



# **The Effectiveness of Bibliotherapy as an Intervention on Improving Aggressive Behavior of Fifth Graders Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders**

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## **Abstract**

*Bibliotherapy is one approach, intending to not only help students learn and develop new social skills, but also to experience validation and insight into their own thought processes and emotions. Books can be used to help people with broad range of personal problems, including emotional, physical, and developmental. This study explores the effectiveness of bibliotherapy as an intervention on improving aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders. Participants were ten children aged eleven ,attended two primary schools in Nasr City; namely Al Sayedia Primary School , and Al Farouk Primary School. A pre-post design was used to examine the effectiveness of bibliotherapy as an intervention on improving aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders. Findings from this study advocated for the effectiveness of bibliotherapy as an intervention on improving aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders.*

**Keywords:** bibliotherapy, aggressive behavior, fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders.

## **Introduction**

Aggressive behavior is identified as any intentional act used to injure another, whether physically or psychologically, including a range of violent physical acts to verbal insults or name calling (Kari Newman, 2015). Aggression is expressed in three different forms: physical, verbal, and relational (Shechtman, 2009). Physical aggression consists of any physical act to direct harm towards another person, animal, or object. Verbal aggression involves the use of words by the aggressor to injure another. Relational aggression is the intentional damaging of relationships, manipulating feelings of inclusion and acceptance within the friendship. Types of aggression can be either proactive or reactive, and are defined by the motive for the aggressive act. Pervasively aggressive youth often display both proactive and reactive aggression (Kari Newman,2015).

Influences of aggression include genetic, biological, and temperamental factors that appear at birth or within the first few years of life; learning disabilities or other mental disabilities; social influences in the child's environment; and stage of development. Children seeking control or power are likely to engage in aggressive behaviors, particularly if they experience difficulty in verbalizing their own emotions, lack empathy for others, demonstrate deficits in social informational processing, or lack self-control (Kari Newman,2015).

Bibliotherapy is one approach, intending to not only help students learn and develop new social skills, but also to experience validation and insight into their own thought processes and emotions. Books can be used to help people with broad range of personal problems, including emotional, physical, and developmental (Abdullah, 2002). Bibliotherapy can help students become aware of many issues such as: self-esteem, interactions with others, problem solving and emotional issues (Stamps, 2003). Rozalski (2010) describes bibliotherapy as a projective indirect tool that employs literature for growth of children that can be used to teach children on life's challenges by encouraging them to connect with book characters, thereby letting readers evaluate their individual.

The goal of bibliotherapy is to broaden and deepen the children' understanding of a particular problem that requires attention. The written books may educate the children about their problem itself or be used to increase their acceptance of a proposed treatment (Akinola,2014).

Bibliotherapy is broken down into four stages by Stamps (2003):

1. Identification – Identify the problem. Choosing the book and matching it to the students' situation is the most important thing. The students must be able to see their situation in the story (Sridhar and Vaughn, 2000).
  2. Catharsis – The student identifying with the character
  3. Insight – Students apply the situation addressed by the book's character to their own situation. A positive reaction may happen in this phase.
1. Universalization – This is known as “putting yourself in someone else's shoes.” Hopefully students can see that all people have problems.

Through all of these stages the teacher should discuss the chosen issue and share helpful coping strategies or problem solving strategies with the student or students. This method lends itself to much questioning, and the teacher must carefully and thoughtfully ask questions that will help the student (Stamps, 2003; Sridhar and Vaughn, 2000).

Shechtman (2006) investigated the effectiveness of bibliotherapy and counseling of 61 aggressive Israeli boys, ages 8 to 16 years, comparing its effectiveness to counseling alone, and control group of boys with no counseling. Boys who received counseling or counseling and bibliotherapy received the treatment in ten 45-minute sessions over the course of 4 months by 48 counseling students. Results, as measured by the pre- and post-treatment ratings from the CBCL and TRF and the Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents were used to measure aggression and empathy, respectively. While the control group did not experience a significant change in aggression or empathy, both treatment groups decreased in aggression and increased in empathy, especially the groups that received bibliotherapy.

Kari Newman (2015) investigated the effect of bibliotherapy as an intervention for aggressive elementary children at a residential treatment center in the western United States. Bibliotherapy was provided for six children, three boys and three girls, ages 9 to 11, Caucasian and Hispanic, who took part in one of two groups. The study involved a multi-baseline design, beginning with a baseline phase, followed by two separate intervention phases comprised of eight sessions of bibliotherapy. Data gathered from almost daily observations along with pre- and post-intervention ratings of aggressive behaviors indicated that four of the six students demonstrated notable decreases in observed aggressive behaviors as well as decreases in teachers' ratings of aggression and/or social problems. Social validity for bibliotherapy as a viable and enjoyable intervention for aggressive behaviors was supported through interviews of students, teachers, and therapists. This study supports the potential for bibliotherapy to be a viable intervention to implement in the public school setting to decrease the observed aggressive behaviors of elementary school students.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the effectiveness of bibliotherapy as an intervention on improving aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders. The primary research question was, what effect will bibliotherapy as an intervention have on improving aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders?

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Participants were ten children aged eleven, attended two primary schools in Nasr City; namely Al Sayedia Primary School, and Al Farouk Primary School. Parental informed consent forms were sent home by the specialist to parents of potential participants telling

them about the study and requesting them to give permission for their children to participate. Through a previous comprehensive psychological evaluation each targeted child had received a primary diagnosis of emotional and behavioral disorders.

#### *Instruments*

*Conner's Behavior Rating scale-Teachers' Forms.* It evaluates the three areas of classroom behavior, participation in group, and attitudes toward authority. In addition it measures the following subscales of hyperactivity, conduct problems, nonchalance, excitement, anxiety, antisocial disorders, dreaming, and attention problems. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire is 0.84 and for subscales varies from 0.79 to 0.87.

*The Aggression Questionnaire by Buss and Perry (1992)* contains 29 items that are measured on a Likert Scale ranging from one being non-characteristic to five being very characteristic. The questionnaire is comprised of four distinct subscales: Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, and Hostility. Buss and Perry's Aggression Questionnaire offers modest but adequate evidence for construct validity. In this study the terms "low level" and "high level" of self-reported aggression were based on each participants' score on the Aggression Questionnaire. The survey looks at how aggressive the respondent is as a child.

#### *Settings*

The study took place within two primary schools in Nasr City; namely Al Sayedia Primary School, and Al Farouk Primary School. The bibliotherapy intervention was conducted in multipurpose room made available for the bibliotherapy groups.

#### *Procedure*

Prior to beginning the study, Conner's Behavior Rating scale-Teachers' Forms was applied to identify levels of emotional and behavioral disorders in the target children. Also The Aggression Questionnaire by Buss and Perry was applied to identify levels of aggressive behavior in the target children. Once this was done, the bibliotherapy intervention was introduced to the students, informing them that they would take part in reading and discussing picture books, along with taking part in some additional activities, 2 times a week for 8 weeks, for a total of 16 sessions.

The researcher did read each part of the story aloud at each session and students followed it from their own copies. Then, the students were asked to summarize the story. Next, structured post reading discussion in which students asked some questions regarding the topic was conducted. The post reading discussion questions were as follows: Who were the characters of the story? Who was the main character faced with the problem? What feelings and thoughts did the character have about his/her problem? How did he/she overcome the problem? Have you ever faced with the similar problem? What did you feel? What did you think? How did you deal with the problem? If not, what would you do if you face with? What other solutions would you use? Post reading discussion enabled children to identify challenges in feelings, relationships, and behaviors of the character/s.

Each session was led and carried by the researcher with the group members, lasted 30 minutes, and followed the same structure, which consisted of: 1) reviewing the group rules, 2) introducing the book and the concepts covered, 3) reading the book, 4) post-reading activities, and then, 5) self-ratings of how well each student followed the group rules and participated in the group.

## Results

The first objective of the study was to determine if use of bibliotherapy as an intervention would be more effective in improving aggressive behavior for the treatment group compared to the control group. For this purpose, the post intervention scores of both treatment and control groups were analyzed. Table 1. shows Z Value result for the differences in post- test mean rank scores between experimental and control groups in aggressive behavior. The table shows that (Z) value was(-2.271). This value is significant at the level (0.01) in the favor of experimental group .

**Table 1.** *Z Values results for the differences in post-test mean rank scores between experimental and control groups in aggressive behavior*

| Variables           | Groups | N | Mean Ranks | Sum Ranks | Mann-whitney | Z Value | Sig  |
|---------------------|--------|---|------------|-----------|--------------|---------|------|
| Aggressive behavior | Cont.  | 5 | 8          | 40        | Zero         | -2.271  | 0.01 |
|                     | Exp.   | 5 | 3          | 15        |              |         |      |

The second objective of the study was to determine the effect of bibliotherapy as an intervention in improving aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Children's aggressive behavior was measured pre and post intervention. Table 2 shows Z Value result for the differences in pre and posttest mean rank scores for the experimental group in The Aggression Questionnaire by Buss and Perry (1992). The table shows that (Z) value was(-2.121). This value is significant at the level (0.01). This indicates that use of bibliotherapy as an intervention had a positive effect on aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders.

**Table 2.** *Z Values results for the comparison of mean rank scores of experimental group at pre- and post-intervention in aggressive behavior*

| Variables            | Negative Ranks |     | Positive Ranks |      | Z Value | Sig. |
|----------------------|----------------|-----|----------------|------|---------|------|
|                      | Mean           | Sum | Mean           | Sum  |         |      |
| Vocabulary knowledge | 3              | 15  | Zero           | Zero | -2.121  | 0.01 |

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to explore the effectiveness of bibliotherapy as an intervention on improving aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders. The primary research question was, what effect will bibliotherapy as an intervention have on improving aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders?

As shown in Table 1 , (Z) value was(-2.271).This value is significant at the level (0.01) in the favor of experimental group . Also Table 2 showed that (Z) value was (-2.121). This value is significant at the level (0.01). This indicates that use of bibliotherapy as an intervention had a positive effect on aggressive behavior of fifth graders children with emotional and behavioral disorders.

The findings from this study confirmed what Ajayi (1997), Clarke, Lynch, & Debar (2006) ascertained as the use of books in the treatment of mentally sick people was dated back to 300 BC when Aristotle delineated the influence that book had on the psyche, especially the purifying or purgative effect on tragedy.

Depending on the findings from this study, I recommend Bibliotherapy, the process of reading books with therapeutic intent, must be seen as an effective means to implement character education within the curriculum.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation of this study is that the sample was small. The study was also limited in that it lacked a maintenance or generalization phase, which would add robustness to the findings. Future research needs to be conducted on large sample, and the need for maintenance and generalization phases.

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