

Bibliotherapy- Use of Books for Healing: An Experiential Study to Introduce Bibliotherapy Service in Libraries

Rummana Nazi^{1*}, P. M. Naushad Ali² and Deoshree Akhouri³

¹Ex-Student, Department of Library and Information Science, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh – 202001, Uttar Pradesh, India; rummanademocracy@gmail.com

²Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh – 202001, Uttar Pradesh, India; naushadali.ls@amu.ac.in

³Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh – 202001, India; drdeoshree17@rediffmail.com

Abstract

Since ancient times, books have been utilized as a therapeutic aid. However, its function and mode of operation have surely changed over time. It is the field of study that examines how writing might be used and how it might affect people's lives. Under the direction of a trained assistant, it is an act of interactive interplay between the reader's personality and the literature. People have various mental health issues, challenges, and difficulties in recent years. Bibliotherapy is a concept where, with the help of books, people manage their lives and their challenges. This study aims to see the efficacy of bibliotherapy in patients with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and depression. Based on this experiment, researchers propose a conceptual framework for libraries. A book by Catherine M. Pittman titled "Rewire Your OCD Brain: Neuroscience-Based Skills to Break Free from Obsessive Thoughts and Fears" served as the primary data-gathering tool for this research, which was carried out using an experimental methodology. The study's findings demonstrate a substantial difference between the experimental and wait-list groups in the treatment of mild to moderate OCD and depression symptoms with the application of bibliotherapy. Based on the findings, a conceptual framework with some recommendations has been suggested.

Keywords: Bibliotherapy, Chatbots, Depression, Experiential Study, Innovative Library Service, Libraries, OCD

1. Introduction

Margret Atwood's famous quote, "A word after a word after a word is a power," inspired the researchers to think about literature and bibliotherapy. Samuel MacChord Crothers coined the term "bibliotherapy" in 1916 (Crothers, 1916). In the past, Aristotle's writings were regarded as soul-healing medication. Caroline Shrodes later described bibliotherapy as "*a process of dynamic interaction between the personality of the reader and literature under the guidance of a trained helper*" (Shrodes, 2019). The process of treating and mending with the help of books is known as bibliotherapy. Undoubtedly, words have the power to both heal and harm people. We all support the therapeutic

benefits of reading. There is always a book that connects with the reader, empathizes with their predicament, and offers support, direction, inspiration, healing, and hope while facilitating change for every scenario in life. Bibliotherapists provide book prescriptions and curated reading services in libraries. Bibliotherapy can treat mild to moderate mental health issues and will be helpful in different settings. The researcher believes that this will be helpful in academic settings because it will help maintain a healthy environment for library users and enhance the quality of not just library service but the institution as well. Bibliotherapy is still an emerging area of study in India, though there are many initiatives in other countries including the UK, USA, Philippines, Malaysia, etc. This

*Author for correspondence

fast-paced life affects education and leads to many health problems. It is crucial to carry out in-depth studies in areas where book therapy can assist people in managing their problems more skillfully and where they can get crucial motivation from literature. In comparison to medications and other treatments, it is also a more affordable option for many. In many developing countries, getting primary healthcare services is still seen as a privilege rather than a fundamental right. Bibliotherapy has several applications. It can be utilized by experts who operate in the mental health, social work, education, and library services fields. Bibliotherapy improves people's moods, which influences their way of life and productivity at work. There are numerous varieties of bibliotherapy, ranging from creative to developmental to prescriptive to clinical, etc. (Pardeck, 2013).

2. Why Do We Need Bibliotherapy?

According to the WHO and CDC report (2022), suicide is the second-leading cause of death among teens and young adults aged 10–34. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. Narrowing the focus down to India, roughly 56 million Indians suffer from depression, and 38 million suffer from some kind of anxiety disorder (WHO). Every year, about 2,000 Indians take their lives. The statistics are even higher if one starts to include the number of suicide attempts. The COVID-19 pandemic in India was not only a stress trigger but also had negative psychological effects on the population. We must take these indicators as a wake-up call to step up mental health services and support. It is important to ensure the role libraries and librarians can play in education and well-being as social institutions. After all, it is one of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Importance of Bibliotherapy in Indian Context

Only half the world's population is aware of bibliotherapy, according to a review of related literature on the subject. India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and many other developing nations struggle with a lack of not only medical care but also literature. There isn't enough literature and study on the subject in India. Studies carried out in India primarily concentrate on its theoretical underpinnings,

policies, and framework (Bankar *et al.*, n.d.). The purpose of this paper and the proposed service is to educate the students and users to deal with their personal and mental health issues. We have witnessed increasing number of suicides, depression, stress, anxiety and other mental health issues after COVID-19 pandemic that affect individual personality and growth is high time to explore what role libraries and librarians can play this regard as social institutions. There are three major types of bibliotherapy - Clinical Bibliotherapy (it is restricted to the clinical settings and diseases); Creative Bibliotherapy (it is mainly based on fiction, storytelling, poetic sessions, and journalism, etc.); and Developmental Bibliotherapy (it includes the well-being and personality growth of an individual).

4. Objectives of the Study

This research was carried out at Aligarh Muslim University's Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College's Department of Psychiatry in India to evaluate the effectiveness of bibliotherapy in OCD and depression patients. It is hoped that this research will promote bibliotherapy in becoming a cutting-edge library service. The following are the objectives:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of bibliotherapy for OCD and depression patients.
- To assess the impact of bibliotherapy on the intensity of depressive symptoms in both control and experimental groups of OCD and depression patients
- To develop a conceptual framework to implement bibliotherapy as an innovative library service.

5. Research Design

According to ICD-10 criteria, a total of 46 patients were included in the research who had been diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder. The final 30 were chosen based on the exclusion and inclusion factors after employing assessment tools (Yale-Brown Obsessive-Compulsive Scale and Hamilton Depression Rating Scale). They were split into two groups: Waitlisted and Experimental. The lottery technique was used to randomly assign each group of 15 patients out of the total 30 patients. To provide bibliotherapy assistance, test groups were selected. Intervention was carried out

in the Psycho-Metric Lab. All patients were asked to provide written consent to engage in the study prior to the study's start. Additionally, they received assurances regarding the privacy and anonymity of the data and were told they could opt out of the study at any time without having any negative impact on their treatment. To satisfy the inclusion and exclusion criteria, a semi-structured sociodemographic data sheet was applied to all OCD patients. Then eight sessions of bibliotherapy intervention started, which were given once a week. The experimental group received a planned book's segments for bibliotherapy. The experimental group received Catherine M. Pittman's book, "The Rewire Your OCD Brain: Neuroscience-Based Skills to Break Free from Obsessive Thoughts and Fears". In total, 15 sets in both Hindi and English were made. The book was translated into Hindi before the segments were distributed to the patients. The experimental group received copies of both the original and the translated versions of the book. The experimental group was instructed to look through each chapter that was given to them carefully. After every chapter, a discussion session was planned in which they were questioned about the chapter summary, what they had learned, and any further inquiries. Management techniques were also discussed during the meetings. The waiting group received only two months of usual treatment. Following the conclusion of the final trial, the intervention was also made available to the waitlist group.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

With the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Science-26, data was examined using the Mann Whitney U-test and

Wilcoxon. First, a normalcy test using descriptive statistics was performed. The Mann-Whitney U test was used by researchers to compare the experimental and control groups. Additionally, a Wilcoxon test was performed to compare the study group's pre and post levels. Instruments included HDRS, YBOCS, and a BOOK.

Researchers asked them to use Woebot as a self-management tool if things go extreme, to track their moods and to share issues to settle down emotions when they were at home because the session was scheduled once a week meanwhile they were asked to take help from Woebot.

6.1 Baseline Comparisons between the Groups

The initial assessment score for OCD and depression is displayed in Table 1. Prior to bibliotherapy intervention, the mean rank of the YBOCS was 19.93 in the experimental group and 17.23 in the waitlisted group ($p = 0.52$). Similarly, the mean rank of the HDRS was 8.5 in the experimental group and 10.2 in the waitlisted group ($p = 0.49$) (Nazi, 2022).

6.2 Pre- and Post-Analysis of the Experimental Group

Table 2 shows that the mean rank of the experimental YBOCS was 8.00 at pre-test and 2.0 at post-test, with a p-value of 0.001*. The mean rank of the experimental HDRS was 5.00 at the pre-test and 0.00 at post-test, with a p-value of 0.005*. This means that the mean rank of the severity of OCD and depression level lowered after bibliotherapy intervention. (Nazi, 2022).

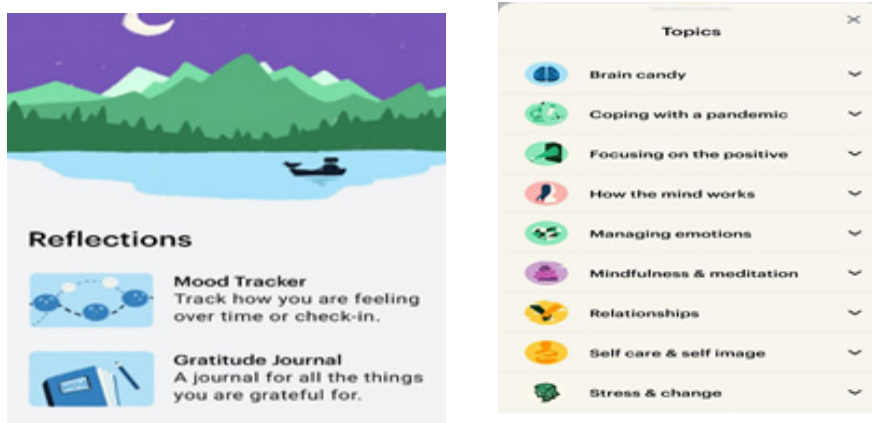


Figure 1. Main interface of Woebot.

Table 1. Comparison of OCD and depressive symptoms between the control group and the wait-list group (at baseline)

Variables	Intervention	Mean Rank	U	Z	p-value
Obsessive-compulsive symptom(YBOCS)	Experimental	19.93	46	-2.78	0.52
	Waitlisted	17.23			
Depression symptoms (HDRS)	Experimental	8.5	31.5	-0.85	0.49
	Waitlisted	10.2			

*Sig at 0.05 level

6.3 Comparison of Experimental Group and Waitlisted Group After Intervention

As shown in Table 3, the experimental group's YBOCS mean rank is 9.43 and 21.57 in the waitlisted group with a p-value of 0.001*, while the experimental group's HDRS mean rank is 5.0 and 14.00 in the waitlisted group with a p-value of 0.000*. It is clear from Table 3 that there is a substantial difference between the two groups. The assertion that there is a significant difference in OCD and depression patients after bibliotherapy intervention is

supported by the fact that the mean rank of the waitlisted group is higher while it is low in the experimental group (Nazi, 2022).

7. Findings of the Study

Prior to the start of the bibliotherapy intervention, researchers did not find any significant differences between the experimental and wait-listed groups. In comparing the two groups, investigators found that the mean rank

Table 2. Comparing the experimental group's OCD and depression symptoms before and after the course of therapy

Variables	Intervention	Mean Rank	Z	p-value
Obsessive-compulsive symptoms(Y-BOCS)	Pre-intervention	8.00	-3.41	0.001*
	Post-intervention	2.0		
Depression symptoms (HDRS)	Pre-intervention	5.00	-2.68	0.005*
	Post-intervention	0.00		

*Sig at 0.05 level

Table 3. Comparison of both groups after intervention

Variables	Intervention	Mean Rank	U	Z	p-value
Obsessive Compulsive Symptoms (YBOCS)	Experimental	9.43	21.5	-3.81	0.001*
	Waitlisted	21.57			
Depression Symptoms (HDRS)	Experimental	5.0	45.0	-3.60	0.000*
	Waitlisted	14.00			

*Sig at 0.05 level

of the wait-listed group was higher while the mean rank of the experimental group was lower, supporting the assertion that there is a significant difference in the patients with OCD and depression after bibliotherapy intervention. The current results agree with many other studies that have shown that bibliotherapy helps people with low to moderate mental health problems, such as Kupshik and Fisher (1999) and Zacharias and Theodore (2015). The results of the present study were also similar to those of Wang *et al.*, (2020). The current research suggests a significant difference between treating mild to moderate depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The current study was backed by numerous prior studies, reviews of the literature, and meta-analyses on the subject, all of which found that bibliotherapy is a useful treatment for reducing the severity of OCD symptoms in patients who also suffer from depression (Xu *et al.*, 2022).

8. Conceptual Framework for Libraries

After going through the literature review and based on the findings of the study researchers proposed the conceptual framework to introduce bibliotherapy as an innovative service for libraries. The following are steps which need to be followed while facilitating bibliotherapy:

- A. **Identification** - Schedule an introductory session, Identify your clients and their problems, build a repo with them.
- B. **Pre-Evaluation** - Evaluate the current status of the client.
- C. **Matching** - Match the existing literature with the problems of your client.
- D. **Preparation of Material/Recommendation list** - Prepare your matched material for a recommendation.
- E. **Place, People, and Time** - decide where, to whom and what type of bibliotherapy you're going to facilitate whether it is a group or an individual.
- F. **Facilitate Bibliotherapy** - After completing all the above-mentioned steps facilitation of bibliotherapy begins.
- G. **Follow Up** - This is the most important step where you get to know the insight of your client, what

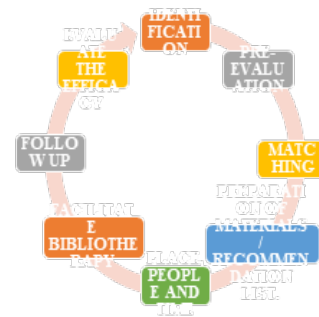


Figure 2. Conceptual frame work for implementation of Bibliotherapy.

understanding your client is having with the provided literature.

- H. **Evaluate the Efficacy** - This is where you evaluate the current status of your clients to see the changes after bibliotherapy intervention.

9. Implementation Steps in Bibliotherapy

The steps in implementing bibliotherapy in libraries are as follows:

- Display or make a corner for Bibliotherapy
- Educate the user about the service
- Motivate users with introductory activities
- Provide a reading/viewing/listening experience
- Allow growth/understanding time
- Provide follow up
- Conduct evaluation and direct users towards closure

10. Technological Application in Bibliotherapy

- Bibliotherapy, the use of books and reading materials for therapeutic purposes, has traditionally relied on physical books and in-person sessions. However, technology has expanded the reach and effectiveness of bibliotherapy in several ways like:
- **Podcast:** A podcast is a sort of online audio content that may be downloaded or streamed by the end user and is typically offered in a collection of episodes or portions.



Figure 3. Technological applications.

- **E-Books:** An E-Book, which stands for “electronic book,” is a digital version of a printed book created to be read on gadgets like computers, tablets, or smartphones.
- **Video Conferencing:** Both Google Meet and Zoom provide a variety of popular video conferencing tools, such as participant spotlights, chat, screen and app sharing, conference recordings, meeting transcripts, and virtual backdrops.
- **Messenger Apps:** Messenger apps like Facebook , WhatsApp, etc.
- **Chatbots:** Chatbots like Woebot , Xiaoice, ChatGPT, etc.

11. Conclusion

The study suggests that bibliotherapy is effective in treating mild to moderate OCD and depression. Patients reported being content and at ease while receiving bibliotherapy, making it a cost-effective option. Using literature can be beneficial for people who are dealing with emotional problems, shyness, mental illnesses, personality development, or life difficulties. To promote mental health, bibliotherapy makes use of a range of materials, including self-help books, fiction, non-fiction, movies, and podcasts. It offers a delicate way for a practitioner or educator to promote reading in students, particularly young ones, to help them better understand one another and the world around them, learn from others, and find the best solutions to their problems. The public’s perception of librarians is frequently negative, especially among young

people. Libraries must use this service as an opportunity to educate the users about this unknown endeavor. Bibliotherapy belongs to librarians; therefore, it is part of their responsibility to employ it. With the help of machine learning, a recommender system can be developed for book recommendations based on user’s requirements. We can use AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, to help address depression and mild to moderate mental health issues. A proper policy framework should be created, keeping in mind the requirements of the students. Libraries need to come forward and should work in collaboration with local practitioners and health counselors to facilitate bibliotherapy in libraries. Having said that, one should keep in mind that while bibliotherapy offers a self-manageable method, one must still be cautious enough when offering literature because it has a direct impact on the patients and their lives. Any random person shouldn’t act as a therapist unless they have sufficient training and experience.

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