Catharsis describes the emotional release experienced by readers as they revisit their previously repressed emotions. Insight describes when the reader gains a fresh understanding of the emotions or situations, leading to positive behavioral changes (Kuriakose & Harsha, 2016; Rozalski et al., 2010). Kuriakose and Harsha (2016) discussed an additional principle, universalization, which involves the reader's realization that they were not alone in experiencing their struggles.

The process of bibliotherapy begins with the goal or problem to be addressed (Rozalski et al., 2021). The practitioner should also consider whether the individual would be receptive and benefit from bibliotherapy (Gallagher, 2020). The text should be selected based on elements or situations like the goal or problem (Rahmat et al., 2021). The practitioner then presents the text to the reader and discusses them individually or in groups (Rahmat et al., 2021). The reader must actively listen to the discussion (Bowman, 2021). Finally, follow-up sessions ensure the reader has processed the text and met the established goals (Rahmat et al., 2021).

Variations of bibliotherapy have been developed over the years. Researchers have emphasized the division between cognitive bibliotherapy and creative or affective bibliotherapy (Bankar & Patil, 2021; Kuijpers, 2018; Troscianko, 2018). Cognitive bibliotherapy involves using self-help or non-fictional texts to aid readers with psychological problems. Creative or affective bibliotherapy involves fictional prose or poetry that connects with readers emotionally, allowing them to cope with their issues healthily (Bankar & Patil, 2021; Kuijpers, 2018; Troscianko, 2018).

Book clubs and shared reading groups may also be considered bibliotherapy if the process of reading and discussing is present (Kuijpers, 2018). In some cases, bibliotherapy may also involve writing to express their thoughts, emotions, and reflections from reading (Bowman, 2021). Morawski & Gilbert (2000) described interactive bibliotherapy, wherein readers are encouraged to participate actively through journals or group sharing. Online platforms for bibliotherapy, such as Goodreads, have recently become more prevalent (Kuijpers, 2018). On such platforms, various readers can share their insights regarding a literary piece and provide other recommendations for fellow readers (Kuijpers, 2018). These variations in bibliotherapy display how far the practice have come from its beginnings.

Bibliotherapy in Education

The practice of bibliotherapy has been a foundational aspect of education for years (Ford et al., 2019). Educators have used bibliotherapy to discuss difficult or sensitive topics in class (Rozalski et al., 2010). For instance, Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* has been used to teach about the Holocaust. In recent years, bibliotherapy has also been used to aid students with personal struggles that hinder their learning (Rozalski et al., 2010). Bibliotherapy thus has many uses in the field of education.

Book selection ensures reading gains (Davis, 2019; Rusch et al., 2020; Suvilehto et al., 2019). Although some books have been designed specifically for bibliotherapy, these books may be too heavy and lack relevance to the lives of young children (Suvilehto et al., 2019). Rusch et al. (2020) enumerated some steps for proper book selection for the educational setting, including previewing all prospective texts, deliberating their relevance to the reader's situation, ensuring the text's developmental congruence, and selecting texts that engage one's senses and imagination, as well as providing relief and encouragement. Illustrations in books are also important for the selection of teachers of younger students (Davis, 2019; Suvilehto et al., 2019).

Age group is important for book selection (Aydin & Basoglu, 2021). For the preschool age group encompassing students aged two to five years, texts for bibliotherapy should ideally involve emotions and how they can deal with them (Rusch et al., 2020). Such texts should tackle a single theme that children can easily understand (Chamalah et al., 2020). Notably, practitioners may modify some texts that are too complicated for this age group without straying from the essential elements of the story (Chamalah et al., 2020).

For elementary levels, texts regarding familial responsibilities, emotional conflicts, disabilities, interpersonal relationships, and overcoming hardships toward achievement were recommended for bibliotherapy (Lindeman & Kling, 1968). For middle school levels, themes of economic insecurity, isolation, superiority, responsibilities, fears, and racial insecurities may already be understood well and were cited as ideal for bibliotherapy. For adolescents, the themes of emotional and economic independence, life as an adult, and socially responsible behaviors were purported to be suitable for bibliotherapy (Lindeman & Kling, 1968). Researchers (e.g., Basari & Ayhan, 2021; Ford et al., 2019; Lindeman & Kling, 1968) have highlighted the importance of bibliotherapy for certain groups of students, such as gifted students, students with learning problems, students with chronic health problems, and students of color. Classroom applications of bibliotherapy tackling the issues of these groups of students may benefit the students experiencing these issues and other students as they grow a deeper understanding of them (Basari & Ayhan, 2021). For instance, multicultural texts used in classroom bibliotherapy may help students of color who identify with the text and white students who learn more about their classmates' cultures (Basari & Ayhan, 2021). Furthermore, bibliotherapy was purported to benefit gifted students because of their inclination toward vicarious learning (Lindeman & Kling, 1968). Overall, bibliotherapy appears to have many uses within the educational setting.

Effects of Bibliotherapy

Over the years, researchers have explored the various effects of bibliotherapy. The most salient effect is how readers can reflect and identify with the texts, allowing them to apply solutions from the text to their real-life problems (Aswal & Srivastava, 2020; Ford et al., 2019; Morawski & Gilbert, 2000). This vicarious way of learning through bibliotherapy represents a non-threatening way for individuals to find solutions to their problems (Rozalski et al., 2010). In

general, bibliotherapy was cited to improve decision-making and problem-solving in students (Basari & Ayhan, 2021).

Reflection in bibliotherapy may also allow thoughts and feelings to surface, bringing a sense of enlightenment to readers (Morawski & Gilbert, 2000). As readers reflect on the problems and situations in the texts, they may understand belongingness, which may lead to acceptance (Rahmat et al., 2021; Troscianko, 2018). Such acceptance may relieve readers' shame, guilt, or fear and allow them to talk freely about their situations with the practitioner (Rahmat et al., 2021; Troscianko, 2018). As such, bibliotherapy presents an opportunity for free expression, particularly for young children who may have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings (Gallagher, 2020). Regarding socio-emotional skills, bibliotherapy was purported to increase readers' social sensitivity (Rahmat et al., 2021). Through stories, children may learn about social cues and socially appropriate behaviors (Rahmat et al., 2021). Developing children may face numerous socio-emotional challenges, such as aggression and fear, which they may overcome with the help of bibliotherapy (Lutovac & Kaasila, 2020). Reading about characters or situations like theirs may help children gain emotional insight and motivation to solve their problems (Rahmat et al., 2021).

As a therapeutic process, bibliotherapy was purported to bring a sense of calm or relaxation to readers who may be suffering from anxiety or neuroticism (Gallagher, 2020; Rahmat et al., 2021). It does so by activating the reader's curiosity rather than their automatic fear response, allowing for a more regulated way for readers to experience their fears or anxieties (Wohl & Kirschen, 2020). Bibliotherapy was cited to be effective, particularly for individuals suffering from mathematics anxiety, as readers become more aware of their feelings towards mathematics and learn to control them (Higgins et al., 2020). Children coping with loss or other negative experiences may also benefit from bibliotherapy, serving as an escape and a guide for healthy coping strategies (Gallagher, 2020; Rusch et al., 2020; Wohl & Kirschen, 2020). Developmental bibliotherapy may also benefit students in terms of their learning. Bibliotherapy may improve learning motivation as they read more about their aspirations and how to achieve them (Mandas et al., 2018). Bibliotherapy was cited to help particularly in readers' problem-solving skills (Rahmat et al., 2021). Finally, multicultural bibliotherapy can help students gain increased awareness, understanding, and appreciation of cultural differences and plans of action for the future (Morawski & Gilbert, 2000). Despite these benefits cited in the literature, practitioners must be careful when practicing bibliotherapy and selecting the right books, as there is a possibility that it may do more harm than good (Troscianko, 2018). At the current state of bibliotherapy research, however, there is still a dearth of evidence regarding how bibliotherapy can benefit readers (Troscianko, 2018). The lack of a unified framework for bibliotherapy remains a serious obstacle to its practice (Hamdan et al., 2020). As such, the purpose of the present systematic review is to synthesize and analyze existing evidence on the practices of bibliotherapy in the educational setting. Doing so may help advance knowledge surrounding the practice and raise insights regarding the possibility of a unified framework for bibliotherapy.

Methods

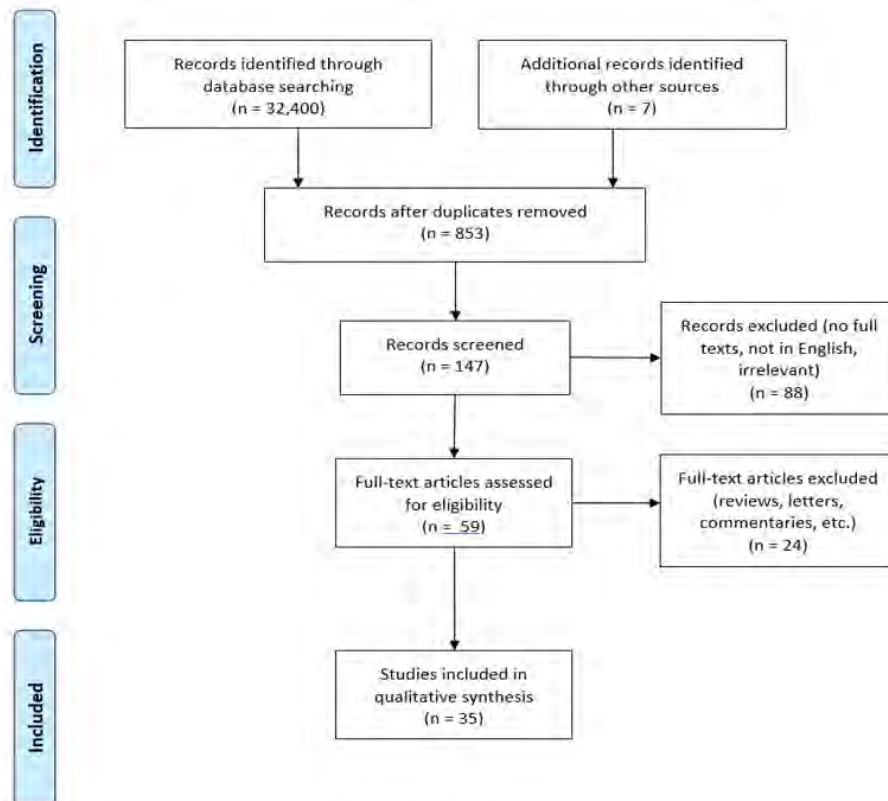
This systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (PRISMA-P; Moher et al., 2015). Following the PRISMA-P ensures that the included articles are relevant to the topic and explicit. This review was also conducted in

line with the *PICO principle*. The population for the review included educators, librarians, students, and children. The intervention involved bibliotherapy. Comparisons with other forms of therapy were present in some of the studies, while the rest utilized control groups. Outcomes described the effects of the intervention in various domains. Following these principles, the research question for this systematic review is: *What are the outcomes of bibliotherapy in the educational setting?*

The search strategy for this systematic review involved using numerous databases to identify relevant articles in line with the research question. The databases used included ERIC, Elsevier, Research Gate, and Google Scholar. References from the included articles were also scanned for additional relevant articles. The search was limited to 2006 to 2021 to ensure their relevance to current practices. Key terms were used together with Boolean phrases “AND” and “OR.” Key terms included *bibliotherapy, reading therapy, book therapy, storytelling, picture books, literature, educational leadership, librarians, educators, pedagogy, intervention, self-help, and student outcomes*. Results from the search were collated and analyzed by title and abstract. Relevant articles were further analyzed by full text and evaluated for eligibility. The inclusion criteria for this review included articles published in English that involved the bibliotherapy intervention and published in peer-reviewed journals. The exclusion criteria included articles without full text, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, letters to the Editor, commentaries, or theoretical articles, and did not involve bibliotherapy or reading therapy. The PRISMA flowchart in Figure 1 below displays the complete process of the search.

Figure 1

PRISMA Flowchart



Results

In this systematic review, 35 articles were deemed relevant and included in the analysis. The articles included quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies using various instruments; hence, a meta-analysis could not be performed. Themes from the results are presented in the following sections.

Perceptions and Practices of Bibliotherapy

Articles regarding the perceptions and practices of bibliotherapy included a mix of quantitative (2/8, 25%), qualitative (3/8, 37.5%), and mixed methods (3/8, 37.5%) studies (see Table 1). Quantitative results revealed a wide range of awareness of bibliotherapy from 14.29% (Somaratna, 2021) to 80% (Owolabi et al., 2018), as well as the type of books most used from social stories (Abraham et al., 2020) to self-help books (Pehrsson et al., 2010). A more agreed-upon outcome involved the lack of training for bibliotherapy (Abraham et al., 2020; Pehrsson et al., 2010). Notably, only one study displayed quantitative results in students' perspectives.

Table 1

Quantitative Results on Perceptions and Practices of Bibliotherapy

Author/Year	Research Design	Sample	Main Results
Abraham et al. (2020)	survey	84 board-certified behavior analysts	26 (31%) were aware of bibliotherapy. 44 (52.4%) practiced bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy was mostly used for children aged 2-7 (40/44, 90.9%). Only 10 (22.7%) had formal training, and 34 (77.3%) had informal training on bibliotherapy. Social stories (43/44, 97.7%) were most utilized. Social and life skills were the most cited goals (42/44, 95.5%).
Owolabi et al. (2018)	survey	38 medical personnel, 6 librarians, 3 sociologists	38 (80%) were aware of bibliotherapy. 16 (34%) strongly agreed, while 26 (55.3%) agreed on using bibliotherapy for clinical and developmental use. 17 (36.2%) strongly agreed, while 23 (48.9%) agreed that bibliotherapy could be used as an intervention strategy for their university.
Pehrsson et al. (2010)	survey	283 counselors	248 (79%) used bibliotherapy. 135 (48%) had formal training. 215 (76%) used bibliotherapy on children aged 8-12, while 190 (67%) used bibliotherapy on children aged 2-7. Self-help books (78%) were most utilized. Family issues (51%) were the most cited issues.
Somaratna (2021)	survey	64 counselors	Only 6 (14.29%) were aware of bibliotherapy, and only 1 (1.56%) used it. All participants stated that university students would benefit from it if implemented.
Zousel et al. (2013)	experiment	46 elementary students	7/23 (30.43%) of the control group liked the books most, while 4/23 (17.39%) liked the teacher most. Contrastingly, 12/23 (52.17%) of the experimental group liked the cartoons most, while only 1/23 (4.35%) liked the teacher most.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Once the articles used in this review were established, full texts were reviewed and evaluated for quality. Data from the articles, including the authors, methodology, and results, were compiled in a table. NVivo 12 was used to generate codes and themes. Five themes were established based on frequency and relevance to the research question.

Qualitative results are also widely varied. Although practitioners were able to name several benefits of bibliotherapy (Basari & Latifoglu, 2021; Lea, 2015; Somaratna, 2021), they also identified challenges such as lack of time and resources (Lea, 2015) and readers' reluctance, boredom, or inability to read (Brewster et al., 2013; Lea, 2015; Somaratna, 2021; Zousel et al., 2013). Overall, the qualitative results showed a balance of advantages and disadvantages of bibliotherapy (see Table 2).

Table 2

Qualitative Results of Perceptions and Practices of Bibliotherapy

Author/Year	Research Design	Sample	Main Results
Basari & Latifoglu (2021)	case study	30 psychological counseling and guidance students	Perceived benefits of bibliotherapy included: "strengthening communication," "looking from different perspectives," "empathy," "emotion transfer," "solution to loneliness and anger," and "self-development." Participants suggested "increasing visual materials and practicing activities," "enacting tales through drama," and "giving stories that fit everyone's problem."
Brewster <i>et al.</i> (2013)	interpretive interactionism	12 public librarians	Participants stated that bibliotherapy may be more suited for "self-helpers" than those with acute psychological disorders. Participants raised concerns regarding the difficulty of evaluation of services and the ability to read when experiencing mental health symptoms.
Lea (2015)	grounded theory	23 female teachers	The benefits of bibliotherapy included a different way of instructing and learning. Despite expressing the importance of books, participants hesitated to use them. Reasons included preference for unmediated and direct instructions, lack of necessary tools, time constraints, lack of resources, and fear that students would fail to internalize the message.
Pehrsson <i>et al.</i> (2010)	survey	283 counselors	Participants reported using assigned independent reading, reading to or with clients, classroom/guidance unit reading, group therapy reading, reading with art activities, reading with writing, reading with drama activities, and having clients read to them. Participants endorsed non-fiction books for bibliotherapy.
Somaratna (2021)	mixed methods	64 counselors	Participants stated that bibliotherapy may help with English language difficulties, career and study direction problems, exam stress and anxieties, and difficulties with motivation or decision-making. Perceived challenges with bibliotherapy included book selection, obtaining continuous professional support, and students' reluctance.
Zousel <i>et al.</i> (2013)	experiment	46 elementary students	Students showed boredom with bibliotherapy in the second, third, and fourth lessons, compared to the use of cartoons, wherein students were more excited.

Socio-Emotional Outcomes

Theme 2 consisted of 7 (63.64%) quantitative, 2 (18.18%) qualitative, and 2 (18.18%) mixed methods studies. Most studies utilized an experimental design (8/11, 72.73%).

Quantitative results showed positive socio-emotional outcomes of bibliotherapy. Although there were non-significant outcomes in terms of bullying (Andreou et al., 2013), socio-emotional sensitivity and control (Basari et al., 2018), and empathy (Ryu & Yi, 2017), there were more significant improvements overall (see Table 3).

Table 3
Quantitative Results of Socio-Emotional Outcomes

Author/Year	Research Design	Sample	Type of Bibliotherapy	Main Results
Abu-Hussain (2016)	experiment	60 elementary students	group reading	The bibliotherapy group decreased violence from 0.78 to 0.52 in teachers' reports and from 0.51 to 0.41 in self-reports. No changes were found in the control group.
Andreou et al. (2013)	experiment	98 fifth-grade students	independent reading with group activities	A non-significant slight decrease in self-reported bullying in the bibliotherapy group. There was a significant decrease in outsider behaviors in the bibliotherapy group. Significant improvements in pro-victim and self-efficacy for intervening for the bibliotherapy group.
Basari et al. (2018)	experiment	30 psychological counseling and guidance students	bibliotherapy education	There have been no significant improvements in emotional sensitivity, social sensitivity, emotional control, or social control. However, there have been substantial improvements in social expressivity and overall social skills for female students. There have also been no significant improvements in all domains for male students.
Betzalel & Shechtman (2010)	experiment	79 children	affective vs. cognitive bibliotherapy	There was a significant decrease in social anxiety in both the affective and cognitive bibliotherapy groups but not in the control group. There was a substantial reduction in symptoms of anxiety, depression, social problems, and attention for the affective bibliotherapy group but not for the cognitive and control groups.
Delano & (2006)	experiment	Three children with autism	social stories	Participants showed increases in the duration of appropriate social engagement from baseline to intervention (P1: 43s to 321s, P2: 37s to 289s, P3: 61s to 308s).
Elley (2014)	action research	17 third-grade students	structured reading and class activities	Interruptions decreased from 44 at week 1 to 4 at week 6. Self-reported positive behaviors (concern for others, patience, tolerance of others' views, respect for others' property, and honesty) increased from pre- to post-test.
Khalik (2017)	experiment	Ten children with emotional and behavioral disorders	read-aloud and structured discussions	There was a significant difference in aggressive behavior between the bibliotherapy group and the control group at the post-test, favoring the bibliotherapy group. There was also a significant difference in aggressive behaviors between the bibliotherapy group's pre-and post-test results.
Ryu & Yi (2017)	experiment	41 nursing students	picture book reading and discussion	There is a significant difference in emotional awareness between the bibliotherapy and control groups, but not empathy.

Qualitative results showed improvements in various areas following bibliotherapy. These areas included social behaviors (Delano & Snell, 2006; Mehdizadeh & Khosravi, 2019), cooperation (Elley, 2014), and identification and reflection (Lutovac & Kaasila, 2020). These qualitative results revealed how social stories and identification with the stories helped in improving socio-emotional behaviors and skills (Delano & Snell, 2006; Elley, 2014; Lutovac & Kaasila, 2020; Mehdizadeh & Khosravi, 2019). These results are displayed in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Qualitative Results of Socio-Emotional Outcomes

Author/Year	Research Design	Sample	Type of Bibliotherapy	Main Results
Delano & Snell (2006)	experiment	3 children with autism	social stories	Participants showed improvements in the target behaviors of comments and contingent responses but did not display much progress in the target behaviors of seeking attention and requests.
Elley (2014)	action research	17 third-grade students	structured reading and class activities	Observational notes indicated improvements in working together and cooperative learning.
Lutovac & Kaasila (2020)	case description	2 cases and 4 teachers	independent reading of case descriptions	Teachers identified with the case descriptions, which allowed them to reflect and increased their motivation and realizations about teaching.
Mehdizadeh & Khosravi (2019)	grounded theory	10 teachers, 4 mothers, and 4 agents	book-based theater with take-home book and CD	Participants reported improvements in students' social skills in showing respect, etiquette, understanding others' feelings, awareness of rules and regulations, participation in group activities, family relations, and expressing emotions. They also reported improvements in students' self-help skills, such as personal hygiene, alternatives for aggression, awareness of dangers, self-control, and reduced disturbed behaviors.

Academic Outcomes

For Theme 3, three (60%) quantitative, one (20%) qualitative, and one (20%) mixed methods study were included. These studies' populations included students, teachers, mothers, and other professionals. All studies reported benefits of bibliotherapy on academic outcomes (see Table 5). Specifically, significant quantitative outcomes were found in verbal responses for children with autism (Fleury & Schwartz, 2016), reading comprehension (Greathouse, 2018), articulation (Merina et al., 2018), and English language and mathematics (Ogbeide & Adomeh, 2019).

Table 5**Results of Academic Outcomes**

Author/Year	Research Design	Sample	Type of Bibliotherapy	Main Results
Fleury & Schwartz (2016)	multiple baseline design	5 para-educators and 9 children with autism	shared reading	Quantitative: Significant improvement in responding to adults (Tau-U = 0.82-1.25, $p < .01$), but not for verbal initiations. Significant improvement in book-specific vocabulary ($p = .008$).
Greathouse (2018)	action research	24 tenth grade students	read-aloud and independent reading	Quantitative: Significant improvement in reading comprehension from pre- to post-test ($p < .0001$), with 13 (54%) of participants scoring above grade level at the post-test. Qualitative: participants reported increased use of text mediums such as writing lyrics, fiction, and poetry.
Mehdzadeh & Khosravi (2019)	grounded theory	10 teachers, 4 mothers, and 4 agents	book-based theater with take-home book and CD	qualitative: most participants reported improved understanding, awareness, reading, speech, auditory, and writing skills.
Merina et al. (2018)	quasi-experiment	40 preschool students	picture discussion	quantitative: significant improvement in articulation of bibliotherapy group ($p = .000$), but not in control group ($p = .743$).
Ogbeide & Adomeh (2019)	quasi-expert-ment	50 junior secondary students	independent reading	quantitative: significant difference in English language learning and Mathematics between the bibliotherapy group and the control group (both at $p < .05$).

Self-esteem, Resilience, and Hope Outcomes

Studies in Theme 4 included quantitative (57.14%) with some mixed methods studies (42.86%). The population for these studies ranged from primary students to college-level students. Although there were non-significant results in terms of confidence, competence, connectedness, and caring (Greathouse, 2018) and in social self-esteem (Salimi et al., 2014), overall, there were significant improvements in general self-esteem (Niman et al., 2019; Ryu and Yi, 2017; Salimi et al., 2014; Tofaha, 2012), hope (Lucas et al., 2019), and resilience (Theron et al., 2017) associated with bibliotherapy (see Table 6).

Table 6**Results of Self-Esteem, Resilience, and Hope Outcomes**

Author/Year	Research Design	Sample	Type of Bibliotherapy	Main Results
Greathouse (2018)	action research	24 tenth grade students	read-aloud and independent reading	quantitative: There is a non-significant slight increase in confidence, competence, connectedness, and caring. Qualitative journal responses indicated an improvement in self-efficacy.
Lucas et al. (2019)	experiment	113 elementary students	group reading with structured activities	quantitative: significant increase in hope from pre- to post-intervention ($p = .002$) overall and in students with low levels of hope ($p < .000$). qualitative: increased themes of agency and hope for the future in children's inputs post-intervention.
Niman et al. (2019)	pre-experiment	11 early adolescents	therapeutic modules	quantitative: significant improvement in self-esteem between pre- and post-intervention ($p = .05$).
Ryu & Yi (2017)	experiment	41 nursing students	picture book reading and discussion	quantitative: significant difference in self-esteem between pre- and post-intervention ($p = 0.041$).
Salimi et al. (2014)	semi-experiment	64 female university students	group bibliotherapy	quantitative: There was a significant difference in self-esteem between the bibliotherapy group and the control group ($p = .005$) and between pre- and post-intervention for the bibliotherapy group ($p = .001$). There was no change in social self-esteem for both groups between pre- and post-intervention.
Theron et al. (2017)	experiment	345 vulnerable children	group storytelling	quantitative: significant difference in individual, caregiver, and community resilience-supporting resources between the bibliotherapy group and the control group ($p = .01$). Qualitative: increased comments on personal agencies and education resources for the bibliotherapy group.
Tofaha (2012)	experiment	60 first grade gifted students	group storytelling	quantitative: significant difference in self-esteem scores between bibliotherapy and control groups ($p = .01$)

Stress, Trauma, Anxiety, and Depression Outcomes

Studies in Theme 5 were mostly quantitative (85.71%), with only one (14.29%) qualitative study. The population ranged from eighth-grade students to postgraduate students. Quantitative results showed significant effects of bibliotherapy on anxiety (Hamdan et al., 2020; Hazlett-Stevens and Oren, 2017; Sriferina et al., 2019) and depression (Hazlett-Stevens & Oren, 2017; Hua, 2018; Jacob & De Guzman, 2016); however, results varied in terms of stress with non-significant (Riahinia et al., 2011) and significant (Hazlett-Stevens & Oren, 2017) results. The qualitative findings indicated that the participant could discuss past trauma through bibliotherapy (Cancino & Cruz, 2019). Results are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7**Results of Stress, Trauma, Anxiety, and Depression Outcomes**

Author/Year	Research Design	Sample	Type of Bibliotherapy	Main Results
Cancino & Cruz (2019)	single case study	1 twelfth-grade student	read-aloud or group reading	qualitative: Participants expressed traumatic struggles with finances, mental health, and relationships during bibliotherapy sessions and in journals.
Hamdan et al. (2020)	quasi-experiment	121 college students	self-help bibliotherapy	Quantitative: Significant reductions in worry, tension, test-irrelevant thinking, bodily symptoms, and text anxiety scores for the bibliotherapy group compared to the control group (all at $p = .001$).
Hazlett-Stevens & Oren (2017)	experiment	68 college students	mindfulness-based stress reduction workbook	quantitative: Significant reductions in depression ($p = .001$), anxiety ($p = .003$), and stress ($p = .05$) for bibliotherapy group. There were no changes in trait worry ($p = .53$) and experiential avoidance ($p = .29$).
Hua (2018)	experiment	36 university students	psychological reading vs. recreational reading	quantitative: There is a significant difference in therapeutic effects between the recreational group (61.11% cure rate) vs. the psychological group (38.89% cure rate; $p < .05$) in favor of the recreational group. Both groups had significant reductions in depression after intervention ($p < .05$), with the recreational group having a greater effect.
Jacob & De Guzman (2016)	experiment	30 female high school students	therapeutic modules	quantitative: Significant reduction in depression between pre- and posttest for bibliotherapy group ($p = .05$), but not in control group.
Riahinia et al. (2011)	experiment	40 PhD students	biography reading by librarian vs. counseling	Quantitative: There was a non-significant reduction in stress for both intervention groups. Counseling group had lower post-test stress (mean = 14.85) than bibliotherapy group (mean = 17.46)
Sriferina et al. (2019)	quasi-experiment	20 eighth-grade students	group guidance bibliotherapy	quantitative: A significant decline in academic anxiety of the bibliotherapy group.

Discussion

The results presented above generally supported using bibliotherapy to improve socio-emotional, academic, and psychological outcomes. Results from Theme 1 showed the perceived effectiveness of bibliotherapy; however, there was a notable lack of awareness and training for bibliotherapy practitioners (Abraham et al., 2020; Pehrsson et al., 2010; Somaratna, 2021). Furthermore, elementary students found bibliotherapy boring after a few sessions (Zousel et al., 2013). Some practitioners have suggested increasing visual cues and practical activities (Basari & Latifoglu, 2021). Other challenges associated with bibliotherapy included a lack of time and resources (Lea, 2015) and readers' reluctance or inability to read while experiencing

psychological problems (Brewster et al., 2013; Lea, 2015; Somaratna, 2021). Based on these findings, bibliotherapy practice and training can still be improved.

For Theme 2, results generally showed the positive effects of bibliotherapy in reducing aggressive behaviors (Abu-Hussain, 2016; Andreou et al., 2013; Khalik, 2017) and social anxiety (Betzael & Shechtman, 2010), as well as promoting socially appropriate behaviors (Delano & Snell, 2006; Elley, 2014; Mehdizadeh & Khosravi, 2019) and emotional awareness (Lutovac & Kaasila, 2020; Ryu & Yi, 2017). Findings regarding the improved socio-emotional outcomes of children with autism (Delano & Snell, 2006) and children with emotional and behavioral disorders (Khalik, 2017) were of particular interest as these populations often struggled in this domain. Notably, affective bibliotherapy was more effective than cognitive bibliotherapy in reducing social problems (Betzael & Shechtman, 2010). These findings indicate the potential effectiveness of bibliotherapy for those seeking to improve socio-emotional outcomes.

Theme 3 showed improvements in academic-related outcomes associated with bibliotherapy. Fewer studies have reported on these outcomes, as bibliotherapy has been known for therapeutic rather than academic purposes. Nonetheless, the findings showed improvements in reading (Greathouse, 2018; Mehdizadeh & Khosravi, 2019), vocabulary (Fleury & Schwartz, 2016), writing (Mehdizadeh & Khosravi, 2019), articulation (Merina et al., 2018), and English language and mathematics (Ogbeide & Adomeh, 2019). These findings showed that bibliotherapy may also be an effective tool for academic-related goals.

In Theme 4, studies showed significant improvements in self-esteem (Niman et al., 2019; Ryu & Yi, 2017; Salimi et al., 2014; Tofaha, 2012), hope (Lucas et al., 2019), and resilience (Theron et al., 2017). Of note were the improvements in orphans' and vulnerable children's resilience, highlighting the therapeutic effects of bibliotherapy for vulnerable populations (Theron et al., 2017). Improvements in hope and self-esteem associated with bibliotherapy could be particularly helpful for motivating students struggling with their academics or other problems.

The fifth and final theme showed improvements in mental health issues associated with bibliotherapy. In terms of trauma, bibliotherapy was found to be effective in allowing the reader to discuss their past traumatic experiences; however, the study did not involve treating the effects of these traumatic experiences (Cancino & Cruz, 2019). As such, this finding only suggests that bibliotherapy could be an initial step in dealing with trauma (Cancino & Cruz, 2019). Findings of other studies were more explicit, showing reductions in anxiety (Hamdan et al., 2020; Hazlett-Stevens & Oren, 2017; Sriferina et al., 2019), stress (Hazlett-Stevens and Oren, 2017), and depression (Hazlett-Stevens & Oren, 2017; Hua, 2018; Jacob & De Guzman, 2016). Based on these findings, bibliotherapy may be useful for individuals suffering from mental health problems.

Certain limitations should be noted with this systematic review. Many studies had small sample sizes and covered only one or two institutions, especially experimental designs. A large-scale study on the effects of bibliotherapy would be a difficult but informative endeavor for future researchers. Some studies lacked specificity in methodology reporting and books used in their interventions. Considering bibliotherapy is still an underdefined practice, more detailed reports would be helpful for future studies. Finally, geographical locations varied in this review, which may translate into cultural differences that have influenced results. Nonetheless, these geographical variations revealed how bibliotherapy could be beneficial on a global scale. In sum,

bibliotherapy, as an up-and-coming practice, may be helpful for teachers and other practitioners to use in different goals for their students.

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