

Online Bibliotherapy to Help Manage Stress and Anxiety of Students During Pandemic: Librarians and Guidance Counselors Collaboration Practical Review

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Abstract

This paper analyzes bibliotherapy in practical review with librarians and school guidance counselors' collaboration during pandemic to release stress and anxiety of students. During the pandemic, students faced many difficulties which caused stress particularly due to the change of offline to online learning program. Bibliotherapy explores the richness of literature as a medium to manage and solve the problems of students with the help from school guidance counselors and librarians. The program is designed for middle and high school students and was initiated by librarians in collaboration with school guidance counselors. A qualitative approach was used to elaborate the result of this research. Incorporating evidence from practical reviews, interviews, and student's program journals, this study demonstrates that bibliotherapy is an effective way to help release and cope stress and anxiety for students during pandemic. Bibliotherapy helps students develop coping skills also felt relaxed and free on how to express their thoughts and concerns and was able to solve the issue without being pressured. The role of librarians is to provide literature database and its selection based on the concern. Librarians are also possible to be the facilitators or bibliotherapist and responsible to be the program advisor. Bibliotherapy uses read-aloud, reading together and mind mapping method which made the session become delightful and relaxing. The counselors which consisted of school guidance counselors and librarians were practically helpful and meticulous in guiding students to find and solve the issue in online bibliotherapy implementation.

Keywords: Bibliotherapy, library, librarian, counselling, stress-coping, mental health, covid-19 pandemic

1. Introduction

Based on research, teenage anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic is at 54% which is categorized as high. (Fitria, 2020). One of the factors is the sudden change from face-to-face learning to online learning or home learning programmes. There are various media, therapies and strategies used to overcome mental health issues like anxiety and depression and one example is Bibliotherapy.

Bibliotherapy comes from two Greek words, *biblion*, which means book, and *therapeia*, which has meant a healing, the healing of the soul (Rubin, 1978). Bibliotherapy is a method of healing through reading and refers to the process in therapy or counselling. Several studies have shown that Bibliotherapy can be used to develop individual, social, and communication skills. (Hariyadi et al., 2014).

Bibliotherapy is a technique of prescribing books to patients who need help in understanding their problems. It is the assistance given to a youngster in overcoming the emotional turmoil related to a real-life problem by having him or her read literature on the topic. (Crothers, 2010).

Bibliotherapy is better understood as the process of reading, reflecting upon, and discussing literature (personal narratives and stories). This discussion of curated literature promotes cognitive shifts within the reader. It is crucial to note that bibliotherapy differs from self-help strategies as the reflection and discussions of literature take place in a structured setting. The reading material is also subjected to scrutiny and has a specific purpose or problem that it addresses. (Monro-Fraustro, 2021).

The therapeutic process of bibliotherapy may be an effective intervention for facilitating healthy development and preventing psychological diagnoses, which creates the potential for self-growth, understanding, and healing (Allen et al., 2012 in Vries, 2017).

The use of literature and identifying how to live more effectively through the characters and problems featured in a book enables children and youth to increase their insight and understanding of the themes and experiences as they relate to their own lives. Bibliotherapy is reinforced through the use of a variety of techniques such as discussion, therapeutic use of art, dramatization, puppetry, and creative writing. (Early, 1993 in Vries, 2017).

Bibliotherapy helps students develop their coping skills using literature which relates to their concerns. The use of literature which consists of story and characters helps students to understand that their issue is also faced by other people, which means they also can solve their problem accordingly.

Bibliotherapy also appears to be effective in the reduction depressive symptoms in the long-term period. Bibliotherapy could play an important role in the treatment of a mental health issue. (Gualano et al, 2017).

The purpose of this study about online bibliotherapy with librarians and guidance counselors' collaboration are:

1. to identify the benefits and effectiveness of Online Bibliotherapy to students.
2. to collect and get feedback of literatures used and counselors of Online Bibliotherapy

3. to identify the role of librarians and library in supporting modern society in education to create sustainable future through nurturing good mental health with Online Bibliotherapy.

Literature Review

In 2013, Research about *“Bibliotherapy: A tool to promote children's psychological well-being”* identified that Bibliotherapy practice benefits students to improve their psychological well-being and development. (Lucas, 2013). While in 2017, a study about *“Helping all Students Become Einstein's using Bibliotherapy when Teaching Mathematics to Prepare Students for a STEM World”* found that Bibliotherapy helps students boost their confidence before competition, certain sessions were implemented to help students regular their emotions and mathematic anxiety. The use of picture books particularly helps them release their frustrations. (Furner, 2017)

Research in 2021 about *“Bibliotherapy as An Alternative to Reduce Student Anxiety During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Narrative Review”* concludes that bibliotherapy provides an opportunity for students to recognize aspects of themselves. Bibliotherapy can help calm the students who have problems such as anxiety and lack of motivation, therefore bibliotherapy is highly recommended to be used by teachers and school guidance counselors to help students go through the stress and anxiety during pandemic. (Rahmat, 2021)

Furthermore, research in 2022 entitled *“Using developmental bibliotherapy design to improve self-management skills of post-graduate students”* finds that Bibliotherapy benefits post-graduate students in self-awareness and community-awareness. Students also show improvement in self-management. The impact of reading interventions brought positive habit formation and attitude in the students. (Sharma, 2022)

In 2022, Bibliometric research entitled *“Bibliotherapy in the Pandemic Time: A Bibliometric Analysis”* has discovered that bibliotherapy theoretically and practically is one of the potential methods to help people facing their crisis during covid-19 pandemic, including the students. The use of selected books can also help health-related issues. (Maru, 2022)

The research above comes to one conclusion that bibliotherapy is one of most effective alternative method to recover health issues including mental health for people in general and students during Covid-19 pandemic. Bibliotherapy has complete tools to help students learn how to prevent worse cases of stress, manage their mental health, and find personal growth during the crisis and chaotic situation of pandemic. Online Bibliotherapy offers alternative and creative methods of healing through books with librarians and guidance counsellors' collaboration at school.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach to elaborate the practical review of online bibliotherapy to help manage stress anxiety of students during pandemic with librarians and guidance counselors' collaboration. Qualitative methodology presently is gaining increasing recognition in developmental psychology. (Demuth, 2015). This research incorporates evidence from practical reviews from counselee and counselors' perspectives, personal correspondence, and evaluation journal from students.

Participants

Participants in this study were students from middle school to high school (grade 7 to 12) at BINUS SCHOOL Bekasi, Indonesia. First, their communicative competence was thought to be sufficient to ensure active participation, with self-reports more reliable with these students than those in younger years (e.g. Fraillon in Merga, 2021). In addition, middle-years students particularly susceptible to wellbeing and mental health concerns, based on the data, for adolescents and teens, whose interactions with peers are so central to their lives and development, the pandemic's shrinking of their world has been especially difficult. Over 50% reported that the pandemic and response has created problems. A little more than 25% of students said they had experienced a "great deal" and 30% a "moderate amount" of changes, as well as stress and problems. A subset reported a "great deal" or "moderate" increase in depression [19% and 17%, respectively] (Wilcox, 2020).

The data above implied that middle-years students need more wellbeing treatment during the pandemic. As minors, students provided both informed individual and parental consent in order to participate in the study. Care has been taken to present the data provided by these participants to ensure that participants and their schools will not be identified via deductive disclosure (Kaiser, 2009). The participants in this research to be called counselees. A counselee is a person who receives counselling or being counselled (Collins Dictionary, 2023).

Tools

Data were collected through online form as semi-structured interviews, observation that was done by the counsellor and were compiled in counsellors' comments, also a program evaluation journal that is called as "Happiness Journal". Most of the responses cited within this article were in response to the following questions.

Students/Counselee

a. Online Form Pre-Session and Post-Session

Pre-Session:

Please tell your concern as an initial information for counsellors and what is your expectation from bibliotherapy.

Post-Session:

1. Does the book used in the bibliotherapy can help your issue?
2. How much bibliotherapy help you with your issue/concern?
3. Was the counsellor able to help you see your issue using the media of a book?
4. Was the counsellor able to help you see the solution/action plan for your problem using the book?
5. Was the counsellor able to help you express your thoughts during the bibliotherapy?
6. Do you enjoy the bibliotherapy session?
7. Do you have any more insights regarding bibliotherapy?

Journal of Happiness

1. My remarkable bibliotherapy sessions
2. My favorite books in bibliotherapy
3. Self-reflection on happiness
 - a. Does everyone deserve happiness?
 - b. Happiness is all about
 - c. My remarkable happiness moment
4. My remarks on bibliotherapy
5. Bibliotherapy energy in my happiness (list of activities)
6. Before bibliotherapy I used to be
7. My new design of happiness after bibliotherapy program

Counsellor

1. How was the counselee before, during and after the bibliotherapy session?

Sampling

Sampling will be conducted based on the type of concern of the counselees. In this research, the counselee's personal information is confidential. There were about 15 (fifteen) students that were selected as sampling in this research study. The concern categories are as follows.

- a. Self-Awareness and Family Problem
- b. Self-Management problem

c. Community-problem

Data Analysis and Validation

This research will use qualitative study particularly with descriptive data from literature study, interviews data, observation, cross-reviewed data from counsellors of online bibliotherapy program. Interview data were transcribed in descriptive data by the researchers (Boeijs, 2002; Kolb, 2012). The data was validated with triangulation. Triangulation's purpose is to enhance the validity of research findings, researchers employ a variety of techniques. Triangulation remains a common method used by researchers to undertake more credible studies and verify their authenticity (Indeed, 2022). The data of this study was analyzed by two researchers, and were peer reviewed by the counsellors. This research also involves observation by the counsellors beside the interviews or online form for students. Lastly, this research refers to some documents regarding bibliotherapy. This analysis and validation of data is to reduce the biasness as low as possible.

Result

The result of this study will be presented into two sections; first, online bibliotherapy practical design and second one is online bibliotherapy practical review. The main purpose of this research is to understand the effectiveness of bibliotherapy practice to students during covid-19 pandemic to help manage and release stress and mental health issues.

Online Bibliotherapy Practical Design

Online Bibliotherapy is a bibliotherapy session using an online platform to communicate between facilitators and students. This program consisted of three stages: pre-regular session, regular session, and post-regular session with evaluation. This program is designed to help students develop their coping skills and be more aware of mental health during pandemic and not designed to diagnose and treat mental health issues.

Online Bibliotherapy implementation is using a developmental bibliotherapy approach. Developmental bibliotherapy includes self-help books emphasizing personal well-being. (Gangi & Bawkosky, 2009 in Vries, 2017). This approach is generally implemented by teachers, school counselors, social workers, parents, librarians.

Developmental bibliotherapy approach is used with a wide variety of individuals in schools and libraries to promote self-knowledge, personal growth, and a sense of accomplishment in a particular stage in life. Therefore, this program is a collaborative program that was initiated by the library as one of the programs in collaboration with school guidance counselors. This Online Bibliotherapy regular program involves three stages: identification, catharsis, and insight from the students.

The role of librarian as bibliotherapist is an intermediary seeking to resolve patron's

informational needs and wants (Ettinger, 2008 in Gagatiga, 2011). The librarian is responsible for being the facilitator or bibliotherapist and advisor of the online bibliotherapy program. Seeking the appropriate literature, creating literature databases based on the needs and wants of the facilitators and students.

The table below shows the Online Bibliotherapy Practical Design that was used in this research.

Online Bibliotherapy Practical Review

The practice of Online Bibliotherapy involves Librarians and Guidance Counselors collaboration. The library gathered the data from pre-session and post-session interviews that were mentioned in tools of this study, observation, and the data from counsellor's observation result to be analyzed. This data gathered concludes into some points as follows.

Table 1: Online Bibliotherapy Practical Design

Online Bibliotherapy Practical Design					
Participation	Sessions	Counsellors	Concern Categories	Book List	Tools
• 1:1 session online • 4-7 sessions in total • Middle – High School Student	Pre-Session Regular Session Post-Session	School Guidance Counsellors Librarians	Self-Awareness and Family Problem Self-Management problem Community-problem	• The Happiness Project • Love for Imperfect Things • The Things You Can See Only when You Slow Down • How Big Are Your Worries Little Bear? • The Giving Tree • The Very Last Leaf • The Alchemist • eBooks	Pre and Post Assessment Tools c/o Guidance Counsellors

Students Concerns and Bibliotherapy Expectation

Students are expected to elaborate their concerns and expectations before joining the session. Thus, the counsellors can help them properly. As can be seen in Table 3, there are several categories of problems that the students can find solutions in Online Bibliotherapy, the details are as follows:

1. Self-Awareness and Family Problem
2. Self-Management
3. Community Problems

Table 2. Online Bibliotherapy Pre-Session Interview

Question	Description	Category of Problem
What is your concern and expectation of bibliotherapy session?	• Improve my score. • Overthinking because of school and wanting to discuss about books so I won't overthink much. • To get some insights about my concern. • Learning to be patient. • I hope that bibliotherapy can calm me down from all my stresses and I hope this can be a new way of coping. • I want to join bibliotherapy to manage with my stress and deal with my worries, especially with all the things I'm doing this year. • I want to learn how to concentrate more.	Self-Awareness and Family Problem
	• How to rebuild reading habit again so I can release my stress. • I would like to get some insights about time management, because I feel like I don't have enough time. • My objective or concern is so that I can learn communicative language to the maximum point • My future endeavours like how and what I should prepare for my college study. • to be able to get off my slump. • I can be more confident. • I used to like reading books, I usually read in the library at my previous school after the school hours, but I feel a bit hard to read now since I'm super busy. I also have zero motivation to read books at home. So, I expect that going in Bibliotherapy I can read more and get everything stressful out of my mind by books.	Self-Management
	• Adapt to new school and make friends.	Community Issue

Based on the students' concern above, facilitators which are librarians and guidance counselors discuss and observe which categories of their problem can be identified, therefore facilitators can maximize the literature accordingly.

Furthermore, the analysis of the data finds that Online Bibliotherapy practice with

librarians and guidance counsellors collaboration brings positive impact to the students during and after the sessions throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Below are major points of Online Bibliotherapy practical review.

Bibliotherapy as a relaxing method to release stress

Bibliotherapy is commonly used to help people to release stress, including students who were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Bibliotherapy offers a relaxing session where students can just be themselves and find peace and comfort from literature. Most students mentioned that the Online Bibliotherapy during pandemic was very helpful to release their stress as they were feeling stuck staying at home and burdened over study, and nobody helped them.

“I found books that were used much helpful. I also feel relaxed throughout bibliotherapy session, the breathing exercise that were given also let me learn how to be mindful.... It was very fun and after every session, my mind felt so calm and relaxed. So, what I’m trying to say is Bibliotherapy makes my day!”

In some cases, Online Bibliotherapy also helps students to rebuild their reading habit. Students found that they tend to get slump during Home Learning Program, and it made them reluctant readers. While Online Bibliotherapy offers the students some ways to make them love reading.

“It’s nice to have a break from everything and just focus on a discussion like the Bibliotherapy sessions, it really helps me view a different perspective from the book, and the discussions are fun too! It makes me reading books more often. So, I found that bibliotherapy help me a lot in rebuild my reading habit.”

Through the Online Bibliotherapy Sessions during Covid-19 pandemic, it is identified that Bibliotherapy is a method to release stress. It concludes that throughout the sessions, it helps students to relax and to recharge. It also rebuilds their reading habit and the love of reading.

Bibliotherapy as a safe place to express thought

Online Bibliotherapy during Covid-19 pandemic that we set with collaboration of librarians and guidance counsellors bring new and fresh method that counsellors use as an alternative to let students bring their thoughts out comfortably without feeling burdened because characters in the books also reflect their problems.

“I can relate myself to the story and characters, I also can express myself without hesitation and not being under pressure... I was able to reflect during the sessions and I grew to learn myself throughout the bibliotherapy. It’s nice to have a way to express my thoughts and feelings comfortably every now and then.”

Students found Online Bibliotherapy as a safe place for them to express their thoughts comfortably, especially during the hectic of pandemic, Online Bibliotherapy offers a comfort

that they have been looking for. Students also can understand themselves better through Online Bibliotherapy because the characters and the story from the literature used were so relatable.

“Bibliotherapy sessions help me get things off my chest, like a diary. I get to learn from different perspectives as well as learning more from my own perspective...I used to be shy, anxious if there are people not asking about myself and I found that I was not knowing myself well, through this session I gain more confident and I feel safe to tell people who I am, all thanks to bibliotherapy that introduce me some books that I found enlightens.”

As a safe and comfortable place that students can stay in, Online Bibliotherapy can be an alternative option therapy method for students and school guidance counselors use to help students manage their stress and solve their problems accordingly.

Bibliotherapy as a problem solver and happiness program

Most of students who joined Online Bibliotherapy during Covid-19 pandemic come with problems and concerns they want to solve, whether it is included as self-awareness, self-management, or community problems categories. All counselees who finished all the sessions of Online Bibliotherapy explained that the program was fruitful and engaging.

“The advice I was given were practical and understandable, it was helpful to me. Bibliotherapy session helps me solve my problems patiently... It is very helpful, and the counsellor is very friendly so I can give my thoughts comfortably... I was given an opportunity to help myself while being guided patiently and systematically.”

Online Bibliotherapy has proven giving systematic problem-solving method, whether it is self or community problems. It trains students to manage their own problem while still being guided on how they can solve it properly. Online Bibliotherapy could be a long-term method to form students with critical thinking and assistance for students to overcome their mental health-related issues effectively.

“It is useful to change our minds, to reset how we think, and be a happy person. I used to be an aggressive person, but now I can learn how to control myself better practically and try to socialize and make some friends. I learn how to be more friendly around new people and it makes me happy... As humans, we deserve to be happy because it increases positivity in our lives and people around us as well. Every session was meaningful to me, each story I read gave me insights and advice that really opened my eyes. After each session, I try to implement those messages into my daily life.”

Similarly, other students also added their thoughts about Online Bibliotherapy change their mind and behaviour to be a happier person.

“Anxious and always worried about what will come were my main issue. Even if everything was fine, I would still worry that things would turn bad soon, and so on. These thoughts constantly disturbed me, and it sometimes hindered me from moving on. I also often compared myself to others and always felt that I wasn't good enough, which made me even more anxious. Thank you for the wonderful experience that bibliotherapy gave me, the stories

I read and the reflection we had afterwards were very meaningful. I gained a lot of life lessons from it, and it makes me happier, and I hope other students would be able to experience this as well.”

In addition to students’ feedback, counselors comment boldly that Online Bibliotherapy brought a positive energy to students during pandemic, especially transforming students to be more mindful during the chaotic and anxious time. Students showed significant change from pre- to post-session. Students become more aware of their emotions and mental health, they also understand better how to regulate their emotions during difficult times and cope with their stress.

“There is a way more positive energy that my counselees radiant. Some become calmer, the other student I consult also is way more confident and she is stepping on stage that she is willing to try new things, make more friends, or even just greet and offer smile first...Once, my counselee was pretty ambitious about score, I understand that it is such demand, he is perfectionist and it makes him easily frustrated, so he mentioned that after bibliotherapy, he can be more patient with the process and accept failure. He said that he just wanted to make sure that he can comeback stronger when he falls.”

Additionally, counselors observed that students show improvement regarding self-awareness, mindfulness, and self-management.

“One of my counselees is facing an issue to manage his anger, at the end of session he told me that what we told them is right that being a happy person is easier than being unhappy and scary person. Thus, he found anger is no longer controlling him... I found my counselees show significant change, she has an issue to manage her time since she is so packed, and bibliotherapy offers her an alternative way to manage her time while she still can enjoy little things...Those who are easily anxious and stressed, I can confirm that they try to apply mindfulness in their daily lives, and not so often comparing themselves to others, instead focus on their own growth as a learner and there they find themselves in a better version.”

The feedback from students and triangulation to the data and counselors about Online Bibliotherapy underlined that it heals, it changes, and it affects students in daily life with a more positive and happier mindset. Students gain new perspective on how to manage their mental health through literature and overcome and cope with their stress and other related problems patiently, calmly, and properly.

Literature and Counsellors

The feedback and evaluation of literature and counselors also was conducted by survey and journal of happiness. The data below shows students comments and preference regarding counselors’ performance and literature suitability.

“The counsellor is wonderful in explanation and guidance. She was patiently guide me to deal with my problem and release stress. She is also resourceful and very friendly. I was able to understand the sessions well... The counsellor explains it to me clearly during the discussion and reading session and help me manage things that I still lack and notice things that I have been skipped while it is precious too to help me maintain how to be mindful. I think it makes me comfortable to share things with. She doesn’t judge that what I’m dealing with is such a shame for me, instead she patiently helps me to find solution and action plans for me.”

Students insisted that counsellors were able to help them to notice the issue and guide them to solve their problem accordingly. Counsellors are thoughtful and resourceful in guiding students manage their mental health-related issues during pandemic Covid-19. While the media of literature also succeed to help them find alternative solutions to cope and deal with their problems.

“The books that were given in Online Bibliotherapy sessions were able to help my issue. I just found out that there are lots of children’s literature that are interesting and insightful for teenagers like me...I have no difficulties regarding the book or the resource, because there were digital books, so during this pandemic, digital books are so useful. I think the books make us be interactive, because some are story books, so it is like we are in imagination world. The books that were selected also fit my problem and some even very details, so I found it easy to practice action plans with it.”

Literature that was provided for Online Bibliotherapy has been selected and compiled by the librarians and peer-reviewed by the School Guidance Counsellors to make sure that it matches the problem categories for the students. The literature database provided let the counsellors and the counselees to easily retrieve the resources as well. Children’s picture books have highest index of use during the bibliotherapy and become one of favourite literature from counselees.

Librarians Role

The role of librarians and libraries are various in Online Bibliotherapy. The library exists as a safe place for students to go when they are facing mental health problems because the library provides books as an alternative method to cope with stress. The library has thousands of collections that will fit their problem and help them find ways to solve problems. While the librarians, besides they come as bibliotherapy mastermind and advisors, librarians are also capable to be facilitators or counsellors for developmental bibliotherapy. In addition, the librarians provide and select resources needed professionally.

Conclusions

This research comes into conclusion that Online Bibliotherapy is an effective way to help manage students stress and anxiety during pandemic. The collaboration between Librarians and Guidance Counsellors creates a new and unique result which literatures are rich and well selected, the database is well built, the reading method is various, and the program is well designed.

The objectives of this study were mentioned.

1. to identify the benefits and effectiveness of Online Bibliotherapy to students.
2. to collect and get feedback of literatures used and counselors of Online Bibliotherapy

3. to identify the role of librarians and library in supporting modern society in education to create sustainable future through nurturing good mental health with Online Bibliotherapy

Online Bibliotherapy is proven effective to help manage stress and anxiety of students during pandemic. Data above was collected from 2021 to 2022 throughout the program when students have home learning program. The information collected shows the positive feedback before and after the session, this show that Online Bibliotherapy answer the needs of students in terms of an alternative method to cope their mental health problem and build self-awareness about the importance of mental health management during pandemic.

The literatures are various from form type, language, also genres. It also shows that the selected literature helps the students elaborate their problems, developing their coping skills through books and can find plenty of solutions. This shows that the book database is well prepared and selected.

The data shows that the counselors of the Online Bibliotherapy which consisted of Librarians and Guidance Counselors are well informed, professionals, and trained well. The counselors were able to give the students a practical approach regarding their problem, concept the action plan needed to help students develop their coping skills.

The collaboration of Librarians and Guidance Counselors is a unique and innovative way to find the better practice. Consist of two professional backgrounds in conducting the Online Bibliotherapy program during pandemic can bring out an excellent and guaranteed selected literatures, various method that was used in Online Bibliotherapy sessions both from catharsis and presentation of reading. The collaborative and peer-review of Librarians and Guidance Counselors create a balance in building the design of Online Bibliotherapy to manage students stress and anxiety during pandemic. The role of Librarian is also wide, they are capable to be facilitators, literature database builder also the program advisors. To recap, this research concludes that Online Bibliotherapy addressed and helped the issue and guidance of mental health and stress management for students during pandemic. Students show significant positive and strong mindset, behavior, and attitude after bibliotherapy intervention.

Recommendations for the next study is on how Bibliotherapy can help adult like teachers or educators to cope their problems.

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