The Implementation of Bibliotherapy as an Intervention Tool by Lebanese English Language Teachers

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Abstract

With the integration of social emotional learning (SEL) in literacy, developmental bibliotherapy is implemented as a therapeutic technique to treat disorders such as low self-esteem, bullying, aggression, and so on. The aim of this study is to examine the use of bibliotherapy by Lebanese English Language teachers, especially in Basic Education. It describes how the teachers deal with the students' disorders, investigates whether they apply bibliotherapy in their classes, highlights the challenges that might prevent them from using it, and explains how efficient they believe bibliotherapy is in coping with students' problems. For this descriptive study design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected through an online survey and hereafter analyzed. The results showed that most of the respondents (67%) have no idea about the concept of bibliotherapy and hence, they have never used it. Instead, responding teachers practice different methods to establish good relations with their students and to support them. In particular, these teachers help their students by varying their teaching style (40%) and listening to them (26%). They consider that the main reason that prevents them from using bibliotherapy is their lack of experience of how to implement it and to select appropriate books. Moreover, the responding teachers reported that finding the required resources (36%) is a major barrier. Hence, this study sheds light on the need to take initiatives towards enhancing the use of bibliotherapy by English language Lebanese teachers especially that SEL activities were integrated in languages and mathematics in elementary education two years ago.

Keywords: bibliotherapy, disorders, literacy, integration, teachers.

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الملخص

في عصــــر دمج التعلم الاجتماعي الانفعـالي في مجـال اللغـة، يُطبق العلاج الكتـابي التنموي كتقنيـة علاجية للتعامل مع اضــطرابات عدة مثل قلّة تقدير الذات والتنمر والعدوانية وما إلى ذلك. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة استخدام العلاج الكتابي من قبل معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في لبنان، خاصة في مرحلة

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التعليم الأساسي. يصف البحث كيفية تعامل المعلمين مع اضطرابات المتعلمين، ويبحث ما إذا كانوا يطبقون العلاج الكتابي في صفوفهم. كما ويسلط الضوء على التحديات التي قد تمنعهم من استخدامه، ويشرح كيف يرون فعالية العلاج الكتابي في التعامل مع مشاكل المتعلمين. ولهذه الدراسة الوصفية ، تم جمع البيانات الكمية والنوعية من خلال استطلاع رأي عبر الإنترنت وتحليلها فيما بعد. أظهرت النتائج أن معظم المستجيبين (67%) ليس لديهم فكرة عن مفهوم العلاج الكتابي وبالتالي لم يستخدموه أبدًا. عوضًا عن ذلك، يمارس المعلمون طرقًا مختلفة لإقامة علاقات جيدة مع المتعلمين لدعمهم. وعلى وجه الخصوص، يساعد هؤلاء المعلمون المتعلمين من خلال تنويع أسلوب التدريس (40%) والاستماع إليهم (26%). و بذلك يرون أن السبب الرئيسي الذي يمنعهم من استخدام العلاج الكتابي هو نقص خبرتهم في كيفية تنفيذه واختيار الكتب المناسبة. وعلاوة على ذلك، ذكر المعلمون أن العثور على الموارد المطلوبة (36%) هو عائق رئيسي. وبالتالي، يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على الحاجة إلى اتخاذ مبادرات لتعزيز استخدام العلاج الكتابي من قبل معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في لبنان، خاصة بعد دمج أنشطة التعلم الاجتماعي الانفعالي في مواد اللغات والرياضيات في التعليم الابتدائي قبل عامين.

Introduction

Upon the school lockdowns and resorting to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education systems found it necessary to integrate Social Emotional Learning. This notion was recognized years ago (Comer, 1988; Elias et al, 1997) but it became a trend that rapidly spread worldwide. Lebanon was not an exception; it integrated SEL in its curricula and in teachers' activities by adapting the CASEL framework (2021) to fit the Lebanese setting.

In general, a mental disorder is defined by Stein et al (2021) as a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or development processes underlying mental functioning. Within the Lebanese context, despite the absence of statistical data that specifically reflect the number of students who suffer from mental disorders, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education recently took the initiative to support students with disabilities or learning difficulties and to offer them special care when they apply for the Official Exams.

Moreover, since the 17th of October 2019; i.e two years after the demonstrations, Lebanon has been witnessing the worst economic crisis in its history. This crisis left its trances on all aspects of life, including the educational sector. Furthermore, as a result of the Beirut Blast on August 4, 2020, more than 200 persons died, 6,500 were injured, and 50,000 were left with damaged homes. Thus, bibliotherapy was highly recommended to manage the numerous cases of posttraumatic stress disorder (Aboujaoude, 2021). In this context, teachers are encouraged to use bibliotherapy as a therapeutic technique that they can implement by sharing or recommending storybooks that target individualized students' disorders.

Bibliotherapy - as Jack and Ronan (2008) put it- is a term that was first coined in 1916 by Rev. Samuel McChord Crothers, who was the first to view this technique as a therapeutic process. Nonetheless, soon there was a shift for this term from hospitals to other settings like libraries, group settings and classrooms.

According to Troscianko, Holman, and Carney (2022), bibliotherapy is unsubstantiated because it has various purposes and implementations. More specifically, the authors clarify that bibliotherapy is still under-tested since it is assumed but not demonstrated that reading has positive effects relevant to one's mental health and wellbeing.

McPherson-Leitz (2018) lists some social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties (SEBDs) that affect the learning environment. These difficulties include but are not limited to inattentiveness, defiance, aggression, bullying, shyness, test anxiety, and truancy (Cefai and Cooper, 2017). Danielson et al. (2020) further refer to the Centers for disease control and Prevention (CDC) to explain that 1 in 6 children is usually diagnosed as struggling with a childhood mental illness during his/her first years at school. In this sense, Khalik (2017) sheds light on the significance of educating children about their psychological problem and deepening their understanding of their feelings; drawing attention to bibliotherapy which has the capability of helping children develop social skills and experience validation about themselves.

In light of what was presented above, this study seeks to examine how familiar the Lebanese English language teachers are with the concept of bibliotherapy and its implementation, whether they use it as a technique in their classrooms or not, what reasons may prevent them from using it in the future, what kinds of disorders their students have and how they deal with them, and what kinds of barriers they face while implementing it.

In more specific terms, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1- What kind of disorders do Lebanese students suffer from? How do English language teachers deal with them?

2- Do Lebanese English language teachers have knowledge about bibliotherapy and its implementation?

3- What opinions do practitioners and non-practitioners have about bibliotherapy?

4- What barriers do the practitioners face while implementing bibliotherapy?

Literature Review
Definition of Bibliotherapy

Katz and Watt's (1992), cited in Adams and Pitre (2000) define bibliotherapy as the guided use of reading, always with a therapeutic outcome in mind. They believe in the efficacy of bibliotherapy in helping children who have difficulty in verbalizing their feelings but are capable to identify with a certain character in a book.

In their turn, Lucas and Soares (2013, p.139) define bibliotherapy as "a projective indirect intervention that uses carefully selected thematic books or reading materials of any kind, such as biographies, novels, poems or short stories to help children cope with changes, emotional or mental problems".

Additionally, Olsen (2006) borrows Pardeck's (1990) definition of bibliotherapy as treating through books as well as the notion of McCarty and Chalmers (1997, p.12) who describe bibliotherapy as "therapeutic in the sense that it can help children work through a crisis".

Khalik (2017, p.31) views 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".

Similarly, Pehrsson and McMillen (2010) adopt Shrodes's (1950, p.32) definition of bibliotherapy as the "process of dynamic interaction between the personality of the reader and literature" under the supervision and guidance of a trained helper.

Recently, Georgios and Nadezda (2022) have noticed that bibliotherapy is a widespread therapeutic method that gained more popularity after the 2 World Wars as it proved to be efficient and effective in helping many soldiers who returned from combat with post-traumatic disorders or symptoms.

History of Bibliotherapy

Historically, books have been used for curative purposes. Jack & Ronan (2008) explain that during the Middle Ages, individuals were recommended to read books as a means of curing various illnesses. In modern times, this technique is used to help patients achieve self-actualization, self-assessment, self-help, and problem-solving skills regardless of whether it is supervised by a psychologist / teacher or independently directed to attain self-help.

Pehrsson and McMillen (2007) argue that human emotions and personality development are affected by stories. It has also been reported that during World War I, literature was prescribed by health professionals as a part of treatment for hospitalized patients.

Aboujaoude (2021) refers to World War II after which millions of paperback copies of selected titles were distributed to troops on the battlefield as well as to injured soldiers in hospitals to lift their morale based on the notion that the words of a wise author or philosopher may help in the healing process. As such, he recommends bibliotherapy to manage the numerous cases of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to the Beirut Blast and its aftermath.

Categories of Bibliotherapy

Generally, the three different categories of bibliotherapy are developmental, clinical, and institutional (McPherson-Leitz, 2018). Clinical and institutional bibliotherapy are used to treat individuals who suffer from severe and serious emotional or behavioral problems. They usually take place in a structured setting, and they are facilitated by a specialized counselor, therapist, or psychologist. Developmental bibliotherapy, however is used to deal with patients who are experiencing some tension due to a specific troubling situation. It usually takes place in a school setting and is facilitated by various school personnel, such as teachers, a school psychologist or counselor, or the librarian (Jack & Ronan, 2008; Rozalski et al., 2010). In other words, the main difference between clinical

bibliotherapy and developmental bibliotherapy is that the former is implemented by a qualified counselor or therapist while the latter may be used by teachers to help students through the processes of normal development and self-actualization (Afolayan, 1992; Kramer & Smith, 1998; Rubin, 1978).

Nevertheless, Lindberg (2021) identifies four types of bibliotherapy which are: a) creative which usually involves reading and discussing stories, poems, and fiction within a group, b) developmental which usually takes place in educational settings and is managed by teachers or parents, c) prescriptive which employs the use of self-help books to modify thought patterns, feelings, and actions either in a clinic or at home, and d) therapeutic which is used along with other methods of therapy for the sake of managing psychological issues.

Benefits of Bibliotherapy

Historically, bibliotherapy has been used to deal with several types of negative behaviors such as aggressiveness (Shechtman, 1999, 2000), death (Meyer, 1994; Todahl, Smith, Barnes, & Pereira, 1998), divorce (Early, 1993; Kramer & Smith, 1998; Meyer, 1991), conflict resolution (Hodges, 1995), child abuse or neglect (Jasmine-DeVias, 1995; Pardeck, 1990), depression (Ackerson, Scogin, McKendree-Smith, & Lyman, 1998), family violence (Butterworth & Fulmer, 1991), and homelessness (Farkas & Yorker, 1993), among many others. In this context, reported benefits of such a technique include increased self-awareness, in addition to enhanced coping skills (Hodges, 1995), improved self-esteem and interpersonal skills (Borders and Paisley, 1992; Garagn, 1983), and reduced negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and loneliness.

Brock (2021) highlights the impact of bibliotherapy on the mental health and wellbeing of students with mental disorders. Equally important, it plays a major role in helping other students to empathize and understand what their peers are experiencing.

The benefits of bibliotherapy, according to Pehrsson and McMillen (2007), include fewer negative emotions, more compassion, increased self-awareness and better problem-solving abilities. Mitchell-Kamalie (2002) agrees that bibliotherapy can reduce negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and loneliness on the one hand and improve problem-solving and coping skills on the other hand.

Bibliotherapy has also proven to help in solving elementary school problems like anger, bullying, anxiety, aggression, and abuse (Olsen, 2006). Therefore, developmental bibliotherapy can be incorporated as a preventative technique which anticipates students' needs (Kramer & Smith, 1998) and consequently provides them with the necessary skills to act in case a crisis occurs.

Khalik (2017) further highlights the effects of bibliotherapy on students' social-emotional development especially those who suffer from panic attacks, anxiety disorders and depression which equally affects their behavioral development as well as their learning. As such, bibliotherapy helps in reducing aggressive behavior in children with disorders. Newman (2015) notes that

intertwining bibliotherapy within the Language Arts curriculum not only helps struggling students by supporting their reading comprehension, text analysis, communication and listening skills, but also serves as a prevention measure. Varela, Capelo, Serrano and Pereira (2018) also focus on the contribution of bibliotherapy in developing pre-school children (Lucas, Caldin & Silva, 2006) who suffer from learning problems or emotional disorders (Akinola, 2014).

According to Troscianko, Holman, and Carney (2022, p.3), the therapeutic effects of reading include "self-understanding, self-expression, and self-esteem; interpersonal and communication skills; and creativity, change, and coping and adaptive functions, amongst others". The authors add that group reading can help one improve socially, mentally, educationally, and emotionally. In this sense, patients proved to have better concentration, interest in learning, self-awareness, self-expression, self-confidence, and ability to reduce isolation. This aligns with the views of Robinson (2008) who explains that bibliotherapy affects the readers' mood, pride and achievement, and communication skills since it gives them the opportunity to reflect on the experiences of others who have a shared 'journey' in a supportive environment.

Troscianko, Holman, and Carney (2022) explain that enjoying a text was a less significant factor that brings benefits as even texts which include an unpleasant or disturbing content have the potential to initiate healthy discussions. Here, it is worth mentioning that some patients benefit immediately while others might have a delayed reaction (Shrodes, 1955).

Components of Bibliotherapy

Troscianko, Holman, and Carney (2022) clarify that some researchers build on theoretical frameworks and other models such as Vygotsky's reader-response model of creative and participatory reading. For instance, in doing so, Billington et al. (2010) propose four components which are a) the reading material, which is a mixture of fiction and poetry, b) a facilitator who makes reading "live" through skillfully reading aloud and initiating discussions, c) group dynamics that offer support and encourage cooperation, and d) a physical environment. In order to measure cognitive as well as emotional variation, researchers may collect emotional response, interpretive response, response regarding mental imagery, and responses regarding drawing connections between the narrative and real life.

Forgan (2002) also mentions four elements which are a) prereading which involves selecting the materials, b) guided reading which involves reading the story and reflecting on it, either mentally or in written form, c) post-reading which involves retelling the plot and answering questions, d) and problem-solving or reinforcement which involves identifying the problem, generating solutions, choosing the best solution, and finally evaluating the outcome of the selected solution.

Implementing Bibliotherapy

In the general sense, incorporating bibliotherapy requires passing through the processes of selecting, reading, and discussing books whether individually or within a group (Gladding and Gladding, 1991).

Aiex (1993) focuses on five basic procedures to follow when implementing bibliotherapy both individually and in groups. The first one is motivation through games and role plays. The second is reading time where children are given sufficient time to read. The third one is incubation during which children think about what they have read. The fourth one is follow-up during which children participate in a discussion to share their perspectives and insights. The fifth one is evaluation during which children draw solid conclusions.

Lucas and Soares (2013) give special attention to teamwork at school since it is the main context where children interact with each other and grow as citizens who can define and achieve goals in a nonthreatening environment that prepares them for the future. Thus, bibliotherapy is not just reading, but rather a combination of reading and reflecting on the reading. Dialogue is an essential factor, and it is usually followed by activities like creative writing or art, and others. Harding, et al. (2019) add that the school's environment plays a significant role in children's mental health. Accordingly, teachers need to build rapport and to establish a sense of trust with the child to feel safe (Catalono, 2008). Teachers should also choose material that is age appropriate and that focuses on one relevant specific problem to help the child make connections. Afterwards, teachers can generate goals, tasks and activities. While implementing bibliotherapy, teachers can choose to apply interactive read-alouds, collaborative inquiry or silent independent reading. However, an interactive read-aloud is the most common used strategy that is defined by Fountas and Pinnell (2021) as a whole-group instructional context in which you read aloud a chosen book to the whole class, occasionally and selectively pausing for conversation. During the process, students view images, hear stories beyond their reading level, make connections between themselves and the characters of the story, and reflect through dialogue.

Camp (2015) refers to Russell (2012) to recommend bibliotherapy as a proactive intervention to prepare students to face problems that might arise. Therefore, teachers should be systematic and purposeful while they are planning and implementing bibliotherapy to support students through developing skills that help them cope with life's non-academic challenges.

Moreover, when implementing developmental bibliotherapy in a school setting, teachers should be familiar with the personality traits of children and the problems they are experiencing. If the intervention is not carried out properly, a child might be more introverted and the existing problem might become worse (Georgios and Nadezda, 2022).

Finally, it is always recommended that therapists test and validate the usefulness of self-help books and involve clients by giving them more

responsibility in the process. Thus, although Adams and Pitre (2000) adopt Rosen's criteria (1982) for recommending books by therapists, both authors describe the behavior of therapists who recommend books they have not personally read as unethical.

Steps of Bibliotherapy

Pardeck (1994) establishes four basic steps of implementing bibliotherapy. The first one is identification during which the practitioner identifies the troubled individuals who need help, their behaviors, problems, situations, and skills that must be developed. During this stage, it is imperative for the practitioner – a teacher or an external expert - to build rapport and develop trust with the patient (Prater et al., 2006). The second step is selection during which the practitioner carefully selects books that relate to the identified problem (Cook et al., 2006; Pardeck, 1994; Sullivan & Strang, 2003). The practitioner then sets a plan and makes logistic decisions regarding the implementation process. The third step is presentation during which the practitioner presents the material in a way that helps the patient see the connection between themselves and the story characters. Then, the patients read the text either through read-aloud, partner reading, or independent reading in order to develop thoughts about the characters and their actions (Cook et al., 2006). The fourth and last stage is follow-up which depends on discussions related to the character's traits, actions, and decisions. This stage might also involve creative writing, art activities, and role playing. The purpose of these follow-up activities is both to reinforce the learning that the child gained during the reading as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention process; hence determining the next steps (Cook et al., 2006; Pardeck, 1994; Prater et al., 2006; Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000; Sullivan & Strang, 2003).

Likewise, Brock (2021) states that implementing bibliotherapy requires students to pass through three stages which are identification, catharsis and insight. In the first stage, students are encouraged to make connections with a specific character to feel that they are not alone in a certain situation. In the second stage, students release emotions. In the third and last stage, students expand their knowledge about themselves through discussions. In addition to the stages of identification, catharsis, and insight, a fourth one -universalization- was suggested by Hebert & Furner (1997) through which children realize that their problems are universal and not theirs alone.

Criteria for Selecting Books

Pardeck (1996) views book therapy as an opportunity of children to be hopeful and learn how to take future actions. This is why it is necessary for teachers to choose the right book that reflects similarities between the character and the child so that the child can develop identification and projection mechanisms. Therefore, the selected books must be interesting to the child, current enough to help him/her relate, well written to leave an impression on him/her, full of believable characters and situations that give him/her realistic hope (Kramer and Smith, 1998; Pardeck, 1994), and appropriate to his/her

chronological and emotional age. As for younger children, books should have illustrations (Pardeck, 1990). Children must also be given the opportunity to choose the book that interests them the most from a list that is already chosen by the practitioner carefully in relation to the topic.

Cancino and Cruz (2019) also agree that it is imperative to consider a student's background, age and level when choosing the stories and books. More specifically, Mathers (2014, p.5) explains that "the right book is like a key turning in the door, opening and unlocking insights into the self and allowing the healthy release of pent-up emotions; the wrong book can make [the reader] want to lock that door securely".

Limitations of Bibliotherapy

Despite all the proven benefits to bibliotherapy, it can never be considered as the sole intervention for people with mental disorders. For instance, Tartagni (1976) clarifies that change is not produced in patients by simply giving them books. In fact, patients with severe cases may not benefit from bibliotherapy as their anxiety blocks their abilities to make connections with the characters (Heath et al., 2005; Russell and Shrodes, 1950). Besides, a patient in a state of denial would fail to identify with characters, project his/her own motives onto the characters, or discuss reactions. Moreover, practitioners with limited knowledge of human development would only be able to initiate surface issues during discussion (Gladding and Gladding, 1991).

Olsen (2006) further argues that bibliotherapy is not a cure-all and it has to be used cautiously with children who suffer from deep psychological problems. As such, it has several limitations. For example, the personality of participants may vary; different individuals may understand the same book differently and hence react differently; and one's private experiences might make the reader misunderstand, misinterpret or even distort information.

Methodology

Research Design

This is a descriptive research that portrays bibliotherapy implementation by Lebanese teachers of English. The Mixed Method Approach was used in this study to collect and analyze quantitative as well as qualitative data. The quantitative method was used to calculate frequencies for the single and multiple-choice questions. As for the open-ended questions, thematic content analysis was used to examine qualitative data based on the teachers' responses.

Instrument

The instrument utilized to collect data was a five-section online survey. The survey was disseminated to teachers who were given one week to fill it. In Section A, demographic information about the respondents was collected including the type of the school they teach in, the governorate they teach in, the cycle/s or stage/s they teach, and the highest educational degree they hold. In Section B, teachers were asked about the kinds of disorders their students suffer from and

how they deal with them. Section C consists of a conditional question that seeks to examine whether teachers are familiar with bibliotherapy or not. In Section D, the teachers who have no prior knowledge about this topic were asked about the reasons that may prevent them from implementing bibliotherapy in the future. Section E addresses teachers who were familiar with the concept of bibliotherapy. In this Section, the authors investigated whether teachers practice bibliotherapy in their classrooms, what opinions they have on bibliotherapy use, what barriers they came across while using it, and whether they received professional training on such a topic or not.

Data Analysis

As a first step, the researchers collected data, cleaned it and sorted responses by question. After that, the researchers conducted a range of statistical analyses by using SPSS (version 19). As a final stage, the reported findings served to help the researchers analyze data, answer the research questions, draw conclusions, and make recommendations.

Validity and Reliability

The survey was adapted from Marci A. Olsen's survey as a part of his MA thesis that was submitted to Brigham Young University – Provo. Thus, it is assumingly already valid. Despite this assumption, the survey was shared with three raters: two university professors and a statistician in order to test content and construct validity. To estimate the reliability coefficient, the survey was shared with 5 teachers -who were not a part of study- at two different intervals so that the researchers could find the correlation between their responses.

Sampling

The study sample included 104 respondents who teach English at different Lebanese schools. In particular, 81% respondents are public school teachers while 16% of them are private school teachers, with an additional 3% who teach at both sectors. Around half of the responding teachers (52%) teach in Nabatieh, 27% teach in the South region, with only 9% teaching in Beirut, 6% teaching in Mount Lebanon, 3% teaching in the North and Akkar, and another 3% teaching in Beqaa and Baalbeck- Hermel.

The Lebanese educational system allows teachers to teach in more than one cycle or stage, so in Cycle I and Cycle II of Basic Education, the percentages of respondents are 33% and 30% respectively. These close percentages of teachers in the two consecutives cycles are similar to those who teach in Cycle III of Basic Education and the Secondary Stage where the percentages are 15% and 18% respectively. Additionally, around 4% of the respondents reported that they teach Kindergarten students.

Regarding the educational background, the highest certificate held by 56% of respondents is a BA in English language and literature, an MA by 32%, a teaching diploma (TD) by 6%, and a Ph.D. by 5%. A sole respondent stated that she does not hold a BA and she is teaching with her Baccalaureate degree, Philosophy Section.

Findings

The results collected by the questionnaire aim to find answers to the research questions. Section A of the questionnaire is dedicated to gather data about the profile of the responding teachers, while in section B the authors' intention was to investigate the type of disorders that Lebanese students have and how teachers deal with them. The results of Q1 showed that 23% of teachers have students who suffer from low self-esteem while nearly an equal percentage of teachers (18% and 17%) reported that their students suffer from bullying and divorce. The results of Question 1 are presented in **Figure 1.**
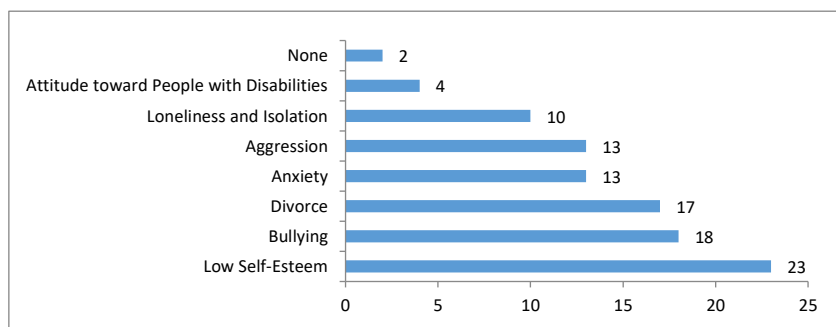

Figure 1: The Type of Students' Disorders

In Q2 of the same Section, the teachers were asked how they deal with students' disorders. The results proved that 40% of teachers change their teaching style by adapting differentiated learning to cope with students' disorders. **Figure 2** illustrates the different techniques used by the teachers.
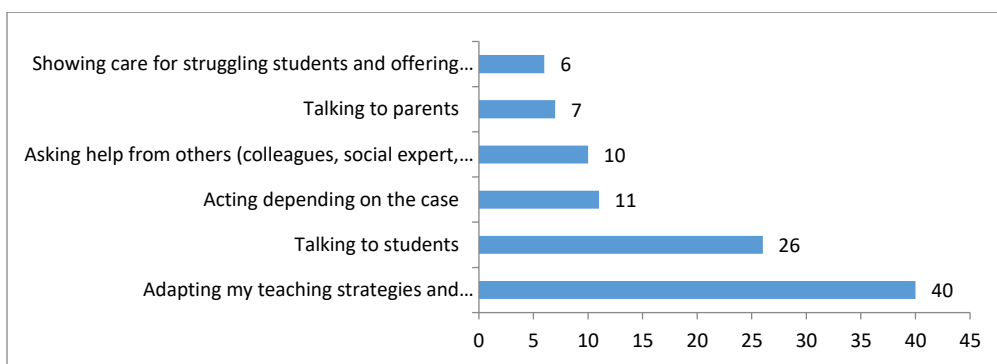

Figure 2: Techniques Used by Teachers to Deal with Students' Disorders

In Section C, the authors adopted Oslen's definition of bibliotherapy as the use of reading to produce affective change and to promote personality growth and development and accordingly investigated the respondents' prior knowledge of concept. Based on their responses, the teachers were guided to two different Sections. The results showed that more than half of the respondents (N=60,

58%) have never heard about bibliotherapy. So, these teachers were guided to Section D where they selected the reasons that may prevent them to use bibliotherapy in their classrooms in the future. According to teachers' opinions, the major obstacles were the way to implement bibliotherapy in class and to find the required resources. **Figure 3** presents the causes that may prohibit teachers to use bibliotherapy.

The 42% (N=44) of teachers who selected the answer "Yes, I have heard about bibliotherapy before" were guided to Section E that aims to examine their practices. The results of Q1 of Section E showed that only 33 teachers have used bibliotherapy in their classes. The teachers' opinions about using bibliotherapy in classes are presented in **Figure 4.** Hence, the results of Q2 of Section E showed the statements selected by the teachers about bibliotherapy use in the classroom.
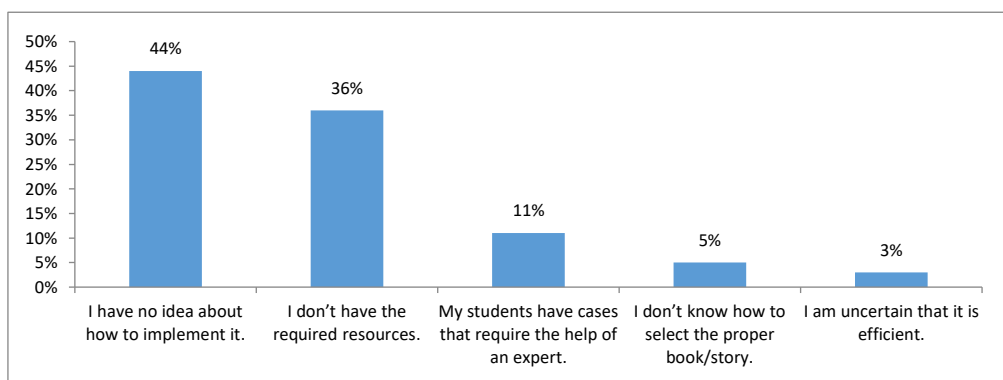

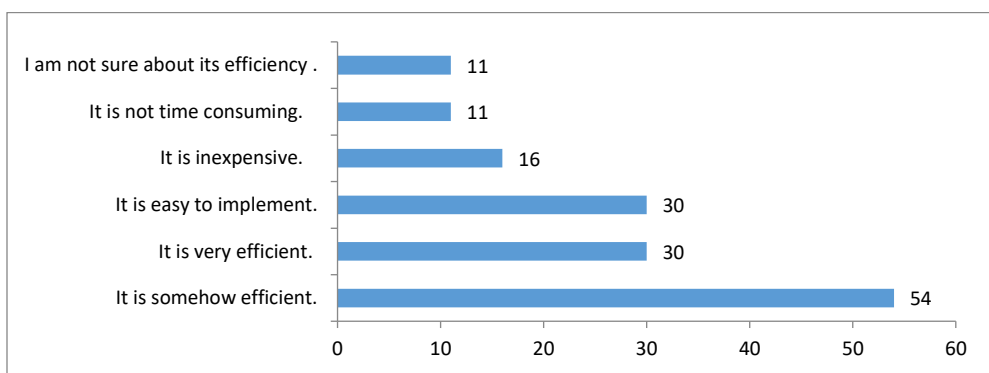**Figure 3: The Reasons That Hinder Bibliotherapy Use**

Figure 4: Teachers' Opinions about the Use of Bibliotherapy

In Q3 of Section E, the teachers listed the barriers that they face when practicing bibliotherapy in their classes. The results showed that for most teachers, the lack of resources is the major barrier. The different barriers stated by the respondents are presented in **Figure 5**.
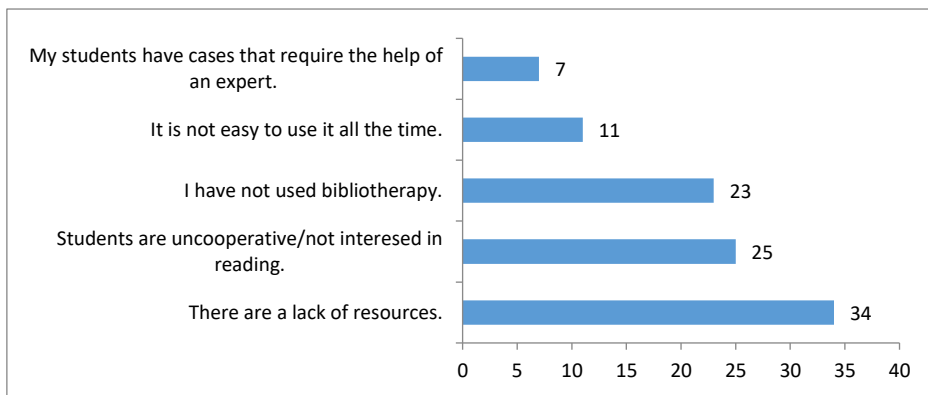
Figure 5: Barriers Faced by Teachers While Practicing Bibliotherapy

Among the teachers (N=10) who stated that they have never used bibliotherapy, five admitted that they have no idea on how to implement it, 3 stated that their students have cases that require the help of an expert, and 2 reported that their students are not interested in reading and not very cooperative. The results of Question 4 of Section E showed that 80% (N=35) of the teachers have not received any training on how to implement bibliotherapy in their classes while 6 out of 9 stated that nonlocal organizations have trained them on this topic. In addition, one teacher stated that her knowledge about this issue is due to that face that she has studied special education at university.

Discussion

The primary purpose of the present study is to investigate how familiar Lebanese English teachers are with the concept of bibliotherapy and its implementation. Most respondents (84%) are public school teachers, and 79% teach in the South of Lebanon. Moreover, around 58% (N=60) of the respondents (N=104) teach in one Cycle or Stage. So, among the 33% and 30% of the respondents who teach in Cycle I and Cycle II, respectively, 22% of them teach only Grades One, Two, and Three of Cycle I, while around 12% of them teach only Grades Four, Five, and Six of Cycle II. Moreover, among the 15% of respondents who teach in Cycle III, only a tiny percentage (4%) teach just Grades Seven, Eight, and Nine, indicating that many teach in more than one Cycle or Stage. Almost all the respondents hold at least a BA in English language and literature, indicating they have the required degree to teach various cycles.

The results of Q1 in Section B reveal diverse types of disorders, such as low self-esteem (23%) as the top problem, followed by bullying (18%), divorce (17%), anxiety (13%), aggression (13%), and loneliness and isolation (10%). All these disorders could be treated by using bibliotherapy as a technique teachers can note while preparing lesson plans to support their students.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 10% to 20% of youth worldwide yearly struggle with mental disorders (WHO, 2016). Many of these

mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, influence the functioning of the individual and have their initial onset before age 14 (WHO, n.d.; WHO, 2016). Due to the body changes one passes through during puberty, self-esteem tends to decrease during adolescence. This starts when adolescents begin to create the ideal figure and compare themselves with peers or idols (Niman, 2019). So, this may lead to the feeling of low self-esteem if the gap is considered too far away. According to Gunarsa (2008), growing feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem might affect academic performance and social relationships.

Many authors, such as Trosciank et al. (2022), Borders and Paisley (1992), and Garagn (1983), reported the therapeutic effects of reading to improve self-esteem and interpersonal and communication skills. In the literature review, Pardeck (1994) suggests using literature to help adolescents cope with problems, and he recommends books to help children deal with separation and divorce (1996). Moreover, to deal with disorders related to divorce, authors such as Kramer and Smith (1998), Early (1993), and Meyer (1991) stated that a bibliography was successfully used as a powerful tool in class.

Bullying, aggression, and anxiety are among the social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties that affect the learning environment (McPherson-Leitz, 2018; Cefai & Cooper, 2017). Therefore, using bibliotherapy with elementary students may help solve such problems, as Olsen (2006) reported. Moreover, Newman (2015) and Mitchell-Kamalie (2002) explain the value of implementing bibliotherapy as an intervention tool for aggressive elementary children and those living in a violent society.

The responses to Q2 of Section B showed that teachers deal differently with students' behavioral problems. The theme analysis of the teachers' statements reveals the responsibility of teachers to give exceptional support in class to students suffering from disorders. So, teachers' initiatives to change their teaching style reflect the degree of care they show for students with disorders, even though only 6% stated that explicitly. The percentage of teachers (26%) who try to understand students' problems by listening to them is more significant than the percentage of teachers who choose to contact parents (7%). The results also conveyed that only some teachers (7%) ask for help from school social experts, administrators, and colleagues.

In Section C, the teachers were asked if they had heard about bibliotherapy to examine whether they use it as a therapeutic technique in their classes. As such, more than half of the respondents (N=60) admitted that they did not know this concept. For those teachers, the main reasons that may prevent them from trying bibliotherapy in the future are the need for more experience in implementing it (44%) and their need for the required resources (36%). Only 11% of teachers stated that their students need intervention from social experts. The problem of selecting proper books or stories by teachers (5%) is also related to implementing bibliotherapy. Surprisingly, these non-practitioners seem to believe in the efficiency of bibliotherapy since only 3% selected the item "I am uncertain about

its efficiency." In conclusion, the results of Q1 in Section D shed light on the importance of guiding English language teachers in implementing bibliotherapy to integrate SEL into literacy.

So, teachers are invited to implement bibliotherapy, whether as a creative (Lindberg, 2021) or developmental (Jack & Ronan, 2008; Rozalski et al., 2010) technique, to help students through the processes of normal development and self-actualization (Rubin, 1978; Afolayan, 1992; Kramer & Smith, 1998). Troscianko et al. (2022) clarified that group reading can help students improve their social, mental, and emotional behaviors and academic performance.

In Section E, the results of Q1 showed that among the respondents (N=44) who declared that they had an idea about bibliotherapy, only 34 teachers practiced it in their classes. In Q2, the description of bibliotherapy as a "somehow efficient technique" was selected by 54% of the teachers compared to 30% who considered it "very efficient" and 11% who were not sure about its efficiency. Moreover, the properties of bibliotherapy as a technique that is easy to implement, inexpensive, and not time-consuming were selected by 30%, 16%, and 11% of the teachers, respectively.

In Q3, the teachers listed the significant barriers they encountered while implementing bibliotherapy in class. Their answers to this question align with their answers to Q1 in Section D. Thus, the need for more resources was the significant barrier for the practitioners (34%) and the non-practitioners of bibliotherapy. 25% mentioned that their students are not interested in reading and they are not cooperative. Moreover, 23% (N=10) of the teachers did not mention any obstacle that may prevent them from using bibliotherapy in class since they have yet to use it. Some teachers (11%) stated that they found it challenging to implement bibliotherapy all the time, and 7% stated that their students needed the intervention of social experts.

The results of Question 4 showed that only nine out of 44 teachers had received training on bibliotherapy and its implementation. However, most of the training sessions were conducted by non-local organizations.

Based on the results of the present study, massive efforts need to be made to integrate SEL in the education system, particularly in literacy. This is because bibliotherapy still needs to be among the practices of teachers. Moreover, this study showed that many teachers have already implemented this technique even without training. The misuse of bibliotherapy by teachers may complicate things. So, they have to be aware of how to integrate it. First, they must be familiar with the students' disorders and report these problems to the social experts, the parents, and the school administrators (Pardeck, 1994; Georgios & Nadezda, 2022). The second step is selecting appropriate books related to students' disorders (Cook et al., 2006; Sullivan & Strang, 2003; Pardeck, 1994) and having specific criteria (Kramer & Smith, 1998; Pardeck, 1994). Moreover, teachers must plan whether reading and discussing books will be individually or within a group (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

Limitations of the Study

This paper examines the implementation of developmental bibliotherapy by English Lebanese teachers. The results might not be reproducible if a larger sample of students was taken. Moreover, this study does not provide a complete image of the situation in Lebanon since much information is still missing. Such information includes how teachers implement bibliotherapy, how often they implement it, and whether social experts are available among the school staff.

Conclusion

This paper investigates whether English Language teachers implement developmental bibliotherapy in classes. The results showed that around 33% of the teachers (N=104) use this technique, though only 9% (N=9) have received training. The therapeutic effect of this technique may allow teachers to deal with students who suffer from social and emotional behaviors such as low self-esteem, bullying, anxiety, isolation and loneliness, and aggression. Since these disorders affect students' academic performance, 40% of teachers differentiate their teaching styles according to individualized cases. As the lack of required resources such as storybooks was a primary challenge, teachers are making great efforts by taking the initiative to establish good relationships with their students and showing care and help. Hence, to succeed in integrating bibliotherapy with literacy, language teachers need to be trained on the efficacy of this therapeutic technique, the proper ways of implementing it, and the criteria for selecting appropriate books.

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