# The Effect of  Bibliotherapy  Intervention Program on Self  Esteem  of Gifted Primary School Children

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**Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of bibliotherapy intervention program on self esteem of gifted primary school children. Method. A total of 67 primary school children participated in the present study. Participants met the criteria for giftedness by using Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of gifted children ( Mourad , In this Volume ) .Children were randomly classified into two groups: experimental ( n= 34 , 20 boys , 14 girls ) and control ( n= 33 , 21 boys and 12 girls ). ANCOVA and Repeated Measures Analyses were employed for data analysis. Results. Findings from this study indicated the effectiveness of the program employed in self esteem in the target children . Discussion. On the basis of the findings, the study supports the idea of bibliotherapy as a powerful intervention for children .*

**Keywords.** bibliotherapy, Gifted primary school children , self esteem .

**Introduction**

Bibliotherapy is a strategy of helping students deal with issues in their lives. Bibliotherapy can help students become aware of many issues such as: self-esteem, interactions with others, problem solving and emotional issues (Stamps, 2003; Prater, 2006). 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).

Bibliotherapy can also engage students in reading and can be used as a strategy to interest students in books. Reading through bibliotherapy can increase students' literacy skills while helping them to cope and understand their own personal issues (Prater et al., 2006) .Prater et al. (2006) created a ten-step strategy plan to help teachers in implementing bibliotherapy in the classroom setting. The steps are

1.  Develop a rapport, trust and confidence with the student. Students must trust those who are trying to work through their issues. The trust and rapport that the teacher builds with the students opens channels of discussion and reform.
2.  Identify other school personnel who can assist. Schools are full of people who are willing to help students. Those people might include; the school psychologist, the school nurse, the principal, other teachers, aides, special educators, etc.
3.  Solicit support from the students' parents or guardians. The students' parents are a critical component. They lend support and can reinforce the issues being addressed. In my opinion, parents or guardians need to be trained in bibliotherapy and also need to be aware of each teaching situation they are providing for their child.
4.  Define a specific problem the student is experiencing. Teachers may also need to research certain issues and strategies for dealing with them.

*Benefits of Bibliotherapy*

Bibliotherapy provides more than just a therapeutic comfort for those who participate Prater et al. (2006) lists five benefits of bibliotherapy. First books help students bring problems to the forefront so that they are able to deal with them (Prater et al., 2006). Through the story's plot, isteners are able to gain insight into their own life situation, while developing their creative and critical thinking skills (Berns, 2004). After reading it is easy for a facilitator to initiate and stimulate discussion about the problems introduced in the story (Prater et al., 2006). A study by Amer (1999) found that children discussed their experiences more freely after reading a therapeutic book. Fiction is an important tool to assist children in opening up about their own feelings (Amer, 1999).

Inman et al. (2000) also discovered that even students who have difficulty verbalizing their thoughts and feelings were better able to open up and discuss with their facilitator their ideas after a bibliotherapy session. Secondly, bibliotherapy helps students channel their life circumstances through a fictional character. Students can safely analyze their own thoughts and behaviors as they identify "with characters in books who are dealing with difficulties similar to their own" (Prater et al., 2006, p. 6). By working through a book students are able to gain distance from their own affect and are able to focus outside of themselves making it easier to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings (Berns, 2004). By utilizing the story's characters students are able to identify similarities and differences and reflect on those qualities (Berns, 2004).

Iaquinta and Hipsky (2006) also found that students grow socioemotionally by identifying with the main character, which then leads to personal insight and growth. Students are able to validate their thoughts and feelings and work together as a group to develop empathy (Berns, 2004). Johnson et al. (2001) also added that along with empathy participants, develop self-confidence which results from thinking in another perspective. This dynamic of a group setting for bibliotherapy has been found to promote interpersonal growth and development, which assists in improving self-esteem, and self-help treatment (Pardeck, 1990).Kozel (1996) found that bibliotherapy also helped in modifying attitudes, promoting behavior changes, and fostering self development amongst all its participants (p. 3).

Prater et al. list the third benefit as education, stating that "bibliotherapy is a tool" that provides useful information to help students solve their problems (2006, p. 6). Johnson et al. (2001) found that sessions helped strengthen conflict resolution among students. Iaquinta and Hipsky (2006) also discussed the coping strategies that were developed because teachers in their study were able to address the issue of teasing and bullying through children's literature. If a teacher was able to facilitate a rich and engaging discussion on the reading's important topics, children were seen to be able to identify with these topics (Sullivan & Strang, 2002).

Students then learned, from the character's example, how to cope and/or resolve their own inner conflicts (Sullivan & Strang, 2002). Along with coping strategies comes the important skill of problem solving for the young readers Prater et al. (2006),Iaquinta and Hipsky (2006),and Kozel (1996) all agreed that bibliotherapy had a positive effect on problem solving skills. Prater et al. (2006) believes that bibliocounselling can be used to provide information or insight about problems, and thereby helping to lead the student to possible solutions for their problems.

Problem solving skills also improved for students with disabilities. They benefit from learning to solve social problems similar to those discussed in the therapeutic children's literature book read to them in class (Iaquinta & Hipsky, 2006). The fourth benefit of bibliotherapy identified by Prater et al. (2006) is that it helps students reduce their anxiety and promote relaxation as they discover that others have the same feelings, and have gone through

similar life events. Facilitated sessions were found to lessen a student's feelings of isolation and increase a sense of companionship amongst classmates (Berns, 2004). Johnson et al. "documented less physical violence in the classroom, less name-calling and fewer put-downs among students" who had participated in bibliotherapy lessons (2001,p.176). With the proper material, bibliotherapy sessions create the important topic of awareness, when students realize that other people have similar problems to themselves, they are able to feel a bit more comfortable in their skin and in their environment (Prater et al., 2006).

Both Kozel (1996) and Inman et al. (2000) discuss the fact that students sometimes feel alone but the reading or sharing of a story depicting children with similar fears or anxieties is able to help provide reassurance that the student is not alone, and many people have similar hopes, dreams, and problems. Bibliotherapy can reduce negative behaviors in a classroom because of its stress reduction properties.

Finally Prater et al. (2006) states that bibliotherapy is also another way to provide a novel to a student. They also found that "bibliotherapy exposes students who might be underachieving to books and to reading, another major benefit of the practice" (Prater et al., 2006, p. 6). When students find a novel that is right for them, and they take the time to read, and literacy skills develop. Johnson et al. (2001) also discovered an increase in language enrichment as a side benefit to bibliotherapy. Not only does it improve reading readiness, and academic achievement according to Iaquinta and Hipsky (2006), Kozel (1996), and Prater et al. (2006) noted that bibliotherapy is an important tool to teach "appropriate social and developmental skills such as friendship skills, hard work, and kindness" to today's youth (Prater et al., 2006, p. 6).

Berns cautions facilitators to remember that "the beneficial effects of bibliotherapy may not be seen for some time" (2004, p. 327). Just as most lessons in the classroom, you must trust the process and have the confidence that bibliotherapy will lighten a listener's sorrow (Berns, 2004). Over time, according to Prater et al. (2006), bibliotherapy allows participants to identify an issue, develop empathy for those who are affected, learn coping mechanisms they can apply to their own life, reduce anxiety and improve literacy skills.

*Self-Esteem*

One of the basic needs for all children is to have a healthy self-esteem. When children have a healthy self-esteem, they are better equipped to learn. Maslow points out that all people need to have a high opinion of themselves to be able to obtain anything. Students who are confident with themselves will face the challenges of school better and become more confident in situations they encounter (Prince and Howard, 2002).

Teachers can create an environment that can boost students' self-esteem (Laursen, 2005). This environment can be created through how the teacher interacts with the students and how the students interact between each other. Teacher and student, both, need to realize the benefit to positive encouragement and acceptance. Students who are do not feel accepted within the classroom and society may then turn to gangs. Gangs provide the needed acceptance which students need, whatever the price (Prince and Howard, 2002; Laursen, 2005).

Bibliotherapy is a tool that can be used to increase self-esteem and other issues that students might face within the classroom setting. Using bibliotheraputic books is a great way of helping students understand the feelings they are having, find solutions that will work, and make them feel better about themselves. As students feel better about themselves, they will increase their personal success.

So , the purpose of the present study was to explore the effect of bibliotherapy intervention program on self esteem of gifted first year primary school children .

## Methodology

*The participant*

60 first year primary students participated in the present study. Participants met the criteria for giftedness by using Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of gifted preschool children ( Mourad , In this Volume ) .Children were randomly classified into two groups: experimental ( n= 30 , 23 boys , 7 girls ) and control ( n= 30 , 21 boys and 9 girls ).

The two groups were matched on age, IQ, and Self Esteem . Table 1.shows means, standard deviations ,t- value, and significance level for experimental and control groups on age ( by month) ,IQ , and self esteem ( pre-test).

*Table 1. means, standard deviations , t- value , and significance level for experimental and control groups on age ( by month),IQ, and Self Esteem ( pre-test).*

| Variable | Group | N | M | SD | T | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | Experimental | 34 | 72.24 | 1.96 | -.121 | Not sig. |
| | Control | 33 | 73 .41 | 2.01 | | |
| IQ | Experimental | 34 | 122.34 | 4.45 | -.221 | Not sig. |
| | Control | 33 | 124.89 | 4.24 | | |
| Self | Experimental | 34 | 17.21 | 3.00 | -.587 | Not sig. |
| Esteem | Control | 33 | 17.67 | 3.52 | | |

Table 1. shows that all t- values did not reach significance level. This indicated that the two groups did not differ in age , IQ , and Self Esteem ( pre-test) .

*Instruments*

Self Esteem Scale: Self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (1965). A sample item is "I am able to do things as well as most other people." Each of the 10 items is given a score from 1 to 4 and higher scores indicate more positive self-esteem. The alpha reliability for the sample was .90.

*Training Procedure*

A story was read to the children in the experimental group for eight sessions of the treatment procedure. The group sessions were held on Thursdays, once a week, in a classroom. Each session lasted approximately 40 minutes. Ten days after the last session of the treatment procedure, post-test measure was applied to treatment group subjects. Twelve days after the last session, posttest was given to no-treatment control group subjects.

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.

When children asked to compare his/her experiences with the experiences of the character, the children may explore his/her own behaviors and feelings and the consequences of them. Thus, the children make a conclusion or generalization about the topic through the discussion. Lastly, a follow-up activity that was aimed to reinforce the skills used by the characters was administered to subjects. Activities allow students to identify the problem presented in the story, produce alternative solutions to the problem, and evaluate the results of the chosen solution.

*Design and Analysis*

The effects of implementing bibliotherapy program on students' self esteem were assessed using a repeated-measures design, pre- post- and follow –up testing.

*Results*
Table 2. shows data on ANCOVA analysis for the differences in post- test mean scores between experimental and control groups in self esteem . The table shows that the (F) value was (132.872) and it was significant value at the level (0.01).

*Table 2. ANCOVA analysis for the differences in post- test mean scores between experimental and control groups in self esteem*

| Source | Type 111 Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|--------|------------|-----|------------|---------|------|
| Pre | 907 | 1 | 907 | | |
| Group | 2029,969 | 1 | 2029.969 | 132.872 | 0.01 |
| Error | 977.771 | 64 | 15.278 | | |
| Total | 3013.194 | 66 | | | |

Table 3. shows T. test results for the differences in post- test mean scores between experimental and control groups in self esteem .The table shows that (t) vale was (14.462). This value is significant at the level (0.01) in the favor of experimental group. The table also shows that there are differences in post- test mean scores between experimental and control groups in self esteem in the favor of experimental group.

*Table 3. T. test results for the differences in post- test mean scores between experimental and control groups in self esteem*

| Group | N | Mean | Std. deviation | T | Sig. |
|-------|-----|------|----------------|--------|------|
| Experimental | 34 | 33.45 | 3.40 | 14.462 | 0.01 |
| Control | 33 | 17.63 | 2.94 | | |

Table 4. shows data on repeated measures analysis for self esteem . The table shows that there are statistical differences between measures (pre- post- follow -up) at the level (0.01).

*Table 4. Repeated measures analysis for self esteem*

| Source | Type 111 sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between groups | 6323.974 | 1 | 6323.974 | 240. 362 | 0.01 |
| Error 1 | 1710.165 | 65 | 26.310 | | |
| Between Measures | 3743.818 | 2 | 1871.909 | 319.483 | 0.01 |
| Measures x Groups | 3827.121 | 2 | 1913.561 | 326.591 | 0.01 |
| Error 2 | 761.695 | 130 | 5.859 | | |

Table 5. shows data on Scheffe test for multi-comparisons in self esteem. The table shows that there are statistical differences between pre and post measures in favor of post test, and between pre and follow –up measures in favor of follow – up test, but no statistical differences between post and follow –up test.

*Table 5. Scheffe test for multi-comparisons in self esteem*

| Measure | Pre M= 17.01 | Post M= 33.45 | Sequential M= 32.35 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pre | -- | -- | -- |
| Post | 18.95* | -- | -- |
| Sequential | 17.85* | 1. 10 | -- |

**Discussion**

The main objective of the present study was to explore whether there were differences in post – test scores mean between control and experimental groups on self esteem . The study also examined If the program was effective, if this effect was still evident a month later .

The results of this study as revealed in tables 3 and 5 show that the bibliotherapy intervention program was effective in improving self esteem of students in experimental group, compared to the control group , who did not receive such an intervention .

It could be concluded that "Bibliotherapy Intervention Program" was found to be effective on promoting self-esteem of students for several reasons. Firstly, the continuous story covered the topics that were determined according to esteem-needs of students in the primary school in which the study was conducted. Additionally, in each chapter of the story, a topic regarding self-esteem enhancement was handled by three characters of the story.

First, the characters faced with the problem situation that troubled them and then they overcame this stressful problem by using some methods based on cognitive behavioral approach. After reading of the story, students discussed some questions about the problem, as well as their own experiences which aimed to help them (a) to see that they are not alone in their problems; (b) others face with similar problems, (c) there are solutions for problems and (d) so that they can have a sense of relief. In addition, students conducted a follow-up activity that was included in the story which that enabled them to practice their learning. Furthermore, while researcher reading the story, the students listened and followed it from their own copy. This made easier to follow the story for the participants. Thus, the application of bibliotherapy that involved issues corresponds to the needs of students and based on cognitive behavioral approach, might be listed among the factors that increased the power of treatment.

In addition , the findings of this study goes in the same line with most of studies that adopted the bibliotherapy intervention program which reported increasing self esteem (Spear ,1996; Meier-Jensen ,2001; Reynolds and Simpson ,2003; Wadsworth , 2007) .

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